Choosing the Right Password Manager (PM) Program

You need to choose a Password Manager (PM) program that fits your needs. Choosing the right program can save you hours of hassle or wasted time changing to a different program. Please consider the following suggestions and recommended PM programs.

Suggestions for Choosing the Right Password Manager Program:

Tech-Savvy Friend? Do you have someone in your life (a trusted family member or technology-savvy friend) who is comfortable with technology and could help you implement a Password Manager (PM)? Do they already use one of the recommended PM programs (listed below)? If so, there may be benefits in choosing the one they already use. They could help you implement it, help teach you how to use it, and help work through any challenges you run into. (However, if the program is not recommended below, please make sure to research into the security architecture and usability features of the program.) – Obviously if you use a PM at work, then there are advantages in using the same one for your personal life.

Secure PM programs: The best PM programs are built in a way to provide excellent security from attackers (such as zero knowledge architecture, strong encryption, MFA options, audited by third-party, etc.). All the PM programs suggested below have these strong security features.

PM Usability Features: There are some key features you should look for in a PM program to make it convenient and easy to use. Some of these features you should consider are: sharing between multiple platforms (smartphone, PC, etc.), strong password generator, account recovery options, cost, email masking, and other features that meet the needs of your situation (like possibly: password sharing options).

Not Bundled: I strongly recommend against using a PM provided for free with other security products you use, such as might be bundled with your antivirus program. In general, they tend to be either provided by a third-party (in which case their policies and practices may be unclear), or a program meant to help tie you into your current AV program. The PM program may not be the main product or the vendor's expertise, and thus we can't guarantee they are designed securely. It may be cheaper, but it may not be best!

List of Recommended Password Managers:

The Password Managers (PM) listed here are ones I have used and researched enough to feel comfortable recommending. However, please do your own research into the features of the programs to see which might be best for you. The features listed below are not meant to be exhaustive and may change over time. (If you select a PM program not listed here, make sure it is highly rated in terms of security.)

Note that some PM programs offer a **free option** that offers a limited set of features; feel free to use that if it meets your requirements; you can always upgrade to the paid version later if you choose to. (The pricing listed here is as of January 2026; please confirm them before purchasing.)

1) **Proton Pass**: Highly rated. Excellent features. Some sites rank this the best free password manager; I would agree.
   a) Pricing and feature options: proton.me/pass/pricing (Free option or $2.99/mth)

   i) Even the free version offers features only available in paid versions of some other PM programs, such as unlimited devices and passwords, some basic password hygiene checks/alerts, and 10 alias emails.
b) Paid version includes Dark Web monitoring, secure password sharing, emergency access, built-in 2FA, unlimited hide-my-email aliases, and many other advanced features, such as monitoring for suspicious account activity.
   i) If you end up choosing the paid version of Proton Pass, then you can get up to a $20 credit by signing up using this link: https://pr.tn/ref/ANH9HVHX (Choose "Password manager" or other services.)
c) If you are already a Proton user (for email or VPN), you should seriously consider Proton Pass as there may be cost savings with bundled plans.

2) **Bitwarden**: It used to be called the best "free" Password Manager. However, it is not as intuitive to use as many of the others, nor does it offer as many usability features. It is best for people who are technically minded as it tends to have a steeper learning curve.
   a) Pricing and feature options: bitwarden.com/pricing (Free option or $1.00/mth)
   b) Paid version has limited additional features, but does include a password strength audit report and emergency access. No Dark Web monitoring.

3) **NordPass**: It is highly rated by many reports; however, this is the one I have not used before so can't recommend from personal experience. Some sites rank this the best free password manager, but there are severe limitations with the free version. Very good price compared with others.
   a) Pricing and feature options: nordpass.com/plans (Free option or $1.50/mth)
   b) Note that the free option cannot be installed on multiple devices. I would not suggest using the free option unless you understand the limitations.
   c) Paid version includes password strength auditing, Dark Web monitoring, emergency access, and email masking.

4) **Dashlane**: Solid choice, but a little more expensive.
   a) Pricing and feature options: www.dashlane.com/pricing-personal ($2.50/mth; NO free option)
   b) Easy to use and great features.
   c) Includes password strength auditing and Dark Web monitoring feature.
   d) However, it has an awkward emergency access procedure.

5) **1Password**: Also a solid choice, but even more expensive. Best for small businesses; can seem complicated for individual users. Makes sense for personal use if your company uses. The company license may offer a free version for individual use.
   a) Pricing and feature options: 1password.com/pricing/password-manager ($2.99/mth; NO free option)
   b) Very secure, but requires an extra step (like a seed password), which can seem complicated for non-technical users. One review said, "So many features that it can overwhelm casual users."
   c) Includes Dark Web monitoring.
   d) Includes a "Travel mode" - Removes sensitive data from your device when you travel, which can then be restored with one click when you return.
   e) Lacks digital legacy options.

6) **Keeper**: Very secure and feature-rich; best for small businesses. Maybe more expensive and more features than needed for an individual. Makes sense for personal use if your company uses. The company license may offer a free version for individual use.
   a) Pricing and feature options: www.keepersecurity.com/pricing/personal-and-family.html (more expensive yet. $3.33/mth; NO free option)
   b) Excellent password sharing system and solid emergency access options.

7) **KeePassXC**: Free. This is software installed locally on your computer (only); it does not use the cloud in any way. The best choice if you want a free PM program, only stored locally on your computer.
   a) Features: keepassxc.org
   b) It requires more technical expertise to set up and manage.
   c) It does NOT use the cloud by default, so does not sync password across multiple devices.
   d) You also must make sure to back it up (securely, regularly) so you don't lose all your passwords.

8) **Apple Keychain**: It is built-in, free, and already activated for people who use an Apple device. If you have embraced the Apple ecosystem (including iPhone, Mac computer, etc.), then feel free to use Keychain.
   a) **However**, it is not recommended if you use a mixed environment, such as an iPhone and a Windows PC, since your passwords will not be synchronized across all devices.
   b) **Furthermore**, the password sharing features are done through the Shared Password Groups features, so can only be shared with others of the Apple ecosystem.
   c) **Note**: For the Zero Knowledge architecture to be enforced, you must enable Apple's Advanced Data Protection (ADP) otherwise some recovery key data are kept by Apple; they could "theoretically" access your passwords.

(Optional) Resources for Choosing a Password Manager Program:

- Best Password Managers: What Features Make Some Better than Others: cyberguy.com/security/best-password-managers/
- Best Password Managers in 2026 – Tested & Ranked by AdBlock Tester adblock-tester.com/ad-blockers/best-password-managers/
- Best Password Manager 2025: Expert-Tested Security Solutions That Actually Work:
- axis-intelligence.com/best-password-manager-2025-ulimate-guide/