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Sync the keychain passphrase with the login account password in Snow Leopard

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Mac OS X Snow Leopard appears to roll in the functionality of the separate [Keychain Minder](#) tool. Keychain Minder has provided a way for system administrators to help keep the passphrase in sync with the login account password. That can be very helpful for users in a directory services environment, because users may change their password in ways outside Mac OS X, thereby leaving the keychain passphrase out of sync.

The [keychain passphrase is separate from the password used to log in to a Mac OS X user account](#). By default, however, the password on the login account is set as the passphrase for that user's default keychain. When the password and passphrase get out of sync, it can cause a lot of confusion for those who don't understand what's going on.

I'd wager it's a rare Mac OS X user that intentionally sets their login account password and keychain passphrase to be different, as I do. Therefore, keeping the two in sync is a benefit in a large percentage of cases.

Snow Leopard implements this feature as a preference item in Keychain Access, under the First Aid tab. It's labeled "Synchronize login keychain password with account." (I would have rephrased that as "default keychain" since keychains by other names can be the default keychain; the default name just happens to be "login" nowadays.)



Keychain Minder stored its settings in the `com.afp548.KeychainMinder.plist` preferences file. This doesn't seem to have any impact, one way or another, on this particular keychain preference.

So, I looked for and eventually discovered that the new built-in feature of Snow Leopard stores its state in the `SyncLoginPassword` key of the `com.apple.keychainaccess.plist` file. You can see this change by use of the `defaults` command in Terminal:

```
# Synchronize disabled in the Keychain Access preferences dialog
$ defaults read com.apple.keychainaccess SyncLoginPassword
0
# Synchronize enabled in the Keychain Access preferences dialog
$ defaults read com.apple.keychainaccess SyncLoginPassword
1
```

You will want to have this preference disabled on any user accounts — likely power users — whose login account passwords will differ from their keychain passphrases. Otherwise, they will get prompted regularly to "Synchronize," "Create New," or "Continue" during the login process.

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