

HOW TO PROTECT DOCUMENTS USING ENCRYPTION

Legal professionals routinely send documents to clients and third parties, and some of those documents contain sensitive, confidential information. Protecting that information is critical, because emails can be hacked, stolen, or sent to the wrong recipient. One way to protect your client's information is to encrypt the document being emailed. You can encrypt a document by adding a password before attaching it to an email. Just as important: never send that password in the same email, or even the same method, as the document itself. Send it separately, such as by phone or text, so that intercepting the email alone won't expose the document.

If you find yourself encrypting documents on a regular basis, it may be worth investing in a dedicated email encryption program rather than adding a password for each document. Contact a practice management attorney to discuss which option best fits your firm's needs.

The instructions below demonstrate how to encrypt documents when using the desktop versions of Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat. Please note that instructions may vary if using a Mac.

Microsoft Word

1. With Microsoft Word open, click on the **Info** tab.
2. Select **Protect Document**. Under the new drop-down menu, click **Encrypt with Password**.
3. A new menu will pop up with an option to type in a password. Type it in and click **OK**. It will require you to enter it again.
4. Then, click **Save**. If you open it again, it will ask for a password. To remove the password, go to **File**, then **Protect Document**. When you see the pop-up menu with the password, delete the password and click **OK**.

Adobe Acrobat PDF

1. With the document open in Adobe Acrobat, click on the **File** tab.
2. Select **Properties** toward the middle of the menu.
3. A new menu should appear. Under the **Security** tab, you should see **Security Method** with a drop-down menu. Select **Password Security**.
4. A new menu will appear, and you should select the first box which states, **Require a password to open the document**.
5. Then, enter the password or passphrase in the box below. The program will let you know how strong your password is. Click **OK**.
6. Enter the password again to confirm. Click **OK**.
7. It is very important to save the document after entering the password. The document will then be labeled as "(SECURED)."
8. To remove password, go to the **Properties** menu and change the **Security Method** to **No Security**. Then click **Save**.

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