Checking for existing SSH keys

Before you generate an SSH key, you can check to see if you have any existing SSH keys.

In this article

About SSH keys

You can use SSH to perform Git operations in repositories on GitHub.com. For more information, see "About SSH."

If you have an existing SSH key, you can use the key to authenticate Git operations over SSH.

Checking for existing SSH keys

Before you generate a new SSH key, you should check your local machine for existing keys.

Note: GitHub improved security by dropping older, insecure key types on March 15, 2022.
As of that date, DSA keys (`ssh-dss`) are no longer supported. You cannot add new DSA keys to your personal account on GitHub.com.
RSA keys (`ssh-rsa`) with a `valid_after` before November 2, 2021 may continue to use any signature algorithm. RSA keys generated after that date must use a SHA-2 signature algorithm. Some older clients may need to be upgraded in order to use SHA-2 signatures.

1. Open Git Bash.

2. Enter `ls -al ~/.ssh` to see if existing SSH keys are present.

```
$ ls -al ~/.ssh
# Lists the files in your .ssh directory, if they exist
```

3. Check the directory listing to see if you already have a public SSH key. By default, the filenames of supported public keys for GitHub are one of the following.

   - *id_rsa.pub*
   - *id_ecdsa.pub*
   - *id_ed25519.pub*

> **Tip**: If you receive an error that *~/.ssh* doesn't exist, you do not have an existing SSH key pair in the default location. You can create a new SSH key pair in the next step.

4. Either generate a new SSH key or upload an existing key.

   - If you don't have a supported public and private key pair, or don't wish to use any that are available, generate a new SSH key.
   - If you see an existing public and private key pair listed (for example, *id_rsa.pub* and *id_rsa*) that you would like to use to connect to GitHub, you can add the key to the ssh-agent.

     For more information about generation of a new SSH key or addition of an existing key to the ssh-agent, see "Generating a new SSH key and adding it to the ssh-agent."