

# Password Protecting Your Pages with htaccess

*Tutorial by Matt Doyle | Level: Intermediate | Published on 3 October 2005*

**Learn how to use Apache's .htaccess files to protect pages on your site with a username and password.**

## *Introduction*

You may have visited a web page that pops up a dialog box similar to this one:



If you don't know the username and password to enter, then you can't access the page or site - it's "password protected". It's sometimes handy to be able to password protect your pages like this - for example:

- You're building a new site, but you only want yourself (and maybe a select few) to be able to view the work-in-progress.
- You have an area of your site that you never want the general public to have access to - for example, your web stats or private pages.
- You have some paid (subscription) content on your site that only subscribers should be able to access.

Apache lets you password protect individual files, folders, or your entire site fairly easily. Read on to find out how it's done.

## *How it works*

To add password protection to your pages, you need to do the following two things:

1. Create a text file on your server that will store your username and password.
2. Create a special file called `.htaccess` in the folder you want to protect.

That's it! Now let's take a look at how to do each step.



### *Creating the password file*

The first step is to create a simple text file that will store your username and password, separated by a colon (:). The small catch is that the password must be *encrypted*. Luckily, there are many free web-based utilities that will encrypt the password for you. Try one of these:

- [4WebHelp's online .htpasswd encryption tool](#)
- [Alterlinks .htaccess password generator](#)
- [htmlite's htpasswd encryption page](#)

Simply enter your desired username and password in one of these pages and submit the form. You'll get back a string similar to the following:

```
fred:p29cmnw14a0et
```

Now, open up your favourite text editor (e.g. Notepad or TextEdit), then copy and paste the username/password string into the editor. Save the file and call it `.htpasswd`.

Next, upload this file to your website. Make sure you place it outside the Web root of your site if possible, as you don't want just anyone to be able to view the file! For example, place it above your `public_html` or `htdocs` folder. (Having said this, Apache is often set up by default to block web-based access to files beginning with `.ht`. Better safe than sorry though!)

If you can't place your `.htpasswd` file outside your Web root, name it something that's not easily guessable - for example, `.htxuymwp` - so that people won't be able to find it easily. (In addition, it helps to start the filename with `.ht`; as mentioned earlier, Apache usually blocks access to files starting with `.ht`.)

## Alternative: Creating the password file using `htpasswd`

If you have SSH access to your web server (or you're running Apache on a local machine), you can encrypt your password and add it to your password file in one go by using the `htpasswd` utility that comes with Apache. Simply SSH to your server or open up a terminal window on your local machine, `cd` to the folder where you want to create your password file, and type:

```
htpasswd -c .htpasswd fred
```

(where `fred` is the username you want to use). You'll be prompted to enter and re-type your password, then the `.htpasswd` file will be created for you.

## Creating the `.htaccess` file

Now that you have created and uploaded your password file, you need to tell Apache to use it to protect your page(s) or site. This is what your `.htaccess` file will do.

Open your text editor again, create a new file, and save it as `.htaccess`.

## Protecting a folder

To password protect a folder on your site, you need to put the following code in your `.htaccess` file:

```
AuthUserFile /full/path/to/.htpasswd
AuthType Basic
AuthName "My Secret Folder"
Require valid-user
```

`/full/path/to/.htpasswd` should be the full path to the `.htpasswd` file that you uploaded earlier. The full path is the path to the file from the Web server's volume root - for example, `/home/username/.htpasswd` or `C:\wwwroot\username\.htpasswd`. (If you're not sure of the full path to your site or home directory, ask your Web hosting company for this info.)

The above `.htaccess` file will password protect all files in the folder that it is placed in, and all sub-folders under that folder too. So if you wanted to password protect your entire site, you would place the `.htaccess` file in your Web root folder.

## Protecting a file

To password protect just a single file in a folder, use the following `.htaccess` file:

```
AuthUserFile /full/path/to/.htpasswd
AuthType Basic
AuthName "My Secret Page"

<Files "mypage.html">
  Require valid-user
</Files>
```

This will password protect just the `mypage.html` file in the folder where you put the `.htaccess` file.



