

Dennis' password disaster!

Written by Nina Du Thaler
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About the Series

The series, Diary of Elle, informs and inspires children's awareness of cyber-safety through fun stories in diary-format. Starring Elle (the diary-owner) and her friends, each book in the series of seven books will allow children to learn about a different cyber-safety concept through the experiences of other children.

The series can be purchased at amazon.com.



Hi, my name is Elle.

I'm just an ordinary kid. I'm not sure what I'm going to be when I grow up but I'm sure I'm destined for greatness.

I always wonder about growing up. I wish I could grow up faster. Whenever I ask a grown-up if I can do something new, they give me a strange look and say, "Don't wish your childhood away!" or "Maybe when you're a little older." I wonder when that day will come because I am older each day than I was the day before!

What's interesting about me? Hmm, let me think ...

When I was little I found my name very confusing. First, I learned about the letters of the alphabet and for a long time I thought my name was spelled "L". Then, I learned it was actually "E" "L" "L" "E". Very weird! It has sort of stuck now and I sign cards and letters "L".

I've made a shocking discovery that I don't know much about cyber-safety. In fact, I don't even know what cyber-safety means. How embarrassing!

I'm sharing my diary and what I've learned with you to save you this embarrassment.

Cyber-safety is all about how to safely use the Internet, computers, mobile phones, tablets and other cool gadgets.

I also have a totally cool group of friends who are going to help us with this. Together, we will explore the cyber-world so you don't have to make any of our mistakes.

Let me introduce my friends ...

L

I am ... Lizzy, always happy and singing and try to see the bright side of things

I Think ... Elle is my BFF (Best Friend Forever)



I am ... Maya, interested in cultures, can count to 100 in 8 languages and imitate many accents

I Think ... I want to be a librarian



I am ... Tom, very popular, have the latest fashion and can do any sports really well

I Think..... I have all cool gadgets there are



I am ... Lucy, a tiny girl with a huge brain and can solve any math problem

I Think ... I love numbers more than anything



I am ... Dennis, a bit nerdy but really cool inside and can remember everything ever said to me

I Think ... I can beat Tom running one day



I am ... Elle, an ordinary kid, willing to learn and destined for greatness
I Think ... I have the best friends ever



Monday

Today, Dennis dropped the ball!

Okay, so he didn't really drop the ball. Well ... he dropped something else. Something far more important. I mean, yes Dennis likes to play rugby, but he wasn't actually carrying a ball through the halls of our school. No way would Mrs Hudson allow us to do that! She has a rule about that. She has a lot of rules, but that's okay. She thinks our education is *serious* business, but I think we can have fun too. You learn more when you're having fun.

Dennis, Lizzy and I were walking down the hall when it all started. Dennis took his mobile out of his pocket to make sure it was turned off before class started. Kids have been known to lose their mobile phones for a whole school year when a mere ping, ping or bleep, bleep escapes during class. We were smarter than that. In fact, we were getting smarter and smarter about using our mobiles, our computers and all our other devices too, in lots of ways.

When we got to our classroom, I saw Dennis go pale as a snowman's bottom. His eyes went as wide as dinner plates behind his tortoiseshell-rimmed glasses. He began searching in his pockets, one after the other, again and again and again.

"Oh no," he said. "Oh no, oh no, oh no!"

Lizzy exchanged a puzzled look with me. We're the best of friends and she always knows what I'm thinking. Right then, I was thinking that Dennis had really lost it.

"Dennis," I said, "what's wrong?"

He gripped his mobile phone tight to his chest, and said in a very quiet voice, "I must have dropped it out of my pocket when I took out my phone."

"Dropped it? Dropped what?"

"The password to my mobile. I wrote it down so I wouldn't forget it!"

"I don't understand," Lizzy told him. "You've got your mobile right there in your hand. Even if someone found your password they can't get into your phone when you still have it!"

"You don't get it," Dennis said. "That's the same password to my online profile, and to my tablet, and to my ... my everything!"

Now I knew why Dennis was so upset. Someone could be sneaking into his online accounts right then, rifling through his personal stuff, while we were standing there talking.

I pictured a scary-looking person, dressed all in black, looking through all of the files in Dennis's computer, all of his music playlists, all of his private text messages with other people ... with me! I know I have some things in my phone that I want to keep private. I have my diary in my tablet. I sure wouldn't want anyone reading it without me knowing about it!

"We'll look for it," I promised Dennis.

Dennis tried to smile. He obviously wasn't sure we would find the tiny piece of paper that he had dropped – the tiny piece of paper that was like a key to all of his private information.

Actually, to be honest, I wasn't sure either ...

