Grades
K-3

Privacy Online: Passcodes

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What are passcodes? Think of passcodes (more commonly, "passwords") like keys to a home. No one can use their keys to enter someone else's home because keys are unique in shape, length and the number of grooves it has; the household key protects the keyholder, their family and property. Passcodes are keys to keeping personal and private information safe from others online. Personal information includes things like kids' hobbies, favourite food, etc.; whereas private information includes details that can identify kids, such as street address, school name, date of birth, etc. Although personal information alone is generally not enough to identify someone, when it's shared alongside private information and ends up in the hands of the wrong person, it can be used to guess passcodes, and "unlock" access to online accounts and profiles (e.g., a passcode using a kid's school team jersey number can be easily guessed at). Passcodes can be a series of random words put together, a memorable phrase, or a combination of words, numbers and symbols unique to the user – like a fingerprint!

Kids in this age group may only have one or two online accounts – or maybe none at all, yet! Perhaps they're using a parent's/guardian's account or the login credentials of an older sibling. Regardless, as more activities and learning platforms move online, the more important it becomes for kids in this age group to understand privacy online. Passcodes should be mindfully cared for and never shared, or else kids risk losing access and control over their profiles, damaging their reputation, or having their identity stolen.

This resource offers information and guidance for parents/guardians on how to communicate with kids about what passcodes are, what a strong passcode looks like, and the steps to creating a secure, memorable passcode that is protected from others.
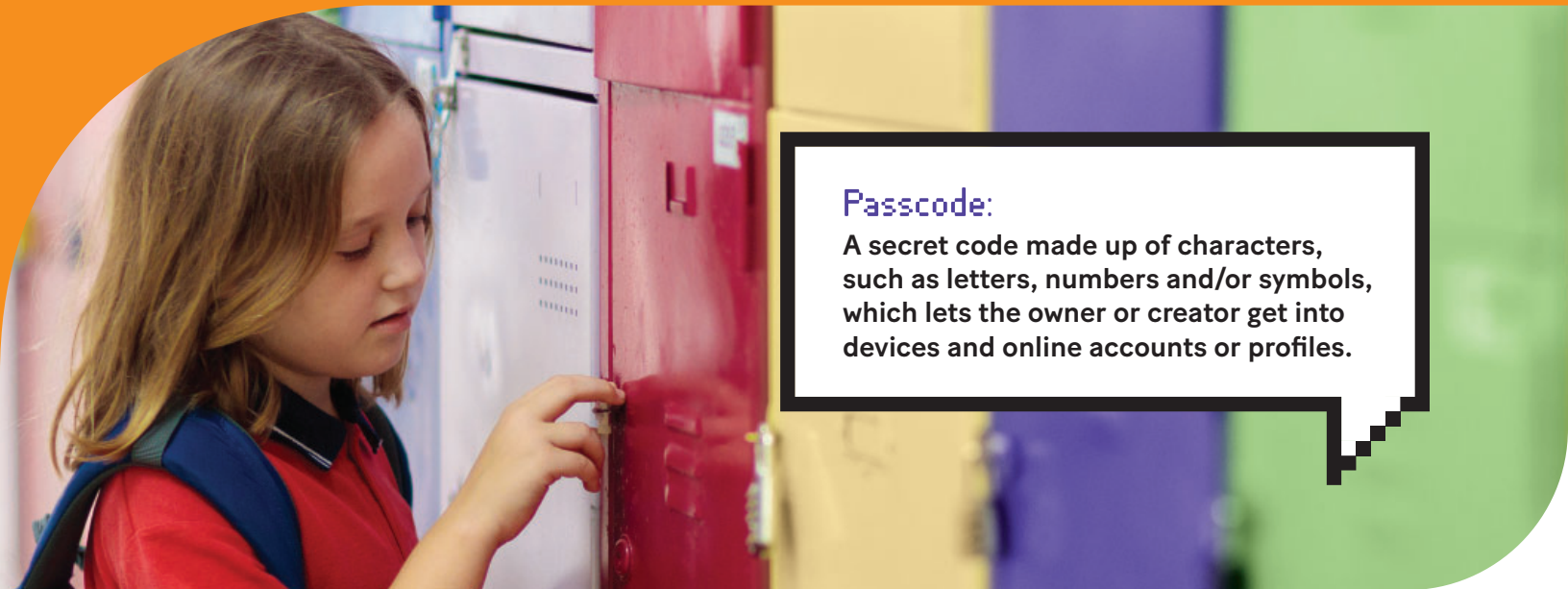
Passcode:
A secret code made up of characters, such as letters, numbers and/or symbols, which lets the owner or creator get into devices and online accounts or profiles.

