

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 289: Changing the Password in Linux

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It is really easy to change your password in any version of Linux, and it is considered good practice to do so from time to time. Rather important, though, don't reuse passwords or rotate them. Just change them to something new each time and don't use an old password from one machine in another machine if you have several. Also note that Linux will not let you simply change case. If your password was Jim3linux it will balk at your attempt to change it to Jim3LINUX or JIM3linux. Jim44linux will, however, work as a valid change from Jim3linux. Make it at least 6 characters. All these caveats are aimed at making your new password unique and not easily guessed, even by someone who knows you, even if they knew your old password.

One other caution. Make sure you type carefully and write down your new password immediately. I admit to being cavalier about this once, and it at least cost me some time. I changed the password and promptly lost the slip of paper recording the new one. Furthermore, none of the permutations I tried seemed to work! There was no remedy but to re-install Linux in the machine. Fortunately, it was already a new installation and no irreplaceable files were lost. Be careful to write down your changes! Also be cautious with typing in the intended case. Case does matter. An upper case 4 is a \$ while an upper case = sign is a + sign. The letter y is not the same as the letter Y!

To change the password, first open a terminal. In the latest versions of Linux Mint Cinnamon, just click on the tray icon labeled \$ _ and a terminal will open on your desktop. As shown below in the box, type in the word "passwd" (no quotes) directly after the ~\$ prompt and press the Enter key.

```
stan@LOROSH: ~$ passwd
Changing password for stan.
Current password:
New password:
Retype new password:
passwd: password updated successfully
stan@LOROSH: ~$
```

On a new line, **Changing password for (user.)** will appear, followed by a new prompt asking for **Current password:** on the next line. Type it in, followed by a press of the Enter key, *but note what you type will NOT echo to your screen*. If you typed the old (current) password correctly, a new prompt will appear: **New password:** Type in the

new version and press Enter. Again, it will not echo to your screen. Another prompt will appear: **Retype the new password:** Repeat typing the new password exactly and press Enter. If your second typing of the new password was identical to the first and it is legal in every respect, the final prompt will show: **passwd: password updated successfully**. Almost instantly, a new terminal prompt will appear on the next line indicating readiness to accept your new terminal command.

That is all there there is to it. You can just type Exit or exit or EXIT followed by the Enter key to exit the process, or just click on the X box in the top right corner of the terminal box. Change your password at least once a year. But, take it from me, record the new password on paper immediately, and do not loose your recording. Stash a copy in your safety deposit box! Happy Computing!