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Tech > Services & Software

iPhone Face ID is pretty cool. Here's how it works and how to use it

Using your face to unlock your phone or tablet or buy something at the store feels like you're living in the future.



Jason Cipriani

Feb. 5, 2020 3:00 a.m. PT

4 min read



Apple's Face ID is used to unlock your iPhone or iPad.
Óscar Gutiérrez/CNET

When it launched Face ID in September 2017, Apple turned your close-up into the key that unlocks your iPhone. Since then, Apple has continued to expand the number and type of devices with Face ID, including the iPhone models of the last two years and the current-generation iPad Pro.

By transitioning to Face ID, Apple killed off its home button and fingerprint reader. The initial shock of relying on gestures to use

**IPHONE FACE ID MYTHS, TRICKS
AND WHY IT DOESN'T ALWAYS
WORK**



has continued to expand the number and type of devices with Face ID, including the iPhone models of the last two years and the current-generation [iPad Pro](#).

By transitioning to Face ID, Apple killed off its home button and fingerprint reader. The initial shock of [relying on gestures to use your display](#) is jarring enough, but when you add in learning how to use Face ID, the rest of the nuances of using your phone can be frustrating.

My advice? After upgrading from a [Touch ID-equipped iPhone](#), be patient. It may take a week or two to adjust to no longer using a home button, but once you get used to Face ID, you'll forget all about it.

Before we dive into the setup process, here are the Apple devices that have Face ID, followed by a quick (and not all that nerdy) look at how it works.



Which Apple devices have Face ID?

Here are the current iPhone and iPad models that have Face ID:

- [iPhone X](#)
- [iPhone XR](#)
- [iPhone XS](#)
- [iPhone XS Max](#)
- [iPhone 11](#)
- [iPhone 11 Pro](#)
- [iPhone 11 Pro Max](#)
- [iPad Pro \(11-inch\)](#)
- [iPad Pro \(12.9-inch, 2018 model\)](#)



Apple's TrueDepth camera system is the magic behind Face ID.
Apple/Screenshot by CNET

A simplified version of how Face ID





Apple's TrueDepth camera system is the magic behind Face ID.

Apple/Screenshot by CNET

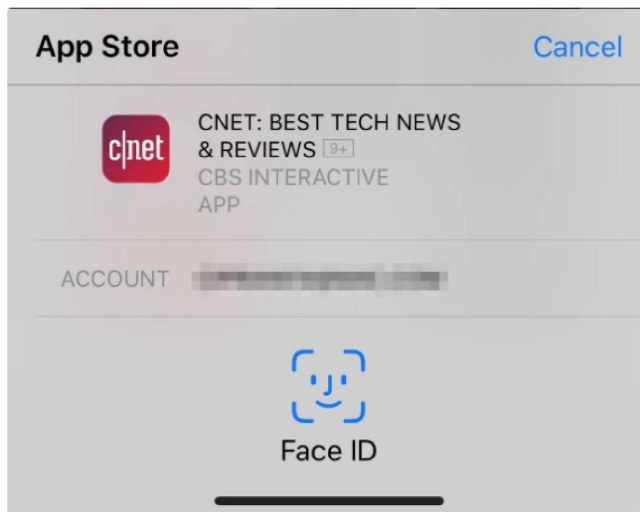
A simplified version of how Face ID works

Located at the top of your iPhone or iPad, Apple's TrueDepth camera system is made up of several components. Working in tandem, the sensors and components project 30,000 infrared dots onto your face, which they then use to map your curves and wrinkles. On an iPhone you can use Face ID only when you hold the iPhone vertically. On an iPad Pro, Face ID works in any orientation.

During the initial setup of Face ID, it converts your face map to a 2D image that it uses as a master key. Every time you wake the screen on your device after that, Face ID maps your face by projecting dots, which it compares with the master key it created during setup.

If Face ID has a match, your device unlocks. If not, you're asked to try again or enter a passcode. And all of that happens in milliseconds.

When is Face ID used?



Face ID is used to unlock your phone, for Apple Pay and to make purchases in the App Store, among other things.

Screenshot by Jason Cipriani/CNET

The most common use case for Face ID is unlocking your device. Activate it by tapping on the display or picking your phone up to view notifications.

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The most common use case for Face ID is unlocking your device. Activate it by tapping on the display or picking your phone up to view notifications.

But that's not all. Whenever you see the Face ID logo at the bottom of the screen (like in the screenshot above), it's actively trying to scan your face. Outside of unlocking your iPhone, Face ID is used to:

- Authorize [Apple Pay](#)
- Approve purchases in the App Store, iTunes, iBooks
- Auto-fill passwords in Safari
- Sign in to third-party apps, such as banking or [password manager apps](#)

Note that when your appearance changes slightly -- say your hair is done differently or you shaved your beard -- Face ID might fail. But Face ID feature has a cool feature in store. When you enter your passcode after it failed to recognize you, it uses that scan to learn that your appearance has changed slightly. Next time, it should recognize you without issue.



Setting up Face ID feels weird, but also kind of fun?

Jason Cipriani/CNET

How to set up Face ID

When setting up an Apple device with Face ID for the first time, you'll be asked if you want to use Face ID. If you chose not to, you can enable it through the Settings app later. Regardless of when you set up the feature, the process is the same.

First, you'll be asked to set a passcode for use as a fallback authentication method if Face ID has trouble recognizing you. You'll also need a passcode after your phone or tablet restarts, or it hasn't been unlocked in 48 hours.

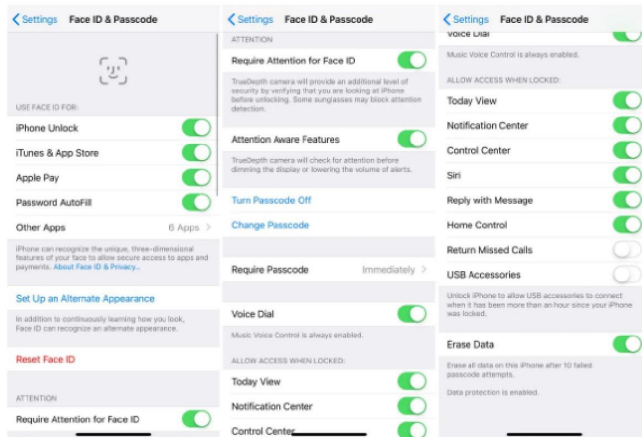
To register your face, hold your device between 10 and 20 inches away from you. With your face centered in the circle, move your

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To register your face, hold your device between 10 and 20 inches away from you. With your face centered in the circle, move your head around until the scan is complete. It's easiest to slowly move in a circle. You'll be asked to complete a second scan, after which Face ID setup will be complete.



Face ID settings are how you can take control of when and where the feature works.
Screenshots by Jason Cipriani/CNET

A closer look at Face ID settings

On your iPhone or iPad, open the **Settings** app and select **Face ID & Passcode**. Enter your passcode when prompted.

