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Checking for existing SSH keys

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

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About SSH keys

You can use SSH to perform Git operations in repositories. 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.

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 Terminal.
- 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](#)."

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