

May 2010

Dear Clients and Friends:

If you own a computer, you surely use passwords to protect your information.

How do people come up with a password? Let's say you have a pet named Dobie and you were born on March 7, so you decide to use "dobie37." You're thinking, "hey, I can remember this, and who is ever going to guess that string of seven characters?"

You picture a hacker staring at his monitor, trying to break into your computer by using one password after another. "That didn't work, darn! Now let's see, maybe they used the numbers from their street address. Nope. This is going to take forever ...."

Actually, that's not how it works. Naughty hackers are called "crackers," and the fastest cracker programs today can hit your computer with 15 million tries per second. There's no thinking to it, just brute force. A password with six lower-case letters can be broken in a matter of seconds. If you include capital letters, numerals and symbols, you'll hold the hacker off for about eleven hours.

The optimal length for a password is at least ten characters. By avoiding words and proper names, using numerals, symbols and both upper and lower case letters, it will take the fastest cracker about 91,800 years to break into your computer.

Even herd animals know there's safety in numbers, so stretch that password!

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck".

Charles M. Shackelford