# How to Password Protect Word and Excel Files

Encrypting and password protecting Microsoft Word and Excel files is a simple matter. There are a couple of simple rules to remember, though. First, if you are emailing a password protected file, DO NOT send the password in the email along with the password protected file. Instead, have the recipient call you on the phone for it. Second, DO NOT use a password you normally use – try to make up a new one each time. That way, everybody you email a file to won't have your personal password(s). Finally, if you will be setting both an open and modify password, it is best to make them different. The point of setting a modify password is to keep people from changing the document/spreadsheet. If both protections are used, and both passwords are the same, when the password is entered to open the document, then it also becomes modifiable, thus defeating the purpose of setting a modify password.

Microsoft Office 2007:
To encrypt files in Microsoft Office 2007 first open your Word document or Excel spreadsheet. Then click the Office button in the top left corner of your window and choose "Prepare".
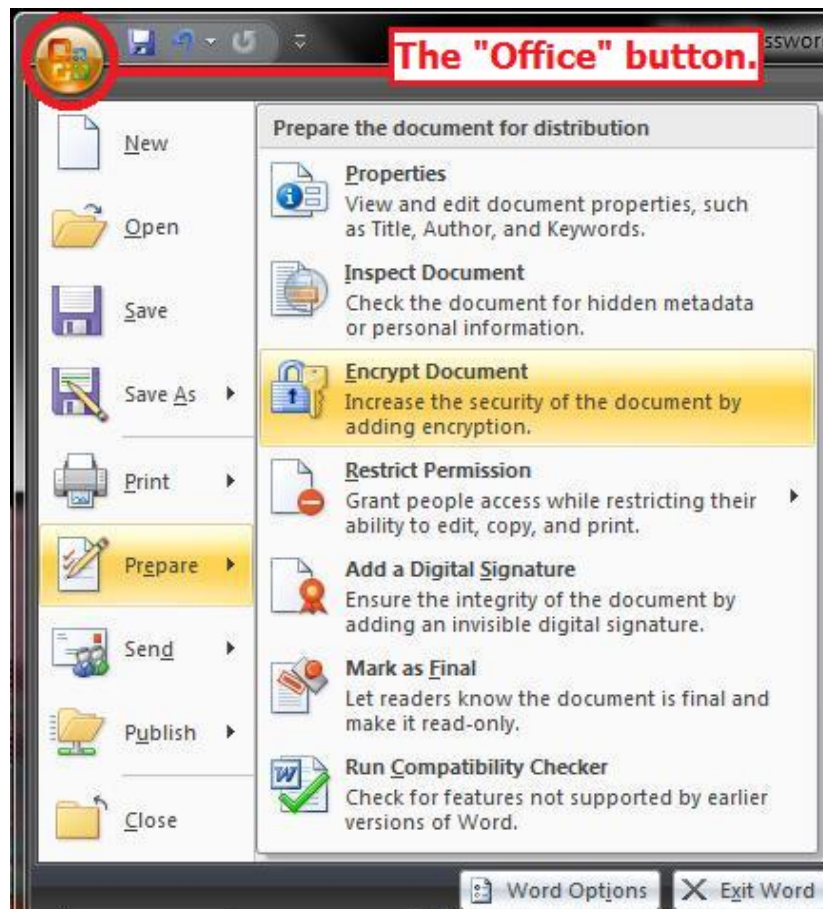
Now click "Encrypt Document" and enter the desired password when prompted.
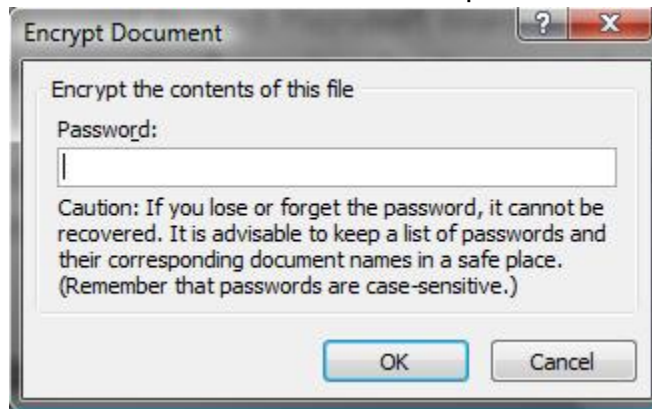
The password should follow the security standard set by the Information Security Password Policy, which can be viewed here:

http://www.admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=41007.

