

Lock Your Documents with a Password
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As useful as computers are, they do have problems – including a lack of on-the-job file security and privacy. Maybe you're writing a love letter to Doris in Accounting or typing the latest line on Sunday's football games. You'd like to protect these sensitive documents from the peering eyes of co-workers or from a supervisor with the quaint notion that employees should do only company work on company time.

Private files

WordPerfect allows files to be kept private. With a password, sensitive documents can be locked and unlocked. Security is absolute – nobody reads the file without the password. Whenever files are transferred electronically, they can be locked. The recipient of the file must retrieve the file with the same password. Even if some computer buccaneer hijacks the files, they can't be unlocked without the password, because locked files are encrypted. This means that if someone tries to retrieve the file with a DOS command, or any other command, he or she will see a confusing hodgepodge of alien characters and bizarre symbols – not real English words and sentences.

Locking the file

To lock a document, retrieve it and press Text In/Out (Ctrl-F5), (2) Password, (1) Add/Change. You'll see an Enter Password: prompt. Type the desired password and press (Enter). You can type up to 24 characters, including numbers, letters, symbols or spaces.

If you're really serious, you can even use Compose (Ctrl-2) to create any of the characters in the WordPerfect character sets. Be aware that the typing doesn't appear on-screen. This guards against a peering co-worker discovering your password.

Type the password again at the ReEnter Password: prompt. Typing the password twice prevents entering the password wrong the first time, thus inadvertently locking the document without you knowing the password.

If the two passwords aren't the same, the annoyed computer beeps and prompts you to re-enter the password.

If you type in the wrong password twice the file will be locked – but you won't know the password. Such an accident isn't likely to happen unless you unknowingly position your hands incorrectly on the keyboard.

When you save the document, the password is saved with it.

An easy locking macro

If you lock files frequently, it's worthwhile to use the included LOCK.WPM macro. To invoke the macro, press (Alt-10), type "lock" and press (Enter). The macro automatically brings up the password menu and pauses twice while you enter the password. The macro then prompts Document to be saved: and pauses while you enter a name.

If the document is already named, you must answer (Y) Yes to replace the document on disk with the new one. The locked and named document remains on the screen.

Note: Be aware that locking a file does not protect it from being deleted, renamed or moved.

Using a locked file

A locked file can't be retrieved unless the correct password is typed at the Enter Password: prompt. Again, the typed password can't be seen on-screen.

The message ERROR: file is locked means you've made a mistake. If you used Retrieve (Shift-F10) to retrieve the document, the prompt Document to be retrieved then appears, followed by the filename. This gentle encouragement means you should try again.

If you tried to retrieve the locked file from the list (F5) menu and entered the wrong password, you'll be unceremoniously returned to the menu.

To (6) Look at a file from the List (F5) menu, you must enter the password. If you use (9) Find on the List (F5) menu, you still must enter the password to search the file. Finally, if you want to print a locked file from disk, you must first enter the password. There's no way around it.

Make sure the screen is clear when you Retrieve (Shift-F10) the locked document, or it won't be locked when you resave the document, since in effect you've created and saved a new document.

Unlocking a file

The password can be removed from any document. Do this by retrieving the locked file, then pressing Text In/Out (Ctrl-F5), (2) Password, (2) Remove.

Make sure you save the document without the password, or the version on disk will still have the password. You can also change the password at any time. Retrieve the document and press Text In/Out (Ctrl-F5), (2) Password, (1) Add/Change. Type the new password twice, the same way you did the original password. Again, make certain you save the file after changing the password.

You can also use the LOCK.WPM macro to change the name of the password.