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The online vow that will change your life

It's the beginning of the New Year which means we have an opportunity here. We have the chance to make 2016 a year of online safety and security. But to do this, you must make the following critical, life-changing vow:

To use strong, unique passwords no matter what for each account.

Over the last year, we've probably discussed passwords on numerous occasions, and by now, you're more than likely ready to move on. But how do you expect to move on if you're still using variations of Password123 or using your spouse's name for the majority of your online accounts? You can't. In fact, your account will be among the first to be hacked in the wake of a data breach, and that hacker (or hackers) will be pulling up last year's data faster than you can say 2016.

So how about a little refresher?

No dictionary words.

If your password exists in a dictionary, change it. Hackers utilize password-cracking software that initially scans the entire dictionary to see if your password lives inside it. Now, this doesn't mean you can't use multiple dictionary words for one password. For instance, if you'd like to write a sentence and make that your password, then that would probably be acceptable. However, you must stay away from common phrases and easy-to-read sentences. Instead of, "I like Star Wars," change it to, "Star me Wars like!"

It's nothing personal.

Anything that can be found on Facebook, LinkedIn, or a \$20 background check should not be anywhere near your password. If you're part of a targeted hacking, your social platforms and background information will be the first stop for any attacker. Many people use their favorite football team, child's name, or birthdate as a password—all of which can easily be found on Facebook. Some people even go as far (or not very far at all depending on how you look at it) to use their first name as their go-to password. If you do this, you deserve every minute of a hacking.

Once is enough.

We cannot stress this enough. **DO NOT USE THE SAME PASSWORD MORE THAN ONCE.** This is a one-way ticket to having every part of your online life hacked in less than one minute. If someone gains access to your Yahoo email address (which Yahoo has been hacked thousands of times in the last few years alone), and your Yahoo password is also the password to your work email, banking account, and Amazon profile, you can say goodbye to a whole mess of things.

If you keep these three tips in mind, you should have a better shot at keeping your password private for the entirety of 2016. However, as hackers become more and more cyber-savvy, your online life becomes more and more vulnerable. So, if any of your accounts offer additional layers of security such as two-factor authentication, you may want to consider complementing your strong password with these additional features.

Online Subscriptions have taken over. Which one is your favorite?

Over the last few years, online subscription boxes have gained in popularity. Are we lazier or are we busier? Too busy to shop for ourselves or too lazy to go out and do it?

Despite the reason, boxed subscriptions have become unique and simplistic in the most innovative way. There are boxes with meals, boxes with samples, boxes with razors, boxes for bros and boxes from farms. Do you want a subscription to something that comes in a neat box? It's probably out there. You just have to search for it.

Here are a few of the most popular boxes on the online market.

BirchBox

For \$10 a month, let [BirchBox](#) send you a colorful box filled to the brim with beauty and grooming samples of all sorts. Men and women are both allowed, but it's safe to say women are the primary targets of this box.

If you're a lady, your box might include lip gloss, facial moisturizer, leave-in conditioner, and mascara. If you're a gentleman, you will probably see items such as shaving gel, deodorant, face wash, and cologne. All samples come from highly esteemed companies and notable designers.

Dollar Shave Club

Tired of using dull blades and receiving less than acceptable shaves? Always forgetting to pick up a razor when you go to the grocery store? Then [Dollar Shave Club](#) is the box for you.

Every month, receive a fresh new set of blades. Whether you want to pay \$1, \$6, or \$9, the choice is yours. But, more money means more blades. But, don't worry. The Dollar Shave Club guarantees even the dollar razor is just as reliable as "the '82 wagon that starts when it's below zero." And, don't be fooled. This box is just as much for women as it is for men.

Graze

This box is a bit different than the last

two. Instead of monthly, it's weekly, and it's quadruple the price. At \$11.99 a week, receive a beautifully designed box stamped with a nutritionist badge of approval. Each box contains healthy snacks that have not been genetically engineered and do not contain artificial flavors, Trans fat or high fructose corn syrup.

Let [Graze](#) know what kinds of snacks you like and what types of food you don't enjoy and Graze will handpick a special box just for you. Have your box delivered to your home or straight to your work.

Farm to People

A bit like Graze, [Farm to People](#) is all about healthy, unprocessed foods. They deliver straight from the farm, and their purpose is to get you to discover unique foods, to support small-batch producers and to know what you're eating.

Their Tasting Box is \$29.95 a month or \$49.95 a month depending on what type of eater you are—Casual Foodie or Food Critic. One box this year consisted of Goat Milk Chocolate, a PB&J Cricket Bar, TaterPiks Pickled Potatoes, Ostrich Meat Snack Sticks and Absinthe & Black Salt Caramels. You get the idea. A whole lot of food that you would never see in a grocery store.

Kiwi Crate

Children need a box, too. And with [Kiwi Crate](#), your child will receive a themed box every month for \$19.95. Each crate comes with 2-3 learning activities (arts and crafts, science, games) and will have a particular theme in mind.

One crate is named Colorful Inspiration. Inside it you will find three projects: Spinning Colors, Stained Glass, and Tissue Tie Dye Bag. Another crate named Fun with Flight will teach your child to create a paper kit and show you how to build a rubber band powered rocket. Every crate contains their branded magazine to help your child learn, grow and explore.

Dojo: Your rock in shining armor.

[Dojo](#) may look like a rock, but don't be fooled by its physical appearance. This inconsequential brown gadget will create the Security of Things around your Internet of Things.

