

Encrypting your home folder with FileVault on Mac OS X 10.6

You can turn on FileVault to encrypt the information in your home folder. Encryption scrambles the data in your home folder so that unauthorized users, applications, or utilities can't access your data.

To set up FileVault for your home folder, you must be an administrator on your computer, or you must get an administrator's help.

When you turn on FileVault for the first time, your home folder is encrypted. While your home folder is being encrypted, you won't be able to log in to your account or use your computer to do other tasks. The process could take a while, depending on how much information you have in your home folder.

Before you begin, make sure you have enough free space on the hard disk that contains your home folder. You need as least as much free space as your home folder currently occupies. For example, if your home folder uses 20 MB, make sure you have at least 20 MB of available space. This space is needed temporarily during the encryption process.

You must create a master password in case you forget your regular login password.

Warning: Don't forget your master password. If you turn on FileVault and then forget both your login password and your master password, you won't be able to log in to your account, and your files and settings will be lost forever.

To set up FileVault on your computer:

1. Choose Apple menu > System Preferences, click Security, and then click FileVault.
2. If the Security preferences pane is locked, click the lock icon, and then type an administrator name and password.
3. If the Security preferences pane shows that a master password hasn't been set, click Set Master Password, and then type a password in the Master Password box.
4. Type the password again in the Verify box.
5. Type a hint in the Hint box to help you remember the password.
6. Click OK.
7. Click "Turn On FileVault." If you want to be sure your deleted files can never be recovered, click "Use secure erase."
8. Click "Turn On FileVault."

You are logged out of your account during the encryption process. When the encryption process is finished, log back in to your account. Your home folder icon changes to show that it's protected by FileVault.