



USDA eAuthentication

Tips For Creating A Strong Password

September 2016

Table of Contents

- Overview
 - Password Rules
 - Password Restrictions
- Password Tips
- Sample Passwords
- Do's and Don'ts
- Other References

Overview

The key to making your USDA eAuthentication account as secure as possible is to create the strongest possible password while making it easy to remember. The following training provides guidelines to help you do this.

Overview: Password Criteria

To help protect your eAuthentication account the following rules are in place to enforce password security. Your password must contain:

- 12-24 characters, including at least one of each of the following
 - Uppercase letter
 - Lowercase letter
 - A number
 - Dictionary words may not be used in passwords
 - At least half of the characters in the new password must be changed from the previous password
- The previous 24 passwords may not be re-used; previous passwords may not be re-used within 365 days
 - One or more of the following special characters

! # \$ % = + : ; , ? ~ * -

Overview: Password Restrictions

Password Restrictions include:

- Do not use any spaces or special characters not listed above
- Dictionary words may not be used in passwords
- The previous 24 passwords may not be reused
- At least half of the characters in the new password must be changed from the previous password
- Profile Information (e.g., Mother's Maiden Name, Date of Birth, PIN, Your Name, Address, Phone Number, Email, etc.)

Note: Your password will expire periodically in accordance with USDA policy

Password Tips

The following tips will help you in developing a strong password for your eAuthentication account:

- Make your password lengthy
 - Your password must be 12-24 characters. The longer you make the password, the harder it will be for someone to guess. Therefore, try to make your password more than 12 characters long.
- Avoid repeated characters or common character sequences
 - Do not use more than 1-2 letters or numbers together (for example “111111” or “aaaaaaa”)
 - Avoid common sequences, such as “qwerty” and “12345.” These sequences are too easily guessed

Password Tips (cont.)

- **Avoid use of dictionary words of any language**
 - Many hackers use dictionary words of many mainstream languages - including slang - to guess passwords. If you use these in your password it makes it easier to guess by a hacker
- **Make your password difficult to guess or research**
 - One technique is to pick a favorite quote, song lyric, or phrase and use the first character from each word to build a password. This will help you select a nonsense word that can't be compared to any known dictionary word and should be unrelated to any of your identity details that are known or researchable
 - Please review our sample passwords section for examples

Password Tips (cont.)

- **Avoid obvious character substitutions**
 - Replacing the letter “i” with 1 or the letter “o” with 0 does little to prevent a password guessing attack.
- **Do not use the same password in all systems**
 - If one of the online systems or computers you use is compromised, then the attacker could potentially have access to all of your systems. Make sure you use a distinctly different password for each of your systems.

Sample Passwords

By using the method of creating a password from a long sentence or phrase, you can develop passwords that are difficult for attackers to crack.

Steps	Password
Choose a sentence	The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog's back.
Select the first letter of each word	tqbfjotldb
Add at least 1 number and special character	tqbf*1jotldb7
Change some of the letters to upper case	TqbF*1jotlDb7
Verify that your password meets our requirements	TqbF*1jotlDb7 <-- Yes, it does!

Do and Don't

Do



Don't



Pick a password you will remember

Write your password down

Change your password on a regular basis
(at least every 60 days for eAuthentication)

Use any personal attributes found in your
eAuthentication profile

Use a mix of upper and lowercase characters, as well
as numbers and special characters

Use a word contained in English or a foreign
language dictionary

Use a password that you can type quickly without
having to look at your keyboard

Share your password with anyone, including spouses
and family members

Verify that your password meets our requirements

Use sample passwords given on various websites,
including ours

Other References

For more information about creating stronger passwords and protecting your identity, type the following keywords into your favorite internet search engine:

- Creating a strong password
- Password security
- Protecting personally identifiable information