Face ID's settings allow you to enable or disable the feature, as well as add an alternate face (for when you give someone else access to your phone, for example). If Face ID can't recognize you when you're wearing sunglasses, you can disable **Require Attention for Face ID**, which makes it possible to unlock your phone even when the TrueDepth camera can't see your eyes.

Because Face ID features controls access to your phone and the security of your personal information, take a few minutes to [double-check these security settings](#) to make sure your data stays secure. If you're new to an iPhone that lacks a home button, we have a [guide to the most common iPhone gestures you'll need to master](#). And, off course, we also have a [gestures guide for iPad Pro users](#).

Apple iOS 13: Top new features



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Apple iOS 13: Top new features



See all photos →

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Tech > Services & Software

Californians Can Now Use an iPhone to Show Their Driver's License and ID. Here's How

Residents of the Golden State can show proof of age or identity via Apple Wallet -- though the feature is limited for now.



Nelson Aguilar

Oct. 17, 2024 5:00 p.m. PT

4 min read ↗



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Ex. 2013

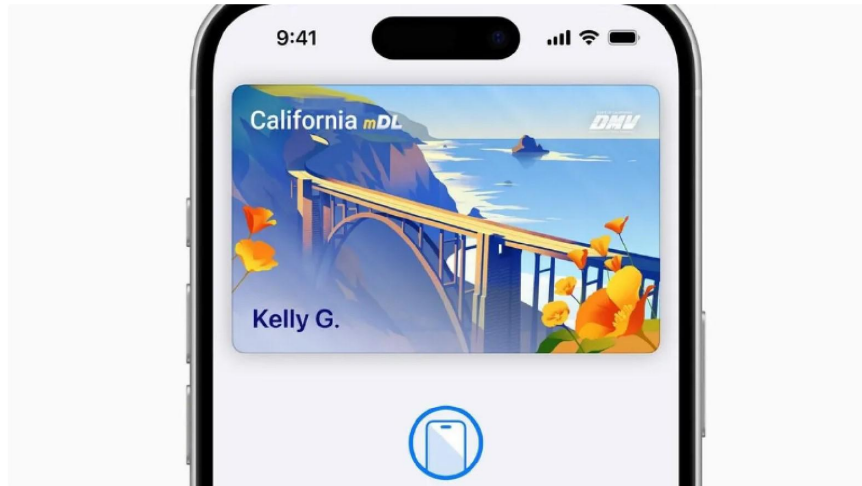
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Nelson Aguilar

Oct. 17, 2024 5:00 p.m. PT

4 min read



This is what a California driver's license looks like in Apple Wallet.
Apple

If you live in California, you may no longer need a wallet to store your physical identification cards. Apple announced last month that residents of the Golden State can now add their California driver's license or state ID to [Apple Wallet](#). If you need to show proof of your age or identity, you can quickly bring up your license or state ID on your [iPhone](#) or [Apple Watch](#).

This is an extension of the California DMV's [mobile driver's license pilot program](#), which allows you to verify your identity at airports without having to hand your phone over to anyone else. All you need to do is hold your device near an identity reader and you can get through select TSA checkpoints -- no problem.

However, that requires a third-party application.

Now you can do it via Apple Wallet instead, making it a more seamless experience on your iPhone.



Here's everything you need to know about how to add your driver's license or state ID to Apple Wallet, where you can use your digital ID and how to then use it in-person or online.

For more, you can now [renew your passport online](#) and here are [the best times to find cheap flights](#).

How to add your California driver's

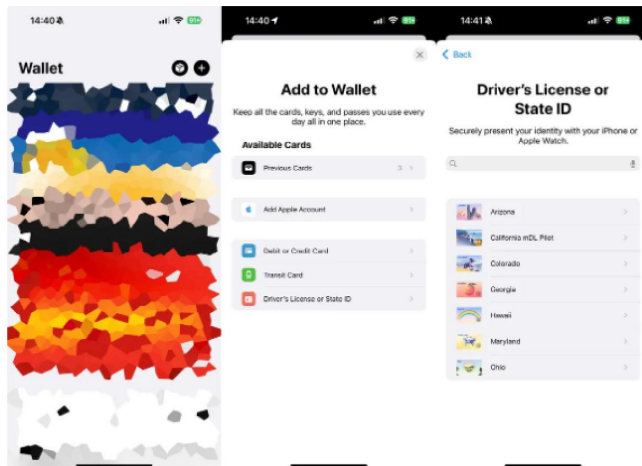
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For more, you can now [renew your passport online](#) and here are [the best times to find cheap flights](#).

How to add your California driver's license or state ID to Apple Wallet on your iPhone

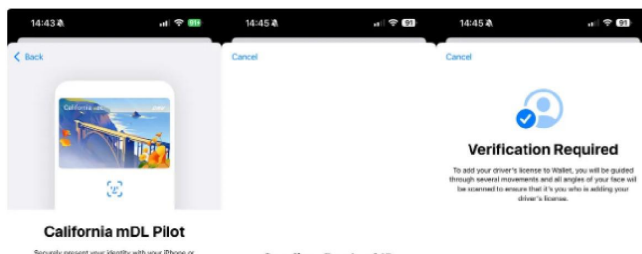
Open the Wallet app on your iPhone and then hit the **plus (+) icon** in the top-right. Next, go to **Driver's License or State ID** and tap **California mDL Pilot**.



Note: You can also add your ID in Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland and Ohio.
Nelson Aguilar/CNET

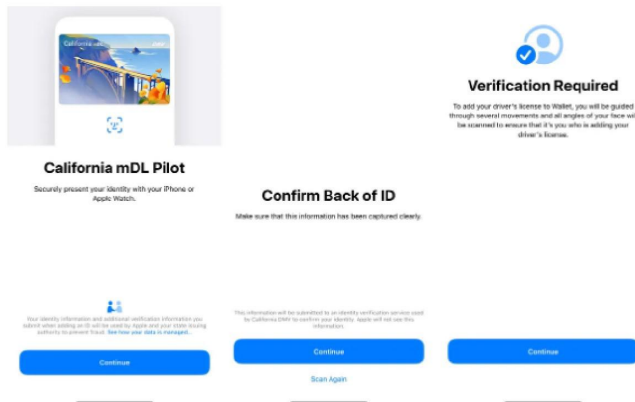
Hit **Continue** and you'll be asked to scan both the front and back of your driver's license or state ID. Do this in a well-lit area with the physical card laid flat on a simple dark background. If your card is in the dark on a white background, your phone may have difficulty recognizing it.

Now you'll need to verify your identity via face scan. Hit **Continue**, position your face in the frame and tap **Get Started**. You'll be asked to do a variety of things, including to open your mouth, tilt your head down and close your eyes. Do each one until your phone vibrates, meaning that the scan is successful. You'll also need to take a selfie, which is used to match the photo on file with the DMV.



