(Approx. 1074 words)

So Long LastPass – Hello NordPass

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For several years, I used LastPass as my password manager. The free version allowed my PC and Android devices to use the same encrypted vault. In 2021 there was a change. Only paid accounts could have PC and Android using a shared vault. The free version no longer did. This required one vault for the PC and another for Android devices.

Because of this, a few UCHUG members changed to the free open-source BitWarden for their multi-platform password management, which uses the same vault across all platforms. I tried BitWarden and did not care for the interface. LastPass either auto-filled or only required a single mouse click to fill in the login information. BitWarden usually needed two or three clicks. But it may have just been me or an incorrect setting. At any rate, I didn't want to change. So, I created an account for my Android devices and exported the PC vault. I also had different master passwords for each version. It required me to sink the two different vaults manually, but I was willing to accept this inconvenience for free.

Then, last year one of the LastPass backup servers was breached, and some user information was stolen. LastPass Corporate informed their users and assured everyone that sensitive data (usernames, passwords, credit card information, etc.) was encrypted and safe. This prompted me to re-evaluate password managers. After online reviews of password managers, I decided to give NordPass a try.

My reasons to try were:

1. They are highly rated in many password manager reeviews.

2. They recently had and passed an independent security audit.

3. They have never been breached. LastPass has. In 2022, LastPass suffered significant security incidents. User data, billing information, and vaults (with some fields encrypted and others not) were breached, leading many security professionals to call for users to change all their passwords and switch to other password managers.

4. NordPass is based in Panama, which has no mandatory data retention laws and does not participate in the Five Eyes or Fourteen Eyes alliances. This means that the company isn't required by law to keep logs or share them with governments.

5. Your NordPass vault is encrypted with the XChaCha20 encryption algorithm. XChaCha20 is more modern and faster than AES 256-bit. For an explanation, go to XChaCha20 Encryption vs. AES-256:What's the Difference? | NordPass

6. They have a family plan that allows up to 6 independent accounts. You can also share your vault with a family member. For example, this will allow me and my wife to have a synced vault.

7. The software is multi-platform. Even the free version can be used on all my devices using the same vault. After loading the NordPass free version, it asked for some account setup info: username, password, and Master Password. You should make it different from your account password, as it will be the magic key to decrypting your vault. I used a phrase that would be easy to remember containing the normal mix of upper/lower case, symbols, and numbers. You will use this key on all your devices to decrypt the vault. DO NOT FORGET WHAT THE MASTER PASSWORD IS! You are the only one that knows what it is. NordPass support cannot help if you forget it. There is one thing that may help. When you create your master password, you will receive a 24-character alphanumeric recovery code. The recovery code will allow you to create a new master password. You should lock this code away in a safe place. During the Windows setup process, you will be prompted to install the browser extension for whatever browsers you have installed. Setup will help you get and install the extension as needed.

After the setup, I exported my password vault from LastPass and imported it into NordPass. Everything went in without a hitch. Next, I went into settings, turned off launching at startup, and set the auto-lock to four hours. That way NordPass will only launch if I needed it, as there are times I am not doing anything that would require a login. Also, the four-hour timeout will keep NordPass from requiring a re-login unless I go over four hours or shut down.

I set the password generator for upper/lower case numbers and symbols. I also set it for 16 characters. Next was to install NordPass on my Android phone and tablet (both Samsung). The app is available in the play store and can be installed easily. The app also installs into your browsers, so there isn't a separate extension installation that I had on the Windows PC. You can launch the NordPass app on Android devices, but I find that just going to a site requiring a login will bring up NordPass as a selection for a spelling selection atop the onscreen keyboard. You select NordPass, which will open the window to input the Master Password. Then you can populate the login info for the site you are accessing.

On my phone, I left auto lock at five minutes as a trial time. If I go to another location requiring login info within five minutes, I do not need to input the Master Password again. Better to be more careful with the phone auto lock settings than the PC on my desk at home. After using NordPass for a few days, I liked how it worked. Since I wanted to have NordPass available to my wife and share the vault with her, I opted for the family plan. The cost for the two-year plan is $68.00. But with six separate accounts available, I can offer an account to both my wife and my son. Also, the paid plan offers a weak and reused password check and a data breach scanner to scan the web for data breaches. I spent some time doing some cleanup. When checking for weak passwords, a change password button will launch a browser to the site needing a password change. Unless you want to create a new password, NordPass will manually offer to autofill the new password per your password settings and save it to the vault.

I am happy and comfortable with NordPass. However, if you have never used a password manager or are looking for an alternative to one you may be using, go to https://nordpass.com/ and check the personal free version.