

Protect an Excel file

You can protect your Excel file with a password to prevent others from accessing data in your Excel files. This topic covers the two different ways you can protect an Excel file — using encryption, and the setting a password to open/modify an Excel file.

NOTES: This topic covers file-level protection only, and not workbook or worksheet protection.

- For information on workbook protection, see [Protect a workbook](#).
- For information on worksheet protection, see [Protect a worksheet](#).
- To know the difference between protecting your Excel file, workbook, or a worksheet, see [Protection and security in Excel](#).

WARNING:

- **Microsoft can't retrieve forgotten passwords.**
- There are no restrictions on the passwords you use with regards to length, characters or numbers, but passwords are case-sensitive.
- It's not always secure to distribute password-protected files that contain sensitive information such as credit card numbers.

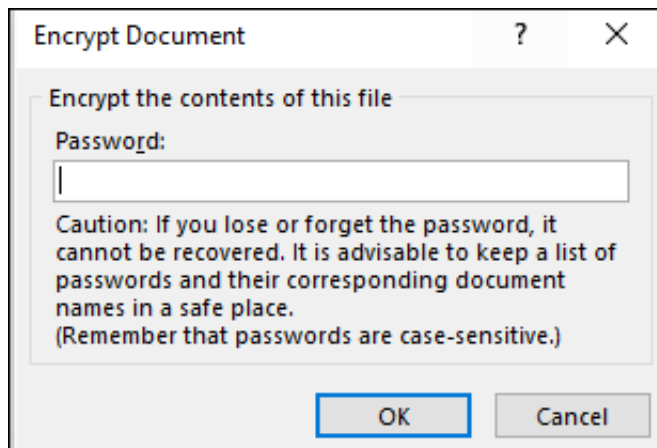
Be cautious when sharing files or passwords with other users. You still run the risk of passwords them falling into the hands of unintended users. Remember that locking a file with a password does not necessarily protect your file from malicious intent.

Encrypt an Excel file

When you encrypt an Excel file, you lock it with a password. Once you encrypt an Excel file, no one else will be able to open it. This is the most common and recommended technique to lock an Excel file.

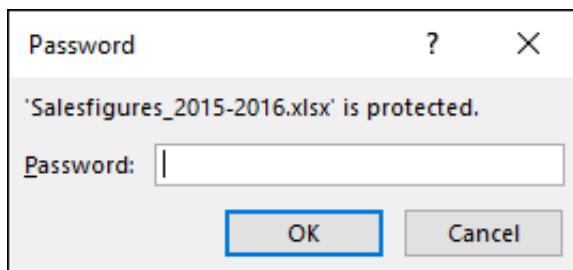
Follow these steps to encrypt an Excel file:

1. Click **File > Info > Protect Workbook > Encrypt with Password**.
2. Enter a password, and click **OK**.



3. In the **Confirm Password** dialog box, reenter the password you entered in the previous step.

When you/another user tries to open the file, the following screen appears:



Set a password to allow reading or modifying

You can set two passwords on the file - one to open the file as read-only, and the other to modify. Then you can share the appropriate passwords with the users depending on the access level they should have.

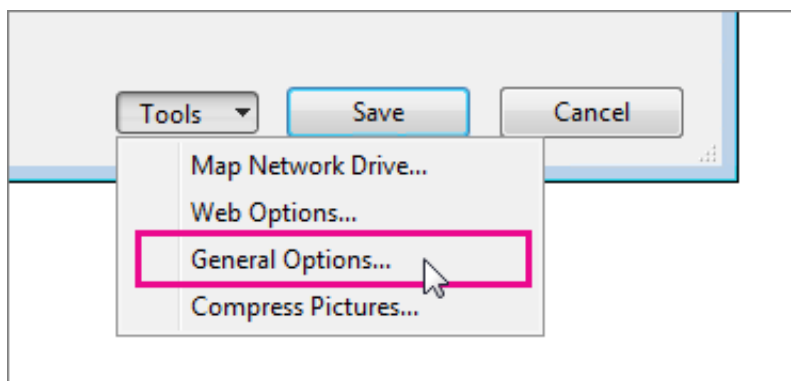
Read-only access does not prevent someone from making changes to a file, but it does prevent them from saving those changes unless they rename the file and save it as something other than the original.

