

Outlook Desktop - Repeated Sign-In Prompt (WAM BrokerPlugin Reset)

Field	Details
Document Type	Known Issue - Workaround
Applies To	Microsoft Outlook Desktop (Classic), Windows 10/11, Microsoft 365 / Exchange Online
Audience	2nd Line Support / Exchange Online Admins
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Overview

This article documents a workaround for a recurring issue where Outlook Desktop prompts users to sign in repeatedly — as frequently as every 15 minutes to every hour - without retaining the session after completing authentication. This issue can affect individual users or a large number of users simultaneously across an organisation.

The Issue

Users open Outlook and are presented with a **"Sign In"** prompt unexpectedly. After signing in successfully, the prompt reappears again after a short period. The following self-service steps do **not** resolve the issue:

- Restarting the laptop or PC
- Signing out of Outlook and signing back in
- Restarting Microsoft Teams or other Office apps

The issue may also surface across other Microsoft 365 services (Teams, OneDrive, SharePoint) simultaneously, as they share the same underlying authentication component.

Root Cause

Modern Microsoft 365 applications do not handle authentication directly. Instead, they delegate all sign-in and token management to a Windows OS component called **Web Account Manager (WAM)** and its associated background plugin: `Microsoft.AAD.BrokerPlugin`.

Normal Authentication Flow

User opens Outlook
↓
Outlook requests a token from WAM
↓
WAM calls Microsoft.AAD.BrokerPlugin
↓
Plugin communicates with Microsoft Entra ID
↓
Entra ID returns an OAuth access token (valid ~1 hour)
and a refresh token (valid up to 90 days)
↓
WAM silently refreshes the token in the background
when it expires - user is never prompted again

What Breaks the Flow

When the `Microsoft.AAD.BrokerPlugin` folder becomes corrupted or enters a broken state, the silent background refresh fails. When the 1-hour access token expires, Outlook falls back to prompting the user because WAM cannot silently obtain a new one.

Known Triggers

This corruption can occur due to, but is not limited to:

Windows OS cumulative/security updates (confirmed trigger - February 2026 Patch Tuesday, build 10.0.29510.1001 and earlier - January 2026 KB5074109)

Incomplete or interrupted Microsoft 365 app updates

User profile corruption

Mid-session password or MFA changes in Entra ID

Entra ID token store inconsistencies after account modifications

This workaround applies to all of the above scenarios. If a user is experiencing the repeated Outlook sign-in prompt and no Conditional Access policy or service health incident is identified as the cause, resetting the BrokerPlugin is the recommended first-line fix.

Before You Start

Rule out the following before applying this fix at scale:

Check	Where
Active Microsoft service incident	M365 Admin Center > Health > Service Health
Recently modified Conditional Access policy	Entra Admin Center > Protection > Conditional Access
User password recently expired or changed	Entra Admin Center > Users
Entra sign-in logs showing policy interrupts	Entra Admin Center > Monitoring > Sign-in Logs

If none of the above are present, proceed with the fix below.

Fix: Manual Steps (Per Machine)

Run on the affected user's machine, logged in as that user. You do not need to be a local admin for Steps 1-4.

Step 1: Close All Microsoft Applications

Fully close **Outlook**, **Teams**, **OneDrive** and any other Office applications. Check the system tray and ensure none are still running in the background.

Step 2: Navigate to the BrokerPlugin Folder

Press `win + R` and enter:

```
%localappdata%\Packages
```

Locate the following folder:

```
Microsoft.AAD.BrokerPlugin_cw5n1h2txyewy
```

Step 3: Rename the Folder

Rename the folder by appending `.old` to the end:

```
Microsoft.AAD.BrokerPlugin_cw5n1h2txyewy.old
```

Do not delete the folder. Renaming it preserves a backup and instructs Windows to recreate it fresh on next boot. If you encounter the error "The action can't be completed because the folder or a file in it is open in another program", see the Troubleshooting section below before continuing.

Step 4: Clear Cached Credentials

Open **Control Panel** ? **Credential Manager** ? **Windows Credentials**

Remove all entries beginning with:

```
MicrosoftOffice16_*
```

```
msteams_*
```

```
Microsoft_OC_*
```

Any entry referencing `office.com` or `outlook.com`

Step 5: Reboot the Machine

Perform a **full restart** (not sign out). Windows will automatically recreate the `Microsoft.AAD.BrokerPlugin` folder in a clean state on boot.

Step 6: Sign Back Into Outlook

Open Outlook. When prompted, sign in once. The session should persist without re-prompting.

Fix: Automated Script (Bulk Deployment)

Use this script for fleet-wide remediation via RMM tool, Intune Remediation Script, or GPO logon script.

Important: This script must run in the affected user's context, not as SYSTEM or a local admin account. The BrokerPlugin folder is per-user profile.

```
# Step 1: Kill processes holding the BrokerPlugin before rename
Stop-Process -Name "Microsoft.AAD.BrokerPlugin" -Force -ErrorAction SilentlyContinue
Stop-Process -Name "backgroundTaskHost" -Force -ErrorAction SilentlyContinue
Stop-Process -Name "RuntimeBroker" -Force -ErrorAction SilentlyContinue

# Brief pause to allow process termination to complete
Start-Sleep -Seconds 2

# Step 2: Rename the BrokerPlugin folder
$brokerPath = "$env:LOCALAPPDATA\Packages\Microsoft.AAD.BrokerPlugin_cw5n1h2txyewy"

if (Test-Path $brokerPath) {
    try {
        Rename-Item -Path $brokerPath -NewName "$brokerPath.old" -Force -ErrorAction Stop
        Write-Output "SUCCESS: BrokerPlugin reset complete. Reboot required."
    }
    catch {
        Write-Output "ERROR: Failed to rename BrokerPlugin folder. $($_.Exception.Message)"
    }
} else {
    Write-Output "INFO: BrokerPlugin folder not found or already reset. No action taken."
}
```

Post-deployment: Push a reboot policy immediately after the script runs, or instruct users to restart when prompted.

Troubleshooting — "The Action Can't Be Completed" Rename Error

If Windows displays:

“The action can't be completed because the folder or a file in it is open in another program”

This means a background Windows process is still holding a lock on the folder even though all visible apps are closed. The `Microsoft.AAD.BrokerPlugin` process runs silently in the background and can respawn quickly. Use the following method to identify and terminate it before retrying the rename:

Using Windows Resource Monitor (No Additional Tools Required)

Press **Win + R** and run:

```
perfmon.exe /res
```

In Resource Monitor, select the **CPU** tab

Scroll down and expand the **Associated Handles** section

In the search box, type:

```
AAD.BrokerPlugin
```

Press **Enter** — Resource Monitor will display all processes currently holding a handle on the folder

Right-click each result ? **End Process**

Immediately return to the folder and complete the rename (Step 3 above) before the process respawns

Expected Outcome

Resolution time	Under 5 minutes + reboot
User impact	One-time sign-in prompt after reboot, then session persists normally
Recurrence	Should not recur unless a subsequent update re-introduces the regression

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