Choose a good password

When you first use a secure website, e.g. for email or online shopping, you will have to give a password that you will enter to identify yourself in future. This password is the key that locks up your personal data.

So it's very important to choose a good one.

A good password is one that you can remember easily, but other people will be unable to guess or find out in some way.

If a password is easy to remember, you won't have to write it down. The easiest way for someone to find out your password is to find where you have written it down! However, you don't want to forget it when you need to use it.

You must also avoid anything that someone can find out easily, such as your name, part of your address, postcode, telephone number or date of birth. It's also best to avoid names of close family members and pets.

Don't use common words: one of the most common passwords is the word 'password'. So it's the one that any criminal will try first. There are computer programs that can try all common words to find out if they have been used as a password.

What can you do?

A good trick is to think of a short sentence or phrase and use the initial letters. You can use a line of a poem, or song, or hymn.

So 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' becomes 'iwlaac'. If you use this method, you can write down a reminder – 'daffodils' - which will mean nothing to someone trying to guess your password.

Or 'Jerusalem' would be 'adtfiat' (And did those feet in ancient time).

You can do a similar trick with things that you remember, but that are unlikely to be known to anyone else. If your first school teacher was Miss Clarke, your password could be 'mtnwmc' (My teacher's name was Miss Clarke). Your aide-memoire is 'First Teacher'.

Once you start using this trick you can easily come up with all the passwords you need and have no problem remembering them.

Some websites require you to use both letters and numbers in your password to make them even harder to guess. For these, you can substitute letters with numbers that look similar. E.g.

1 for i, 0 (zero) for o, 5 for s, 3 for e (E turned backwards)

You can also use the & or + characters for "and".