Keeping your BLUF account secure with Authy

Security is something we take seriously on BLUF, and we encourage all our members to think carefully about it as well. Remember that if someone has access to your BLUF account, not only can they see information about you, but they can also view the profiles and photos of other BLUF members, potentially exposing information about those people, without their consent.

One of the principle rules of BLUF is that you must not pass on information about other members which might compromise their privacy, and one of the best ways of doing that is to keep your account secure. That means not sharing passwords with anyone else, and not leaving your computer unattended when you're signed in to BLUF.

There are also other ways you can make things secure:

- Turn on 'profile protection.' This means that before any changes can be made to your BLUF profile, or to important settings, a password or other form of identification will be required. So, if you have friends who are in the habit of, for example, posting fake status updates on Facebook if you leave your computer lying around, this can prevent that.

- Turn on 'secondary identification.' This setting - often referred to as Two Factor Authentication, or 2FA - means that rather than a password, when identification is required by BLUF, you will have to use something different, in the form of "Something you have", rather than "Something you know." The idea is that even if someone finds or guesses your password, your account is still protected, unless they also have the thing you need.

This guide is concerned with secondary identification on BLUF, using an app on your mobile phone, which generates numbers. Other types of secondary identification can be used on BLUF, such as security keys that plug into your computer, but using an app is simple, and free.

BLUF security will work with a range of apps, including Google Authenticator, Microsoft Authenticator, and others that are compatible with those. In this guide, we are using one called Authy, which we recommend because it is free, for both Android and iOS, and it's also very simple to transfer information to a new phone.
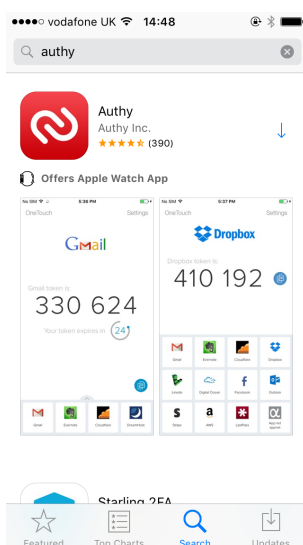
If you have any admin permissions on the BLUF website, for example for helping to approve photos, or updating events, you must set up secondary identification to access those functions. Other members can use this guide, to add extra protection to their accounts.

The screenshots in this guide have been taken using an iPhone, but the Authy app looks almost identical on Android, too.

Getting started

To start, install Authy on your phone. For iPhone users, tap the App store, and search for Authy. For Android, go to the Play Store and search for Authy. You should see a result similar to this, for 'Authy' from 'Authy Inc'. You can also go to the Authy website, https://authy.com/features/setup/ and read more information there, or click the icons to go to your app store.

Tap the download button in the store to install Authy on your device.

Before you proceed any further, sign in to your BLUF account - ideally on a separate computer, rather than your mobile phone - and click on the menu with your BLUF number, then choose Settings, followed by Account.

If you have never been to the Account page before, you will have to select two security questions, and enter their answers, before you can proceed. These questions will be used if we need to verify you, for example if you change email address without telling us, and then want to access your BLUF account. Once they have been set, you'll see the main account page.

Setting up your BLUF account options

On the account page, you'll see an option labelled "Profile protection" with a tick box. If this box is ticked, then you'll be asked for confirmation before being able to edit your profile, or update photos.

If the box is already ticked, then when you set up secondary identification, you'll be asked to enter your BLUF password. Once secondary identification has been set up, you'll enter a code from the Authy app. For now, don't change the setting.

Instead, scroll down to the next section, "Secondary identification" and click button marked Setup next to Authenticator.

You'll see a screen showing a square barcode (a 'QR code'), with a box next to it and a button labelled Verify, and a button below it labelled 'Disable Authenticator.'

Adding a code to Authy

Now, go back to your phone, and open the Authy app. You'll be prompted to enter your mobile phone number - this is so that Authy can help you sync information between phones, but you must use the same mobile number on each device. You'll be asked to get verification - tap SMS, and when the message arrives, enter the code number into the box.
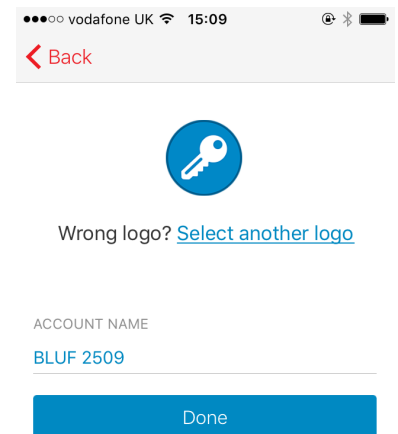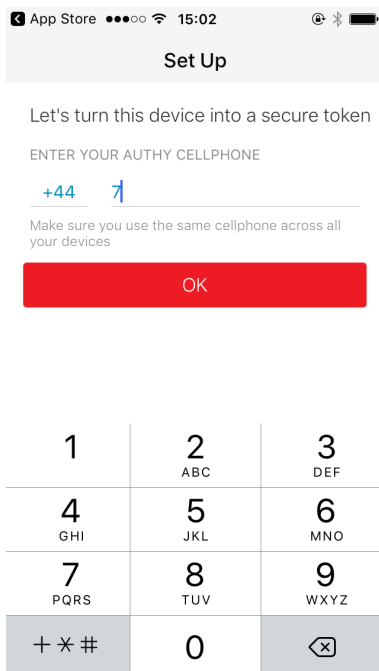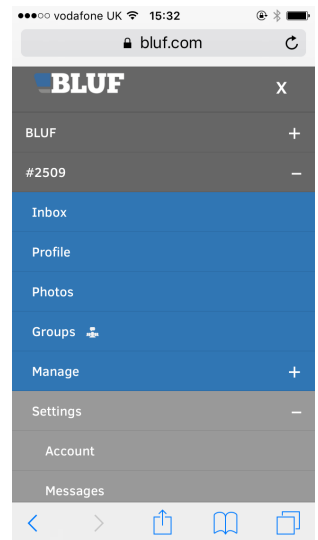
If you're asked to grant Authy any permissions, tap Allow.