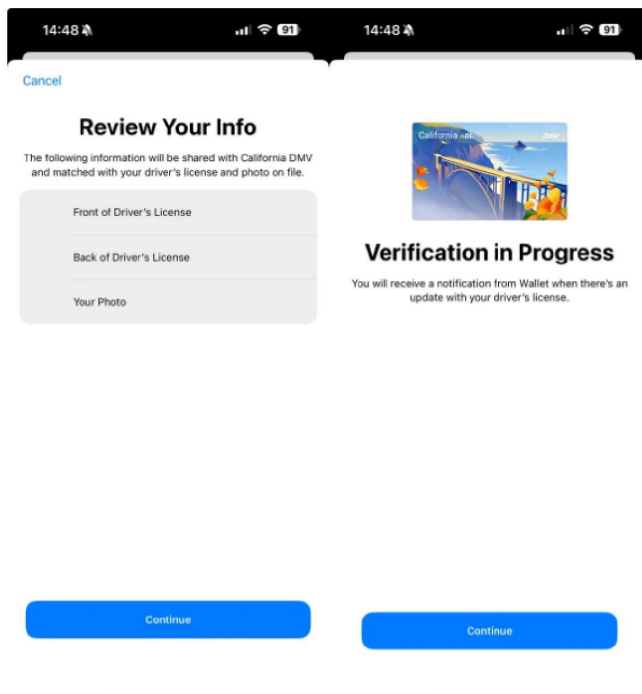
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The process takes only a few minutes.
Nelson Aguilar/CNET

Finally, you can review your info, which includes the photos of your driver's license or ID and the photo of you. Tap **Continue** and then agree to the terms of use. All your information is then sent to the DMV to verify your identity. You'll receive a notification from Wallet when there's an update and your ID is added to your iPhone.



We'll update you how long it takes.
Nelson Aguilar/CNET

Where can you even use your driver's license or ID in Apple Wallet?

Before we get into how you use your ID, it's good to know where you can use it.

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Where can you even use your driver's license or ID in Apple Wallet?

Before we get into how you use your ID, it's good to know where you can use it.

For now, you can use your ID in Apple Wallet at select [airports](#), [businesses](#) and venues. That includes the following locations in California:

- Los Angeles International Airport
- San Francisco International Airport
- Circle K (currently only five stores, all located in Sacramento)
- Bank of America Plaza (only in Downtown Los Angeles)
- National Bank Plaza (only in downtown Los Angeles)
- Apple Store



Your digital ID works to get past TSA at LAX.

Geoffrey Morrison/CNET

Obviously the locations where you can use your digital ID in California are pretty limited right now, but it is a great way to breeze through an airport without having to take out your wallet, especially if you have your boarding pass on your phone as well.

Besides physical locations, you can use your ID in Apple Wallet to log in to DMV's online services. You can also use it in select apps, like Turo. And soon you'll be able to use it to with Clear, Uber Eats and MyChart.

How to use your driver's license or ID in Apple Wallet

The driver's license or state ID in your wallet can be used to show proof of your age, in case you're buying alcohol, or to prove your identity if you're trying to get through TSA at the airport. At an Apple Store, you can use your digital ID for order pickups, Genius Bar appointments and more.

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The driver's license or state ID in your wallet can be used to show proof of your age, in case you're buying alcohol, or to prove your identity if you're trying to get through TSA at the airport. At an Apple Store, you can use your digital ID for order pickups, Genius Bar appointments and more.

To show your digital ID, go to **Apple Wallet** and choose your **ID**. You can then hold your iPhone or Apple Wallet near an identity reader, check the information being requested and then use Face ID or Touch ID to authenticate.

This is pretty much the same way you would pay for something via Apple Pay.

If you're using your ID in Apple Wallet in an app on your phone, you'll see a button that says either **Verify with Apple Wallet** or **Continue with Apple Wallet**. You can then review the specific information being requested and authenticate with Face ID or Touch ID.

For more, here's how to [fix two of iOS 18's more annoying features](#) and [7 iOS 18 settings you should change right away](#).



News > Social Media

Meta Testing Celebrity Scam—Spotting Facial Recognition Technology

The parent company of Instagram and Facebook is also trying out facial recognition features designed to help users get back into locked accounts faster.

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Technology

The parent company of Instagram and Facebook is also trying out facial recognition features designed to help users get back into locked accounts faster.



Bree Fowler

Oct. 22, 2024 11:19 a.m. PT

3 min read



Meta is hoping its facial recognition will spot scams faster.

Getty Images

It can be tough for the average person to spot scam posts and accounts on Facebook and Instagram. Often, they'll feature a popular celebrity who's supposedly pushing a new product or investment opportunity, something many public figures actually do.

Meta, the parent company of those social media platforms, said Monday that it's testing out new [facial recognition](#) tools designed to help it spot those scams faster, as well as make it quicker and easier for all users to recover access if they get locked out of their accounts.

The tools are designed to give all users the ability to quickly and securely prove who they are, allowing Meta to ferret out scammers before they can dupe people, and to lessen the headaches often involved with recovering access to a Facebook or Instagram account.

"We're hoping by showing how we're using this technology to keep people safe, we can help inform the broader industry approach to a problem that is really a whole of the internet problem," Monika Bickert, Meta's vice president of content policy, said on a call with reporters.

The so-called "celeb-bait" scams use the pictures of public

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people safe, we can help inform the broader industry approach to a problem that is really a whole of the internet problem," Monika Bickert, Meta's vice president of content policy, said on a call with reporters.

The so-called "celeb-bait" scams use the pictures of public figures, including content creators and celebrities, to bait social media users into clicking on advertisements that take them to scam websites designed to steal their money or personal information.

Meta said it already uses automated technology to review millions of ads that cross its platforms every day, looking for scammy content. But it's not uncommon for legitimate ads to also feature celebrities, and it can sometimes be tough to tell the difference.

Read More:

- [What Is Meta AI? Everything to Know About the Social Network's AI Tools](#)
- [Meta Quest 3S Review: The Best Cheap Ticket to Mixed Reality](#)
- [Google Nest Wants Your Friends' Faces: Should You Give In?](#)

What the new tools will do is compare the celebrity faces in suspected scam ads with the profile pictures on the respective celebrities' Facebook and Instagram pages. If there's a match and a scam is confirmed, Meta will block the ad.

Early testing with a small group of celebrities and public figures has produced promising results, detecting scam ads faster and more accurately, Bickert said. Over the coming weeks, Meta plans to start enrolling more celebrities who have had problems with scam ads in the past, though they will have the option of opting out.

The company also hopes to eventually use facial recognition features to detect scam accounts set up to impersonate celebrities. Cyber criminals will often use fake accounts to push fraudulent investment scams or giveaways, swindling consumers out of sensitive information or money.

Meanwhile, the same kind of facial recognition technology will also be used to give all Meta users a faster way to get back into locked accounts, by allowing them to take and submit a video selfie. Similar to features like [Apple's Face ID](#), which is used to unlock a smartphone, the tools will compare the selfie with the user's account profile picture.

The process takes about a minute and Meta says the new verification method will be harder for cybercriminals to undermine than traditional document-based identity verification.

