

As a result, the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) recommends new guidelines for creating secure passwords:

- » Encourage longer passwords.
- » Drop the complexity requirement. Instead, encourage users to create passwords that they can easily remember. A simple sentence or phrase consisting of ordinary words will suffice, as long as the sentence or phrase is long. For example, “My password is a simple sentence” would make a good password.
- » Drop the requirement to change passwords periodically; it only encourages users to write down their passwords.

Old ways are difficult to change, and it will take a while for these new guidelines to catch on. Personally, I wouldn’t drop the requirement to change passwords periodically without also increasing the minimum length to at least 12 characters.

Secure the Administrator account

It stands to reason that at least one network user must have the authority to use the network without any of the restrictions imposed on other users. This user is the *administrator*. The administrator is responsible for setting up the network’s security system. To do that, the administrator must be exempt from all security restrictions.



WARNING

Many networks automatically create an administrator user account when you install the network software. The username and password for this initial administrator are published in the network’s documentation and are the same for all networks that use the same network operating system. One of the first things that you must do after getting your network up and running is to change the password for this standard administrator account. Otherwise, your elaborate security precautions are a complete waste of time. Anyone who knows the default administrator username and password can access your system with full administrator rights and privileges, thus bypassing the security restrictions that you so carefully set up.



WARNING

Don’t forget the password for the administrator account! If a network user forgets his or her password, you can log on as the supervisor and change that user’s password. If you forget the administrator’s password, though, you’re stuck.

Managing User Security

User accounts are the backbone of network security administration. Through the use of user accounts, you can determine who can access your network as well as what network resources each user can and can’t access. You can restrict access to