

HACKED: In December of Last Year ...



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In December of last year, a hacker gained access to more than 32 million usernames and passwords from the users of RockYou. After obtaining and studying the data from that hack, data security firm Imperva has come up with a list of the top ten most common passwords.

(<http://www.foxnews.com/scitech/2010/01/26/common-internet-passwords/?test=latestnews>) In reading the list of passwords, I felt the need to pick my mouth up off of the floor. In this day and age of Identity Theft, people are still using things such as *123456* as a password!

The report states that “*Nearly 50 percent of users used names, slang words, dictionary words or trivial passwords (consecutive digits, adjacent keyboard keys, and so on).*”. That is absolutely insane. I understand that most people in the world are not uber Geeks. I get that not everyone is a “power user”. But anyone who has turned on a computer and connected it to the Internet has heard of the dangers of having your information hacked.

Have we gotten lazy? Do people feel as though it'll never happen to them? After all, you aren't rich, or famous. Why would someone want to hack you? People don't realize that it's the average Joe that many hackers are after. They want your social security number. They want your health records. They aren't trying to bilk you out of millions of dollars. They just want your information so that they can use it to their own advantage.

Making up strong passwords is not a difficult thing to do. You don't even have to come up with one all by yourself (I don't!). There are several different types of password generators available – many of which are free. PC Tools happens to have an excellent (and reputable) password generator.

(<http://www.pctools.com/guides/password/>) You can also use the super-secure [password generator on GRC](#).

(<https://www.grc.com/passwords.htm>) That one will create a 64-character random – and unique – password. You can use as many characters of it as you wish.

There's also a service available to find out how secure your passwords are. [The Password Meter](#) (<http://www.passwordmeter.com/>) will give you a score, based on a specific set of criteria. The Password Meter checks for minimum requirements of at least eight characters, and at least 3 out of the following 4: uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers and symbols.

Do yourself – and your identity – a favor. Never use the same password twice. Don't use a password that is any combination of your birthdate, your child's birthdate, or your pet's name. Take the time to be sure your passwords are secure, and to change them periodically.

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