



Forgot Your Mac Password? 4 Ways to Reset Your Password

Locked out of your Mac? You can still get back in without losing important files. Here are all the ways you can regain access to your Mac.

See full bioDec. 20, 2025 5:22 p.m. PT



Memory fog locking you out of your device? We'll show you how to get back in.

Apple/Screenshot by Sarah Tew/CNET

We've all been there: You forget a [password](#) and get locked out of your computer. It's frustrating and risky, and it can derail your day or week. Regaining access to your online accounts is easier, thanks to email and phone number recovery. But when it comes to your [laptop](#), the process isn't as straightforward. It's still possible, though, so don't panic. You can definitely get back into your [Mac](#) if you've forgotten the password.

Take a deep breath, because you're not lost access to your Mac forever. [Apple](#) has accounted for forgotten passwords. In addition to the company's security measures to protect devices against unauthorized access, it has built a tool into [MacOS](#) for this exact scenario.



There are a few different methods you can use, and the road you take to unlock your Mac without a password could depend on [whether you linked your Apple ID to your user account](#) on your Mac during setup, or if you have one of the new [M1 Macs](#). If you didn't link your Apple ID, that's fine too, because there's still another option to reset your account password. Here's how to get started regaining control over your Mac computer.

Note: Before you get started, Apple recommends you double-check that you're using the login password for your Mac and not the Apple ID password, check Caps Lock, and make sure you're using the correct input source for your language by clicking the Input menu (keyboard icon) in the Menu bar. If you have a password hint set, you can check it by clicking the question mark icon next to the password field on the login screen. If you have multiple user accounts, make sure the right account is selected before attempting recovery.

Use your Apple ID to reset your Mac's password

Ideally, you'll have linked your Apple ID to your user account on your Mac during the initial setup, which will make it possible to reset your user password with just a few clicks.

After entering the wrong user password three times, you'll be asked if you want to restart your computer to view the password recovery options. Once it reboots, you'll then be asked to sign in with your Apple ID, select the user account you want to reset the password for, and then enter a new user account password.



You'll get a few options that will let you reset your password.
Apple

On some Macs, you may see a different screen, including the option to directly reset your password using your Apple ID, or if enabled, the option to reset using your recovery key which you made with FireVault. We've covered it in more detail towards the end of this guide.

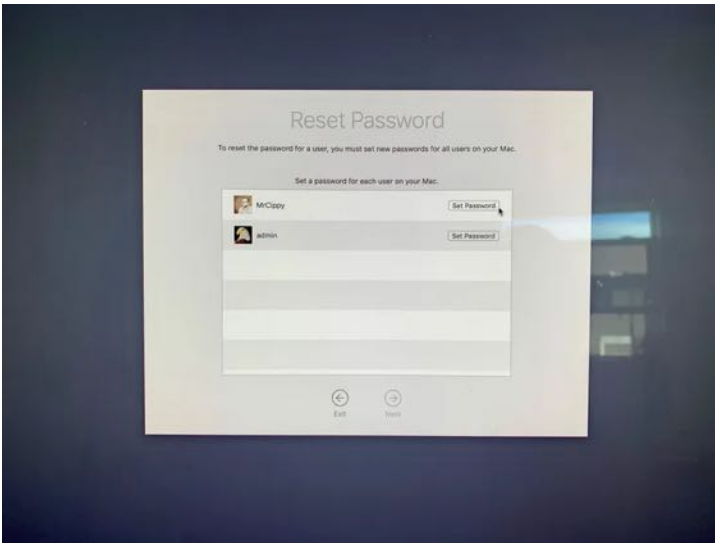
You may also see a message that says "Your account is locked. Try again in [duration]." In that case, wait until the duration mention has passed, restart your Mac and try the above steps again.

Use another admin account to unlock your Mac

If you share your Mac with friends or family members and they forgot their password, odds are you'll be able to reset it for them. The key here is that you need access to an admin user account.

Usually, the person who first set up the Mac has an admin account by default, but you can check by logging in to your account and opening **System Preferences > Users & Groups** and viewing the list of user accounts on your Mac. Just below the user name will be the account type -- if it says "Admin" you can reset user passwords.

To do so, from that same **Users & Groups** screen, click on the lock and enter your admin name and password when prompted. Next, select the user you need to reset the password for and then click on the button labeled **Reset Password** and follow the instructions.



Remember to write down the new passwords you create for other users on your Mac.

