

Password protection

It's hard to know which faceless technocrat decided to protect everything that you might want to access in the course of your day with a password. But your laptop, your mobile phone, your office network, your gas bill and probably even your spouse are held behind military grade, 256 bit encryption. While it is mildly reassuring that hackers can't access your overdraft, it is absolutely infuriating that neither can you.

Most of us struggle to recall our own postcode so it seems crazy that we're expected to deal with a baffling series of eight digit combinations of letters, numbers and random characters issued by everyone from our car insurers to the supermarket that even Derren Brown would have difficulty remembering.

As a result we've all stopped caring. According to a list of the top 500 most used passwords was published in Mark Burnett's book *Perfect Passwords: Selection, Protection, Authentication* the number one most used password is "123456" while at number two is simply "password".

The solution is surely to give us just one password that works for everything. In fact your parents should select this for you at birth and insist it should be tattooed – backwards so it can be read in a mirror – on your forehead. And if walking around with "womblefiend123"

on your face in gothic script seems a high price to pay, remember that at least you'll be able to see your bank balance.



New smart phone

You don't need much convincing to invest in a new smart phone. As the phone companies insist on issuing newer, shinier and sexier handsets just a couple of days after you got your last one, it ended up looking like an obsolete brick that even Thomas Edison would have been ashamed to be seen with as soon as you got it. So it's been a long, painful, contractually designated 24 month wait until you could upgrade to something genuinely state of art.

Despite the fact that your old phone is still working perfectly well, you decide that a wafer thin, glass and burnished metal slab that looks like a prop from Star Trek is essential to impress work colleagues (and the opposite sex) with just how digitally savvy and connected you are.

However as soon as you pop the cellophane on its gleaming white box and your pornographically exciting new gizmo drops effortlessly in your palm you are immediately struck with horror when it dawns on you that everything else you own is designed to destroy it. House keys will score great canyons into its screen; half-eaten boiled sweets will clog up its nano grills and pocket fluff will bespoil its sheen. While it won't fit into the pocket of your jeans, it will fit neatly into the mouth of a child or small dog. Even the sweaty fingers that you'll need to operate it will leave unsightly greasy marks on the graphite.

So it's back to the mobile phone shop you will go to spend another £50 on cases, covers and screen guards which make your lovely new phone look like something you picked up cheap at a Tupperware party.

Cold callers

In this digital age we have it pretty easy on the shopping front. You can simply log on to the internet and buy all the groceries, clothes, books and insurance you need at any time of the day or night. So is anyone really sitting at home waiting for a wildly, pushy teenager in a call centre in Pontypridd to ring them about great discounts on double glazing or whether they want to take part in a survey about their utility supplier? And even if you are, would you choose to have this personcall during your favourite soap or half way through dinner?

But the phone is only the half of it. Every time you open your door after 6pm it's a young offender with a tray full of overpriced dish cloths and the look of an opportunist burglar about them or a monosyllabic student trying to sign you up to a £15 direct debit to bankroll eye operations in Africa. By the end of the evening it's a breath of fresh air to open the door to find that it's just one of your neighbours tearfully confessing that they've run over your cat.

Inconvenience aside no one is really sure just how rude they can be to these people. In your dreams you slam down the phone or to casually shoulder the door shut with a curt "not now, you reptile" but in reality that is simply socially unacceptable. Instead you are forced

to waste valuable TV time concocting a convoluted story about running a bath or your children's imminent bedtimes; a stuttering and unconvincing excuse which inevitably results in you agreeing to speak to the cold caller at the same time the following day.

Internet shopping

We all live busy lives. Between working longer hours, hitting the gym to justify the huge annual membership fee, dropping off the kids off at school and trying to find time to plough through the thousands of hours of *Mad Men* waiting to be watched on the Tivo box, there's barely a moment in the day to get to the shops. Thank God for the internet.

Not only is great for essentials, it's also a fabulous for buying stuff you never knew you wanted or needed. Whether you're sourcing original vinyl from your youth, hand made baby booties from local artisans in France or a polystyrene coffin of frozen steaks from an organic farm in Scotland, a world of unnecessary purchases is at your fingertips. In fact you now spend so much of your evenings picking out reclaimed tiles on Ebay that you barely have time to wonder when and where all this stuff is getting delivered – which is just as well because it certainly isn't getting delivered to your house.

TOP TEN MOST ANNOYING PACKAGING

1. Moulded plastic around fruit – Is there any greater affront to nature that a single orange encased in PVC biosphere that you literally need a buzz saw to open?
2. Individual milk or creamer pot – Even in the hands of seasoned hotel residents these UHT time bombs will explode.
3. Parmesan wedge – Peeling from the pointy end as instructed simply lodges the fat end in like a immovable cheesy anchor.
4. Giant Styrofoam mouldings – They may have kept your new telly safe but now they refuse to fit back in the box they came in.
5. Plastic milk containers – Why does anyone need a lid and a foil bit?

(continued overleaf)