The rollout of facial recognition features in recent years, most

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account, phone, printer.

The process takes about a minute and Meta says the new verification method will be harder for cybercriminals to undermine than traditional document-based identity verification.

The rollout of facial recognition features in recent years, most notably on smartphones, has helped consumers get used to using their faces to do everything from access the passwords to their online accounts to pay for their groceries.

At the same time, privacy advocates and security experts have warned of the potential dangers of facial recognition, pointing to how it could be used to do things like [identify protestors in a crowd](#) or [shoplifting suspects in stores](#).

Meta itself shut down its [facial recognition system](#) in 2021 and said it would delete the face scan data of more than 1 billion users. It cited societal concerns and regulatory uncertainty about facial recognition technology as the reasons.

Meta said Monday that the new tools have been vetted for security and privacy, adding that the facial images used and any data generated from them will be deleted as soon as they are no longer needed.

And while the tools are being rolled out globally, they're on hold for now in the European Union and United Kingdom, as Meta continues to work with regulators in those places, as well as in Illinois and Texas, because of concerns about state privacy laws.

Tech > Mobile

Article updated on October 22, 2024 at 6:49 PM PDT

Best Apple AirTag Accessories of 2024



Invest in an AirTag accessory to track your keys, wallet, luggage and more.

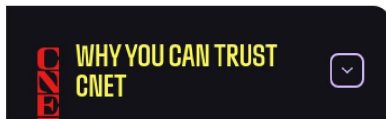
OUR EXPERTS



Written by
[David Carnoy](#) X

Our expert, award-winning staff selects the products we cover and rigorously researches and tests our top picks. If you buy through our links, we may get a commission.

[Reviews ethics statement](#) →



OUR PICKS



Affordable key ring or strap
Belkin Secure Holder



Otterbox option
Otterbox AirTag Rugged Case



Vegan leather key chain
Cyrill AirTag Case Cover



Apple's leather key ring
Apple's leather Key Ring

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Maxell, Ltd.

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WHY YOU CAN TRUST CNET

16
Years of Experience

14
Hands-on Product Reviewers

6,000
Sq. Feet of Lab Space

[How we test →](#)

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 Vegan leather key chain Cyrill AirTag Case Cover		\$33 at Amazon View Details ↓
 Apple's leather key ring Apple Leather Key Ring		\$35 at Amazon View Details ↓
 Generic multipack Eusty faux leather key chain (4-pack)		\$8 at Amazon View Details ↓
Show 10 More ↓		

Whether you're constantly losing your keys or misplacing your wallet, an [Apple AirTag](#) is the tech gadget for you. Once you own one of the convenient, tracking devices you'll need an Airtag holder. From a key ring to luggage tag and Airtag case, these are the best Apple AirTag accessories to buy. (And they're also an excellent, [affordable tech gift](#).)

You don't always need an accessory to use an Apple AirTag. In some cases, you can just chuck the tag into whatever you want to keep track of, like your purse or backpack. In some cases, an attachment would work better, like with keys or a laptop bag where you don't want items to move around too much. If you want to stick your AirTag onto an object, plenty of AirTag mounts are available.

Note that CNET editors have tried most but not all these accessories. If we haven't tried a product, we've tested other accessories from those companies, so we feel comfortable recommending these. We'll be adding more Apple AirTag accessories to the list as we test new products.

Read more: [Apple AirTags Hands-On Evaluation](#)

Key chains and straps

Affordable key ring or strap

Belkin Secure Holder

One of the best AirTag accessories, Belkin's Secure Holder for AirTags comes in [key-ring](#) or [strap](#) versions in four color options. There's nothing terribly fancy about them, but at \$13, they both cost less than Apple-branded options shown below. You can also get a two-pack for [\\$20](#).

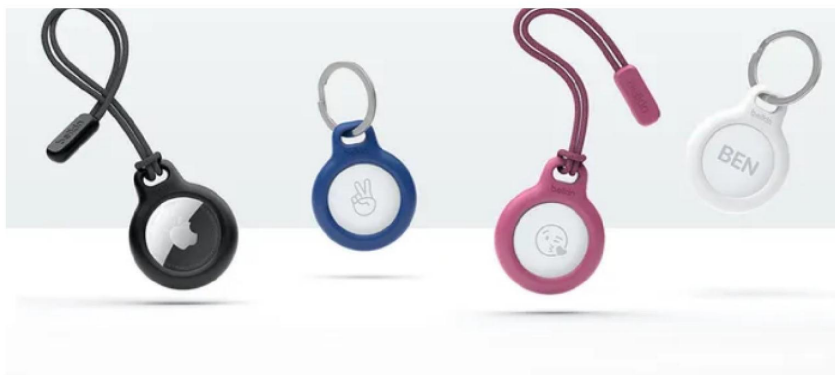
**\$10 at Amazon****\$10 at Best Buy****\$13 at Crutchfield**

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- Best Apple AirTag Accessories of 2024



Hide our expert take ↑

Otterbox option

Otterbox AirTag Rugged Case

While it launched a little later than some Apple AirTag accessories, Otterbox's key chain holder, which Otterbox calls a "Rugged Case," is made of solid plastic and does indeed encase your AirTag (you unscrew the top piece, place your AirTag in the case, then screw the top piece back on to lock the AirTag in the holder).

\$18 at Amazon

\$20 at Otterbox

\$20 at Apple

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Vegan leather key chain

Cyrill AirTag Case Cover

While this faux leather affordable key ring from Cyrill, a sub-brand of Korea-based Spigen, is nothing fancy but it is available in a premium black and gold finish. You can also look into the rest of [Cyrill's collection on Amazon](#).

\$33 at Amazon

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Apple's leather key ring

Apple Leather Key Ring

The Apple-branded leather keyring costs around \$35 and is available in a few color options, though you may find limited stock with FineWoven replacement leather keyrings available in stores.

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find limited stock with FineWoven replacements making it to stores.

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Generic multipack

\$8 at Amazon

Eusty faux leather key chain (4-pack)

If you're looking for a value option, your best bet may be to roll the dice on a no-name brand on Amazon. This Eusty key chain cover is available in a four-pack for just less than \$10. Often, generic models like this are labeled as "leather" when in fact they are faux leather (sometimes referred to as PU leather or vegan leather). These look a lot like other basic faux leather AirTag key chains and come in a few color options.

There are dozens if not hundreds of generic AirTag holders available. Most should be fine, but don't expect them to wear as well over time as the true leather models.

Show our expert take ↓

\$15 holder

\$15 at Amazon

Caseology AirTag Vault

Caseology's AirTag Vault is another straightforward key chain option that's affordable at \$15 but could shave a few dollars off its price over time. (Caseology is also a sub-brand of Spigen.) It's one of the few Apple AirTag accessories that was available at launch and has been pretty popular as a result. It comes with a carabiner but you could attach a standard key chain if you wanted.

