



## HOW SAFE ARE PASSKEYS?

BY JAY BORDEN

Passkeys are being promoted as more secure than passwords. But are they?

Let's start by looking at how they work. Passkeys use a public key/private key model. The company or organization you are connecting to has your public key. Only your device has the private key. Both are necessary for the login or connection to occur. The private key is tied to your specific device so even if it is stolen it will not work for someone else, like a cybercriminal if they don't have your device.

Passkeys are often tied to biometric information such as a finger print or a face scan on the device. They can't be guessed or cracked as passwords can.

This does make it more secure than a password which can be stolen and will work for anyone using the correct username and password.

As the private keys reside on your system and are tied to that system, possibly even tied to biometric data, if a company you deal with gets hacked, it won't compromise your passkey as it will your password.

A drawback is that while phones and tablets use biometric data, not all devices do. So, what happens then? You can use a secure password for logging into your device. Once you are logged in, the passkey becomes available and can be used to log into applications and websites.

But how to protect the password to log into your device? A good password manager encrypts your passwords and offers reasonable security. However, password managers have been hacked. Whether or not they exposed your unencrypted passwords depends upon the specific situation.

## HOW SAFE ARE PASSKEYS?

CONTINUED

But good encrypted password managers are still safer than passwords most people make up themselves which can be cracked in seconds. If the passwords are not encrypted, they don't even have to be cracked.

Passkeys can be synchronized across devices making them more efficient and flexible.

While these are definite pluses, passkeys cannot guarantee complete security. If an attacker steals an authenticated browser or session cookie, it bypasses passwords and passkeys.

Many sites now offer passkeys. While they are not infallible, they are more secure than a username/password combination and we suggest using them.

But using a passkey doesn't relieve you of the need to practice good cyber hygiene. Passkeys help, but there is nothing that is absolutely secure. The majority of breaches are due to people clicking a bad link. A passkey won't protect against that. If the hacker has your credentials and a session cookie, they are in.

Given the number of username password combinations available for sale on the dark web and the additional security of a passkey, we do recommend the use of passkeys over passwords alone. Use a good password manager for all devices when passwords are used for anything.

Visit our site, [onebrightlycyber.com](https://onebrightlycyber.com) to learn all the ways we help keep you safer.