Tuesday

Would the real Dennis please stand up?

At school the next day, we found Dennis sitting at his desk, head down on top of his desk with his arms crossed over the top of his head. That wasn't like Dennis. He was usually so full of energy. If we could bottle up his energy in a battery we'd be able to power the whole school!

"Hi, Dennis!" I said. He didn't even look up. "Hey, what's wrong? Is this about your password? Did you find it?"

"No," he said in a muffled voice from beneath his arms. "I had to change all of my passwords on everything."

That sounded awful. "Why? What happened?"

Slowly he sat up, and showed me the screen of his mobile. "Someone got into my online account last night. They posted that I failed the trial test in maths!"

"But you did fail the test in maths," I pointed out before I could stop myself.

"I know, but I didn't want everyone in the class to know about it!" He took the phone back and dropped it on his desk like it was something disgusting. "I can't believe someone took my password just to embarrass me like that! I'm glad I saw it so quickly and erased it. Hopefully, not too many people saw it."

Our friend Maya plonked her bag on the table next to Dennis, sat down with us, and leaned in very close so she could whisper. "Just be glad that's all I did."

We both stared at Maya.

"You?" Dennis asked her. "Why would you do this?"

I knew the reason already but Dennis seemed surprised when Maya explained it.

"Dennis," she said, "when people know your password, they have access to all of your stuff online. They can take over your life. I could have sent messages to everyone you know telling them you thought you were a blue-nosed baboon!"

"She's right," I told Dennis. "And think about all of the photos and stuff that you keep online. What would happen if someone looked at all this stuff, or even deleted all of it?"

Dennis nodded his head. He seemed to be a little happier now that he knew it was a friend who found his password. "You're right. I know. I shouldn't have dropped my password like that."

I shook my head. "You mean you shouldn't have written the password down. If you don't write it down, you can't lose it."

During class, I took out a piece of paper and wrote a note for myself.

Passwords: Don't write them down, if you don't want them to get around!

I added up in my head all the different passwords I use. There are so many them. It wasn't going to be easy to remember them all, but if I can remember all the facts and figures they teach me in school, how hard could a few passwords be?

I asked my parents how to make a good password.

They said to think of something that is important to me but something that doesn't change every day. Like a pop star or a favourite TV show.

Hmmm, I really love Go Go Gorilla on TV, I thought.

"Okay, start with that. Now, add a number on the end. Don't use the number one. Everyone uses the number one. Pick a number you'll remember, like the number of cats you have or what grade you're in," they added.

I picked the number five. So, now I have gogogorilla5.

"But, we're not done yet! Now, change another thing. Take out the vowels."

So, now I have gggrrll5.

"That way, even if someone knows how much you love *Go Go Gorilla*, they won't know how you spelled it," Dad added.

"Or, change some of the letters into numbers. Change the o's to zeros, or s's to fives."

So, now I have g0g0g0rilla5. (Psst, just so you know, that's not my real password.)

Phew, even if someone does steal my mobile, it would take them forever and a day to guess that password! I thought.

I know you can do the same thing with the name of your best friend, pet or grandparent, or maybe a city you want to visit someday. You can make up a word too, if it's one no one else knows and one you can remember easily.

But I'm not going to write my real password down in my journal and I'm not going to use the same password for everything!

Besides, I don't want anyone finding out my password and pretending to be me to send messages to my friends!

I'm not perfect but I think I'm pretty close to it, and I'm willing to learn!

Remember, you might not believe it, but there's always someone you can go to for help, and it's never too late.

Dear friends

Although a diary is private, I'm happy to share mine with you. I hope you enjoyed learning from my cyber-adventure.

Watch out for my next book. I'm sure it will rock your socks off and be another exciting cyber-journey.

Until next time, be safe when using and playing with technology.

Thanks for reading.

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P.S. If you liked reading my diary, would like to share your opinion or want to find out more about me and my friends, please visit www.diaryofelle.com.

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About the Author

Nina Du Thaler began working in the Information Technology (IT) industry long before authoring her first book. She is also a mother of a 9 year old daughter (almost double digits!) and works as a Chief Information Officer (CIO), responsible for the IT environment within a large company in Australia.

She has experienced first hand the positive and negative impacts that technology can have on children's daily lives. It is pervasive and they use it easily and without hesitation, but they are unaware of potential consequences and we have not equipped our children to have the skills to deal with these challenges.

In the series, Diary of Elle, she combines her knowledge and experience in IT and parenthood, into a unique combination of fun products (featuring Elle and her friends), so that children can learn from other children's experiences.

Nina and Elle wish you fun reading, with some learning on the side!

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