

Crabby answers three common password questions

Applies to: Microsoft Office Outlook 2007, Outlook 2003

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Crabby Office Lady

Some of the feedback I get indicates that you're having some issues about Outlook passwords. Let's see if we can't salvage some of your sanity and unravel the mysteries of Outlook passwords at the same time.

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So: Outlook passwords are driving you nuts, eh? From your letters and feedback, I see that this topic elicits three pain points:

1. Outlook won't do your bidding and remember your password.
2. You forgot your password.
3. You share your computer with others but you want to keep some of your mail private.

Today I'll address these burning problems so that you can get over your password obsession and on with your life.

Question #1: Why won't Outlook save my password?

I know...I KNOW! I get lots of feedback about this very issue: even though you've checked the "Remember password" box, Outlook is being a stubborn old hag and **keeps asking you for it**. **Sisyphus** has company now.

Never fear, stonemason, I've researched it and compiled a list of support articles that address this very issue. The procedure to fix this problem varies, depending on what version of Outlook you're using and a few other things. Below are some links to support articles written by password experts that may just solve your problem.

Outlook 2007

- [I get an Enter Network Password prompt](#)

Outlook 2003

- [The save password setting is not saved when you connect to a POP3 server](#)

Question #2: Do you have my password?

The short answer: no, I don't have your password.

Listen, I know that we all have a lot of number combinations to remember: the PIN to get money from the magic cash machine; home, office, and cell phone numbers; security codes for our home, car, or daycare center.

So it's no surprise that your Outlook password promptly dropped out of your head (along with the middle name of your youngest child) after Saturday night's wine tasting event. And now, of course, if you can't remember your password you can't get your e-mail; if you can't get your e-mail, you're not going to be able to write your mother-in-law and ask her about that kid's elusive middle name. (Then again, you could look on the bright side of things: no more e-mail means no more spam!)

So...how do you get that password back? (This is my favorite part of this column.) YOU CAN'T. Of COURSE you can't. If you could just call me up and ask me, what good would a password be? And no, [Microsoft doesn't have your password either](#).

Here's the thing: unless you've written the password down or it spontaneously comes to you during tomorrow's morning meditation session, there isn't any real way to retrieve it. It's gone, pal; get over it and move on.

But all is not lost.

If you use an Internet service provider (ISP) to get your e-mail, you'll have to call the company and *reset* your password. Different ISPs go about this in different ways but it's usually not too difficult. You'll probably even talk to a real, live human who will make sure you are who you say you are. ("Name? Address? Mother's maiden name? Shoe size? Favorite pizza topping?")

If your computer is part of a network/domain (such as at work), you'll need to talk to the administrator in order to reset the password.

Once that's taken care of (and you DID write that new password down, didn't you?), you'll need to go into Outlook and add it in there.

NOTE Remember: A strong password combines uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. Weak passwords don't mix these elements. Strong password: Y6dh!et5. Weak password: supersecretpassword.)

NOTE The procedures below are for POP3, HTTP, or IMAP mail accounts. (If you're not sure what type of account you have, read my column [Crabby demystifies e-mail protocols](#). If your company is using Outlook with Exchange Server, it's your Windows password we're talking about and that is a horse of a different color and a column for a different day. As well, just changing your password in Outlook won't mean diddly unless you've called your ISP first. The password your ISP has and the password you put into Outlook must match.)

Update Outlook 2007 with your new e-mail account password

- On the **Tools** menu, click **Account Settings**.
- Select the e-mail account whose password you want to change, and click **Change**.
- Under **Logon Information**, in the **Password** box, type the password that was provided by your ISP or mail administrator or the password that you created.
- Select the **Remember password check box** (if you want).

Update Outlook 2003 with your new e-mail account password

1. On the **Tools** menu, click **E-mail accounts**.
2. Select **View or change existing e-mail accounts**, and then click **Next**.
3. Select the POP3, IMAP, or HTTP e-mail account that you want to update with a new password, and then click **Change**.
4. In the Password box, type your new password, and then click **Next**. Then click **Finish**.

Question #3: Can I lock Outlook when I leave my computer?

In a word: Not really, other than by using your Windows logon password. (OK, in 10 words.)

See, there is no logon password for the Outlook program itself. The password you set with the instructions here protects your personal data that is used in Outlook, but will not prevent people from using Outlook or help secure data against hackers.

By "personal data," I mean: If you use an Internet e-mail account in Outlook, such as a POP3 or HTTP account, your messages are delivered to a Personal Folders file (.pst) on your computer. You can create a password on your .pst file to prevent the people you share your computer with (normally people at home, not at your office) from being looky-loos.

[Set a password to help protect your Outlook information](#)

NOTE If you forget or lose this password, you will not be able to access this file or its contents. Period. End of story.

If you're running Outlook through Microsoft Exchange — common in business environments and rare for personal or home e-mail — you don't need to set a password for your Outlook data. Protection of your Outlook data is already managed by Exchange.

Finally

Setting up passwords is just part of what should be your security story. I strongly suggest you look beyond e-mail accounts and files and consider the bigger security picture. Take a look at our [Security and privacy](#) section on Office Online. I'll just feel better knowing you did.

"Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough." — George Washington Carver

About the author

[Annik Stahl](#), the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the [Did this article help you?](#) feedback tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

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