You may also set files to require a password to be modified. **This is only necessary if the integrity of the data must be maintained.** To set this option, click the Office button in the top left corner of your window and choose "Save As".
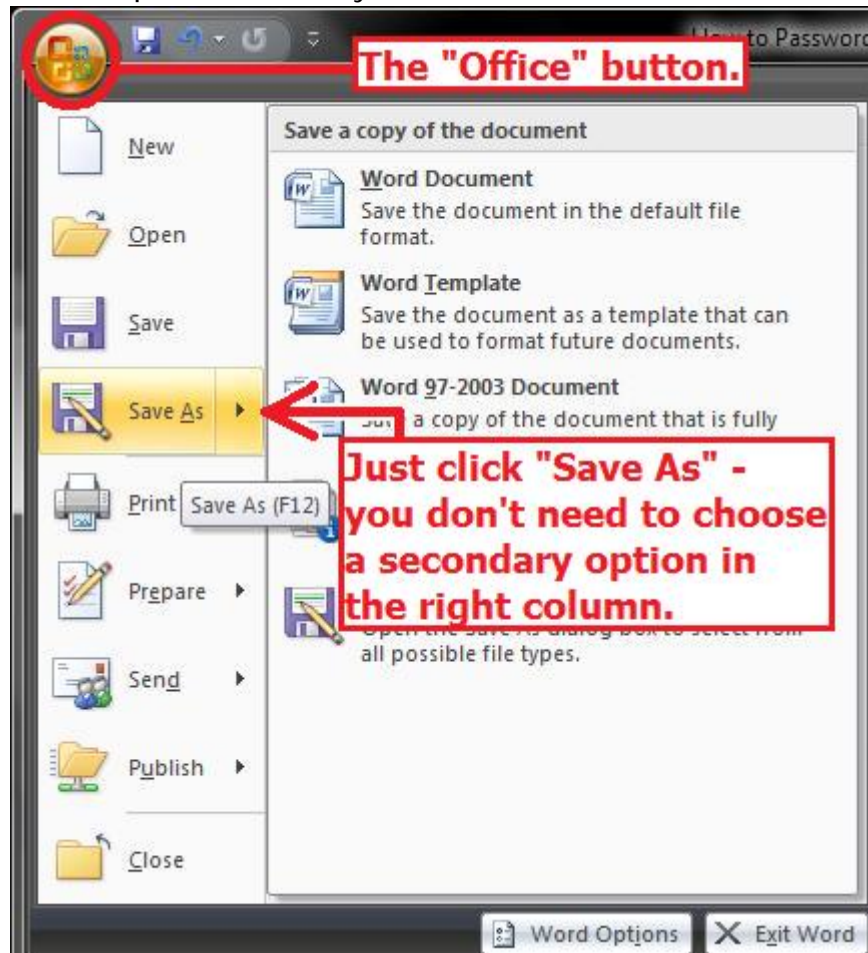
When the save window comes up, click the "Tools" drop-down menu (next to the "Save" button) and choose "General Options".
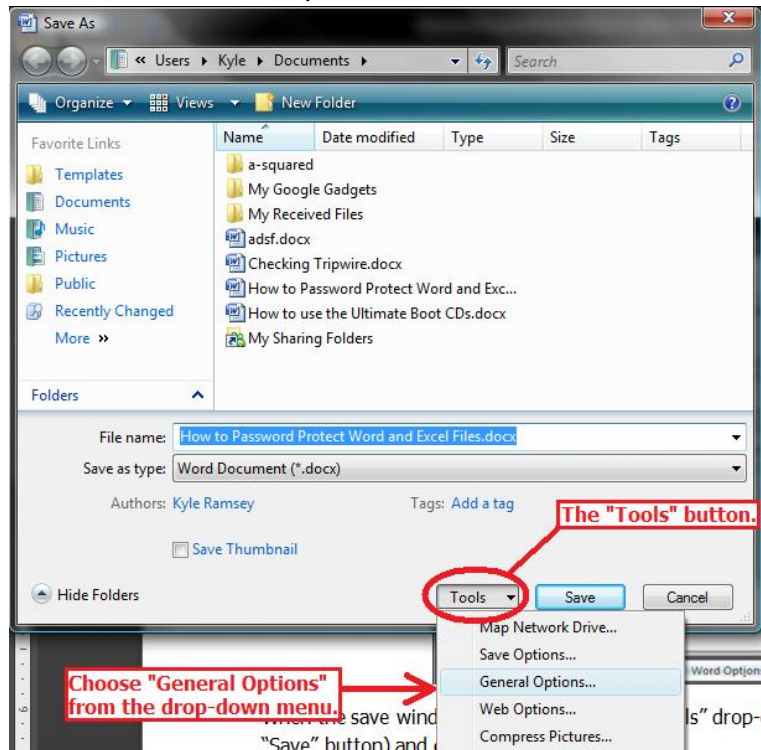

