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Dashlane's Free Automatic Password Changer is a Game Changer

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The “best practices” for password security are 1) make your passwords long and obscure; 2) never write them down where they can be stolen; and 3) change them every 30 days. Unfortunately, all of that is so difficult that it seldom gets done. The key to password security is to make it easy. Read on to learn how you can strengthen and change all your most important passwords in just a few seconds...

Software such as RoboForm and LastPass simplify password management by storing many passwords in an encrypted “vault” and filling them in automatically when they are requested on websites. They all will generate long, complex passwords on demand. You just have to remember one master password to unlock the vault and set a reminder to change passwords monthly.

Password managers have evolved additional features such as auto-filling forms, backing up data and passwords to the cloud, syncing passwords across devices, adding support for two-factor authentication, importing bookmarks and competitors’ password file formats, and so on. Like other security software, password managers are locked in an ever-escalating features war.

Into this fray jumped Dashlane. It does all of the above, including two-factor authentication in version 2.0. If you enable two-factor authentication, Dashlane will text to your phone a code that you must enter manually before your master password will unlock Dashlane’s vault.

Dashlane Automatic Password Changer

It also does a great job of minimizing keystrokes, the second most important function of a password manager. For example, when you want to log in to Facebook you don’t have to choose a profile from a drop-down list, as you do in some other programs. Dashlane recognizes the Facebook log-in screen, fills in your username and password, and even “clicks” the log-in button for you. The log-in screen flashes by so fast you may miss it if you blink.

Dashlane version 2.0 introduces a “security dashboard” where you can review all of your passwords. It highlights weak and outdated passwords, nudging you to strengthen your defenses.

Automated Password Changing

But the more interesting news in the latest version is the Password Changer, which lets you update your passwords with a single click. You select the sites on which you want to change your passwords (about 75 popular sites, including Facebook, Twitter, Google, Amazon and Dropbox are supported). Dashlane will generate new passwords, then automatically login and change your passwords on the selected sites in just seconds.

This is pretty awesome in light of the fact that security breaches like HeartBleed and ShellShock are occurring at an alarming pace, and the best course of action when these things happen is to change all your passwords. Doing it manually is a huge nuisance. Clicking a button to make it happen is (almost) fun.

LastPass, a Dashlane competitor, introduced a password changer feature just a day after Dashlane announced theirs. It supports the Chrome, Safari, and Firefox browsers, but not Internet Explorer. It also lacks the automation offered by the Dashlane password changer. You'll need to select a site, do the password change, select the next site, and so on. But still, it's a time saver over logging into each site and navigating to the password change page. I'll admit that not having this feature in RoboForm has made me dread the task of updating some of my own passwords on a regular basis.

On the downside, cross-platform syncing with Dashlane now costs \$39.99 a year. That means passwords and form data that are stored on your PC are not available on your phone unless you pay. Earlier free versions feature syncing; users are urged to donate voluntarily.

Dashlane also acts as a digital wallet, storing your credit card and even PayPal data securely and filling in their details wherever needed. If you have multiple versions of a profile (e. g., different shipping addresses you've used on Newegg.com), Dashlane stores them all and lets you pick one from a drop-down menu.

Dashlane cannot work in the iOS Safari browser thanks to Apple's developer rules; neither can any other password manager. Dashlane gets around this with its own mini-browser, which you must open whenever you want to supply a password on an iPhone or iPad.

Aside from the premium syncing fee, Dashlane is a fine option for a password manager and digital wallet. I've been using the paid version of RoboForm for years, so I'll be considering a change when my next renewal comes due.