KNOWLEDGE BASE ARTICLE

Automatic Lock: When Password Vault Asks for the PIN Again

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Overview

Password Vault asks for your PIN once, to open the vault. While the vault is locked, the **web part** shows none of your entries - only a PIN prompt. Once you have entered the PIN, the **list** is shown and every action works directly; the vault stays **unlocked** while you work and **locks** again automatically after five minutes without activity. This article explains what the PIN is needed for, when the vault locks and what happens at that moment.

Locked and unlocked

For a vault that has already been set up and is not blocked by failed attempts, there are two access states:

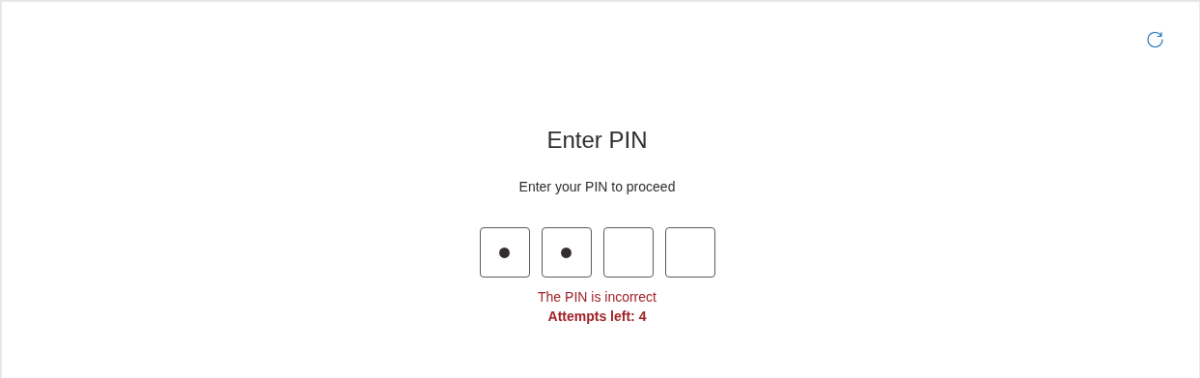
- **Locked** - the state after every page load. The web part shows no entries, not even their names: instead of the list it shows the **Enter PIN** prompt. In the toolbar, only the **Refresh** button is available.
- **Unlocked** - the state after a correct PIN. The list, the **Search** box and the filter, **New Item** and the **Configure** gear are shown, and every action runs immediately, without asking for the PIN again.

The lock state belongs to the open page: unlocking the vault in one browser tab, on one device or in **Microsoft Teams** does not unlock it anywhere else.

The Enter PIN prompt

While the vault is locked, the web part shows the **Enter PIN** prompt in place of the list, with the text *Enter your PIN to proceed* and four digit boxes.

1 Type your 4-digit PIN. The digits are masked as you type. The PIN is checked automatically as soon as the fourth digit is typed - there is no OK button.
2 If the PIN is correct, the prompt disappears and your entries are shown.
3 If the PIN is wrong, the prompt shows *The PIN is incorrect* and *Attempts left: N*, and you can try again. The *Attempts left* line is also shown whenever earlier incorrect PINs have been counted - for example after a reload or on another device.



The Enter PIN prompt after an incorrect PIN

Warning

The counter does not reset with time. The web part shows *The PIN is incorrect* and the number of attempts left. When the save succeeds, the counter is stored in the vault file, so attempts count across devices and sessions. A correct PIN or a PIN change resets the counter; saving that reset to the file also requires a successful write. If the file cannot be read or the counter cannot be saved, the page may use cached data and a failed attempt may be counted only locally; restore the connection and refresh before continuing. After 5 incorrect PINs in a row, the vault is blocked with the message *You've entered an incorrect PIN too many times.* and only **Reset** is available. See KB10455. Incorrect PIN Attempts in Password Vault: What Happens After Five Failed Tries.

What the PIN is needed for

Action	Locked	Unlocked
Viewing the list: names and user names	Hidden - the **Enter PIN** prompt is shown instead	Shown
Expanding an entry to see **User name**, **URL**, **Folder**, **Tags** and **Notes**	Not available	Available
Showing a password (eye button), **Copy to Clipboard** next to **User name** or **Password**	Not available	Available directly
Marking or unmarking a favorite (star), **Search** and	Not available	Available

Action	Locked	Unlocked
the filter drop-down		
New Item, **Edit**, **Remove**	Not available	Available directly
Configure → **Change PIN**	Not available (the gear is hidden)	Available directly
Refresh	Available	Available

In short: the PIN is needed once, to open the vault. After that, no action asks for it again until the vault locks.

Note

While the vault is unlocked, names and user names are shown in the list, and URL, folder, tags and notes in plain text as soon as an entry is expanded. Anyone who can see your screen at that time can read them. Do not put secrets such as security answers or recovery codes in **Notes**. How each field is protected is explained in KB10452. How Password Vault Protects Your Data: Encryption, PIN and Storage.

When the vault locks again

The vault locks again in these cases:

- **Five minutes without activity.** Activity means a mouse click (or tap) or a key press inside the web part, including its dialogs and the **Change PIN** screen. Every click or key press inside the web part restarts the five-minute period. Moving the mouse, scrolling the page, or working elsewhere on the page or in another application does not count.
- **Reloading the page.** The unlocked state is kept only in the open page; after a reload, or when you open the page again later, the vault starts locked.
- .

The **Refresh** button does not lock the vault: it reloads your entries from OneDrive and keeps the current state - unless your PIN was changed or the vault was reset on another device in the meantime; then the page locks and asks for the new PIN. If the vault was reset and no new PIN has been set, the setup screen appears instead.

There is no lock button. To lock the vault immediately, reload the page or close it.

What happens when the vault locks

When the five minutes have passed, the web part:

- hides the list, the **Search** box and the filter and shows the **Enter PIN** prompt instead;
- hides every password that was shown;
- removes the encryption key from the memory of the page;
- closes every open dialog - **New Item**, **Edit Properties** and the **Remove** confirmation - without saving; a change can no longer be saved after the lock;
- closes the **Change PIN** screen; the PIN stays unchanged.

After you enter the PIN again, the list returns with the search text and the filter you used; expanded entries are collapsed.

Warning

A password you copied stays in the clipboard after the vault locks - Password Vault does not clear the clipboard. Paste it where you need it and then copy something else, especially on a shared computer.

Tips for working safely

- **Lock your computer** (for example, Windows logo key + L) whenever you leave it. The automatic lock hides the vault only after five minutes; until then, everything that is shown stays visible on an open page.
- **Close or reload the page** when you have finished, instead of waiting for the automatic lock.
- **Save an edit before you step away.** A **New Item** or **Edit Properties** dialog left open for five minutes without activity is closed and its changes are lost.
- **Type the PIN carefully.** The digits are masked on the **Enter PIN** prompt, and each mistake counts towards the limit of five.
- **Keep your PIN somewhere safe.** A forgotten PIN cannot be recovered; see KB10460. I Forgot My PIN in Password Vault: What Are My Options?.

Tip

To change your PIN, see KB10450. How to Change Your PIN in Password Vault. Showing and copying passwords is described step by step in KB10444. How to View and Copy a Password or User Name in Password Vault.

Terms

List
A list is a storage unit in SharePoint. A list can contain columns of different types, content types, and views. A document library is a special type of list and therefore inherits the functionality of a list.

Microsoft Teams
Microsoft Teams is a chat-based collaboration platform for business communications with features for online meetings, live events, and document sharing.

Web Part
A web part is a primary building block of functionality or content placed on a SharePoint page. Some web parts support customization, such as configuring the web part or changing its appearance.