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Basic Spigen

\$15 at Amazon

Spigen Valentinus

Spigen is also selling an attractively simple key-chain Apple AirTag holder, the Valentinus, for around \$14. It's made of faux leather.

Show our expert take ↓

Tough mount

Pelican Stick-On AirTag Mount

If you're looking for a holder that sticks onto anything (like the underside of a bike seat or scooter), Pelican has a solution.

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- Best Apple AirTag Accessories of 2024

Tough mount

\$10 at Walmart

Pelican Stick-On AirTag Mount

\$10 at Amazon

If you're looking for a holder that sticks onto an object (like the underside of a bike seat or scooter), Pelican's Stick-on AirTag Mount is designed to do just that. A single mount costs \$18 while a pack of four sells for \$50 or less when on sale. It's available in different colors.

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Apple's polyurethane loop

\$29 at Amazon

Apple AirTag Loop

\$29 at Best Buy

Apple's Loop, made for attaching your AirTag to a bag, costs as much as an AirTag. But it's Apple's official loop option and this polyurethane option is cheaper than the leather [\\$35 Leather Loop](#). (That doesn't make it a good deal, but I'm just pointing it out.) It's available in four different colors.

Show our expert take ↓

Full leather key chain

\$30 at Nomad

Nomad leather key chain for AirTag

I like the design of Nomad's leather AirTag key chain better than Apple's, which leaves the AirTag partially exposed. This AirTag key chain hides it and looks more like a standard key chain. It's designed to "weather" over time, getting darker (particularly the brown version). It's available in brown or black for \$30, which is pricey but it is nice.

Nomad also makes a Leather Loop that's also a key chain and [lists for \\$10](#). I prefer the more expensive model pictured here.

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Rugged option

Spigen AirTag Case Rugged Armor

Spigen, known for its value iPhone cases, has not quite as cheap as we hoped it would be, but it does have a rugged design with a nice

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Spigen, known for its value iPhone cases, has its Apple AirTag Case Rugged Armor. It's not quite as cheap as we hoped it would be, but maybe it will come down in price in time. It does have a rugged design with a nice carabiner and carbon-fiber elements.

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Customizable cases

\$38 at Casetify

Casetify AirTag holders

Casetify has a wide variety of AirTag holders. They're made of hard plastic and are fairly basic but have some eye-catching art on the backside. You can also customize them with your name or choose from several emojis and other graphics. They're expensive at \$38 but sometimes go on sale.

Show our expert take ↓

Other AirTag options

Mount it

\$25 at Moment

Moment hardshell mount

Moment, which makes and sells photo and video accessories for Apple products, including lens attachments, will have an enclosure accessory that allows you to mount your Apple AirTag. "Made from a rugged aramid fiber shell and backed with a super strong adhesive, you can stick an AirTag to any flat surface," Moment says.

Moment also has the [Stretch Fabric Mount for AirTags](#) (\$20) that's designed to stick to fabrics, such as the inside of a bag, and other flat surfaces.

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DIY mounting option

\$7 at Amazon

Gorilla mounting tape squares

If you don't want to spend \$15-\$20 for a mount, Gorilla Mounting Tape Squares are a cheaper option and can be cut to size for AirTags. AirTags have a water-resistance rating, which means it can be submerged in up to 1 meter of water for 30 minutes. It is dust-proof. So it can withstand some punishment without a cover. After all, it doesn't have a screen.

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submerged in up to 1 meter of water for 30 minutes and is dust-proof. So it can withstand some punishment without a cover. After all, it doesn't have a screen.

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- Best Apple AirTag Accessories of 2024

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Extra batteries

\$13 at Amazon

Energizer CR2032 (10-pack)

\$14 at Walmart

The AirTag uses a CR2032 coin battery, which should last about a year. You can find a 10-pack of those batteries on Amazon for somewhere around \$12. That's the way to go, especially if you have multiple AirTags, and other devices that use CR2032 coin batteries.

Always remember to keep coin batteries away from small children so they don't accidentally swallow one. They can cause major injury if ingested.

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Watch this: Apple AirTags made a good small impression

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Tech > Services & Software

The Essential Guide to Using Apple's New Passwords App

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The Essential Guide to Using Apple's New Passwords App: Passkeys, 2FA, Sharing and More

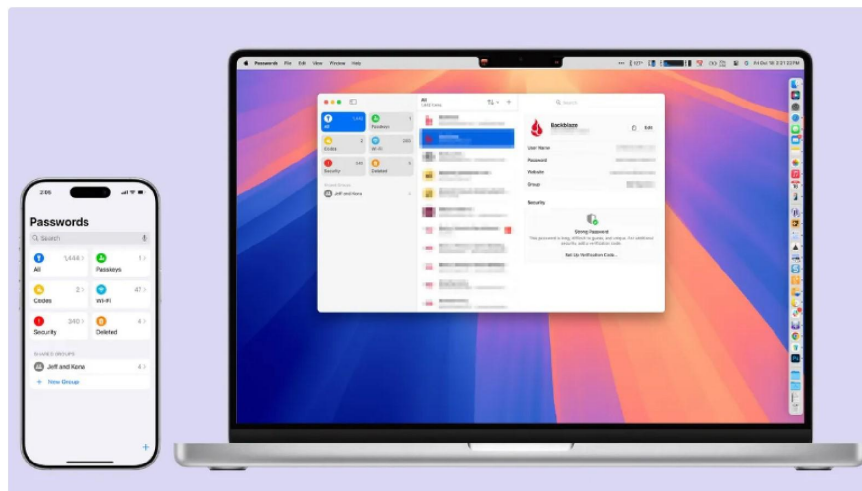
If you're not storing unique passwords for all of your websites and services in a secure place, Apple's Passwords app gives you an incentive to start now.



Jeff Carlson

Oct. 25, 2024 4:11 a.m. PT

9 min read



Screenshot by Jeff Carlson/CNET

In this article...

- The Passwords app is the best kind of feature facelift
- How to save a new website password in Safari
- How to create a new password in the Passwords app
- How to autofill your information using Passwords
- How to set up automatic verification codes
- What are passkeys and how do I use them?
- Share selected passwords in groups

See More

How do you store the passwords for your favorite websites, your bank, smart devices and all the rest? You've no doubt got a raft of passwords to keep track of. It's exhausting. We're long past the time when you could use the same password across multiple

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Share selected passwords in groups

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How do you store the passwords for your favorite websites, your bank, smart devices and all the rest? You've no doubt got a raft of passwords to keep track of. It's exhausting. We're long past the time when you could use the same password across multiple services -- and I hope your solution isn't a list in your Notes app that anyone could read.

If you're tired of password chaos, Apple's new Passwords app can securely store the passwords and passkeys you use every day. Third-party apps such as 1Password and Bitwarden can also take on this role, but the dedicated Passwords app is native to the Apple ecosystem on the iPhone, iPad, Mac and Vision Pro.

