How to Activate An MIT Kerberos Account

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Overview

To activate an MIT Kerberos account, you typically just need to register a username and password you would like to use for your primary user account at MIT. This process automatically creates your Athena file space and activates your Athena account. In addition, you will also use your MIT Kerberos Account in a number of other contexts and for logging into Athena.

If you have already registered (i.e., you have established an MIT Kerberos acoount) but your Athena account still seems not to have been activated (even after a full day), contact Athena User Accounts at 617.253.1325 to have them activate your Athena account manually. (This may be the case, for instance, with staff members who have been at MIT for a number of years.)

Who's eligible

Every MIT student, faculty member, and on-campus staff member is eligible for an Athena account.

Registering your MIT Kerberos account

To register, staff and faculty need only supply their MIT ID number. Incoming undergraduates will have an account registration link from their my.mit.edu portal. Incoming graduate students will receive an email with a unique link to register for their account a few days after confirming they intend to attend MIT. Freshmen will register via a link from my.mit.edu which becomes available in May.
Students who have misplaced their email or never received it, can contact accounts@mit.edu User Accounts if you need to register for your Kerberos identity before arriving on campus.
Only students need an unique link to register. All others who are eligible for an Athena account need only their MIT ID.

Registration is easy:

1. Depending on your status's registration method, go to the unique link supplied in your email, on your my.mit.edu portal or visit http://web.mit.edu/register on any browser that supports Java applets. or go to any Athena workstation that displays the words "Welcome to Athena" and make sure the login window appears.
2. Click on the **Register for an Account** button at the bottom of the login window.
   Result: The registration window appears.
3. Enter your first name, middle initial, last name, and MIT ID number, as prompted. Enter your information exactly as it appears on your MIT ID card, my.mit.edu portal or email with unique link. If there are mistakes in the information as it appears on your MIT ID card (you may need to enter the "incorrect" information to register for your Athena account), report the errors to the appropriate campus agency later, and tell Athena User Accounts when the information has been updated.
4. Enter the username you would like for your MIT Kerberos account. Your username is a unique sequence of characters that identifies you to many electronic services at MIT and to other users. Use your username to login to Athena, send and receive email, and identify yourself on MITnet. The registration program suggests a name based on your real name, but you can pick any valid name.

   Note: Once you set your username, you cannot change it.

   More on Choosing a Username.
   An MIT Kerberos account username must be 3-8 characters long, containing only lowercase letters, numbers, and underscores. It cannot start with a number. A good username readily identifies you; usually an abbreviated form of your real name is best. For example, it is customary to use your first and middle initials, and as much of your last name as will fit (thus, William Jefferson Clinton might use wjclinto or wclinton). Pick a username you can live with – you will have to use this name for as long as you have an account at MIT.

5. Enter a password you would like to use as the key to your MIT Kerberos account. Your password is a secret sequence of characters that only you (and the Kerberos authentication servers) know. Each time you log into Athena, for example, you first enter your username to tell the system which particular user you are, then you enter your password to prove to the system that you are that user (and not someone trying to break into the account).
    - If the password you select is "insecure" (easy to break), the registration program makes you choose another. Once you have entered an acceptable password, the system prompts you to type in the very same password again to confirm that you know the password.

      Note: Whenever you enter your password (even in the registration process), none of the characters you type are displayed on the screen. This is to protect your password – Kerberos knows what you are typing even though you can't see it. When you're done, remember your password.

      More on Choosing a Password
      A Kerberos password must be at least 6 characters long, and can contain any combination of characters that appear on the computer keyboard. It must contain at least two types of characters (such as letters and numbers, or upper and lower-case letters, or letters and punctuation marks). Choose something that's easy for you to remember, but hard for others to guess.

      Don't use:

    - Variations on names (yours, your sweetheart's, your pet's)
    - Your phone number, birth date, or social security number
    - Names from popular culture (film stars, rock bands)
    - Any word in any dictionary.

      Note: Never let anyone else know your password – including friends or even the administrators of Athena or other systems that use your Kerberos identity. You can be held responsible for anything done in your username. Sometimes it may seem that you need to let someone else know your password (to share a file, for instance), but there are always workarounds. Don't give away the key to your account.
      Change your password frequently – every semester at least, and any time you think someone else may have learned it.

Related Links

Athena at MIT
Getting an MIT Kerberos Account
Athena Consulting
Options for Purchasing an Athena System