

Tips for Choosing a Good Password

Computing and Information Services provides computer accounts on three different types of systems: a Linux system (Odin), Windows 2000 file servers (Charlie, Alice), and VMS systems (Thuban, HMCADM). Depending on whether you are an HMC student, faculty, or staff, or a guest at HMC you may have an account on one or all of these systems.

Most people like to use only one password for all of their computer accounts in order to make it easier to remember their passwords. Each system may have slightly different restrictions on acceptable passwords, so to pick a password that will work on all three systems you should follow these guidelines.

- Pick a password between 6-8 characters long.
- Use at least two alphabetic characters and one numeric character.
- Alphabetic characters include both upper- and lower-case letters.
- Passwords are case-sensitive on some systems, so if you do use upper- and lower-case letters, be sure to remember which ones are which!
- Symbols and punctuation marks (such as !@#\$%, etc.) may be legal on some systems, but not on others, so avoid these characters.
- Do not use spaces in your password.
- You cannot use your login name, or any reverse or circular shift of your login name as a password.
- Do not select a password that is a word from a dictionary.
- Avoid choosing words readily associated with your computer site or yourself, such as your birth date, the name of a product, the model of your car, etc.
- The VMS system requires you to change your password every 6 months. While not every system requires this, in general this is a good practice.