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Keep GnuPG credentials cached for entire user session

Asked 10 years, 2 months ago Modified 1 year, 5 months ago Viewed 59k times



GnuPG can, with `gpg-agent`, cache access to a private key. How can I **keep that cache active for the entire user session**?

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When I unlock the key for `gpg-agent`, it only stays cached for a limited time. With SSH's agent, I enter the passphrase one time and it stays cached for the whole session. I want the same behaviour from `gpg-agent`.



So, `ssh-agent` doesn't suffer from a limited cache lifetime. But `gpg-agent` limits the cache lifetime, at least by default. How can I **eliminate the limit on cache time** from `gpg-agent`?

cache

authentication

gnupg

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edited Jun 20, 2017 at 23:44

asked Jul 26, 2013 at 0:05



bignose

3,067 3 22 26

4 Answers

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The user configuration (in `~/.gnupg/gpg-agent.conf`) can only define the default and



maximum caching duration; it can't be disabled.

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The `default-cache-ttl` option sets the timeout (in seconds) after the last GnuPG activity (so it resets if you use it), the `max-cache-ttl` option set the timespan (in seconds) it caches after entering your password. The default value is 600 seconds (10 minutes) for `default-cache-ttl` and 7200 seconds (2 hours) for `max-cache-ttl`.



Set it to a year or so – say, 34560000 seconds (400 days) – and you should be fine:



GnuPG 2.1 and above

In GnuPG 2.1 and above, the `maximum-cache-ttl` option was renamed to `max-cache-ttl` without further changes.

```
default-cache-ttl 34560000
max-cache-ttl 34560000
```

GnuPG 2 and below

```
default-cache-ttl 34560000
maximum-cache-ttl 34560000
```

Restart the agent

But for this change to take effect, you need to end the session by restarting `gpg-agent`.

```
gpgconf --kill gpg-agent
gpg-agent --daemon --use-standard-socket
```

If you want to limit to your session length, you'd need to kill the daemon at logout. This is very different between operating systems, so I'm referring to another question/answer containing [hints for different systems](#).

You could also restart the `gpg-agent` during login, but this does not limit caching time to the session length, but logins of a user. Decide yourself if this is a problem in your case.