You might think that you’ve never lost data, or that it’s too much work to use unique passwords, or even that hacks aren’t that bad. In reality, hacks happen all the time, and it is often hard to tell if personal information has been lost. In order to best prevent hacking, it is important to know the most common methods to steal data.

Humans are incredibly easy to ‘hack’. Emails that ask for bank information to send money somewhere (as obvious as it is) are simply trying to phish for bank information or passwords, which can be used to steal money. This happened at Desert Vista, where someone imitated Dr. Barela’s email and sent viruses to staff, pretending to be a new agenda. When the virus was downloaded, it erased the hard drive of the computer it was on. The most prevalent way to be phished today is where the hacker will create a website that looks identical to the login page of another (Twitter, Google, Wells Fargo, etc.) and prompts the user to log in. The user will enter their information and all of the information that they typed goes directly to the hacker, who can log on the real website with the credentials.

Fortunately, it’s easy to stay safe with simple techniques. The easiest one is browsing the internet carefully. Making sure not to download anything fishy is probably the biggest thing anyone can do to protect their computer. Then, make sure any link is legitimate before proceeding to click it, which can be done by hovering over it to see the destination. Another crucial and easy step is to have a new password for every account or website. While it seems tedious, there are many password managers that can help, where one master password protects the rest of the passwords hidden inside. Many of these are also able to automatically log in on various websites, so it isn’t hard to use. The next thing to do is encrypt any saved data. Encryption is an accessible way to
make sure that someone reading data can’t read what they are looking at, and can even be done on a Mac with no special programs, with FileVault. Hacks are devastating and changing every password is a nightmare, so stay safe.

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