Choosing a secure password

Your password is the key to your account and you need to safeguard it. Anyone who has or can guess your password can get into your account. Anyone who has your password can pose as you. Therefore, you may be held responsible for someone else's actions, if they are able to get your password.

It is your responsibility to set a strong password (i.e. one that is difficult for both humans and computers to guess), to not divulge it to third parties, and to change it when you fear it may have been compromised.

Tips on safeguarding your password

- **First and foremost, NEVER give your password to anyone.** "Anyone" means your coworkers, your spouse, your systems administrator. In the event of an emergency, the system administrator can change your password. Your system administrator never has a need to know your personal password.
- **Make your password something you can remember.** Do not write it down.
- **Make your password difficult for others to guess.** See the section below on choosing a secure password.

How to choose a secure password

Coming up with a good password can be difficult, so here are some guidelines to use.

- Choose a password that is at least eight characters long.
- In general, a good password will have a mix of lower- and upper-case characters, numbers, and punctuation marks.
- Put a punctuation mark in the middle of a word, e.g., ``vege%tarian''.
- Think of an uncommon phrase, and take the first, second or last letter of each word. ``You can't always get what you want'' would yield ``ycagwyw''. Throw in a capital letter and a punctuation mark or a number or two, and you can end up with ``yCag5wyw''.
- Deliberately misspelling one or more words can make your password harder to crack.
- Use several of the techniques above.
- Something that no one but you would ever think of. The best password is one that is totally random to anyone else except you. It is difficult to tell you how to come up with these, but people are able to do it. Use your imagination!