## Uploading the `.htaccess` file

Once you've created your `.htaccess` file, upload it to your website, placing it in the folder (or folder containing the file) that you want to protect.

## Testing it out

Now use your Web browser to visit the folder or file that you've protected. You should see a password dialog like the one shown at the start of this tutorial. Type in the username and (unencrypted) password that you chose earlier, and you should be given access to your folder or file!

(By the way: with this type of password protection, you continue to have access to the password protected stuff until you restart your browser.)

## Problems?

If you can't access your stuff and the dialog keeps popping up, check that you entered the username and password correctly. If it still doesn't work, check the path to your `.htpasswd` file on the server - make sure the path specified in the `AuthUserFile` directive is correct. Also make sure that both the `.htpasswd` and `.htaccess` files are readable by the Web server user (`chmod 644` should do the trick for UNIX/Linux/FreeBSD servers).

If the password protection isn't working (i.e. you can still access your stuff without needing to enter a username/password), check that you uploaded your `.htaccess` file to the right folder. Also check that your web server supports `.htaccess` password protection (it needs to be an Apache server, and your server admin needs to have enabled the `AuthConfig` override for your site).

### *Password protecting more stuff*

- If you want to password protect other folders (that aren't under the currently protected folder), simply copy your `.htaccess` file to the new folder to be protected.
- To password protect more than one file in the same folder, just create more `<Files></Files>` blocks within the same `.htaccess` file - for example:

```
AuthUserFile /full/path/to/.htpasswd
AuthType Basic
AuthName "My Secret Page"
```

```
<Files "mypage.html">
  Require valid-user
</Files>
```

```
<Files "myotherpage.html">
  Require valid-user
</Files>
```

### *Adding more usernames and passwords*

You're not restricted to just one username/password. If you want to add other user-

names and passwords, simply repeat the "Creating the password file" procedure above, but add each new username/password line to your existing `.htpasswd` file, e.g.:

```
fred:p29cmnw14a0et  
linda:vwp45xakfh89
```

Alternatively, if you're using `htpasswd` to create your passwords, as described earlier, then you can add extra users with the command:

```
htpasswd .htpasswd linda
```

(where `linda` is the username you want to add). Make sure you don't include the `-c` option when adding additional users, or `htpasswd` will attempt to create a new password file!

### *Further info*

For full information on Apache's `mod_auth` module (the module that does password protection, amongst other things), see the [Apache mod\\_auth documentation](#).

### *Related articles*

*Follow Elated*

- [mod\\_rewrite Tutorial for Absolute Beginners](#)
- [Making a Custom Error Page](#)

### *Responses to this article*

#### **20 most recent responses (oldest first):**

**looby**

06-Jul-10 10:51

Thanks very much for this - it's a lot clearer than some other "explanations".

I wondered if I could just mention something which will be obvious to most but with

which I struggled. It took me a long time to work out what exactly to put in the AuthUserFile line. Eventually I realised that it must look something like this

```
AuthUserFile /home/your_user_name/folder/.htpasswd
```

I was originally trying

```
/folder/.htpasswd
```

which won't work.

Thanks again for a helpful article.

**matt**

07-Jul-10 04:19

**DaisyMae**

24-Sep-10 11:02

Hi

The password protection works like a dream, however once I've submitted the correct password I get an Internal Server Error.

It's the same error I get when I mess up the main website .htaccess file.

The main website is still working ok.

Do you have any ideas why it might be giving me this error?

Thanks 😊

xxx

**matt**

26-Sep-10 19:12

@DaisyMae: Take a look in your Apache error log - this will tell you the exact error message/problem.

**skelkins**

19-Oct-10 16:21

This was a great tutorial: clear, easy to follow, and spectacularly useful. The very few times I've needed to do this, I've never remembered how it's done, and it has always seemed to take me ages of searching around before I find a genuinely helpful how-to. This time, I'm bookmarking. Thank you so much for writing it!