Jason Cipriani/CNET

Recovery Mode is the next best bet

If neither of those methods will work, you'll need to boot your Mac into Recovery Mode in order to access the password reset tool. I've found the easiest way to do that is to start by completely powering down your Mac.

From there, the process to getting into Recovery Mode will depend on the kind of Mac you have. For Macs with an Intel processor, press and hold the **Command** and **R** keys on your keyboard, then press the power button. Hold **Command+R** until you see a progress bar show up below the Apple logo. You can also get into Recovery Mode by restarting your Mac and trying to time the keyboard combo of **Command+R**, but in my experience, starting with your Mac turned off is the most reliable method.



Apple

For the [Macbook Air](#), [MacBook Pro](#) and [Mac Mini](#) that use Apple's M1 processor, you'll need to turn off the computer and then press and hold the power button until you're presented with an options button. Click it and then select **Recovery**. (We have a more [thorough walkthrough of Recovery Mode](#) on the M1 Macs.)

With your Mac now in Recovery Mode,

click on **Utilities** in the menu bar followed by **Terminal**. A new window will show up, waiting for you to enter a command. Type "*resetpassword*" as one word, without the quotes, and press **Return**.

Close the Terminal window, where you will then find the Reset Password tool. Follow the prompts, which include signing in with your Apple ID and then selecting the user account you need to change the password for.



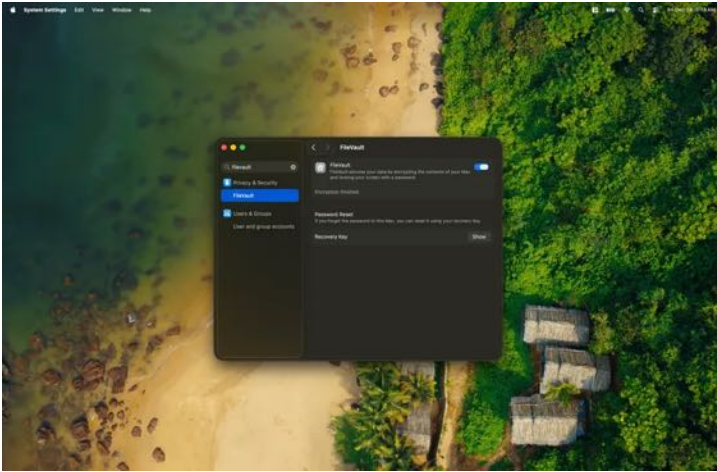
If you use FileVault, you have two options to reset your user account password.
Sarah Tew/CNET

If FileVault is enabled on your Mac, you can use your recovery key

FileVault is an optional macOS feature that encrypts your Mac's hard drive and all of the data stored on it. It's typically turned on during initial setup, or you can turn it on in System Preferences at a later time.

If you have FileVault turned on, you have two additional options to reset your user password. You can wait up to a minute on the user login screen for a prompt to show up that instructs you to press the power button to restart the Mac into Recovery mode. Follow the instructions to restart your computer, after which you should see a Reset Password window show up.

The other option is to use the Recovery Key that you should have written down when you enabled FileVault. Let's be honest, most of us don't do that, but if you did you can enter the recovery key when asked for it after three failed login attempts. Be sure to use uppercase letters and to enter the hyphens -- they're required.



Palash Volvoikar/CNET

If you don't reset your password using your Apple ID or recovery key, you will be able to see a window with other system recovery options like restoring from Time Machine, reinstalling macOS, using Disk Utility and Terminal. You can click Terminal, type `resetpassword` and click Return to run the Reset Password assistant. If nothing else works, you might want to reset your Mac by reinstalling macOS.

Any method we outlined is an effective way of regaining access to your account, or if your child forgot their password. Of course, if you can use this to get into your Mac, so can anyone who has access to your computer. You can prevent that from happening, you'll just need to be [more proactive during setup with storing recovery keys and remembering your password](#). [Here's how to lock down your Mac](#).

How do I find out what my password is on my Mac?

For obvious security reasons, Mac doesn't let you view your own user password. You can, however, access and view the passwords and passkeys you have saved for websites, apps and networks on your device. For this, if you are running macOS Sonoma or earlier, head over to the System Settings and open Passwords. Sign in using the Touch ID or enter your user password to proceed. If you are using macOS Sequoia, open the Passwords app and sign in.

You will now see a list of saved logins and passkeys. Click on Details for any account to view the credentials.