

# How to build a memory vault

**Easily store all your computer and Internet passwords safely and securely in your own memory**

By Darren Bridger



Never forget a password again

Stay secure against theft and identity fraud

[www.LostArtsOfTheMind.com](http://www.LostArtsOfTheMind.com)

## **Introduction**

In this short e-book I'm going to show you a method for easily memorising all your user-names and passwords. This technique is easily to learn, and will almost certainly tighten the security on your current passwords thus making it less likely that a hacker or identity fraudster can gain access to your various accounts.

If you use this system then I guarantee that within 30 minutes to an hour you will have memorised all your usernames and passwords, and will have them instantly accessible. Furthermore the beauty of this system is that every time you access one of your passwords from memory you will be strengthening the memory and making it easier to remember again!

## **The problem**

Computers and the Internet have opened up an amazing array of new services and information to us all. Its amazing to think of the websites that we take for granted today that were unheard of ten years ago. Many people now use the Internet for their banking, shopping, buying books and DVDs, paying their taxes, and studying and researching information for education and work.

In order to take advantage of all the different services offered online we often have to create an 'account' – be it free or paid – at a particular website. When you create your account you typically have to provide a username and password.

But these can soon grow to an enormous number, and unless you write them down you can find it very easy to forget.

Most people now have to remember at least four computer passwords, as well as other passwords and numbers such as passwords for software. Many have more.

Just as an example, I have passwords for:

2 web-based email services

Ebay

Amazon

My bank account online

Guru.com (a website for hiring artists, web-designers etc)

Several Internet discussion boards that I read

Then you also typically have to remember your user name as well as your passwords. And your user names may not always be in the same format on different sites. For example, on some sites you may have used capital letters for the first letter of each name (and some sites are case-sensitive, some aren't!), on some you may have just used your first initial then surname, on

others you may have used spaces, and on others not. In a minute I will explain how to deal with this.

The vast range of phone numbers that we have to remember are not usually a problem as we can store them on the memory of our cell-phone or write them in a notebook. But it is dangerous to write down your usernames and passwords. The reason why is obvious: there are unfortunately plenty of people around these days who will steal your passwords and access your various accounts without your knowledge. This is clearly particularly dangerous when they can access your bank or email accounts.

Furthermore, there are a number of databases that exist across the world that hold an abundance of information on you, including details such as your date of birth and mother's maiden name, that could be used to unlock your password.

We are sharing so much of our personal information online – including our credit or debit card numbers and phone numbers – that there is great potential for theft or invasion of privacy if that information gets into the wrong hands.

Therefore not taking precautions to keep your accounts secure – or by making them vulnerable by writing down your passwords – is like going to work and leaving your front door unlocked. You are inviting criminals in.

So, firstly I'm going to show you how to choose your usernames and passwords wisely and then how to memorise them easily so that they are always accessible to you yet secure in your own brain.

### **How to choose your usernames and passwords**

Most people tend to make two main mistakes in choosing their passwords.

Firstly, they tend to choose something very simple and obviously connected to themselves, such as the name of their pet.

Secondly, because of the difficulty in remembering a large number of passwords, they often tend to just use the same password for every account! Meaning that all a hacker has to do is work out this one password and they would have access to *all* your accounts! Needless to say you should *not* do this. Instead you should have a unique password for every account.

There are two rules you should follow when choosing your passwords:

1. Don't make them obviously connected to you (such as your pet's name or mother's maiden name) or connected to the service/website that you are using them for. Following this rule will make it much harder for any hacker to simply guess your password.
2. Don't make them just letters, add in at least one number too. I'll explain more about this in a minute. Suffice to say that this also adds in more

complexity and makes your password less predictable and harder for a hacker to guess.

### **Standardise your usernames to one or two forms**

The main level of security is going to be in your password, not your username.

This is important: you cannot rely on your usernames to be secret and secure.

Usually you will want your username to be your real name, especially if it's for a web-based email account or something like that where the user-name also forms your email address.

e.g. if my name was Joe Bloggs, and I signed up for a Google email account, I would want my username to be JoeBloggs so that my email address would be [JoeBloggs@gmail.com](mailto:JoeBloggs@gmail.com)

There is another reason why you do not want to depend on your username for security: your username is more public than your password. For example, when you type out your username on the 'sign in' page of a site it is usually visible on screen. Therefore anyone in the room could be looking over your shoulder at it.

So what I suggest is that you chose one or two different ways of writing your user-name and then stick to them across all your accounts. Ideally just one would do, as it would be easier to remember. But this is not always possible, so two is fine.

