

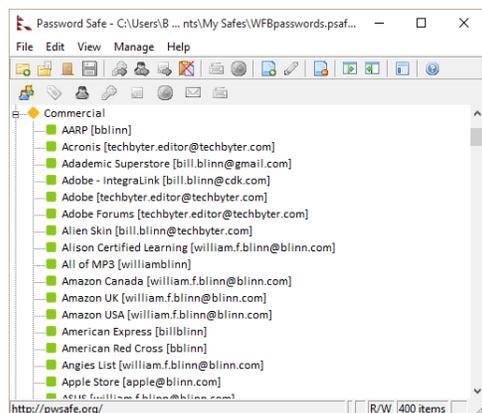


You Probably Need a Password Manager

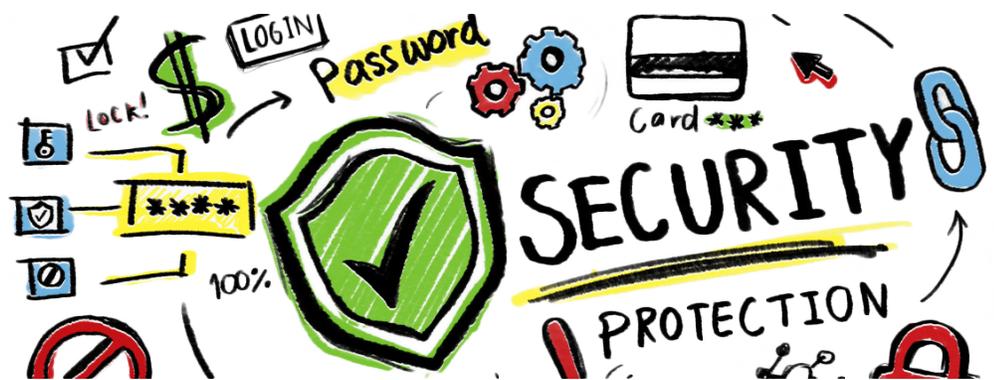
THERE ARE FREE PASSWORD MANAGERS AND ONES THAT YOU PAY FOR. SOME OF THEM HAVE EXTRA FEATURES YOU'LL FIND USEFUL. REGARDLESS OF THE FEATURES AND REGARDLESS OF WHICH ONE YOU CHOOSE, THE IMPORTANT POINT IS TO CHOOSE SOMETHING.

Web browsers can remember your login name and password for sites that you visit often, but storing passwords in a browser is considered a security risk. Browsers are getting better, but I still prefer to use a separate password manager because it will work with all browsers. I use at least 2 browsers every day and sometimes 4. Storing passwords in all of them and keeping the passwords updated sounds like more work than I want to do.

For the past several years, I've used the paid version of LastPass. Before that, I used the free version for a while. Even earlier I used KeePass and, in ancient history, PINS. There's no shortage of these applications.



Password Safe is somewhat harder to use than most competing products, but it is also more flexible than most. There is no automatic system that synchronizes passwords on various computers.



One of the more interesting applications I've seen recently is Password Safe. It stores login data in a password-protected, encrypted file that you unlock when you need access to the stored information. Password Safe has an Auto Type feature that will log you in to sites and applications automatically. A default Auto Type action exists, but this can be customized for applications or sites that you use. This is helpful because some sites, particularly bank sites, use non-standard login procedures that cause automatic logins to fail.

Password Safe is somewhat more difficult than most to use, though, in part because the documentation appears to have been written by the person who wrote the program. That's never a good idea because developers make too many assumptions about what a user will know. As a result, it took several tries and more than an hour for me to import 400 passwords into Password Safe.

The primary shortcoming, though, is the fact that there's no option to store passwords online.

There is a thumb-drive option, meaning that you must always have the thumb drive with you. And, of course, you could store the file on Google Drive or One Drive.

The customization possible with Password Safe is impressive, though, and this might be the right application for more geeky readers. You can download it from SourceForge and, as of this writing, no additional applications are included.

Why You Need One

EVERY WEBSITE YOU VISIT THAT REQUIRES A PASSWORD SHOULD HAVE A UNIQUE PASSWORD. I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT I DON'T LIVE UP TO MY OWN ADMONITION. I USE THE SAME PASSWORD ON SEVERAL SITES THAT I CONSIDER TRIVIAL — ONES THAT CONTAIN NO FINANCIAL INFORMATION, FOR EXAMPLE. BUT MY PASSWORDS ARE BOTH UNIQUE AND COMPLEX FOR NON-TRIVIAL SITES SUCH AS BANKS, WEBSITE MANAGEMENT,

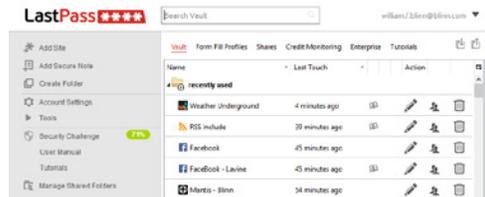


How Many Screens?