Enter the desired password in the "Password to modify:" field and click "OK".
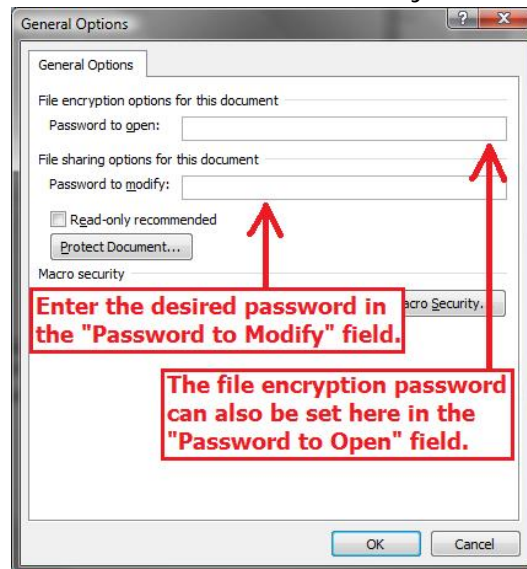

Once the password is set, you can click "Save" in the "Save As" window that should still be open to save the file with its new password restriction. This can also be done to previously created files as needed, so old files that need to be protected will not need to be recreated. You can set the encryption password here as well, in the "Password to open:" field, so if you will be setting both passwords routinely, you can save some time and set both right here.

Microsoft Office 2003 and XP:

Encrypting files in previous versions of Microsoft Office is very similar to the procedure for Office 2007. First open the file that you want to encrypt. Then click "File" and choose "Save As...".
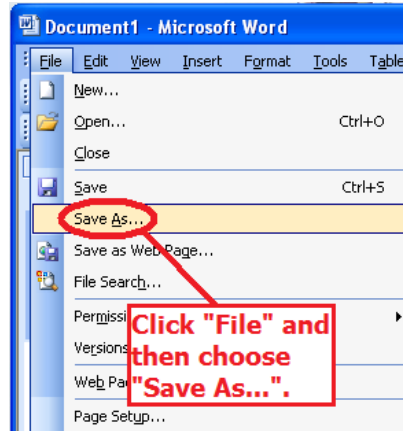