For users who need to be able to modify the file, you will have to share *both* open and modify passwords.

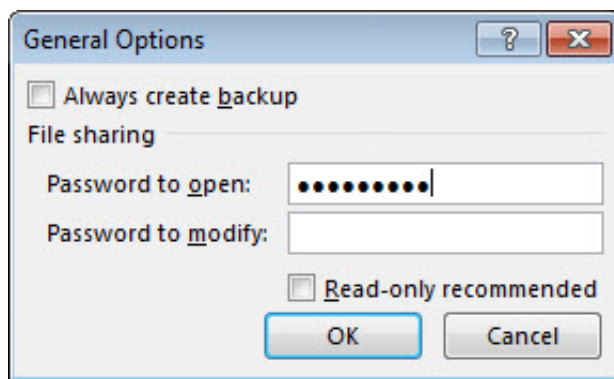
Follow these steps to set a password to open/modify an Excel file:

NOTE: In the Mac, go to **File > Save As > Options**, and then set the password to open or modify the file. Select **Read Only** if you want users to open the file as Read-only.

1. In the Excel file, click **File > Save As**.
2. Click a location, such as **Computer** or your **My Site** web page.
3. Click a folder, such as **Documents** or one of the folders on your OneDrive, or click **Browse**.
4. In the **Save As** dialog box, go to the folder you want to use, then click **Tools** and then click **General Options**.

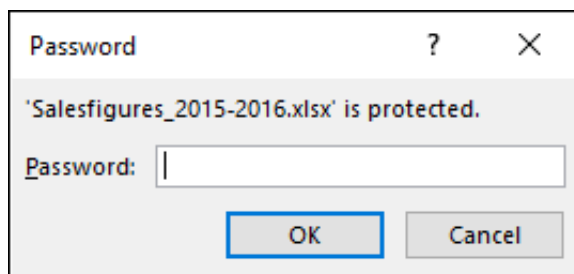


5. You can specify one or both passwords here, one to open the file, another to modify the file, depending on your requirements.

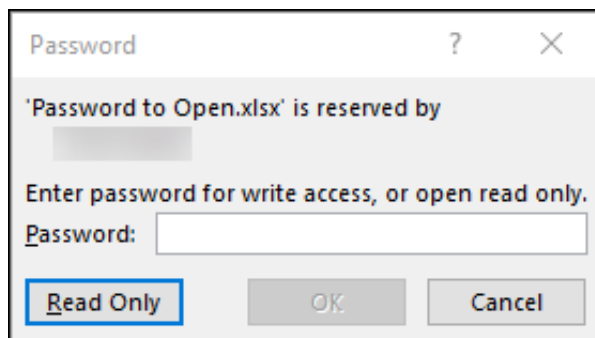


6. Click **Save**.

When someone tries to open this file, Excel prompts for a password.



A second screen shows if there is a password to modify the file. Users who don't have the modify password can click **Read Only** and start viewing the contents of the file.



How can I tell if a file is protected?



Disable encryption in an Excel file



Remove passwords



Known issue: Passwords disappear when you save an Excel file to the Excel 97-2003 (*.xls) format



Do you have a specific question?

[Post a question in the Excel Community forum](#)

Help us improve Excel

Do you have suggestions about how we can improve the next version of Excel? If so, please check out the topics at [Excel User Voice](#).

See Also

[Protection and security in Excel](#)

[Protect a workbook](#)

[Protect a worksheet](#)

Great! Any other feedback?

The more you tell us, the more we can help.

To protect your privacy, please do not include contact information in your feedback. Review our [privacy policy](#).

Send

No thanks