

Windows 10 and Computer Accounts

Dennis Eichenlaub

June 2016

With Windows 10, Microsoft encourages us to use a Microsoft Account to log into our computers. When updating a computer to Windows 10 or installing Windows 10 from scratch, it's easy to use a traditional Local Account. But the default is to use a Microsoft Account, and some may not know the difference.

I prefer using a Local Account, and my computers are set up to do so. Recently, when I went on the internet and logged my Microsoft cloud, Microsoft changed my computer from a Local Account to a Microsoft Account. When I Googled this, I found I was not the only person who experienced the account change on my computer.

This article discusses the difference between a Local Account and a Microsoft Account, why Microsoft is encouraging us to use Microsoft Accounts, and what to do if your computer has a Microsoft Account but you want to use a Local Account.

If you already know about Local Accounts and Microsoft Accounts, feel free to skip down to the bottom of the last page.

What is a Local Account?

A Local Account on our computer is what we have been using until now. Since at least 1993, when Windows NT was introduced, computers could have as many Local Accounts as desired. Each account has its own set of files, desktop icons, and permissions.



User Name:	<input type="text" value="Dennis"/>
Password:	<input type="password" value="***"/>

The user name is anything we want. I use my first name. The password is also anything we want. It can be simple or complex. If we leave the password blank, we can log into our computers without a password.

Windows 10 and Computer Accounts

Dennis Eichenlaub

June 2016

What is a Cloud Account?

A Cloud account is an account we use to enter any of our cloud programs when we go on the internet. Examples of cloud programs are Facebook, Google, and Microsoft.



User Name:	<input type="text" value="deichenlaub@gmail.com"/>
Password:	<input type="password" value="*****"/>

Sometimes cloud programs allow us to pick a user name. But if the user name we pick is already used, the program will recommend an alternate name, often by adding numbers. Other times cloud programs use our Email address as our user name. Most cloud programs require a "secure" password, with rules about how many numbers, letters, and special characters we must use.

What is a Microsoft Account?

Starting with Windows 8, Microsoft allowed us to sign into our Microsoft cloud and our PC at the same time, by using our Microsoft Account user name and password as the login to our computer. Starting with Windows 10, this became the default way to create accounts on our computer. Recently, Microsoft has gotten aggressive about converting our computers from Local Accounts to Microsoft Accounts.



User Name:	<input type="text" value="deichenlaub@gmail.com"/>
Password:	<input type="password" value="*****"/>

Windows 10 and Computer Accounts

Dennis Eichenlaub

June 2016

Why is Microsoft doing this?

Like many computer companies, Microsoft is advancing their cloud services. Using the Microsoft cloud, one can view or edit their documents from any device. Apple and Windows computers work equally well. One can also use most mobile devices. Microsoft Office is available for both Android and Apple phones and tablets. Office 365 offers free copies of office programs that are quite powerful and capable. One can view and edit their documents from a borrowed computer (such as at a library). It is even possible to view and edit documents from your computer when your computer is not connected to the internet. (Microsoft stores a copy of documents in the cloud and another copy on the computer. The next time the computer connects to the internet, the files “synch up”.)

The Microsoft cloud also allows us to share data. We can share all or part of our calendars and contacts with whoever we choose. We can collaborate with other people when creating documents. Or we can give other people “read only” access to some of our files. We have a lot of control over what we share and who we share it with.

As one might imagine, these are very advanced features. Microsoft invented the idea of logging into both our computer and our Microsoft cloud at the same time to make these features work better, and also to encourage us to take advantage of the new features.

Personally, I welcome Microsoft’s innovative work. However, I also think Microsoft should make it more clear what they are doing. And I especially think Microsoft shouldn’t modify my computer accounts without asking first. A lot of other people agree with me. But I don’t think Microsoft is being evil. They’re just being stupid.

What can I do about it?

If you Google “Windows 10 local account”, you will find several interesting articles on the subject, including two highlighted below.

If you don’t have a Local Account for your computer, you can create one. See:

<http://www.pcworld.com/article/2975023/windows/how-to-create-a-local-account-in-windows-10.html>

If you had a Local Account, but Microsoft switched you, you can switch back. See:

<http://www.howtogeek.com/230543/how-to-revert-your-windows-10-account-to-a-local-one-after-the-windows-store-hijacks-it/>