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## HowTo: Linux Remove a PDF File Password Using Command Line Options

Posted by [Vivek Gite](#) <[vivek@nixcraft.com](mailto:vivek@nixcraft.com)>

I get lots of e-bills (utility, telephone, Internet, mobile, cable and so on) in a PDF format for my small business and I need to forward those to my accountant. However, all PDFs files are password protected. I don't want to share my account password with anyone to just open my bills. Evince is a PDF document viewer capable of displaying password protected files but it cannot remove the password. How do I remove a password from all PDFs under Ubuntu or any other Linux distribution in a batch mode?



[1]

You can remove the password using various utilities under Linux. Use any one of the following option:

1. **pdftk** - A handy tool for manipulating PDF file.
2. **qpdf** - The qpdf program is used to convert one PDF file to another equivalent PDF file.
3. **xpdf-utils** - Portable Document Format (PDF) suite -- utilities such as pdftops and ps2pdf.
4. **Print to a file** - Use Evince software itself.

## How Do I Use **pdftk** To Remove The Password?

Type the following command to install the pdftk (note it will install java too, if you do not like java, just use another tool):

```
$ sudo apt-get install pdftk
```

Decrypt a PDF called input.pdf with YOURPASSWORD-HERE password and create unencrypted output.pdf, enter:

```
pdftk input.pdf output output.pdf user_pw YOURPASSWORD-HERE
```

OR

```
pdftk input.pdf output output.pdf user_pw YOURPASSWORD-HERE owner_pw YOURPASSWORD-HERE
```

OR

```
pdftk input.pdf output output.pdf input_pw YOURPASSWORD-HERE
```

Where,

- **input\_pw password** : Input PDF owner passwords
- **user\_pw password** : Input PDF user passwords
- **owner\_pw password** : Input PDF owner passwords same as input\_pw.

## How Do I Use **qpdf** To Remove The Password?

Type the following command to install the qpdf:

```
$ sudo apt-get install qpdf
```

Decrypt a PDF called input.pdf with YOURPASSWORD-HERE password and create unencrypted output.pdf, enter:

```
qpdf --password=YOURPASSWORD-HERE --decrypt input.pdf output.pdf
```

## How Do I Use **xpdf-utils** To Remove The Password?

Type the following command to install the qpdf:

```
$ sudo apt-get install xpdf-utils
```

First, decrypt a PDF and create a postscript file, enter:

```
pdftops -upw YOURPASSWORD-HERE input.pdf
```

You will get input.ps file. This can be printed or open under Linux itself. But, you can convert it back .ps file (postscript) back to a PDF as follows:

```
ps2pdf input.ps
```

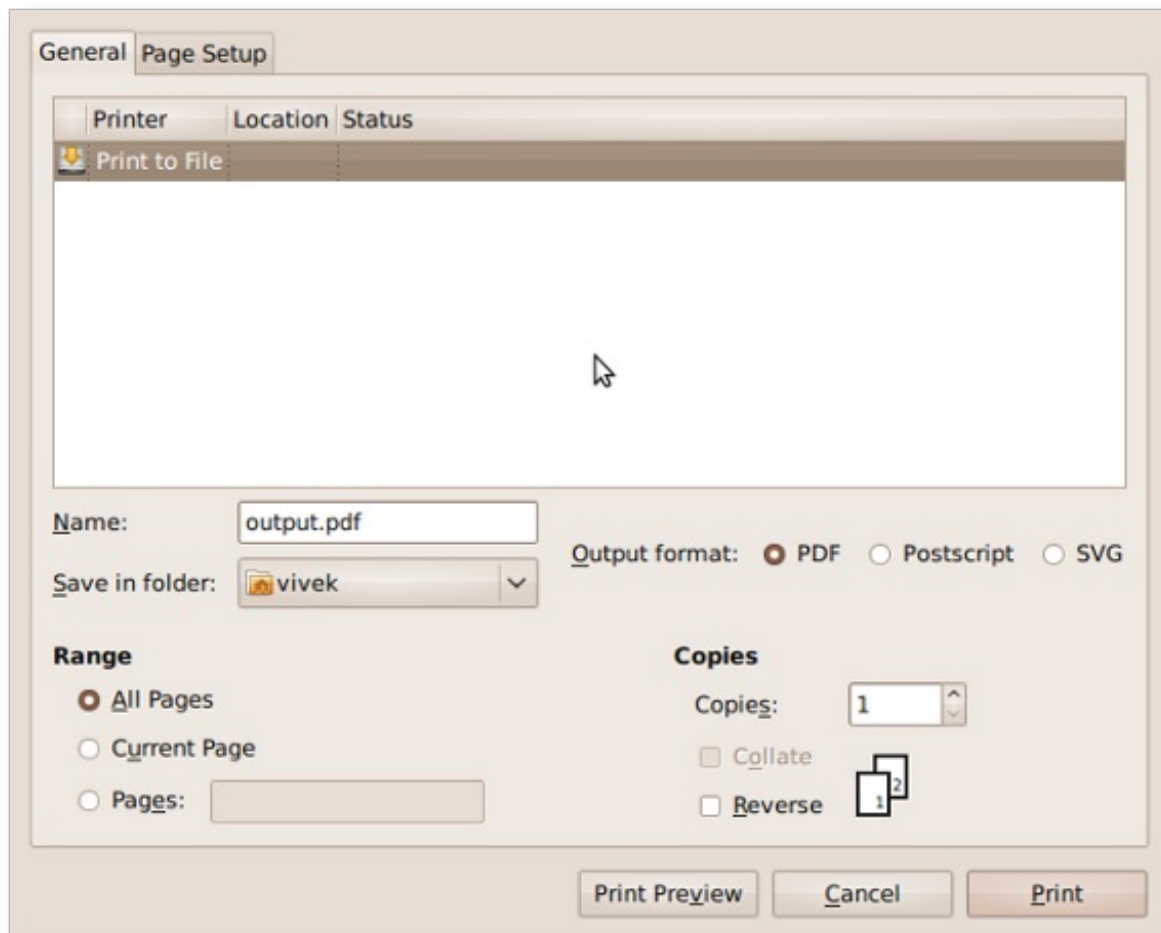
Please note that the ps2pdf command is part of ghostscript and it will get installed when you run xpdf-utils.

## How Do I Use **evince** To Remove The Password?

Open a pdf file using evince itself, enter:

```
evince input.pdf
```

Enter your password. Once opened click on File > Print > Select "Print to file" > Select "PDF" as output format and click on Print.




[2]

Fig.01: PDF file remove password with evince print option

Writing a shell script left as an exercise to the readers.

## If You Don't Know The Password, Use Ghostscript Like This

Update: [nickwe](#) <sup>[3]</sup> pointed out the following command:



```
gs -q -dNOPAUSE -dBATCH -sDEVICE=pdfwrite -sOutputFile=unencrypted.pdf -c .setpdfwrite -f e
```

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