



Password, please?

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Level 3



Manju was fascinated by locks and keys. The soft metallic sound of a key turning in a lock made her happy. The key bunch Mummy kept tied to her saree was Manju's favourite toy.

She loved to explore the mysterious depths of keyholes.

Manju passed the village locksmith Ranjith's shop on her way to school every day. She loved to listen to the rasping of the tools as he made new keys.



One day, Mummy needed to get a new key for her almirah.
Manju went with her to Ranjith's shop.
Ranjith picked up a flat piece of metal. "What is this?" Manju asked.



"This is a blank key," replied Ranjith.

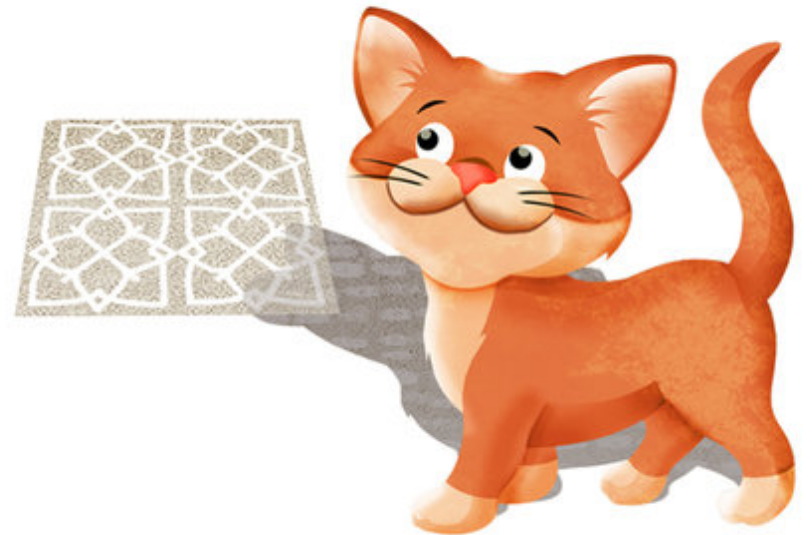
Then he held up Mummy's key and said, "See these pointy bits that look like mountains? And these curvy bits that look like valleys? Your almirah lock also has mountains and valleys inside it. The key's mountains and valleys fit that pattern. So when you turn the key, the lock opens!

I am copying the mountains and valleys from the old key to the new one. So the new key will also open the almirah."



Back home, Manju couldn't stop talking about the locksmith. She told Munira Aunty, who lived next door. She even told her cat, who stopped licking his face for half a minute and looked bored. When her cousin Riju came to visit that evening, she told her too. Riju was studying to be an engineer.

“Do you know, Riju didi,” Manju said, “if you want to make a new key for a lock, you have to copy the pattern of mountains and valleys from the old key to a blank key?”





“Really?” said Riju. “Then it’s a very good thing that Mummy keeps the keys safe. Otherwise anyone could copy the key and steal our things!”

“That’s true!”

“This is the sort of thing that I am studying,” said Riju.

“What, making keys?” asked Manju.

“Something similar,” replied Riju. “We lock up things we want to keep safe, like the sarees in our almirah, right?”

Manju nodded.

“But what if the thing you want to keep safe is information?”

“Like what, Riju didi?” asked Manju.

“Like how much money you have in your bank account. Or your best friend’s secret. Or the notebook of recipes passed down from our grandmother to your mother.”

“Oh yes, we need to keep those safe,” agreed Manju.



"If we have to protect this information, we have to put it in a safe place and lock it! There are many safe places. Like my computer, where I keep my college notes," said Riju.

She opened her laptop. "To see my work, you have to type the password here!"

"What's a password?" Manju wanted to know.



"A password is like a key. The almirah's lock opens only when the pattern on the key fits the pattern in the lock, like a jigsaw puzzle. My computer will only open if the password I type matches the password I have set. If you tell anyone the password, they can open it too! So you have to be very careful whom you give your password to."

