

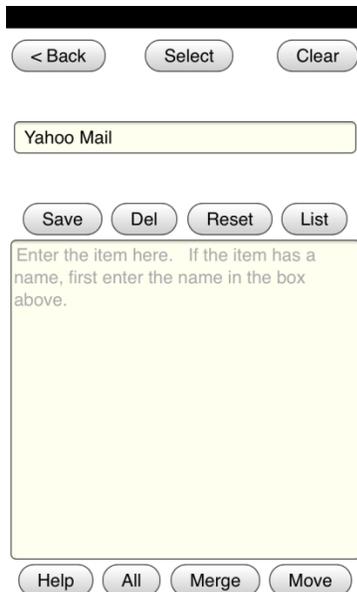
PassLok as a password manager

Coming up with good passwords is hard. Everybody knows that. Even so, systems administrators don't make things easy by forcing the use of capitals, numbers, symbols and, even worse, forcing frequent password changes. Just when you thought you had the perfect password, which you also managed to memorize, you have to change it! And they don't want you to write the new password anywhere!

An emerging solution to this apparently intractable problem is password managers. Password managers are programs that store your passwords securely, so you don't have to remember them. Typically the passwords are stored locally and on a secure Cloud location in encrypted form, and it takes a single password (which thankfully nobody will ever ask you to change) in order to decrypt and retrieve everything else.

Popular password managers are, for instance: LastPass, 1Password, RoboForm, and Norton Identity Safe. See [this article](#) to read a comparison between current choices. Some of them are free, others require a subscription. All will store your passwords under a single master password, and most will integrate with the browser in order to fill passwords for websites automatically.

PassLok was not designed as a password manager, but it can perform as such. The only thing it won't do is fill your logins automatically, but it makes this up with extreme portability, so you can go to a computer that is not yours (say, at a local library), and still have your complete password database available with a minimum of hassle.



The screenshot shows the PassLok interface for adding a new password entry. At the top, there are three buttons: "< Back", "Select", and "Clear". Below these is a small text input field containing "Yahoo Mail". Underneath the field are four buttons: "Save", "Del", "Reset", and "List". A large yellow text area contains the instruction: "Enter the item here. If the item has a name, first enter the name in the box above." At the bottom of the interface are four buttons: "Help", "All", "Merge", and "Move".

To store a password that you come up with or that is given to you, simply head to the **Locks** screen, enter a name for the password (such as the website name) in the small box at the top, and then the password itself in the large box. If you have previously entered your secret Key (via the **myKey** button), the password will be stored in encrypted form when you click the **Save** button. To retrieve it, simply start typing the name in the small box until the encrypted password appears in the bottom (the full name will also appear on the message line above the small box), and then type Enter. The password will decrypt (if you have entered your secret Key, of course), and display in the large box, ready to be copied.

Now, you may want to come up with a high-security password that is different for each website. Can this be done in PassLok? It's actually easier than what I just described. PassLok generates and stores a random 86-character password if you only write a name in the little box, leaving the large box empty, before clicking **Save**. To retrieve it, just type the name as described above. The random password is guaranteed to be different every time you do this, so different websites will end up with different passwords, all of them very secure.

Now the problem is rather not losing those passwords. In order to do this, or in case you want to use your password database on a different machine, you need to do a backup of your database. You do this by going to the **Locks** screen and clicking **Move**. A dialog will then appear warning you that if you click **OK** your database will be erased. Click **Cancel** at this point so your database is preserved; the backup will still be on the main screen. From there, you can copy it and take it to a different program, or simply email it to yourself (there's a button for that on the extra functions screen). The database is locked, and only your secret Key will unlock it.

When you want to use your passwords on a new computer, simply go to your email (or wherever online you have placed your encrypted database), copy it and paste it in the main box of PassLok, and then click **Lock/Unlock**. If you have previously entered your secret Key, the database will unlock and merge with whatever was stored locally. Now all your passwords are available on a machine that you never used before, and you never had to install anything. Nifty, uh? If you don't want to leave any traces when you're done, simply click **Move** at the end, but this time let the process go all the way through so the database is erased from that machine.

This is a trick that the other password managers cannot pull off, for they all need to be installed on a certain machine. Then, each installation needs to be credentialed so it has access to the password database, which is usually in the Cloud. The process is rather painful, especially if you have to do it multiple times. PassLok, by design, never contacts the Cloud, but as we have seen this doesn't mean you cannot store your passwords somewhere safe, so they are accessible to you everywhere.