Now, when the main screen appears, tap the cog wheel at the top right. On an Android device, tap the top right of the screen and choose Setting from the menu.

On the settings screen select Accounts, and then press the + button to add a new account - on iPhone this should be at the top right of the screen, and on Android it will be at the bottom right.
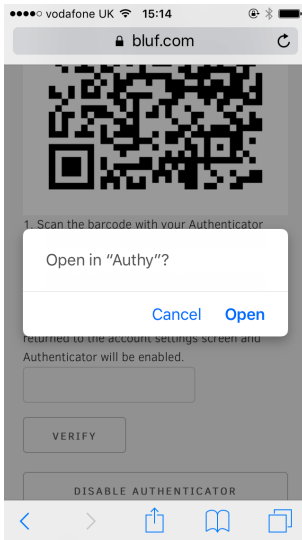
Now, tap the button labelled 'Scan QR code' and point your phone at the computer displaying the BLUF setup page. You may need to move it a little to give it a good view of the code, and you may be asked to give Authy permission to use the camera.

When the code has been read, you'll see the account name - which is BLUF followed by your BLUF number - and all you need to do is click Done.

What if I don't have a separate computer?

Don't panic. If you have to sign in to BLUF on your mobile phone, you can still set up Authy. Go to the setup page on BLUF, as described in the section above, and below the QR code, you will see a line that says

2. Your code is …

followed by the a code, highlighted in blue. Just tap on the code, and your phone will ask if you want to open the link in Authy, which will automatically add it to your device.

Don't forget to verify!

After you have added the code, exit from Authy's settings, and return to the main screen of the app. Tap on the icon labelled 'BLUF xxx' with your number, eg BLUF 2509, and you will see a six digit number. On the iPhone, a circular counter shows how many seconds until it expires, and on Android, a progress bar above the number moves from right to left. The number changes every 30 seconds.

Before you can use Authy on BLUF, you must verify it has been set up correctly. Wait until the number has just changed, and then type it into the box on the BLUF website, next to the Verify button, and then click Verify.

You should see a note that your account is now protected by Authenticator, and you'll be returned to the main Account screen.

If you forget to verify the setup of your app, you won't be able to use it to access BLUF admin functions.
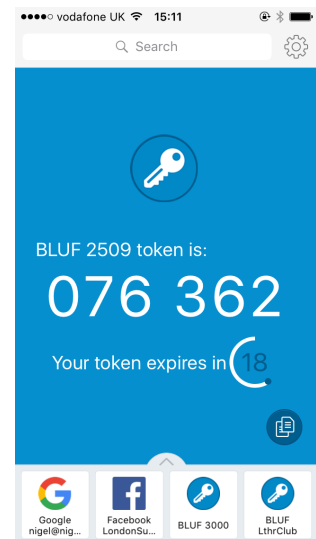
Next steps

If you just need Authy set up to access BLUF admin functions, you're done. Next time you need to sign in to Admin, after clicking the link wait until the website pops up the box, and instead of typing in your password, open the Authy app on your phone to get the current code.

It's usually best to wait for a new code if the current one has only a few seconds left, in case it's changed by the time you finish typing it in.

Now that you have secondary identification added to your account, remember that if you enable Profile Protection, you will need the app to update your profile or photos, or to change options on the Account page.

Below the Secondary identification section of the website, you will see a reminder of when it will be used, and an additional tickbox, 'Require secondary identification to log in to BLUF'

If you tick this option, then after entering your BLUF id or email, and password when you log in, you'll see a page asking you to enter the current code from your app. This will ensure that, even if someone knows your password, they won't be able to get in to your BLUF account unless they also have access to your mobile phone to get the Authy app.

If you use more than one phone, you can set up Authy on others too - use the same phone number as the original one, to link them all to the same account, then create a backup password on the first phone, and enter the same password on other devices. Authy will then copy the details of all the sites to each device. There are also versions of Authy for Mac and Windows.

As well as BLUF, you can use Authy to protect many other online sites and services, including your Google account, Facebook, Twitter, Paypal, Amazon, Adobe, Dropbox, and more. Anywhere a site suggests using Google Authenticator to generate a code, you can use Authy instead.

And now that you've seen how easy it is, why not protect your other online accounts the same way?