

Tips and tricks for external users with MFA for SharePoint

Use Private Browsing Mode to eliminate conflicts within your web browser. *You can also use a completely different web browser than you usually use, and this will eliminate conflicts.* Do not let the browser remember your credentials as this is not only a security risk, but can also cause conflicts when signing into multiple environments (SharePoint, Outlook, Teams, ETC.) If you're already signed into other Microsoft services (such as Outlook, OneDrive, or Teams), consider using private browsing mode to access the SharePoint site. Here's why:

1. **Avoid Account Confusion:**
 - When you're signed into multiple Microsoft services, your browser may remember your credentials.
 - Using private browsing mode ensures that your SharePoint login is separate from any existing sessions.
2. **Prevent Cross-Site Tracking:**
 - Private browsing mode prevents websites from tracking your activity across different sites.
 - It helps maintain better privacy and security while accessing external resources.
3. **Temporary Session:**
 - In private mode, your session is temporary and isolated.
 - Once you close the private browsing window, your login information won't be stored.

How to Use Private Browsing Mode (for the most common browsers):

Microsoft Edge (InPrivate Mode):

1. Open Microsoft Edge.
2. Click the three horizontal dots (menu) in the top-right corner.
3. Select "New InPrivate window."
4. Access the SharePoint link within this private window.

Google Chrome (Incognito Mode):

1. Open Google Chrome.
2. Click the three vertical dots (menu) in the top-right corner.
3. Choose "New incognito window."
4. Access the SharePoint link within this incognito window.

Firefox (Private Window):

1. Open a New Private Window
2. Click the menu button (three horizontal lines) in the top-right corner.
3. Select "New Private Window."
4. A new window with a dark purple mask at the top will open. This is your private browsing window.

Open a Link in a Private Window:

Right-click on any link and choose “Open Link in New Private Window” from the context menu.

Safari (Mac):

Browse Privately One Time:

1. Open Safari on your Mac.
2. Choose **File > New Private Window** or switch to an existing private browsing window (identified by a dark Smart Search field).
3. Browsing in private mode isolates tabs from each other, prevents tracking, and doesn't save webpages, AutoFill info, or recent searches.

What Private Browsing Does Not Save:

- Visited pages are not added to the history list.
- Form and search bar entries are not saved.
- Downloaded files are not listed in the Downloads Library.
- Cookies set in private windows are temporary and discarded after the session¹.

Remember that private browsing mode doesn't save your browsing history, cookies, or other data. It's a useful way to keep your SharePoint access separate from your other Microsoft services.

Once you selected your browser and are either using a completely different web browser or a in private/incognito window, you are ready to move on to setting up MFA.

1. Link Email to Microsoft Account:

If you haven't already linked your email address to a Microsoft account, follow these steps:

- Go to the Microsoft account creation page. ([Linked here](#))
- Click on the words “Create One!” to link your existing email with a set up a new Microsoft account. (*You can also choose to create a new email just for access to NYSED SharePoint*)
- Provide your email address and create a password.
- Follow the prompts to verify your identity (usually via email or phone).
- Once your Microsoft account is set up, proceed to the next steps.

2. Receive the Invitation Email:

- As an external user, you'll receive an email invitation from the SharePoint site administrator. This email will contain a link to access the SharePoint resource.

3. Click the Link:

- Open the email and right click on the provided link to access the SharePoint site and select copy link.
- Then paste it into the address bar of your chosen browser in its private or incognito session.

4. Sign In:

- You'll be directed to the SharePoint sign-in page.

- Enter your email address (the one you received the invitation on) and click “Next.”
5. **Complete MFA Challenge:**
- After entering your email, you’ll be prompted to complete an MFA challenge.
 - Depending on the organization’s setup, you may need to verify your identity using one of the following methods (*Please note, do not use the same method that you use for other log ins as this can cause issues*):
 - **Text Message (SMS):** You’ll receive a code via SMS to your registered phone number.
 - **Authentication App:** Use an authenticator app (such as Microsoft Authenticator) to generate a time-based one-time password (TOTP).
 - **Phone Call:** You’ll receive a phone call with a verification code.
 - **Other Methods:** Depending on the organization’s policies, there may be additional methods available.
6. **Set Up MFA:**
- If this is your first time setting up MFA, follow the prompts to set up your preferred MFA method.
 - You’ll need to choose and configure one or more of the available options (e.g., text message, app, phone call).
7. **Access SharePoint:**
- Once you’ve successfully completed the MFA setup, you’ll be granted access to the SharePoint site.
 - You can now navigate the site, view documents, collaborate, and perform other tasks.

Remember that MFA enhances security by requiring an additional layer of authentication beyond just a username and password. It helps protect your account and the resources you access. If you encounter any issues during the setup process, reach out to your organization’s IT as NYSED IT is not able to provide support for external users.

In the event you encounter any issues with this process, it is best to begin again after clearing your web browser cache. To do that follow the following steps:

Microsoft Edge:

- Click the three-dot menu icon in the top-right corner.
- Navigate to **Settings > Privacy, Search, and Services > Choose What to Clear**.
- Select **“Cached Images and Files”** from the list, and click **“Clear Now”**. [You can also set Edge to automatically clear the cache when you close the browser¹](#).

Google Chrome:

- Click the three-dot menu icon in the top-right corner.
- Go to **More tools > Clear browsing data**.
- Choose a time range (e.g., **“All time”**).
- Check the boxes for **“Cookies and other site data”** and **“Cached images and files”**.
- [Click **“Clear data”**](#)².

Mozilla Firefox:

- Click the menu button (three bars) and select **Options**.
- In the **Privacy & Security** section, click “**Clear Data...**” under **Cookies and Site Data**.
- Unselect “**Cookies and Site Data**” and keep “**Cached Web Content**” checked.
- [Click "Clear"](#)³.

Apple Safari:

- Click **Safari** in the menu bar and select **Preferences**.
- Go to the **Privacy** tab.
- Click “**Manage Website Data...**” and then “**Remove All**”.
- Check if “**Show Develop menu in menu bar**” is selected in the **Advanced** tab.
- If not, check the box.
- [Select Develop in the menu bar and click "Empty Caches"](#)⁴.

Other common issues:

Using the wrong site address:

Attempting to log into sharepoint.com or variables of that site, instead of the full link provided. Any deviation from the log in link, will result in a site not found or access denied message. To avoid this once you have successfully logged in using the link that was emailed to you it is a good idea to bookmark the site in your browser of choice. Then you can simply open the private browsing session, select your bookmark and the log into the site using MFA.

Signing in with the wrong email:

The link you received is the only email you can use to access the site and trying to log in with a different email will not work, unless you have gone through and set up that email with MFA already for that specific site. Always check that you are logging in with the correct email and password. Otherwise, you will be denied access.

Your guest account has been removed due to inactivity:

If you have not accessed the SharePoint site in over a year, your account credentials will have been removed from the system. You will need to contact the office and ask that they remove you completely from the environment and site and then add send you a new invite. Once they have confirmed that they have deleted you from the site, they will send a new invitation and you will then use that to complete the enrollment steps. To avoid deletion, you will want to log in every six months to keep your account active in our environment. Additionally, your access could have been removed by the office, in which case you would need to contact the office that provided you access to be sent a new invitation.

File permissions:

If you have followed the steps and get an access denied in the correct site, it is likely that there is an issue with the way the document/folder was added to the SharePoint you are accessing, and you will want to confirm with the office that you are working with that the document is set up correctly.