# PASSWORD SECURITY IN FIREFOX

Ever left your laptop on the table in the coffee shop while you nip to the loo (without bothering to lock the screen), or order another flat white? Ever checked your personal webmail in Firefox or Chrome on an office computer at work, on a desktop that others have access to,...and clicked "yes" to remember the password for next time? If you did, well then, [this article in The Guardian](#) might interest you. This story reminded me just how easy it is to display the stored passwords in Firefox:

- Click **Tools** then **Options** (or *Edit > Preferences* if you're on Mac or Linux), then click the **Security Tab**, click the **Saved Passwords** button, click the **Show Passwords** button, click through the **Are you sure** button
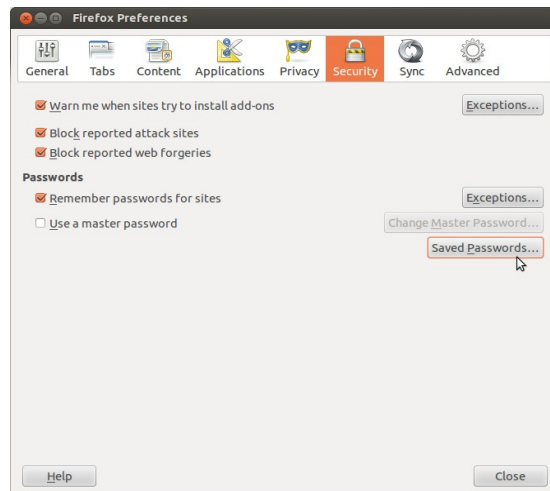

...and there you have it! A nice list of all the websites and their user-names and passwords that were ever saved in the browser. How many clicks was that? Maybe 6? I can do this in under 10 seconds. All the potential password thief now has to do is take a quick screen shot with their phone, close the window, and you will never know they were there... This is even worse than in Chrome, where the thief would have to steal passwords for each site one by one...

I could suggest several approaches for Firefox users to mitigate the situation:

- Just don't do it! Don't click that "Remember Password" button. Rely on your own memory...well, errm, I'm the first to admit that this is not always practically workable. So many logins, so many resets, so little time, deteriorating memory with age...
- If you don't want passwords stored on your work machines by multiple users, then simply set Firefox to delete stored passwords every time when the browser is closed. You can easily do this in the "Privacy" tab of the settings menu (and remind other users that checking personal web email on work computers is a potential security risk. Worms and trojans can be delivered via email.)

- Use the master password option in Firefox. Very simple to set up. In the "Security" tab, simply check the "master password" box.
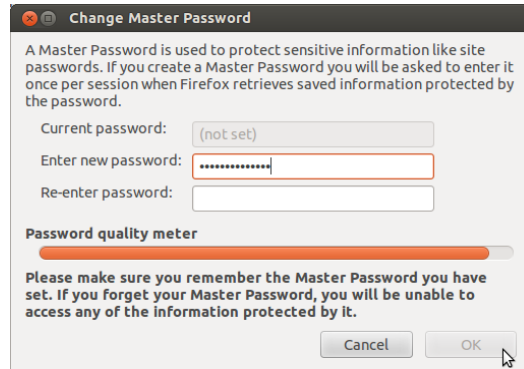
- **Lock your desktop** when you walk away! You should be doing this already. All you have to do in Windows is touch the Windows Key and the "L" key simultaneously. Of course, as a capable OSCAR user you've already set up a desktop screen-saver password with a time out lock, right? *right??* You haven't??? Oh, good golly! Click here in a hurry to learn how to do this.

- Remember the **physical security** of all your computers and devices! I for one, never leave my laptop unattended in the coffee shop, screen lock or no. User interface level passwords will only slow down hackers, they don't defeat them. Even if you set passwords in your desktop and in your browsers, any person with physical access to your computers or other devices and a little know-how and time can hack into them and get your passwords. That goes for your servers too. So keep those locked up. If you're super paranoid you could even install a Linux desktop on your PC and set it up with full disk encryption (Ubuntu makes that really easy to do).

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