

“hacker”) is using your account to break into your system, ask your system administrator for advice first, if possible! You should also change your password periodically; every few months is recommended.

A password should be easy for you to remember but hard for other people (or password-guessing programs!) to guess. Your system should have guidelines for secure passwords. If it doesn't, here are some suggestions. A password should be between six and eight characters long. It should *not* be a word in *any* language, your phone number, your address, or anything anyone else might know or guess that you'd use as a password. It's best to mix upper- and lowercase letters, punctuation, and numbers.

To change your password, you'll probably use either the *passwd* or *yppasswd* program from a shell prompt. After you enter the command, it prompts you to enter your password (“old password”). If the password is correct, it asks you to enter your new password—twice, to be sure there is no typing mistake. For security, neither the old nor new passwords appear as you type them.

On some systems, your password change won't take effect for some time. The change may require between a few minutes to a day.

Customizing Your Account

As we saw earlier, your home directory may have a hidden file called *.profile*. If it doesn't, there'll probably be one or more files named *.login*, *.cshrc*, *.tcshrc*, *.bashrc*, *.bash_profile*, or *.bash_login*. These files are *shell setup files*, and are the key to customizing your account. Shell setup files contain commands that are automatically executed when a new shell starts—especially when you log in.

Let's take a look at these files. Go to your home directory, then use **less** to display the file. Your *.profile* might look something like this:

```
PATH='/bin:/usr/bin:/usr/local/bin:'
LESS='eMq'
export PATH LESS
/usr/games/fortune
date
umask 002
```

A *.login* file could look like this:

```
set path = (/bin /usr/bin /usr/local/bin .)
setenv LESS 'eMq'
/usr/games/fortune
date
umask 002
```