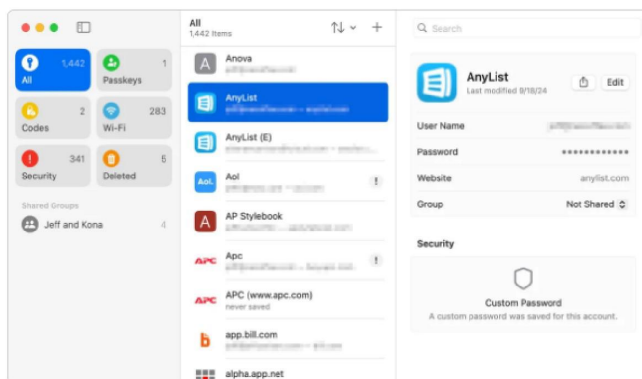
Are you ready to tame your tangle of passwords? This guide covers the main features of the Passwords app and shows you how to easily access your critical information when you need it. It primarily covers Passwords from the point of view of the MacOS app, but the basics apply to the iPhone and iPad apps, too.

For more of what you can find in iOS 18 and MacOS Sequoia, read how to get more from your iPhone with nine unique iOS 18 features and eight real-world uses for iPhone mirroring in iOS 18 and MacOS Sequoia.

The Passwords app is the best kind of feature facelift

If the Passwords app sounds familiar, that's because storing passwords isn't new to Apple's operating systems. The app accesses a set of low-level Keychains that the operating systems use to store sensitive information such as credentials for websites and apps and security certificates.

Until now, this was difficult to access -- you had to open the more technical Keychain Access app (which is still available) or dig into system settings or Safari's preferences to find them.



The Passwords app on MacOS Sequoia has the same look and approach as the Reminders app.

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The Passwords app on MacOS Sequoia has the same look and approach as the Reminders app.

Screenshot by Jeff Carlson/CNET

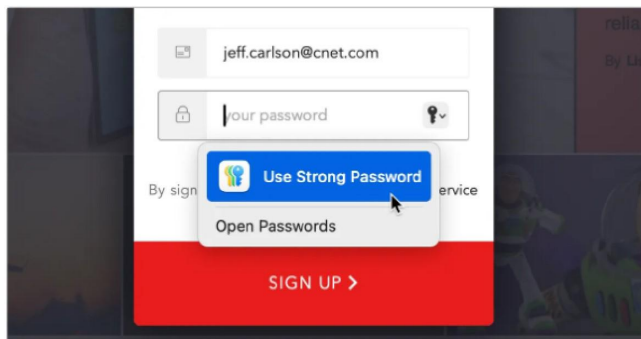
The new Passwords app pulls all that data together into a simple interface that lets you add and edit passwords, generate automatic verification codes, create passkeys and share selected entries with other people. If you've used Apple's Reminders app, the look and approach will be familiar. And if you enable iCloud Keychain (in **Settings > [Your Name] > iCloud > Saved to iCloud > Passwords and Keychain**), the encrypted data securely syncs to the Passwords app on each of your devices.

It runs as a standalone app and ties into Safari to autofill site passwords. You can also access your passwords from a menu bar item. If your preferred browser on the Mac is Chrome or a Chromium-based browser such as Opera, you can install the [iCloud Passwords extension for Chrome](#); Apple doesn't offer an official add-on for Firefox or DuckDuckGo, so be mindful of extensions that claim to work with iCloud Passwords.



How to save a new website password in Safari

Most of your passwords are likely for signing into websites such as your bank, online stores and other outlets. When you sign up for an account at a new site using Safari, Passwords prompts you to create a randomly generated secure password. Choose **Use Strong Password**, which creates a new entry in the app.



The Passwords app can suggest a strong password when you sign up for a new site.

Screenshot by Jeff Carlson/CNET

The Passwords app doesn't need to be open for this to work,

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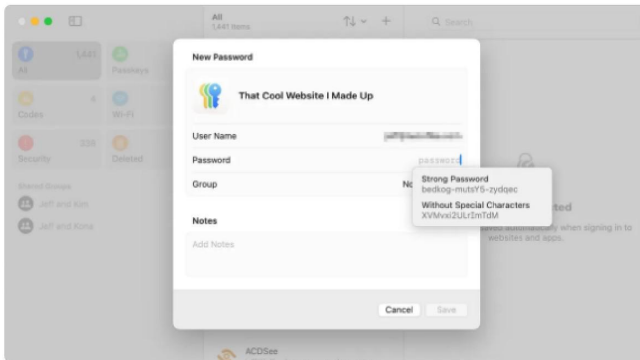
The Passwords app can suggest a strong password when you sign up for a new site.
Screenshot by Jeff Carlson/CNET

The Passwords app doesn't need to be open for this to work, since it's integrated at the system level.

How to create a new password in the Passwords app

The advantage of having a standalone Passwords app is to give you a better way to create and manage these passwords. While most of the time you'll be prompted to create a new password, there will be times when you'll need to manually do it.

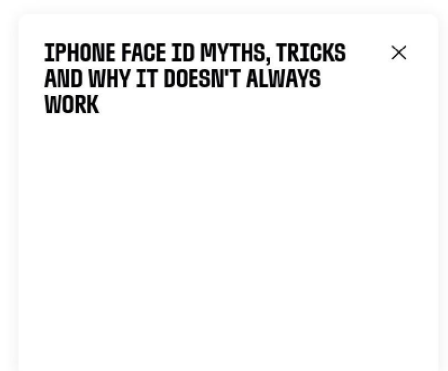
1. Open the Passwords app and authenticate with your system password, Touch ID, Face ID or device passcode.
2. Click the **+** button or choose **File > New Password**.
3. Enter a title for the entry.
4. Type your user name in the **User Name** field (which could be an email address, depending on what the app or service requires).
5. Click the **Password** field and choose a secure password option that appears. You can also type directly into the field, but too often people use easily-guessed or repeated passwords -- stick with the randomized ones the Passwords app is suggesting.
6. If you have any other information, such as recovery codes or details about an app purchase, enter those in the **Notes** field.
7. Click **Save**.



Create a new entry with a secure password in the Passwords app.
Screenshot by Jeff Carlson/CNET

When you create a password using this method, there's no **Website** field -- Passwords leans heavily on the process of capturing login information when you're using the site's fields to sign up or log in. But you can add a link separately by clicking the **Edit** button in the entry you created and then typing or pasting the address in the **Website** field.

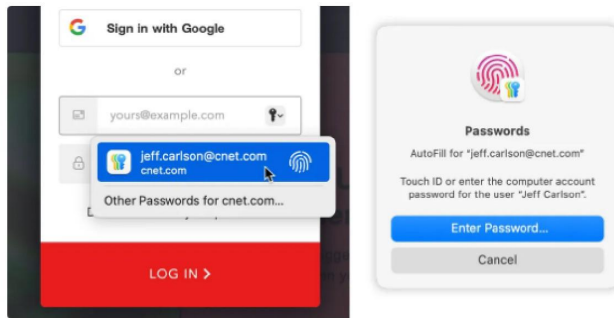
How to autofill your information using



capturing login information when you're using the site's fields to sign up or log in. But you can add a link separately by clicking the **Edit** button in the entry you created and then typing or pasting the address in the **Website** field.

