

Disney Tech Primer - Part 2: All About Magic Bands

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Check out [Part 1](#) of this series.

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□ Putting My Disney Experience on and wearing it - Magic Bands

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□ The most visible, most tangible, and most talked-about aspect of all of Disney's new tech is undoubtedly the Magic Bands.

A Magic Band is a [durable, rubberized wristband](#). Inside this wristband is an RFID chip programmed with a unique serial number. This RFID chip performs exactly the same function as the magnetic strip on a credit or debit card, or the magnetic strips on older Walt Disney World park passes and room keys - it identifies that particular Magic Band to one of the many RFID readers now appearing throughout the parks.

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□ What is a Magic Band?

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□ Don't think of the Magic Band itself as being anything special. A Magic Band is nothing more than an alternative form of ticket/identity media, just like the old Key to the World cards were. But instead of swiping a card with a magnetic strip through a slot, you now tap your Magic Band onto a reader device. And in a slick piece of product branding, Disney has made sure that every Magic Band reader you encounter is either shaped like an illuminated Mickey Mouse head (most of which light up green to indicate when your Magic Band has been successfully read), or has a Mickey Head embossed on it.

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□ Magic Bands are the primary way to access all of the features of your My Disney Experience (MDX) account when you're at Walt Disney World (WDW). WDW resort packages include free Magic Bands for each member of your party. Once you have completed the Online Check-in process, you will be able to click the Customize Magic Bands option on MyDisneyExperience.com, and choose colors for each member of your party's Magic Bands. The Magic Bands also have your name printed on the inside, and you can choose how you want your name to appear.

How do I get a Magic Band?

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□ You have until 30 days prior to arrival to go to your MDX account and customize your Magic Bands. At the 30-day mark, your Magic Bands will automatically be mailed to you at home. Disney does not mail Magic

Bands internationally, however; if you are visiting from outside the United States, you can still customize your Magic Bands, and they will be waiting for you at your WDW resort when you check in. It's just that simple.

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□ How do Magic Bands work?

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□ Each Magic Band has a totally unique serial number. Your Magic Bands are linked to your MyDisneyExperience account, and can be used to access anything else that is associated with the account - your Disney's Magical Express reservation, your dining reservations, your FastPass+ selections, your park passes, your WDW resort room's door lock, your Disney Dining Plan credits, and even the "charge to room" feature - it's all associated with your MDX account, and it can all be accessed with your Magic Band.

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□ Thus, when you get off the plane at MCO, you tap your Magic Band on a reader to board the Disney's Magical Express bus. When you arrive at WDW, you can go straight to a park, and simply tap your Magic Band on a reader to enter the park, because your park passes are already associated with your MDX account. When one of your FastPass+ return times comes up, you tap your Magic Band on a reader to get into the FastPass queue of the attraction. When you go to a restaurant for lunch, you tap your Magic Band on a reader to access your Disney Dining Plan credits. When you buy a souvenir, you tap your Magic Band on a reader to charge the item to your room.

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□ What if I lose my Magic Band?

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□ For added security, any time you make a purchase with your Magic Band, or use one of your Disney Dining Plan credits, you will be asked to input a 4-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN); this prevents any nefarious persons from using your Magic Band if you happen to lose it. You get to choose your own PIN; it's done in your My Disney Experience account, naturally, and should be done well in advance of your arrival.

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□ Likewise, when you enter a WDW theme park or water park, you tap your Magic Band on the reader, and place your finger on a biometric scanner; the fingerprint ensures that only you can use your Magic Band to enter a park and use one of your ticket entitlements.

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□ If you lose one of your Magic Bands, don't panic! It can be deactivated and replaced, just like a lost ATM or credit card, because none of this stuff is "on" the Magic Band itself; all of your info, park passes, and reservations are in the WDW computer system, linked to

your MDX account. The Magic Band is simply a form of ID that you use to access your MDX account, and everything associated with it. Replacement Magic Bands will be plain gray, though; you only get the pretty colors when you customize your Magic Bands in advance.

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□ They look a little cheesy, like a child's toy. How secure are they?

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□ Magic Bands are extremely durable and very secure. They're also waterproof and shockproof; you can wear them safely while swimming in your resort pool, while taking the plunge from Summit Plummet, while golfing, horseback riding, or screaming your way through Rock & n Roller Coaster. They're easily adjustable, and even have a tear-off section that makes them small enough for small children's wrists. For added security, there are also decorative sliders available which hold the band closed.

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□ What if my Magic Band breaks or stops working?

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□ Quite simply, go to Guest Relations if you're at one of the parks or Downtown Disney, or to the front desk if you're at a WDW resort. They'll either fix it, replace it, or refer you to someone else who can help.

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□ But there are also quite a few roving Disney Cast Members to be found, mostly around the park entrances and FastPass+ kiosks, who are armed with iPads which can read Magic Bands.

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□ Can I... you know, PLUS the Magic Band somehow?

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□ When you arrive at WDW, you will find a number of accessories available in the gift shops to customize the look of your Magic Bands, including slipcovers and dangling charms. You can PLUS it to your heart's content.

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□ Jennifer Marx has written a couple of excellent blog posts about plussing your Magic bands:

□ [Bling out your Magic Band](#)

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□ [Make a CoverBand for your Magic Band](#)

About The Author: Will Garmer is a native Marylander from the suburbs of Baltimore, who works for an engineering firm as a CAD (computer-aided drafting) and GIS (geographic information systems) specialist. In plain language, he makes maps. And he's a bit of a technophile who likes to keep abreast of current tech trends. He's been going to Walt Disney World yearly since 1990, enjoying the parks and resorts and taking thousands of

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