TROUBLESHOOTING CASE STUDY

Demonstration sample

Outlook keeps asking for a password after an MFA change

Illustrative support scenario. The environment, timeline and outcome are fictional. Written to show how I troubleshoot and document; not paid client work.

Environment: Windows 11 · classic Outlook for Windows (Microsoft 365 Apps) · Microsoft 365 work account

SITUATION

After the company turned on multi-factor authentication (MFA), one user's Outlook asks for a password over and over. Webmail works.

NARROWING IT DOWN

- **Browser sign-in works** for the same account. That points toward desktop sign-in or app settings on this PC. It doesn't rule out a policy.
- **Only this user** is affected, so an outage is unlikely. A policy aimed at this user or device is still possible.
- **MFA changed yesterday,** so stale sign-in state is a lead, not a proven cause.

STEPS, SMALLEST CHANGE FIRST

1. With the user's OK, record the Outlook version, the exact message and time, and whether Teams or Word also prompt.
2. Check the connection and clock, restart, and install approved Windows and Office updates.
3. **File > Office Account:** confirm the right work account, then sign out and back in. Other Office apps may ask to sign in again.
4. Run Microsoft's sign-in troubleshooter. Look at **Settings > Accounts > Access work or school** without disconnecting or changing anything.
5. Only if the evidence points to an outdated saved Office sign-in: close Office and remove that one confirmed entry for this account in Credential Manager. Names vary, and it doesn't hold every Microsoft 365 sign-in.
6. Classic Outlook only: make a test profile from Outlook's profile picker (hold Shift while starting Outlook). Keep the old profile until the new one works.

ILLUSTRATIVE OUTCOME

After steps 3 and 5, the prompts stopped. Tested sending, receiving and restarting Outlook twice. This fits stale sign-in state; the root cause wasn't independently confirmed.

WHEN I ESCALATE

If browser sign-in also fails, a policy or device-compliance message appears, or approved steps don't fix it, I send the Microsoft 365 administrator the messages, times and steps taken.

> *Client note: "The repeated password prompts stopped after I refreshed your Office sign-in and cleared one outdated saved sign-in. If they come back, send me the exact message and tell me whether outlook.office.com still works."*