How to autofill your information using Passwords

The next time you return to a site and need to sign in, you'll be prompted to use Passwords to autofill your stored information. Select the account that appears in the pop-up and then authenticate using Touch ID or Face ID, depending on your device.



With a password saved in the Passwords app, you can use Touch ID (or Face ID, depending on the device) to fill in the login information.

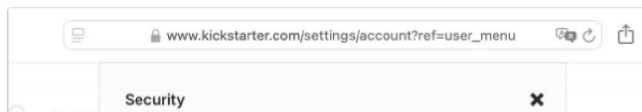
Screenshot by Jeff Carlson/CNET

If the autofill prompt doesn't appear, go to the Passwords Menu Bar item and search for the site there. Select it and then click the User Name or Password fields (or one and then the other) to copy the content and paste it into your browser.

How to set up automatic verification codes

Having a secure password is just the first security step in this day and age. Many sites now recommend (or outright require) a two-factor authentication option as well. Sometimes this is the mobile number you use for texting to receive a one-time code that expires after a set amount of time. Or it could be an automatic verification code that randomizes every 30 seconds.

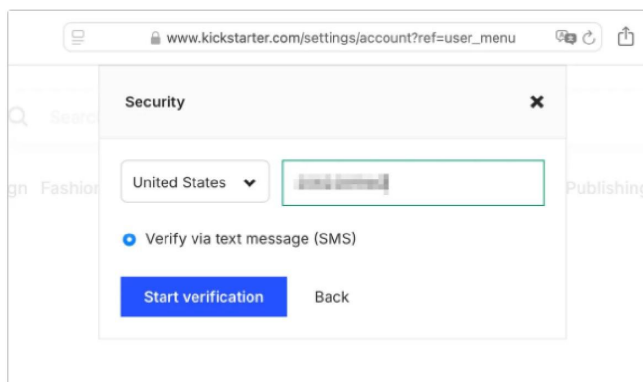
To set up 2FA on a site, sign in to it and access your account settings. Look for an option such as "Sign up for two-factor authentication" or similar. Enter your phone number or email address -- the type depends on what the site is using -- and send it. The site then sends a verification code in the method you supplied.



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at the end with some a verification code at the moment, you supplied.



Set up a verification code that gets saved into the Passwords app.

Screenshot by Jeff Carlson/CNET

That might be all the site requires. The next time you sign in, you'll be prompted to authenticate using that method, in which case you'll get a new code.

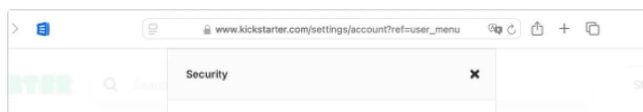
The system can automatically delete a text message or email containing the code when you're done with it -- after all, that number combination will never work again. Go to **System Settings > General > AutoFill & Passwords** and turn on **Verification Codes: Delete After Use**.

There may also be another level of authentication that doesn't rely on sometimes spotty SMS networks and email servers. The site may accept a continuously changing code that is tied to your account, which can be generated at filled in using the Passwords app. Here's how to set that up:

1. In the two-factor authentication process, you'll likely be given a QR code to set up a verification code. Control-click the code and choose **Set Up Verification Code** from the contextual menu.
2. In the Passwords app, which automatically opens, select the entry for that site.
3. Click **Add Verification Code**.

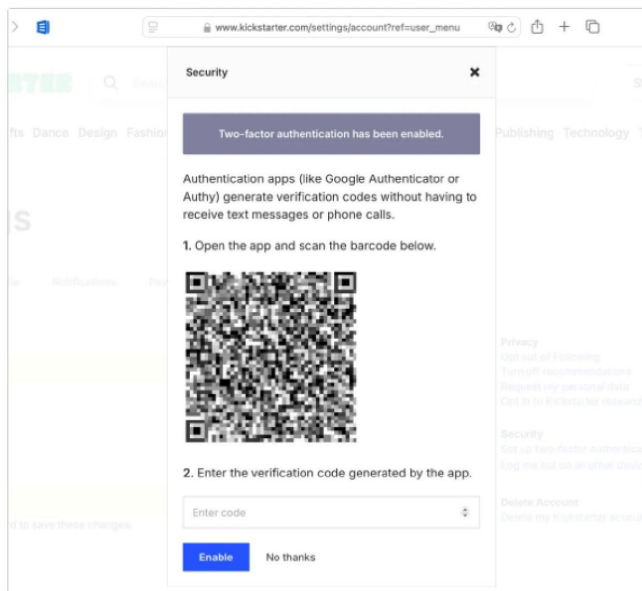
Return to Safari and click the field asking for the verification code. A Passwords pop-up will appear for you to authenticate by entering the current code. If that doesn't appear, go to the Passwords app, click the Verification Code field and choose **Copy Verification Code**. Then paste it into the field in Safari.

The next time you log into that site, using Autofill will also apply the current verification code.



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The next time you log into that site, using Authentic will also apply the current verification code.



Set up a rotating random verification code that gets stored in Passwords and is available when signing in to a site.

Screenshot by Jeff Carlson/CNET

On the iPhone, the process is similar: When presented with a QR code, touch and hold it, and then choose **Add Verification Code** in "Passwords".

What are passkeys and how do I use them?

What if I told you we could just forget about passwords altogether? No more requirements that a password include at least 12 characters and numbers and special characters, not be a password you've used previously and also reference your favorite movie genre as expressed in prime numbers.

That's the promise of passkeys, a way of authenticating you using the secure hardware you're already using. With a passkey in place, you can sign into a site or app using Face ID or Touch ID on your iPhone, iPad, Mac or Vision Pro -- without typing a single character.

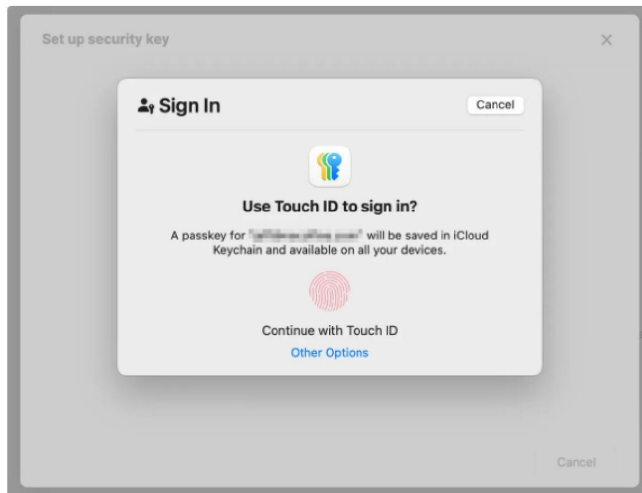
Setting up a passkey is similar to a 2FA method: Sign in to your account on a service that supports passkeys, view your account security settings and look for an option to create a passkey or security key. You'll get a prompt to store the passkey using Touch ID or Face ID (depending on the device you're using).