Make it your name, and put your middle initial in. For example:

JoeLBloggs

Putting your middle initial in will make it a little bit more tricky for someone to guess if they don't know your middle initial, and it will also make it more likely that that user-name is still available.

Of course, you probably already have accounts, such as email accounts, that you cannot change your username on. If so then just do your best to streamline your accounts that you can change down to as few usernames as possible. That way they will be easier to remember and even if you do forget which name you selected for which account, you will only have to try about two or three names to find out which it was.

So, we've established that the passwords are going to be the main level of security on your accounts, and that you will have a minimal number of usernames. Now we're going to try some memory exercises to prepare you for creating your own mental memory vault.

## Basics of memory

The techniques for mastering your memory have been passed down from ancient cultures more than two thousand years old. They are mostly based on the idea that we are more likely to remember things if they:

1. Have a location in space
2. Stimulate the imagination in as many senses as possible
3. Have a connection to other things

Just close your eyes in a moment and try to imagine your house or apartment.

Imagine entering the front door and walking through each room. Even if you are not very good at visualising in your mind's eye, you almost certainly can recall a vast amount of detail about your home and can easily remember the location of each room. This is because we are naturally very good at remembering familiar spaces.

Now try the same thing for your local shopping mall. Imagine entering it and walking around it. The chances are that you can recall most of the shops and their locations, as well as other 'land-marks' within the mall such as the location of the toilets and the location of the coffee shop. If you can't remember a mall then try and remember your old school. Visualise walking in the main door and try and recall as many of the rooms and corridors as you can.

The second item on the above list of things that make memory easier was 'stimulate the imagination in as many senses as possible'. This is important, and I want to return to it shortly.

Lastly, if things have a strong connection to something already remembered, this makes them more memorable. We are going to make use of this fact in order to create 11 'spaces' in our vault in order to store 11 passwords. We're going to do this by taking advantage of the fact that you can already count from zero to ten!

You already have the list of the numbers from 0 to 10 burned into your long term memory. What we need to do next is give each number an image that you can associate with it. You've got two options, either choose images that look like each number, or images that rhyme with the name of each number. Here are some suggestions for the numbers:

## The number system

Number	Sound system	Appearance system
0) Zero	Hero (e.g. Superman)	Sun
1) One	Gun	Pen/ pencil/ candle
2) Two	Shoe	Swan
3) Three	Tree	Handcuffs
4) Four	Door	Sail-boat
5) Five	Hive (ie Bee hive)	Curtain hook
6) Six	Sticks	Elephant's trunk
7) Seven	Heaven	Boomerang
8) Eight	Gate	Snowman
9) Nine	Wine	Balloon on a string
10) Ten	Hen	Bat and ball

Read through the above systems and firstly chose which one – the sound or appearance system – you think you will find easiest to learn.

You don't have to accept my particular suggestions, you can make up your own. It doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is that they will be easy for *you* to remember.

Once you've done that, quickly test yourself on it. I'm going to give you some of these numbers and I want you to quickly recall which sound or shape you are linking it to.

5 links to...?

2 links to...?

8 links to...?

10 links to...?

Now, its time to put this all together and build your own memory vault.

### Building your memory vault

By now you should have completed steps one to three:

**Step one:** you should have chosen your one or two forms of username.

**Step Two:** You should also have practised recalling a route around your home and your old school or your local shopping mall.

**Step Three:** You should have practiced and become comfortable with the number system (sound or appearance version... or both!)

Now we are going to put it all together to create a unique system for memorising your passwords. In order to do this you can make some notes,

but its very important that you cut up the paper and destroy it afterwards. You don't want anyone to find a written list of all your passwords! I've created a form for you to use below. You can print it up and use it or just make your own notes on paper.

First write down a list of all the different accounts you need passwords for (with a maximum of 11 accounts). Write the name of each account next to it.

So, for example, if your first account is for your google email, then you will write 'Google email' next to one.

Once you've written down each service, I want you to go back to imagining your house, old school, or local shopping mall, whichever you find easiest.

Now, imagine walking in the front door of the building and I want you to locate 11 easy to remember areas. These could be 11 different rooms, or 11 objects (such as a table) within a room, or it could be 11 different shops if you choose the shopping mall. Make sure you have the order of these 11 places fixed in your mind, so you are walking through the building in a specific order.

So, now you have 11 easy to remember locations that you can 'walk through' in your imagination, in order. I want you to now go through each of the 11 in order and place your image of each number at that location. For example, if you chose the sound system, and you are walking around your house, you might put Superman (hero = zero) on the front door mat, then a gun (= one) in the hallway and so on. Make the images vivid, enlarge them if necessary. Also, give them a *reason* for being in that place. For example, maybe Superman is standing on the front door mat because he is guarding the house.