A chat screen serves as the interface through which you track the security and safety of your connected devices—things like your phone, alarm system, baby monitor, tablet, printer, and router. You can pick and choose which devices are connected to Dojo, as well as add new devices with ease.

If any abnormal or suspicious activity occurs, Dojo will change colors and send you a message notifying you of the questionable activity (whether you're at home, at work, or across the country). From here, you can block or accept the activity. Imagine your neighbor trying to use your Wi-Fi without permission or a hacker attempting to access your printer.

However, Dojo-Lab asserts that most incidents are resolved automatically with no effort on your end. To make things even more efficient, if you consistently block or allow certain activities, Dojo will eventually dub them as "preferences." Once an action is considered a preference, Dojo will automatically complete associated activities for you.

If you're worried about your data, don't be. None of your data is tracked, collected, or even seen. Dojo can proactively protect your devices without "looking" inside them.

Dojo is available for a preorder price of \$99, and with this payment, you receive the device, a 1-year warranty, and 12 months of service. After the promotion ends, the cost of Dojo bumps up to \$199 (which includes the gadget itself and the 1-year service). If you decide to renew your service after the first year, it will drop back down to \$99 a year.

www.dojo-labs.com



4 tips to keep your children safe online.

The Internet of Things has expanded more than most people ever imagined it could. People are constantly connected to things, and things are indefinitely connected to other things. This concept has had a significant impact on the way our children are brought up. Younger generations have trouble even differentiating between 'online' and 'offline'—they're simply 'online' at all times. There is no such thing as 'offline' to younger generations.

Men, Women, and Children, a movie released earlier this year, centers on young adults and children growing up in an online world. The movie heavily focuses on how parents struggle to deal with it on a daily basis, never knowing where to draw the line or how to do it. And this probably rings true for many real-life parents. How do I teach my children online safety? What is acceptable for them to do? What should they not be doing? How do I guide them in the right direction without overstepping?

There are many different ways to lead your children down a secure path, and there are a few good organizations out there that present useful 'how-to' material such as [iKeepsafe](#) and [NetSmartz](#). But here are a few tips to help you get started.

Start at the very beginning.

Parenting.com [compares](#) your child's online world to a playground. You know who your child is playing with, and you know all about the park they're playing at. So why wouldn't you do the same with their 'online playground'? They're big advocates of copiloting—sitting with your child and being in the same online playground as they are.

But don't take this the wrong way.

This doesn't mean sitting with your 15-year old or even your 10-year old. This means starting from the very beginning when your young child is barely learning how to navigate connected devices.

Teach them what is right and what is wrong.

You can't assume your children know what is right and what is wrong online. How do you expect them to stay safe online if you've never told them how to be safe? As technology changes and as your children get older, you should have multiple conversations with them about what you believe to be acceptable and not acceptable. Give them clear, understandable guidelines. For example, do not share your physical address with anyone online. But don't just leave at that. Explain why they cannot share their information and what the consequences may be.

Enable parental controls.

Parental controls are necessary. And depending on your children, you can make the decision as to how long they're necessary and to what degree they're needed. Most all devices—tablets, phones, computers, TVs—all have parental control settings or downloadable applications that are easy to navigate and even easier to implement. Here's a great [video](#) from O2 Guru, a UK-based digital communications company, on how to find these settings and applications.

Explain the meaning behind online reputation.

Many times, online reputation is used within a business context; however, it can also be used to describe an individual's collection of online material. There are [companies](#) that make a living off of protecting and preserving your online reputation, the inherent masters of Online Reputation Management. You need to explain to your children why these companies exist, and how people find their way to these companies. They need to understand that their online actions today can haunt them 10, 20, or even 30 years from now, ruining job prospects and personal relationships.

4 Apps to Simplify your Day-to-Day

Laundry Day

Have you ever noticed how absolutely unintelligible the laundry symbols are on the tags of your clothes? A square with two lines on the upper left corner, a cup of water with four circles, and a triangle with an 'X' through it. What does any of that actually mean? [Laundry Day](#) would like to show you. Scan your tag, and this app will display any associated symbols, as well as a straightforward description of what each one means. Simple enough.

Device: iOS 7.0 or later **Price:** \$0.99

Photomath

Do you struggle with your children's math homework? If you do, you're not alone. [Photomath](#) is the smart camera calculator that strives to eliminate your after-work struggle. Scan a problem in your child's math book and instantly receive the answer, as well as step-by-step instructions on how to reach the answer.

Device: iOS 7.0 or later, Android 4.1 or later
Price: Free

Evernote Scannable

Do you find that you gather too much paperwork throughout the work week? Paperwork you need, but isn't exactly critical enough to constitute a hardcopy? This is where [Evernote Scannable](#) would like to step in. This innovative app allows you to scan any documents into high-quality images. You can share or save these images in your photos, through Evernote, in a message, or via email. Quickly organize your child's class announcements, any business cards, and all those product flyers into one, easy-to-find archive.

Device: iOS 8.0 or later **Price:** Free

Cudasign

Are you tired of waiting days to receive a signature on a crucial document? Or maybe you're the guilty party... procrastinating for weeks before signing and mailing important documents? [Cudasign](#) is the simplest way to sign, seal, and deliver all those documents awaiting a signature. This app allows you to add electronic fields and data validation into any uploaded document and then to share it with trusted parties via email. Easy to archive and extremely secure, Cudasign is the highest rated e-signature app on the market.

Device: iOS 8.0 or later, Android 4.0 or later
Price: Free to download, receive up to 5 free signed documents per month