When the "Save As..." windows opens, click the "Tools" drop-down menu in the top right corner of the window. If you are encrypting a Word document, choose "Security Options...". If you are encrypting an Excel spreadsheet, choose "General Options...".
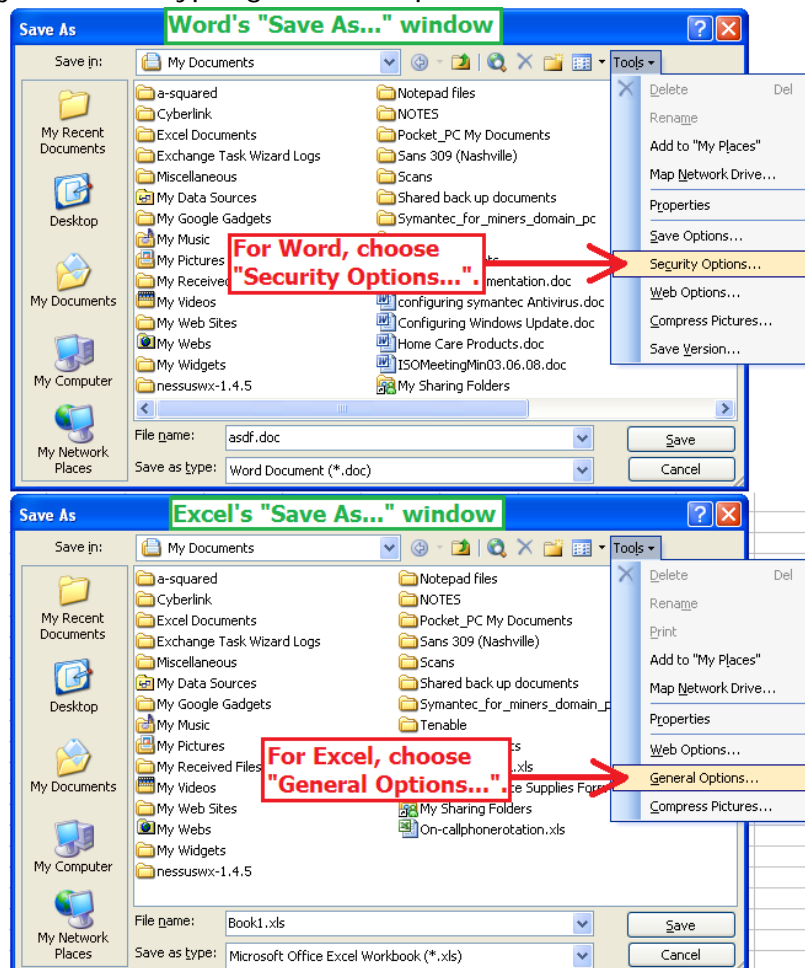
Enter the desired encryption password in the "Password to open:" field. You may also set files to require a password to be modified. **This is only necessary if the integrity of the data must be maintained.** To do this, enter a password in the "Password to modify:" field.
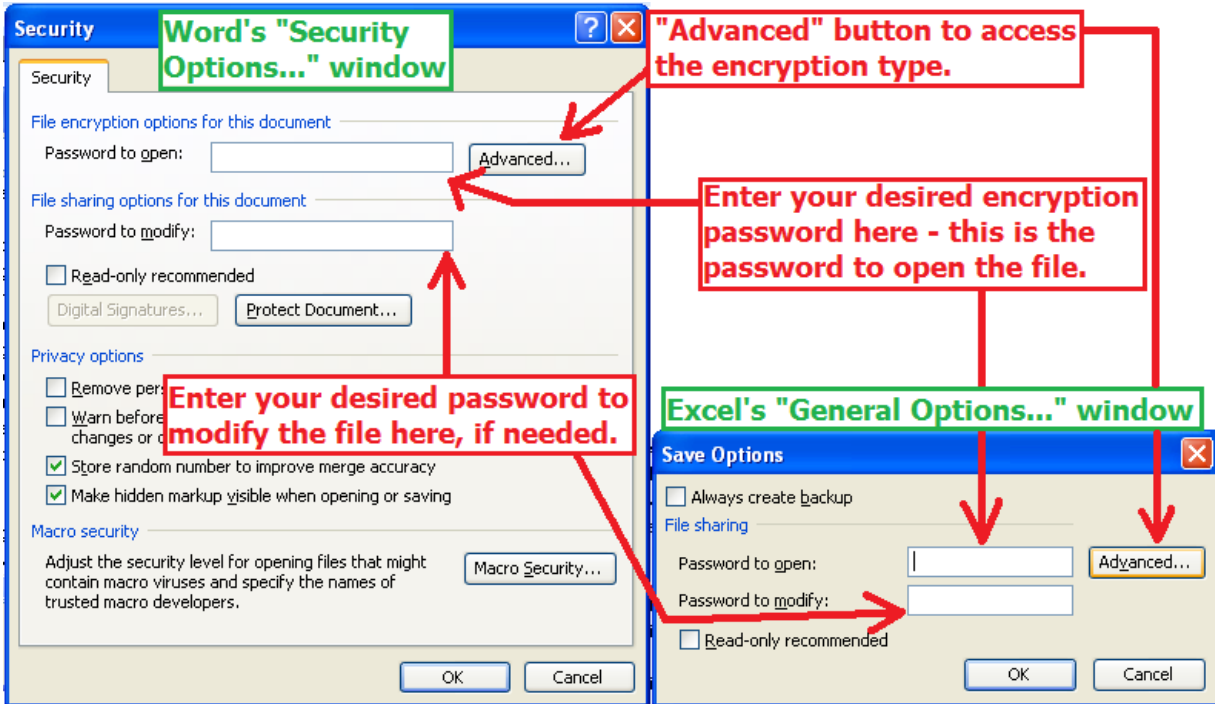
