How to use two-step verification with your Microsoft account

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Applies to: Microsoft account

About two-step verification

What two-step verification is

Two-step verification helps protect you by making it more difficult for someone else to sign in to your Microsoft account. It uses two different forms of identity: your password, and a contact method (also known as security info). Even if someone else finds your password, they'll be stopped if they don't have access to your security info. This is also why it's important to use different passwords for all your accounts.

If you turn on two-step verification, you will always need two forms of identification. This means that if you forget your password, you need two contact methods. Or if you lose your contact method, your password alone won't get you back into your account—and it can take you 30 days to regain access. You may even lose access to the account. For that reason, we strongly recommend you have *three* pieces of security info associated with your account, just in case.

What happens when you turn on two-step verification

If you turn on two-step verification, you'll get a security code to your email, phone, or authenticator app every time you sign in on [a device that](#)

isn't trusted. When two-step verification is turned off, you will only have to verify your identity with security codes periodically, when there might be a risk to your account security.

What you'll need for set up

Two-step verification begins with an email address (we recommend two different email addresses, the one you normally use, and one as a backup just in case), a phone number, or an authenticator app. When you sign in on a new device or from a new location, we'll send you a security code to enter on the sign-in page. For more info about the authenticator app, see How to use the Microsoft Authenticator app.

Turn two-step verification on or off

1. Go to the Security basics page and sign in with your Microsoft account.

2. Select **More security options**.
3. Under **Two-step verification**, choose **Set up two-step verification** to turn it on, or choose **Turn off two-step verification** to turn it off.
4. Follow the instructions.

   Note

   As part of setting up this account, you'll be given a QR code to scan with your device; this is one way we ensure you are in physical possession of the device you are installing the Authenticator app to.

Reset your password when two-

step verification is turned on

If you forget your password when you have two-step verification turned on for your account, you can reset your password as long as we have two ways to contact you, like one of the alternate contact email addresses or phone numbers that you used when you turned on two-step verification.

Depending on what security info you have added to your account, this requirement might mean entering a security code from your authenticator app and entering a security code that was emailed to your backup email account.

To reset your password, follow the steps in [How to reset your Microsoft account password](). Instead of receiving one security code to verify your identity, though, you'll receive two.

If you're looking for info about changing, removing, or updating the alternate email address or phone number where you get security codes, follow the steps in either [Security info & verification codes]() or [Replace your Microsoft account security info]().

Where you can't use security codes, use app passwords

Some apps (like the mail apps on some phones) or devices (like the Xbox 360) can't use regular security codes. If you see an "incorrect password" error on an app or device after you turn on two-step verification, but you're sure your password was correct, that means you'll need an app password for that app or device.

App passwords are only available if you use two-step verification. If you don't have two-step verification turned on, you won't see the **App passwords** section on the **Additional security options** page.

Read about how to create and use app passwords in [App passwords and two-step verification](#).