

# How did the scopes for the CryptProtectMemory function end up in a strange order?

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April 23, 2015



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A few weeks ago, I left an exercise: Propose a theory as to why the names and values of the scopes for the CryptProtectMemory function are the way they are.

I didn't know the answer when I posed the exercise, but I went back and dug into it.

The `CryptProtectMemory` function started out as an internal function back in Windows 2000, and when originally introduced, there were only two scopes: Within a process and cross-process. The Flags parameter therefore defined only a single bit, leaving the other bits reserved (must be zero). If the bottom bit was clear, then the memory was protected within a process; if the bottom bit was set, then the memory was protected across processes.

Later, the team realized that they needed to add a third scope, the one that corresponds to `CRYPTPROTECT_SAME_LOGON`. They didn't want to make a breaking change for existing callers, but they saw that they could retarget what used to be a Flags parameter as an Options parameter, and they added the new scope as a third option.

The numeric values remained unchanged, which meant that the new function was backward-compatible with existing callers.

**Bonus chatter:** Commenter sense is correct that SAME\_LOGON can be used by a service while impersonating the client, however it is not the case that the scope can be larger when impersonating a remote user. The memory block returned by the `CryptProtectMemory` function can be decrypted only on the same machine that encrypted it, and only as long as the machine has not been rebooted.

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