A DEFINITION

To stay protected in real life, kids use...

LOCKS
For bicycles, scooters, and more!

KEYS
For homes, garages, safes, diaries and more!

PADLOCKS
For lockers at school or swimming lessons!

These objects are used to protect individuals and belongings in real life. However, it's also important to keep safe online while using devices.

To stay protected online, kids should use passwords to...

UNLOCK

Set codes to lock and unlock devices such as phones and tablets.

LOGIN

To login to computers, or online gaming or streaming services.

DOWNLOAD

To download new games or applications.

⬡B RELEVANCE

Hacker:
A person who uses devices, such as computers, to gain unapproved access to people's accounts and information.

Passcodes stop non-authorized users from getting into devices; it's also a way to tell online accounts that it's actually the right person using the device and not someone else, like a bad person. When a bad person, like someone called a "hacker", has access to passcodes, they could pretend to be someone else, and may try to get the actual account or device owner in trouble or "lock" them out of their accounts.
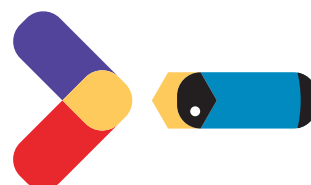
Creating strong and secure passcodes

To be safe, kids need to know how to make a good passcode that's hard for someone to guess. Below are tips on how kids can make and protect passcodes so that their online activity is safe and secure.

✔ Do

- Create long passcodes! Consider a silly sentence or rhyming words, so it's easy to visualize and, therefore, remember!

- Use a mix of letters (both uppercase and lowercase), numbers and symbols to make passcodes even stronger.

- Update passcodes every once in a while! This can make it even harder for someone to guess them.

✘ Don't

- Use names of family, friends, pets, or popular TV or online characters.

- Include things other people know, like a nickname, favourite colour or jersey number.

- Avoid using private information, like birthday, school, age or gender in passcodes.

Remember this!

If parents/guardians and/or kids don't have a strong passcode, it's like leaving a key under a mat at the front door for someone to find!
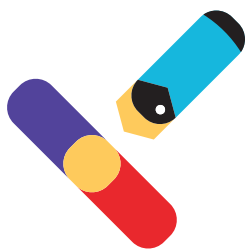
Conversation Starter:

Consider the following three passcode examples. Which one would be the best passcode to use? Why? Why are the other two considered "weak" passcodes?

1. **MyLittlePony**

2. **ilovesoccer**

3. **SillySallySlime*55**

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Protecting passcodes

Passcodes are very important for preventing others from getting into accounts and accessing private and personal information. Parents/guardians can offer these three key pieces of advice to kids to help them protect their passcodes:

- **Share with care:** Only share passcodes with parents/guardians; if someone other than these individuals knows their passcode, ask them to change it right away.

- **No peeking!** Look out for people sneaking a peek while entering passcodes. Make sure no one is looking over their shoulder or between their fingers if they're covering their eyes!

- **Sign-out:** Kids need to be sure to log out of online accounts when they're finished on a device, whether at home or at school/library. When they sign out or log out of their online accounts or devices, they're letting the device know that they're leaving!
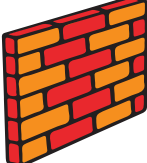
Remember this!

Kids should never share passcodes with friends (not even their BFF!)

Activities are a useful way for kids to test and demonstrate their knowledge on the topic covered in this resource. Have them try the activities themselves and offer support when needed.

Rhyme Time!

Practice making your own super strong, memorable passcodes using words that rhyme together, then add a number and a symbol, and see what you get!

Word	Rhyme 1	Rhyme 2	Add a Number	Add a Symbol	Passcode
Tall	Wall	Ball	3	+	TallWallBall3+ ✓
Tell					
Dog					
Sat					

Visualize It!

Take your favourite passcode from Activity #1 and make a drawing of it.

Remember, visualizing your passcode will help you remember it!

DogFrogLog8# ✔

⬡D FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on cybersecurity, or to continue the conversation and learning process, visit the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security website:

cyber.gc.ca/en/

For more information on Passphrases, passwords and PINs, visit the Government of Canada's website:

getcybersafe.gc.ca/en/secure-your-accounts/passphrases-passwords-and-pins

Kids Help Phone:

Contact by text message at **686868** or by phone at **1-800-668-6868** from across Canada, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; or access their resources online: **kidshelpphone.ca**

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