"Hmmm... When I get a computer, what should I set as my password?"
Manju wondered aloud.

“Some people’s passwords are really easy to guess – their date of birth, their pet’s name, or the name of their street. A good password is difficult to guess. The longer it is, the harder it is to guess. It is better if it has letters and numbers. But a password should also be easy to remember.”
Just then, Mummy called Riju, who ran off to greet her aunt.
TING! went Riju’s mobile.





What might that be? A new game? Riju had the best games! Manju often spent her evenings pestering her cousin to let her play. Today, she would play them by herself.

Manju pressed a button on her cousin's phone. The screen lit up. A keypad with numbers appeared. It needed a password!

She pressed 1234. "Incorrect password" appeared on the screen. Then she tried 0000, but the phone did not unlock. She also tried Riju's birthday, 10-10-97.

"Hoi!"

That was Riju.





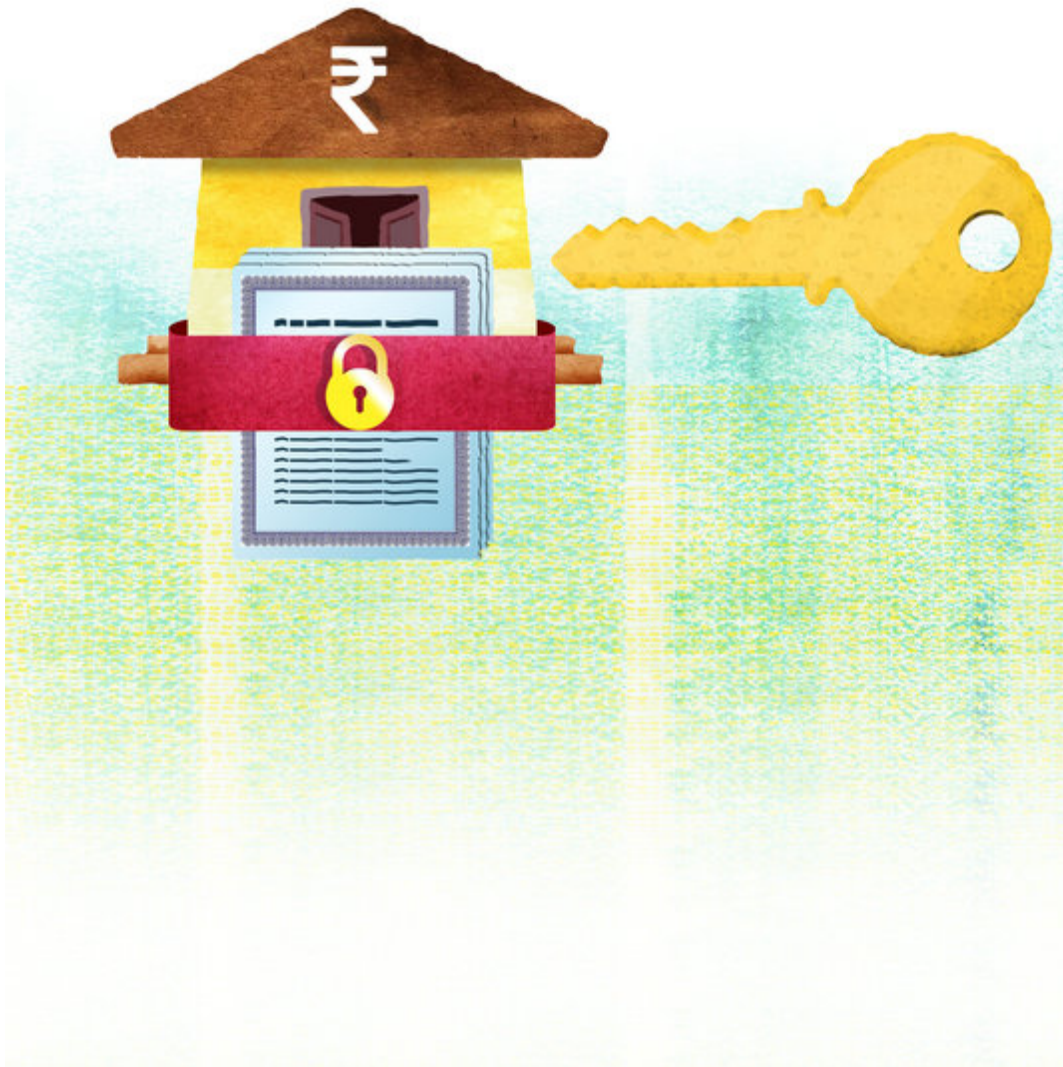
"I've locked my phone with a password," she said. "And I don't give it to nosey little girls."