MANY PEOPLE HAVE 2 COMPUTER MONITORS THESE DAYS AND 3 IS BECOMING MORE COMMON. REMEMBER 12-INCH MONOCHROME MONITORS?

CORPORATE E-MAIL, CLIENT DATA, AND THE LIKE.

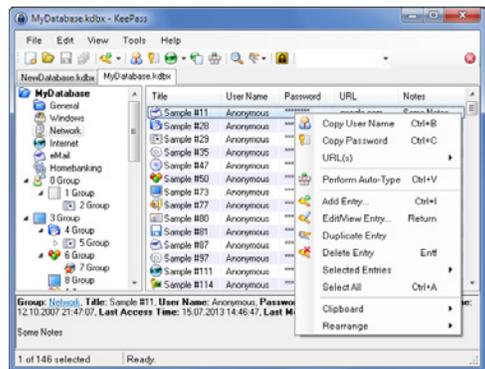
If you're looking for a free password manager, LastPass is my recommendation for most people. It has a remarkable number of features for a free application. The paid version (more about that in a bit) adds a few useful features for just \$1 per month.



LastPass is uncommonly easy to use, integrates with most browsers, synchronizes passwords among various computers and portable devices, and can be accessed from public computers

During the installation process, LastPass will offer to import all of the passwords you have stored in your browsers. The fact that LastPass can do this is a pretty good indicator of the (lack of) password security in browsers. You will also be asked if you want to turn off password storage in browsers. The right answer is Yes.

KeepPass is another good free password manager, but it has the same shortcoming that I mentioned with PasswordSafe: There's no online storage. If you use only a single computer, don't have a smart phone, and never need access to password protected sites from public computers, KeepPass is a good choice.



KeepPass is one of the older password managers, but it's still a good choice. A portable version stores passwords on an encrypted thumb drive, so your information is always available.

Can You Spend a Few Bucks?

LASTPASS IS STILL MY RECOMMENDATION. FOR \$12 PER YEAR, LASTPASS PREMIUM PROVIDES THE ABILITY TO SYNC ACROSS DEVICE TYPES AND INCLUDES MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION, IF YOU WANT TO USE IT.



If you use secure applications that require a password to log in, LastPass Premium can help. LastPass for Applications, a separate utility available to Premium users, brings automated password management to applications, too.

A competing application, Dashlane (\$40/year) adds a feature that LastPass doesn't have. It can give an emergency contact access to your passwords. We're all going to die and relatives might like to have access to your "digital legacy" when you're gone. The Emergency Contact feature lets you list any number of emergency contacts and give them access to some or all your accounts.

You can create the same effect in an application such as LastPass by providing your user name and password to those who will need it when you're gone and doing it that way costs nothing.

LastPass also has a Shared Family Folder. Premium users can create a folder that will be shared with 1 to 5 other LastPass users. The creator needs to have a premium subscription, but the others can all be free users. Drag any account into the shared folder and it will be shared with the group. Ω

My primary computer has 2 27-inch monitors and I'd consider a third if I could figure out where to put it. One person I know has 6 screens on his desk: 3 on his primary computer, 2 on a secondary computer, and 1 on a tablet that's propped between the external monitors on his notebook computer.

Some people think that adding a single huge monitor is better than, or at least equal to, using 2 monitors. In most cases, it doesn't work out well.

That's because replacing a smaller cluttered monitor with a larger monitor just leads to larger clutter. Granted, installing multiple monitors isn't the right solution for everyone but if you spend a lot of time in front of a computer and realize that you're constantly moving one application out of the way of another, you're a candidate.

Generally one monitor becomes primary, used for what's being worked on, and the second monitor is reserved for reference materials and control panels. Users of applications such as Adobe InDesign or Adobe Photoshop can place supplemental controls on the second monitor so that the primary monitor displays a larger workspace. This is important for photography and design work.

For video producers, that second or third monitor is a necessity, not a luxury. Those who have 3 or 4 monitors often use 2 of them for the primary task and place status information on the outboard monitors. Stock brokers use the extra monitors to track market conditions and computer system administrators use them to display real-time system monitors.

If you're still using just a single monitor, visit a store that sells computers and monitors to see if the extra screen real estate work well for you. Most people who try a second monitor never go back to just one. Ω



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