Strong passwords

We all use passwords on the internet, but as the threat from cybercrime increases, one thing we need to do is to make sure our passwords are stronger and therefore safer.

Passwords containing names, real words, sequential numbers or dates are easy to remember but also easy for hackers to crack.

Strong passwords can be hard to remember as they use a seemingly random mixture of upper and lowercase letters, numbers and symbols.

What we need is a simple technique to create strong passwords which we can easily recall. And one way to do this is by using a memorable phrase.

Let's have a look at an example. I'll use:

Wendy's planning Simon's 18th birthday party for next month

as our memorable phrase.

From this I'll only use the first letter of each word - and keep the numbers.
To add another number, I'll change the 'f' which stood for 'for' and use the number 4 instead.

Adding symbols will make it even stronger so I'll change the S in Simon for a dollar sign.

Now there's a good mix of numbers, symbols as well as upper and lower case letters, that I can easily recall by using the phrase:

Wendy's planning Simon's 18th birthday party for next month

The longer the password is, the more random it is and the bigger the pool of characters it comes from, the more difficult it is to crack.

Here's another thing you can do to make things even more secure.

When it's offered, use two step verification. Once you've set this up, this is how it works.

You log in as normal with your username and password, and then you're sent a use once only verification code typically by text or phone.

Once you input the code, you can access your account as normal.

With two step verification, if a criminal got hold of your username and password and tried to log in, they'd be challenged for a verification code, and to get that, they'd need to have access to your phone.

If you want to, you can choose to verify only once for a trusted device such as your personal computer.

You can then log on as usual, but if anyone tried to get access from a different device, they'd be asked for a verification code.

So two step verification adds an extra layer of protection to your account.

Using stronger passwords which have upper and lower case letters, numbers and symbols and two step verification, when it's available, will help to keep you better protected.