Manju stuck her tongue out.



“Now do you see why passwords are so important, Manju?” Riju said. “They’re like keys to the things we want to keep private.”
“Yes, didi,” said Manju. “I only wanted to play some games!”

“And you only had to ask!” Riju said, typing in her password. “Let me show you a new game – Guess the Password!”



Play with Manju

This game gives you clues to passwords. See if you can crack them.

Phone passwords

1. Manju is nine years younger than her cousin. If Manju chooses her birth year as her password, what would it be?
2. If Riju's password is her date of birth backwards, it would be...
3. Remember the first password Manju tried on Riju's phone? What's that in reverse order?

Answers:

1. 2006 2. 790101 3. 4321

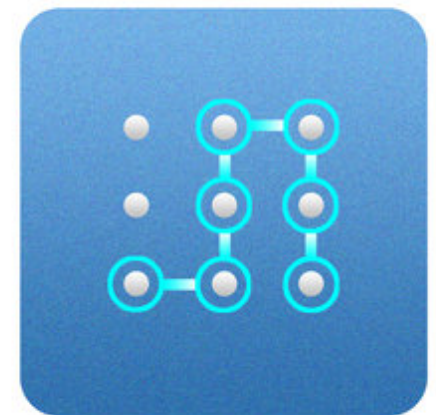
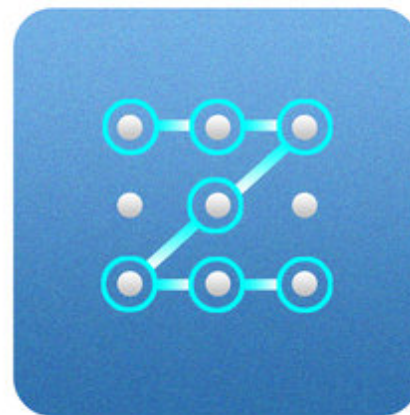
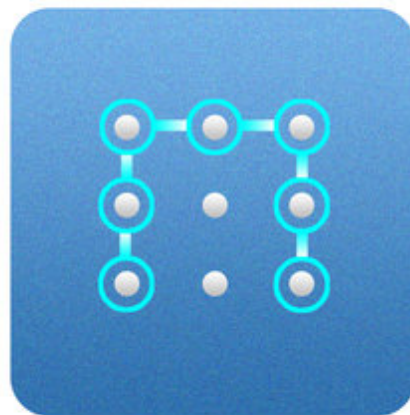
Did you solve the clues? Remember, if you did, others can too. So here are some simple dos and don'ts:

1. Don't keep passwords that are too short (123, xyz, abcd are weak passwords).
2. Remember your password so that you do not have to write it down. If you write it down, someone might be able to find it.
3. Use both upper and lower cases (ComPUteR).
4. Don't use words that are easy to guess (The name of your school, dog or town).

Passwords are used to 'unlock' or open mobile phones, computers, safety vaults in banks, our accounts on websites, and many other things.

Fingerprints and retina scans are also used as passwords. These are called bio-metric passwords.

A password could also be a set pattern you trace on the screen.
Like this:



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Password, please?

(English)

Manju wants to play games on her cousin's phone. But it's locked with a password! Here is a book that introduces readers to the concept of passwords as a key to guard information. To find out more, open the book; you don't need a password for that!

This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.



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