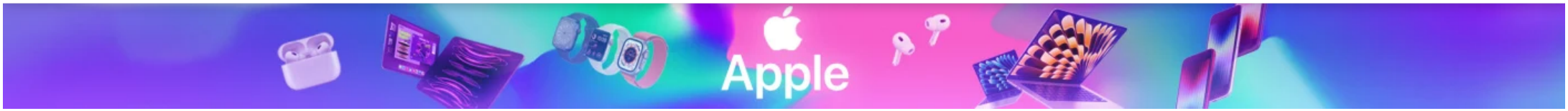

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No More Passwords: How to Set Up Apple's Passkeys for Easy Sign-ins

Introduced in iOS 16, passkeys eliminate passwords for supported apps and websites, instead letting you sign in with Face ID or Touch ID.

By Lance Whitney Updated June 21, 2023

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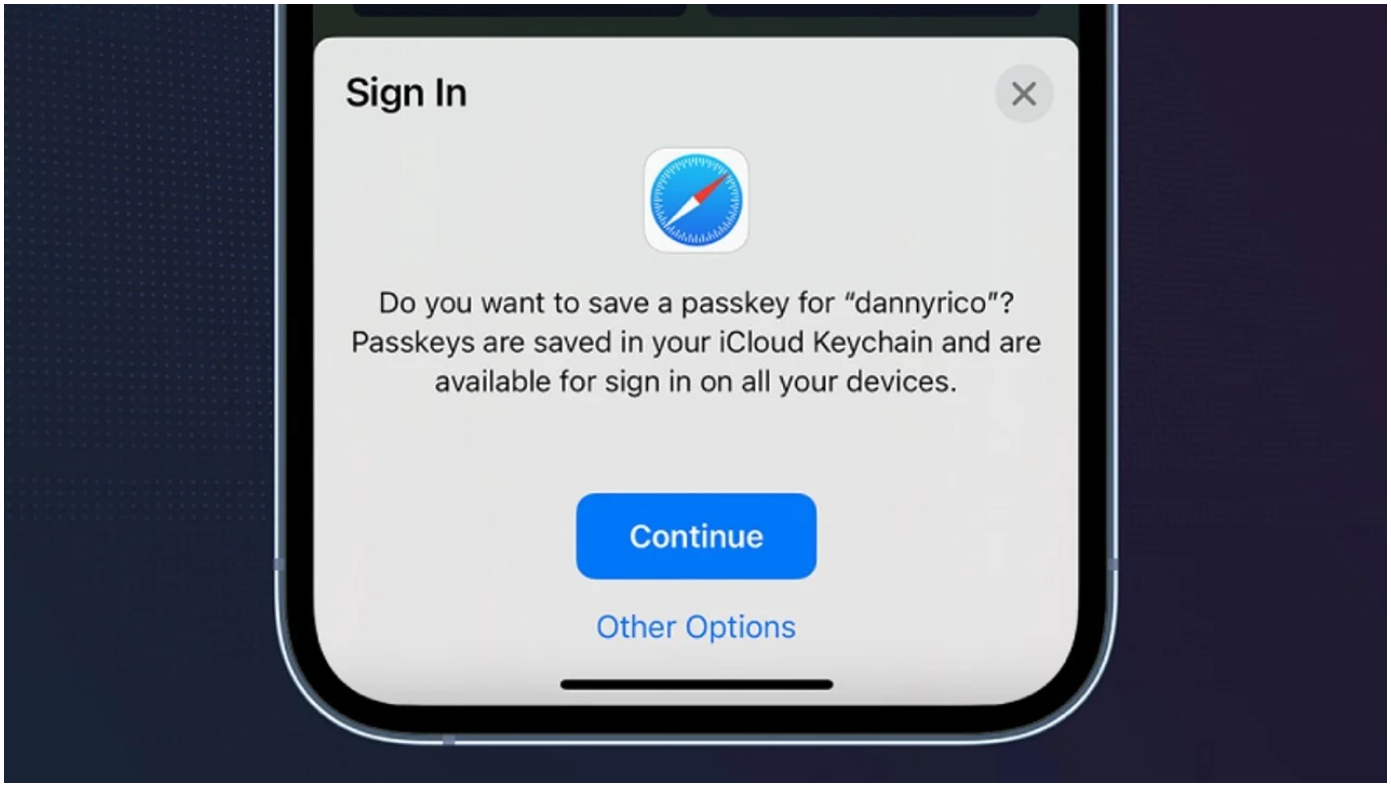

(Credit: Lance Whitney)

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We all use passwords to secure our many online accounts, but that means having to remember complex codes or pay for password managers. With the release of iOS 16, Apple introduced passkeys as a new feature that may soon make passwords a thing of the past.

Passkeys allows you to sign into your accounts using Face ID or Touch ID on supported apps and websites. For new accounts, you no longer need to create a password at all. Apple will take the

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feature a step further by automatically assigning users a passkey for their Apple ID starting with iOS 17, iPadOS 17 and macOS Sonoma. Here's how to set up and use passkeys.

