

Seminar: Password Policies

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1 Introduction

One security mechanism which can be found almost everywhere is passwords. Usually, in these systems, the password selection of the users are governed by password policies. How these policies are designed has great impact on the resulting passwords the users choose, and this impact is not always what is expected. In fact, sometimes a password policy can result in weaker passwords.

2 Aim

The aim of this seminar is to look deeper into the world of password policies. We want to find out how different policies affect users password decisions. After participating in this seminar you should be able to:

- Reflect on the aspects of secure use of passwords.
- Grasp the meaning of research results in the area of security and usable security.

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3 Theory

First you must read Chapter 2 “Usability and Psychology” in [1]. Then, to participate in this seminar you must have read the paper “Of Passwords and People” by Komanduri et al. [2]. In this paper the authors have studied how different password policies affects users’ choice of passwords.

4 Assignment

You should read the material. While reading, write down your thoughts about the subject matter.

During the seminar we will discuss the results of the research paper, we will also discuss password policies in general. To prepare you for the seminar, let these questions guide you:

- What are the main results of the research paper?
- How did they conclude them?
- What is your strategy for remembering passwords?
- How do you react to different password policies?

5 Examination

To pass this assignment you need to actively participate in the seminar.

References

- [1] Ross J. Anderson. *Security Engineering*. Wiley, Indianapolis, IN, 2 edition, 2008. ISBN 978-0-470-06852-6 (hbk.). URL <http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/~rja14/book.html>.
- [2] Saranga Komanduri, Richard Shay, Patrick Gage Kelley, Michelle L. Mazurek, Lujo Bauer, Christin Nicolas, Lorrie Faith Cranor, and Serge Egelman. Of passwords and people: Measuring the effect of password-composition policies. In *CHI*, 2011. URL http://cups.cs.cmu.edu/rshay/pubs/passwords_and_people2011.pdf.