When you next sign in to that site, you won't see a password field at all: it prompts you to use the passkey instead.

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security settings and look for an option to create a passkey or security key. You'll get a prompt to store the passkey using Touch ID or Face ID (depending on the device you're using).

When you next sign in to that site, you won't see a password field at all: it prompts you to use the passkey instead.



With a passkey set up for a site and stored in the Passwords app, you don't have to deal with passwords at all.

Screenshot by Jeff Carlson/CNET

Not only are they more convenient, passkeys are also more secure. One of the biggest problems with passwords today isn't the danger that someone will somehow break into your devices and steal yours -- it's the industrial-scale theft of thousands or millions of passwords from the companies you've created passwords for as a result of hackers breaking into those servers. That's useful for sites such as Amazon, Shopify and Uber, for example, which contain valuable sensitive information about their customers and are frequent targets for hackers.

Share selected passwords in groups

Your passwords are private, but sometimes you need to share them with someone. For example, let's say you and your spouse share a login to access a regular food delivery service. You can add the site's login information to a shared group in Passwords so you both have access to it. If you need to change that password, it's automatically updated in the Passwords app on their devices, too. And if you're using a passkey on your devices, they can also login using a passkey that's created for their devices, securely tied to their Apple Account.

Sharing passwords involves creating a new shared group and then adding passwords to it:

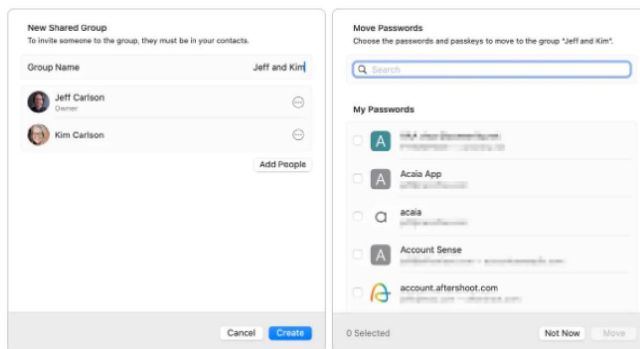
1. In the Passwords app, click the + button that appears when you move the pointer over Shared Groups, or choose **File > New**

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Sharing passwords involves creating a new shared group and then adding passwords to it:

1. In the Passwords app, click the **+** button that appears when you move the pointer over Shared Groups, or choose **File > New Shared Group**.
2. Type a **Group Name**.
3. Click the **Add People** button and choose the person from your contacts. Repeat if you're creating a group with several people.
4. Click **Create**.
5. In the next screen, search for (or scroll to locate) the password you want to share, and click the checkbox for it. Repeat for all of the passwords to share.
6. Click **Move**.
7. Optionally notify the other person by sending them a text message. Click **Notify via Messages**. Or click **Not Now** to not send a text -- they will still see the group invitation in their Passwords app.



Share selected passwords with someone else who is also using the Passwords app.

Screenshot by Jeff Carlson/CNET

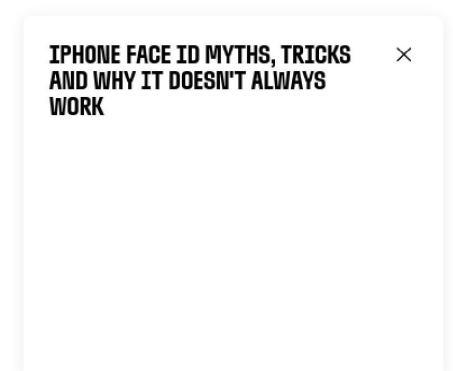
Share a single password with someone

One great new feature in Passwords is a handy way to share a Wi-Fi password without divulging the password itself: You [show someone a QR code](#) that grants them access.

You can also share a password with someone near you over AirDrop:

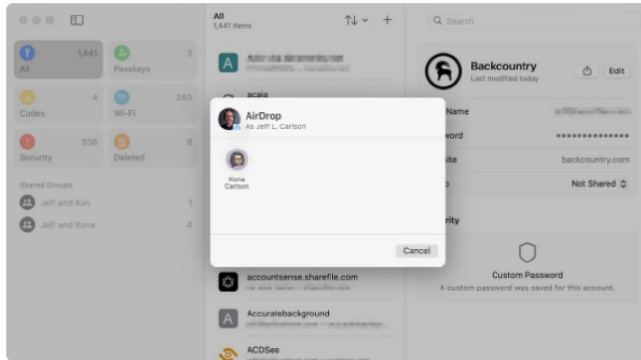
1. In the Passwords app, go to the password you want to share.
2. Click the Share button and authenticate to grant permission.
3. In the AirDrop window that appears, click the icon of the person near you.

When the other person accepts, the password is added to their Passwords app.



near you.

When the other person accepts, the password is added to their Passwords app.



To share a single password with someone nearby, the Passwords app uses AirDrop for the transfer.

Screenshot by Jeff Carlson/CNET

Import passwords from other services

What if you already use another password app, such as 1Password or Bitwarden? You can export your passwords into the Passwords app on the Mac. But there are a few caveats.

First, the Passwords app accepts only a CSV (comma-separated values) file, which is just a big unencrypted text file. Your current password tracker should be able to export the file, then go to **File > Import Passwords** in the Passwords app and select it.

Then, and this is crucial, remember to securely delete that CSV file so all your passwords aren't sitting around vulnerable. You can do that in the Finder by deleting the file, which puts it into the Trash. Next, open the Trash, right-click or Control-click the file and choose **Delete Immediately**.

The other thing to keep in mind about importing passwords is that not everything may come over. 1Password, for example, stores items such as secure notes and credit cards that are not imported into the Passwords app.

What the Passwords app doesn't offer

When Apple announced the Passwords app as part of iOS 18 and macOS Sequoia, some people wondered if the company had just "Sherlocked" other password keepers. The term comes from an old macOS feature called Sherlock, which let you search your computer for more than just file names. Other search utilities did the same thing, but when Apple built the feature into the system, it killed the market for many of those third-party apps.

On the surface, it sure sounds like Apple Sherlocked utilities such

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old MacOS feature called Sherlock, which let you search your computer for more than just file names. Other search utilities did the same thing, but when Apple built the feature into the system, it killed the market for many of those third-party apps.

On the surface, it sure sounds like Apple Sherlocked utilities such as 1Password, Bitwarden and LastPass (though [LastPass and its poor security](#) has done more damage to itself). But although Passwords assumes the core functions of storing and applying passwords, other apps still have their own advantages:

- **Sharing between platforms:** Other apps have iOS, MacOS, Windows and Android apps.
- **Sharing between family members on different platforms:** Similarly, if you want to share passwords with someone who isn't in the Apple ecosystem, a third-party app is the alternative.
- **Other types of secure information:** If you want to store sensitive data like notes, documents, credit cards and bank account numbers in one place, look to another app.

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