**matt**

19-Oct-10 20:21

Thanks @skelkins, I'm glad you found the tutorial helpful. 😊

Cheers,  
Matt

**dougsix**

21-Nov-10 18:59

Your explanation was clear and worked fine for protecting web folders as described....but

I guess I was looking for something different.

On my first web I have some sub-folders with pages in them.

I want to prevent access directly into the sub-folders but allow the web browser to see the pages.

Hope I explained that correctly.

Thanks

**matt**

21-Nov-10 23:02



Hi dougsix,

If I understand you correctly, you want to prevent automatic directory listings. To do this with Apache, see:

<http://httpd.apache.org/docs/1.3/misc/FAQ.html#indexes>

Alternatively, you could put a blank index.html file in each directory.

Hope that helps!

**dougsix**

22-Nov-10 13:10

Thanks for the quick response.

The blank index.html page seems to do exactly what I wanted. Now the contents of the folders are not visible.

Thanks again.

Dougsix

**matt**

23-Nov-10 23:37

@dougsix: Great stuff. You'll find the .htaccess approach is generally more manageable, but the blank index.html technique works well if you only have a few directories to protect (and you don't want to mess around with .htaccess files).

**JustToSay**

27-Jan-11 09:36

Thanks for the info on using htpasswd.exe that was welcome info. And the passwd protect works fine also. But I would like to add in my case here I had an error in the log every hit saying.

client denied by server configuration: it was because I was allowing dir listing in the

folder to fix that I added.

IndexIgnore .htaccess to the .htaccess fixed the errors when it tried to read the dir listing every time.

```
AuthUserFile c:\webserver\ServerControl\.htpasswd
AuthName "WhoAreYou"
AuthType Basic
require valid-user
IndexIgnore .htaccess
Options +Indexes
# adding fancy directory indexing
IndexOptions +FancyIndexing
```

Thanks again for the nice how to..

**matt**

27-Jan-11 22:36

**tommie**

08-Feb-11 18:17

Love the explanation of how to protect folders and pages.

I'm working on a script that will allow users in the system to "auto login" or ftp to a password protected folder from a link provided to them. Is this even possible and if not with .htaccess is there another way?

ex:

<http://www.mydomain.com/protected-folder?>

`username=USERNAME&password=PASSWORD`

[Edited by tommie on 08-Feb-11 18:48]

**matt**

09-Feb-11 19:29

Hi tommie,

You can specify a username and, optionally, a password in an ftp:// URL:

<http://www.cs.rutgers.edu/~watrous/user-pass-url.html>

Cheers,

Matt

**banafsajy**

18-Jun-11 18:26

hi, how do you get users to logout from the protected page once they are done viewing the content?

Once I've successfully entered the protected page using this method and I close the window, the next time I visit the protected page it doesn't ask me for a password anymore.

So question is, how secure is this?

**matt**

23-Jun-11 03:37

@banafsajy: You can't really. The browser stores the credentials until it's closed:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basic\\_access\\_authentication#Disadvantages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basic_access_authentication#Disadvantages)

If you need to support timeouts and logouts then the best bet is to use server-side

code (PHP, ASP etc) with sessions. This also gives you more security since the credentials aren't sent by the browser with every request - only the session ID is sent.

Cheers,  
Matt

**gordon**

29-Feb-12 02:55

I tried this.

I put the password above the root directory.

Everything works well, except that if instead of entering a username and password, I just hit cancel, it takes me right into the directory I was trying to protect.

Any suggestions?

**matt**

04-Mar-12 23:43

@ gordon: No idea without seeing your .htaccess and password files. Sounds like maybe your Apache isn't set up for HTTP auth properly.

**derek7467**

27-Nov-12 12:45

Can i specify an error page if the user hits cancel and gives bad credentials?

**derek7467**

27-Nov-12 13:12

figured it out. thanks.

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