

Password Security

In October 2009, Microsofts Hotmail/Live system was hacked and all the username/password combinations advertised for sale on the web. A whole section was posted so potential buyers could see that it was a genuine offer. As far to many people use the same passwords on all their accounts - Banking, Yahoo, MSN, email, Games, PayPal, Live, Hotmail, Facebook, Twitter etc. - this was a major coup for the hacker and a valuable sale. The validity of the usernames was checked by the BBC.

In November 2009 there are thousands of emails being sent out with the titles "Facebook Account Update" and "New Login System" These are both username/password capture systems.

Did you know that there are 70,000 new viruses launched every day?

You should change your MSN/Live/Hotmail password immediately. If you use the same password anywhere else, change that as well. Below are a few tips on how to be secure with your password.

- Ignore all emails you receive asking you to change your password by following a link. The link will always, 100% of the time take you to a password capture site.
- Ignore all emails with a link to upgrade to a new version of banking, msn, yahoo, facebook etc. If the application owners want you to change your password the link will be in the application, not an email (however you will often not get a warning, as the big companies do not want to worry you). Links in emails are always password capture sites. No genuine company will send you a mail with a link to change your password.
- Use different passwords in each application, this way if one password is hacked your other accounts are secure. In the last few weeks I have had many customers moaning that their Yahoo/Google/Facebook/MSN/Hotmail/email account has been hacked, in all cases they used hotmail and they used the same passwords in all their accounts.
- Make the password hard to hack. use a mix of uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers and symbols. Something along the lines of K#Remk~97y5# is classed as 99%+ secure (please do not use that or you will be hacked, change at least 3 characters to use it)
- NEVER use a date of birth, a name, a standard word from a dictionary, or a social security number. These are the first things hackers password breaking programs look for.
- Never let the computer remember your password for you. These programs store your passwords using encryption which is based on 128 - 1024 bit encryption. Decryption programs are now so powerful that they can decrypt 512bit encryption now and it is estimated that they will be able to decrypt 1024 bit encryption in early 2010.
- Use a firewall and close all ports that are not needed by programs you use.
- Install a quality antivirus - Macafee, Norton, AVG, Panda, microsoft, etc. and keep it updated everyday, the best ones update every 4 hours. and run it every day. The only FREE products that I know of that are genuine are Microsoft and AVG (both these products carry the minimum of protection, for full protection get the full version of AVG).
- Never use online checkers, most of these will say you have hundreds of security issues and then ask you to buy their software. Only use the big names.
- If you have a wireless network, make it secure and keep the password private.
- This applies to users of MAC's as well as PC's.