Last fall I mentioned that the most common problem we face in the PSRC computer lab is forgotten user IDs and passwords. Without them, you cannot do much of anything on line. And I suggested keeping your passwords on your computer, which, itself should be protected with a password, or, at least, a four-digit PIN.

A similar problem is making up a new password when you establish a new on-line account, or when you have to reset your password because you didn’t take my advice in the previous paragraph. Then you’ll need to conjure up a password that’s usually an eight-character string comprising at least:

- Two upper case letters,
- Two lower case letters,
- Two numbers, and
- Two symbols

Unfortunately, few things come to mind that would use such a hodge-podge of characters. Sometimes, I’ll let Keychain on my Mac create a random password for me, which it then stores in its secure file (very handy!). You can also purchase a third-party password app like 1Password that works for most browsers and operating systems.

But sometimes I log in to, say, my iCloud or Gmail account from a remote location and don’t want to rely on an app to remind me of my password. For those few accounts, I’ll create a password that’s a long word or short phrase that uses symbols and numbers for letters, like P@S3W0rd$ in the title of this article. (Of course, I’d never use any variation of “password” as a real password, and I’m sure you wouldn’t, either.)

Here are three more examples:

- Eye8aG00se! (“I ate a goose.” This is the form person-action-object. And, no, I’ve never eaten a G00se.)
- 4Ev3rA*! (“Forever a star!” How you will describe your spouse from now on.)
- EyeMN3vRL8! (“I’m never late!” It’s not true, but it’s good to hear yourself say it.)

Now, to be really secure, your passwords should be much longer—say, 20 characters or more—because computers can quickly “crack” shorter ones by trial and error. But a more reasonable threat is someone logging into your Gmail account, which uses your E-mail address as your ID, and then guessing your password. A person would have a hard time guessing these smaller passwords that use numbers and symbols.

G00Dby4Now.