Tips for creating a strong password

Passwords provide the first line of defense against unauthorized access to your computer. The stronger your password, the more protected your computer will be from hackers and malicious software. You should make sure you have strong passwords for all accounts on your computer. If you're using a corporate network, your network administrator might require you to use a strong password.

What makes a password strong (or weak)?

A strong password:

- Is at least eight characters long.

- Does not contain your user name, real name, or company name.

- Does not contain a complete word.

- Is significantly different from previous passwords.

- Contains characters from each of the following four categories:

CHARACTER CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Uppercase letters	A, B, C
Lowercase letters	a, b, c
Numbers	0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Symbols found on the keyboard (all keyboard characters not defined as letters or numerals) and spaces	` ~ ! @ # $ % ^ & * ( ) _ - + = { } [ ] \ | : ; " ' < > , . ? /

A password might meet all the criteria above and still be a weak password. For example, **Hello2U!** meets all the criteria for a strong password listed above, but is still weak because it contains a complete word. **H3ll0 2 U!** is a stronger alternative because it replaces some of the letters in the complete word with numbers and also includes spaces.

Help yourself remember your strong password by following these tips:

- Create an acronym from an easy-to-remember piece of information. For example, pick a phrase that is meaningful to you, such as **My son's birthday is 12 December, 2004**. Using that phrase as your guide, you might use **Msbi12/Dec,4** for your password.

- Substitute numbers, symbols, and misspellings for letters or words in an easy-to-remember phrase. For example, **My son's birthday is 12 December, 2004** could become **Mi$un's Brthd8iz 12124** (it's OK to use spaces in your password).

- Relate your password to a favorite hobby or sport. For example, **I love to play badminton** could become**ILuv2PlayB@dm1nt()n**.

If you feel you must write down your password in order to remember it, make sure you don't label it as your password, and keep it in a safe place.

Source: http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-vista/tips-for-creating-a-strong-password