How Passkeys Work

Your iPhone stores each passkey using iCloud Keychain. After generating a passkey for a specific app or site, that key is securely saved on your phone for future use. All you need to do to log into an account is authenticate with facial or fingerprint recognition.

From a technical angle, a passkey replaces your password with hidden cryptographic keys. A passkey actually consists of two separate keys, known as a key pair. One key is public and registered with the app or website you're using. The other key is private and stored only on your mobile device. The key pair seamlessly handles the authentication process between your device and the app or website.

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Beyond being simpler and more manageable than passwords, passkeys are designed to be more secure. Using cryptography, the passkeys are strong and built to resist hacking attempts. Each set of passkeys is linked only with a specific app or website, so they can't be used to sign into a phony app or site. The key never leaves your device, so it can't be leaked. Plus, the exchange with iCloud Keychain is encrypted end to end so that no one can read it.

What Apps and Websites Work With Passkeys?

The main downside with passkeys is that not many apps and websites support it at this point. But as with any nascent technology, it should gain further traction as more developers climb onboard. Here is a list of websites and apps that are known to support passkeys:

- Best Buy
- CardPointers
- Carnival
- Dashlane
- eBay
- GoDaddy
- Google
- Kayak
- Nvidia.com
- PayPal
- Safari
- WordPress

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Set Up Passkeys on Your iPhone

Before you can set up passkeys, you must first update your iPhone to iOS 16. Go to **Settings > General > Software Update** and allow the update to install, if you haven't already done so. To sync passkeys across other Apple devices, you need iPadOS 16 or higher on your iPad and macOS Ventura or newer on your Mac.

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Next, you'll need to enable iCloud Keychain, if it’s not already turned on. Go to **Settings > Passwords > Password Options** and make sure the **AutoFill Passwords** switch is turned on. Check the **iCloud Passwords & Keychain** option as well.

How to Set Up New Passkeys

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If there's a supported app or website for which you don't have an account, you can create a passkey right from the start. For this example, we use the Kayak app, but the steps may differ slightly across different apps.

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Head to the log-in screen and choose the option to sign in with your email address. Enter your email address, then tap the **Create your account** button. A notification pops up asking if you want to save a passkey for your address. Tap **Continue**, and the passkey is created. You're then signed into the app.

To set up a passkey on a website, navigate to the account creation screen. Enter your email address, then choose the option for Face ID or Touch ID. Tap **Continue** in response to the notification asking if you want to save a passkey for this site. You’re then logged into the site.

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Switch to Passkeys on Existing Accounts

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If you already have an account with an app that supports passkeys, you can change how you log in so that you no longer need a password. Here's an example using the CardPointers credit card app.

Sign into the app with your email address and existing password. Navigate to the settings screen and go to **Manage Passkeys > Add New Passkey** to create a passkey for the account.

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How to Pass On Your Passwords After You Die

When Should You Change Your Password? Not as Often as You Think

How to View Saved Wi-Fi Passwords: All the Tricks and Hacks You Need to Know

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If you already have an account with a website that supports passkeys, sign in with your username and password. Go to the settings screen and look for an option for passkeys, Face ID or Touch ID, or security device. Select that option and you should see the notification asking if you want to save a passkey for the site. Tap **Continue** to create the passkey.

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How to Log In With Passkeys

Now you want to sign into an app for which a passkey has been created. Open the app and navigate to the sign-in screen. Tap the sign in button or link. A notification should pop up asking if you want to sign in with your passkey. Make sure that option is selected and tap **Continue**. You're then signed in using your passkey.

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To sign into a website for which you have a passkey, navigate to the login screen. Type your email address, if required, then choose whether you want to log in with Face ID, Touch ID, or a security device. A notification should pop up asking if you want to sign in with your passkey. Tap **Continue** to sign in.

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Manage Your Passkeys

You can view and manage the apps and websites for which passkeys have been created. On your iPhone, go to **Settings > Passwords**. The apps and sites are listed on the screen. You can then tap a specific entry to view extra details about the passkey.

Here, you can see your username for the account and when the passkey was created, add a note about the account, and even add or remove a corresponding password. If you ever want to remove

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a passkey from your device, tap **Delete Passkey**. Otherwise, select **Edit** to change certain information, such as your username.

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About Lance Whitney

Contributor

I've been working for PCMag since early 2016 writing tutorials, how-to pieces, and other articles on consumer technology. Beyond PCMag, I've written news stories and tutorials for a variety of other websites and publications, including CNET, ZDNet, TechRepublic, Macworld, PC World, Time, US News & World Report, and AARP Magazine. I spent seven years writing breaking news for CNET as one of the site's East Coast reporters. I've also written two books for Wiley & Sons—*Windows 8: Five Minutes at a Time* and *Teach Yourself Visually LinkedIn*.

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