A Log-in Finger Ring? Google Working on Password Alternatives

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The topic of passwords has made headlines in the past year — from high-profile hacks [1] to web users repeatedly not picking the right ones [2] — but Google [3] has its sights set on making the login-process much more secure in the future.

How secure, you may ask? Consider logging into Gmail [4] with a high-tech ring worn on your finger or a key card that plugs into your computer's USB port.

The Yubikey is resilient to being dropped, and can also be taken underwater.

As detailed in a research paper in *IEEE Security & Privacy Magazine* [5] and reported on by *Wired* [6], Google is already looking into password alternatives in the form of passdevices. The initiatives have also been confirmed by *Mashable*.

"We're focused on making authentication more secure, and yet easier to manage. We believe experiments like these can help make login systems better," a Google spokesperson said.

Google is currently running a pilot program with USB cards called Yubikeys [7], which aims to get passwords off computers and the cloud. This means that instead of having Google accounts tied to text, they would be linked with an actual device.

"We'd like your smartphone or smartcard-embedded finger ring to authorise a new computer via a tap on the computer, even in situations in which your phone might be without cellular connectivity," Google said in its research paper.

However, some may argue having a physical authentication device might be another thing you have to worry about not leaving home without. This also means if a card or ring is lost or stolen, it should immediately be reported.

Another solution on Google's radar is a chip embedded within your smartphone. With close-range wireless, users could potentially tap the computer to unlock email or even just be within range.

In the meantime, Google plans on implementing a system not linked to hardware or software so anyone with a supported browser. If you don't want to wait, Google's two-factor authentication sends your phone a log-in code whenever you access your account from an unfamiliar computer.

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http://www.wirelessdesignmag.com/news/2013/01/log-finger-ring-google-working-password-alternatives?qt-most_popular=0

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