

# WALLETS & PRIVATE KEYS

Cryptocurrency wallets do exactly what the name implies; they are applications or devices that store cryptocurrency. There are several options for storing your cryptocurrency, which each offering its own level of security and ease of use.

While there are several variations, wallets can be categorized as follows:

**Software**  
**Hardware**  
**Mobile**

**Browser Interface/  
Extension (Online)**

**Paper Wallet**

Additionally, software wallets can either be full nodes or lite clients. Both can store cryptocurrencies, but light clients only download part of the blockchain, taking up a fraction of the storage space compared with a full node would.

Simply put, private keys are the master password to your cryptocurrency. Private keys can be derived from a seed phrase, which is often used to restore a wallet.

The holder of the private key is the only one who has ultimate control over the coins associated (by a public key) with the corresponding private key. It is extremely important that you **BACK UP AND STORE YOUR PRIVATE KEYS IN A SAFE AND SECURE**

**PLACE**. Losing a wallet is not a big deal, but rather a minor inconvenience as long as you have access to the wallet's private keys. This will require you to download or purchase a new wallet, but you'll be able to restore all of your cryptocurrency using your private keys.

Some of these wallet options offer custodial services where you do not have control of your own private keys. Instead, they are managed on your behalf by the wallet provider. Some wallets offer custodial services where a third-party manages your keys for you. While these can be beneficial for less tech-savvy users, there is always a risk that the third party could be compromised and your funds could be lost.

## SOFTWARE

Software wallets are downloadable applications that act as a bridge between your computer and the blockchain. Software wallets are often cryptocurrency specific and are either released by a supporting foundation or as an open source project.

- [MyEtherWallet.com](#)
- [Bitcoin Wallets: https://bitcoin.org/en/wallets/web/](https://bitcoin.org/en/wallets/web/)

## HARDWARE

Hardware wallets are physical devices that essentially take your private keys off of the internet by securely storing them on your hardware device. These devices vary in shape and size, but some resemble a thumb drive. Hardware wallets use software that allows interaction with the blockchain without the risk of your private keys being exposed via the internet.

- [Nano](#)
- [Trezor](#)
- [Bitbox](#)

## MOBILE

Mobile wallets offer the most convenient of the crypto storage options when it comes to spending or receiving digital currencies. Many mobile wallets are integrated into Dapp browsers, allowing seamless transactions within Dapps. Mobile wallets are what is known as “hot wallets,” designed for everyday spending and receiving of cryptocurrency. These wallets are not the most secure way to store cryptocurrency, but what they lack in security they make for up in easy use.

- [Jaxx](#)
- [Coinbase Wallet \(formerly Toshi\)](#)

## INTERFACE

Interface wallets are web-based storage applications that often integrate directly into a browser. For example, Metamask, an Ethereum based browser extension, allows users to interact directly with decentralized applications, or Dapps. Metamask has a wallet feature, allowing you to actively participate in decentralized applications.

- [Metamask](#)
- [MEW](#)
- [MyCrypto](#)

## PHYSICAL WALLETS

It might be counterintuitive, but a physical wallet is one of the most secure ways to store your cryptocurrency. By not having your private keys exposed to the internet, there is less chance that something could go wrong, making a paper wallet one of the most secure options. Of course, physical wallets make transacting with cryptocurrency a more difficult option than other wallets. In order to get your cryptocurrency back to a spendable state, you would simply have to restore your paper wallet into an appropriate, more transaction oriented wallet, such as the options above.

- [Crypto Key Stack](#)
- [Crypto Steel](#)