Now click the "Advanced" button to the right of the "Password to open:" field. Once the "Advanced" window opens, scroll down to the bottom of the list and choose "RC4, Microsoft Strong Cryptographic Provider" (the very bottom one) as the encryption type. Make sure that "Choose a key length:" is set to "128" and that "Encrypt document properties" is also check-marked. Click "OK" on the "Advanced" window.
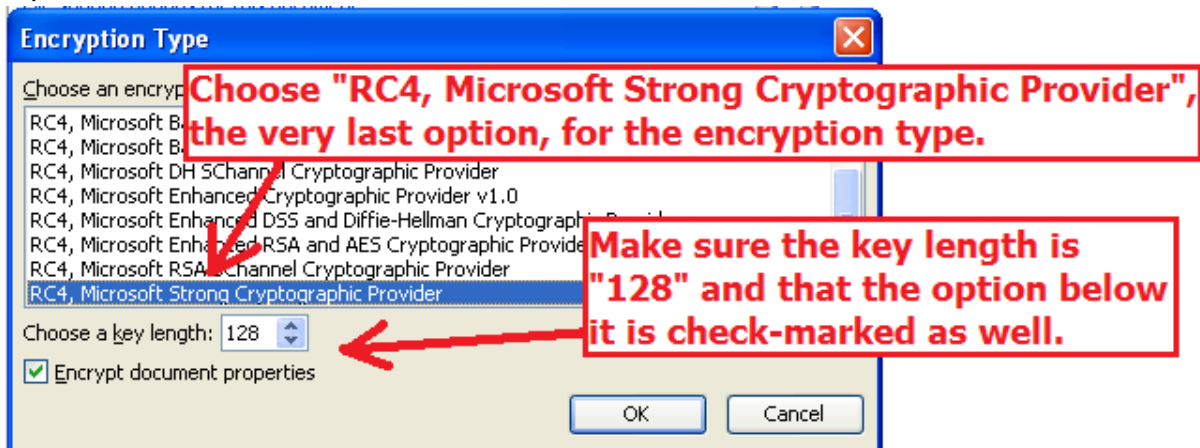
Once all options and passwords have been set, click "OK" on the "Security Options..."/"General Options..." window. Now click "Save" on the "Save As..." window and your document/spreadsheet is now password protected.