

## Built-in accounts

Most network operating systems come preconfigured with two built-in accounts, Administrator and Guest. In addition, some server services, such as web or database servers, create their own user accounts under which to run. The following sections describe the characteristics of these accounts.



TIP

- » **The Administrator account:** The Administrator account is the King of the Network. This user account isn't subject to any of the account restrictions to which mere mortal accounts must succumb. If you log on as the administrator, you can do anything. For this reason, avoid using the Administrator account for routine tasks. Log in as the Administrator only when you really need to.

Because the Administrator account has unlimited access to your network, it's imperative that you secure it immediately after you install the server. When the operating system Setup program asks for a password for the Administrator account, start with a good random mix of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. Don't pick some easy-to-remember password to get started, thinking you'll change it to something more cryptic later. You'll forget, and in the meantime, someone will break in and reformat the server's C: drive or steal your customer's credit card numbers.

- » **The Guest account:** Another commonly created default account is the *Guest account*. This account is set up with a blank password and — if any — access rights. The Guest account is designed to allow anyone to step up to a computer and log on, but after they do, it then prevents them from doing anything. Sounds like a waste of time to me. I suggest you disable the Guest account.

- » **Service accounts:** Some network users aren't actual people. I don't mean that some of your users are subhuman. Rather, some users are actually software processes that require access to secure resources, and therefore, require user accounts. These user accounts are usually created automatically for you when you install or configure server software.

For example, when you install Microsoft's web server (IIS), an Internet user account called IUSR is created. The complete name for this account is IUSR\_<servername>. So if the server is named WEB1, the account is named IUSR\_WEB1. IIS uses this account to allow anonymous Internet users to access the files of your website.



TIP

Don't mess with these accounts unless you know what you're doing. For example, if you delete or rename the IUSR account, you must reconfigure IIS to use the changed account. If you don't, IIS will deny access to anyone trying to reach your site. (Assuming that you *do* know what you're doing, renaming these accounts can increase your network's security. However, don't start playing with these accounts until you've researched the ramifications.)