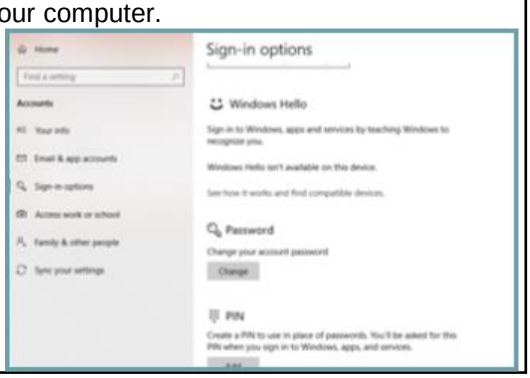
LOCKDOWN YOUR LAPTOP

Creating a Windows Log-in Password

Although a log-in password won't protect against a competent hacker, it can be enough to dissuade unsophisticated criminals from snooping through your personal files and accessing your online accounts. Protecting each account (Guest, Admin, and User) with different passwords helps prevent a hacker from getting access to everything on your computer should they gain access to any one account. It is recommended you create and use a "User" account, not the "Admin" account, for all daily activity. This way, hackers would be limited in the damage they can do to your computer.

Windows 10 offers a number of enhanced log-in and security features.

Navigate to Start Button > Settings > Accounts > Sign-in Options to setup your 'Sign-in Options."



Practical Password Tips

If you have files on your computer that you don't want anyone else to access, you can use password-protected file or folder encryption to keep them safe. However, encrypted files are only as secure as the strength of the password protecting them.

For this and the rest of your security measures to be maximally effective, make sure you follow these simple password rules:

- Use a password that is at least 12 characters long and includes a mix of lower- and upper-case letters, symbols, and numbers. Try not to use complete words, but, if necessary, avoid common words that can be found in a dictionary. Not all devices, systems, or accounts allow these combinations, but do what you can within the available constraints.
- Avoid sharing passwords across multiple platforms, especially for sensitive accounts like a Windows logon, bank account, and email account.
- It is recommended you review your passwords periodically, to ensure they remain secure.

Additional Security

Windows 10 has a number of additional log-in security features. At the "Settings," "Accounts" and "Sign-in Options" menu, you can select "Picture Password" to enable secure log-in based on your unique mouse movement responses.

Note: You can use a PIN to sign into Windows, apps, and services. However, this option is not as secure as the "Picture Password."

Windows 10 also has a feature which allows you to pair your laptop with a Bluetooth-enabled device and automatically lock your computer once the device is out of range. You can enable this feature from the "Settings," "Accounts" and "Sign-in Options" menu by pairing your laptop to a Bluetooth device with the "Dynamic Lock" slider.

For personal accounts, you can enable two-factor authentication (2FA.) 2FA requires users to authenticate access through a supported device, e.g. a text to a cell phone number or an email to a backup address, before accessing an account.

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Virtual Private Network (VPN)

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection is the safest way to connect to the Internet and safeguard your information.

Unsecured networks present a major threat to your personal information, especially when using your device on a public wifi network. When connecting to public wifi, you don't know who else is on the local network, which leaves your personal data vulnerable to snooping. Even when connecting to the wider web, your data is increasingly collected, inspected, and exploited.

One sensible solution is to use a VPN. It is recommended to use a VPN whether you are connecting to the internet from home (even with a secure wifi connection) or in public. This is simply the most secure way to access the Internet.

VPN For Beginners

When you connect to a VPN, you access a site or service which acts as a secure launchpad into the World Wide Web. Once connected to the service, your data is encrypted and sent to a third-party server. There it is combined with other traffic before being integrated into the "normal" traffic flow on the World Wide Web. Since your information is jumbled up with other information, it becomes difficult to identify as *your* specific information. It is like a needle in a haystack.

A Few VPN Perks

- VPN services are cheap, with some starting around $3 per month.
- A VPN can help protect your data from identity theft and fraud.
- VPN providers often allow users significantly increased privacy protections from advertisers and hackers alike.
- VPN providers allow you to enjoy services that require connections from certain countries, regions or time zones.
- If your Internet Service Provider blocks some applications, such as Skype or other VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) applications, use of a VPN may help.

Where To Find VPN Services

Not all VPN services are created equal. Depending on your typical web usage, you will want to shop around for a service that fits your profile. If you need a fast connection for rapid-fire browsing or streaming services and your VPN provider doesn't have enough servers, you may experience poor Internet speeds or be unable to make a connection at all. Others might offer some privacy protections but require you to give up some control of your anonymity.

Before subscribing to a VPN service, be sure to look at reviews. The VPN market is competitive and ever expanding which means VPN providers often offer free trial periods to new users. On the next pages are three VPNs that have been reviewed and are recommended to use.