So now you have the 11 locations linked in order to the 11 numbers. Great! Now you need to associate each of your passwords with that place and number. This is how you do it: turn the name of the website into an image. For example, I use a pair of binoculars to represent Google, as it's a *search* engine. Find a connection and turn it into an image. Go through each of your 11 websites or services and turn them into an image and place each one of them at one of the 11 points on your route.

Now, run through those images in your mind. You should have 11 places, linked in order to 11 numbers, linked to 11 images that represent each website.

We're almost there now.

All we have to do is create a password to link to each of those 11 places. Each password can be whatever you like, as long as it is something that is highly memorable and linkable to each location. So, for each of your 11 locations, you have a number-image and an image (which tells you what that website is); you now need to link in a third image which will be your password.

Carefully go through your 11 places and select a password that you can easily link to each place.

Now, here is the important part. Your *actual* password for that place will consist of that word, with the place number in front of it. The combination of a number and a word will make your password more secure and harder to guess.

So if you choose the password RubberDuck for google for your 1<sup>st</sup> place, you would imagine Superman (1), looking through a pair of binoculars (Search engine/Google) and seeing a RuberDuck. And your password would be 0RubberDuck.

Say your next password was for your bank, and your next location was your kitchen, and the password was Painter. You might picture a giant bank ATM machine in the place of your oven, and an artist is standing in front of it with a canvass, painting it with a paintbrush (number 1)! (the more bizarre the image, the better!). Therefore this password would equal 1Painter.

And so on.

Continue this process until you have images for each of your accounts and passwords.

If it helps, print out the table below and jot down each of your images for each number, account and password in the spaces. But remember to destroy the page once you have memorised it!

Location (eg each place in your house, school or shopping mall)	Number image (eg the images from the sound or appearance system as described above.)	Account image (eg a google email account might be a pair of binoculars ( <i>search engine</i> ))	Password image (any image that is highly memorable and that links closely to the number and account image)	Final password (eg if its location 0, and password image = RubberDuck then final password = 0RubberDuck)
	0 =			
	1 =			
	2 =			
	3 =			
	4 =			
	5 =			
	6 =			
	7 =			
	8 =			
	9 =			
	10 =			



When you have the whole thing figured out in your mind, take a break for ten minutes. Then mentally review the list – go through it again. If you cannot remember any of the items consider changing them slightly to make them more vivid and memorable.

Then quickly mentally review the list again before you go to sleep tonight, and again quickly when you wake up tomorrow morning.

If you can take these steps then it's highly likely that the information will be 'burned' into your long term memory. Particularly if you can review the list at least once a week. The great thing about it is that every time you use the system to remember a password, you are in effect practising it, and therefore will be more likely to remember it in the future. So just by using the system you strengthen it.

Congratulations! You have now created your own memory vault!

### **A slightly simpler version of the memory vault**

There are two ways to make the system slightly simpler.

Firstly, some people find it a bit confusing that the first location on their route is labelled as "0", and the second as "1" etc. So you can take the Zero label out if you so wish, leaving just ten locations.

Secondly, you may have realised that the 'route' around your house, school or local mall is not absolutely essential, you could just remember the list of numbers, rather than placing them at locations around your route. This is true, although I think the route makes it easier to visualise. However, if you want to simplify the system you can do it just using the numbers and forget about visualising a route.

### **Summary of the mental memory vault system:**

1. Chose a place (such as your home, school or local shopping mall) and make a mental route around it with 11 (or fewer) locations.
2. Chose a number-image system (sound or appearance) and memorise images for the numbers 0 to 10 using it.
3. Chose an image that relates to each of your accounts that you are memorising passwords for. Place each image at a location on your route, and link it to the appropriate number image for that location.
4. Chose a password for each account and make a vivid image from it. Connect that image to the image for its account and number.

5. Each of your final passwords then equals the password with its number in front of it.
6. Practise walking through the route in your imagination as regularly as you can in order to strengthen the power of your memory vault.
7. Next time you need to remember a password, simply mentally 'walk through' your route and you will soon discover the image combinations that unlock the password for that account.

For more little known mind tricks and techniques, please read my book 'The Lost Arts of the Mind': [www.LostArtsOfTheMind.com/Book.htm](http://www.LostArtsOfTheMind.com/Book.htm)

For more information on memory techniques, try the following books:

Memory training for students:

<http://darrenLB.memorypp.hop.clickbank.net>

Memory improvements techniques:

<http://darrenLB.mastmemory.hop.clickbank.net>