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Can Your Passwords Withstand Cybercrime? [1]



Cybercriminals are well aware that people often use simple and reused passwords across multiple accounts. If such a password is compromised, it can potentially provide access to all your accounts.

Creating strong, unique passwords and keeping them secure is essential for protecting personal and sensitive university data.

Each year, NordPass collaborates with independent cybersecurity researchers to build and assess a comprehensive database of stolen passwords gathered from various publicly accessible sources, including the dark web.

For 2023, the top five most stolen passwords in the U.S. are 123456, password, admin,1234, and UNKNOWN. It's no surprise that cybercriminals can crack these passwords almost instantly using methods such as:

- **Phishing scams:** fraudulent emails, calls, or texts designed to trick recipients into revealing personal information.
- **Guessing common passwords:** cybercriminals use malicious software to test thousands of common passwords in seconds to gain access to accounts or systems.

- **Dictionary attacks:** cybercriminals input common words or phrases to breach information.

Fortunately, many organizations, including CU, have requirements and recommendations that help prevent the use of these easily compromised passwords:

- **Length:** use passwords that are at least 12 characters long; the longer, the better.
- **Complexity:** create random passwords with a mix of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols.
- **Multi-factor authentication:** use MFA whenever possible to add an extra layer of security. Learn more about MFA. [2]
- **Uniqueness:** ensure each account has a different password.
- **Avoid auto-save:** do not let your browser save or automatically fill in your passwords. If you can log in automatically, so can anyone with access to your device.

Password managers

These tools can generate and store complex, unique passwords for each of your accounts. If you're considering one, research thoroughly and compare reviews from reliable sources like Consumer Reports, PC Mag, and CNET to find a reputable option.

Learn more about passwords

Visit your campus website for specific guidance.

- CU Anschutz [3]
- CU Boulder [4]
- CU Denver [3]
- UCCS [5]
- System Administration [6]

Groups audience:
Office of Information Security

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