

What is Microsoft Authenticator?

A Faster and Safer Way to Protect Your Account

Microsoft Authenticator is a free app from Microsoft that helps verify your identity when signing in to your Microsoft 365 account.

Instead of waiting for a text message containing a security code, Microsoft Authenticator sends a notification directly to your phone. You simply tap **Approve** to confirm it's you.

In most cases, it is quicker, easier, and more secure than receiving codes by SMS.

Why Do I Need It?

When you sign in to your email, you use your password as the first layer of security.

The second layer, often called Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), helps protect your account if somebody manages to obtain your password.

Traditionally, this second step has often been a code sent via text message. While this has improved security for many years, cybercriminals have become increasingly successful at intercepting or bypassing SMS verification methods.

Microsoft Authenticator provides a stronger and more reliable alternative.

How Does It Work?

When you sign in from a new device or location:

1. Enter your email address and password.
2. A notification appears on your phone.
3. Open the notification and tap **Approve or match 2 digits**
4. You're signed in.

That's it.

No waiting for a text message.

No copying and typing six-digit codes.

Why Is It Better Than SMS?

Faster

SMS messages can take time to arrive.

Authenticator notifications are usually immediate and only require a single tap.

More Reliable

Text messages rely on your mobile carrier.

Authenticator works using an internet connection and can function over Wi-Fi, even when mobile reception is poor.

More Secure

Cybercriminals can sometimes trick mobile providers into moving your phone number to another SIM card. This is known as "SIM swapping".

Because Microsoft Authenticator is linked directly to your device rather than your phone number, it provides much stronger protection against these types of attacks.

Is It Difficult To Use?

Not at all.

Most people find Microsoft Authenticator easier than SMS after the initial setup.

Once configured, approving a sign-in usually takes only a few seconds.

For many users there is less typing, fewer delays, and fewer issues than receiving text messages.

What If I Get a New Phone?

Changing phones is common and expected.

If you replace your device, Microsoft Authenticator can be configured on your new phone. As with any security system, we recommend contacting support if you're changing devices and are unsure of the process.

Keeping more than one sign-in method registered also helps ensure you can always access your account if something happens to your phone.

Is Microsoft Authenticator Safe?

Yes.

Microsoft Authenticator is developed and maintained by Microsoft and is used by millions of people worldwide.

Importantly:

- Your password is not stored in the app.
- Your fingerprint or facial recognition information never leaves your device.
- The app helps verify that it is really you signing in.

Using Microsoft Authenticator significantly reduces the risk of somebody gaining unauthorised access to your account.

Microsoft Is Retiring SMS Authentication

Microsoft has announced that Microsoft-provided SMS and voice authentication services will be retired from Microsoft Entra ID from **1 February 2027**. Before this, Microsoft is encouraging organisations and users to move to stronger sign-in methods such as Microsoft Authenticator and passkeys.

This change is being made across Microsoft's platform to improve security and reduce the risks associated with SMS-based authentication.

For this reason, users who currently rely on text message codes are encouraged to begin using Microsoft Authenticator as soon as possible.

Our Recommendation

We recommend that all users install Microsoft Authenticator and make it their primary sign-in method.

Benefits include:

- ☐ Faster sign-ins
- ☐ Fewer problems with delayed text messages
- ☐ Better protection against cybercrime
- ☐ Works from anywhere with an internet connection
- ☐ Ready for Microsoft's upcoming authentication changes

Microsoft Authenticator is one of the simplest steps you can take to improve both the security and convenience of accessing your email and Microsoft 365 account.

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