

Changing passwords from a Windows PC with PuTTY

These excessively detailed instructions show how to change your password on the Philosophy department server using the PuTTY program for an SSH connection. The steps are really extremely simple, but since many users are uncomfortable with anything like a command line interface, below are some pictures of this process being done (specifically with a copy of Windows Vista and Internet Explorer). I don't have analogous instructions for OS X, but I'll try to get some up soon.

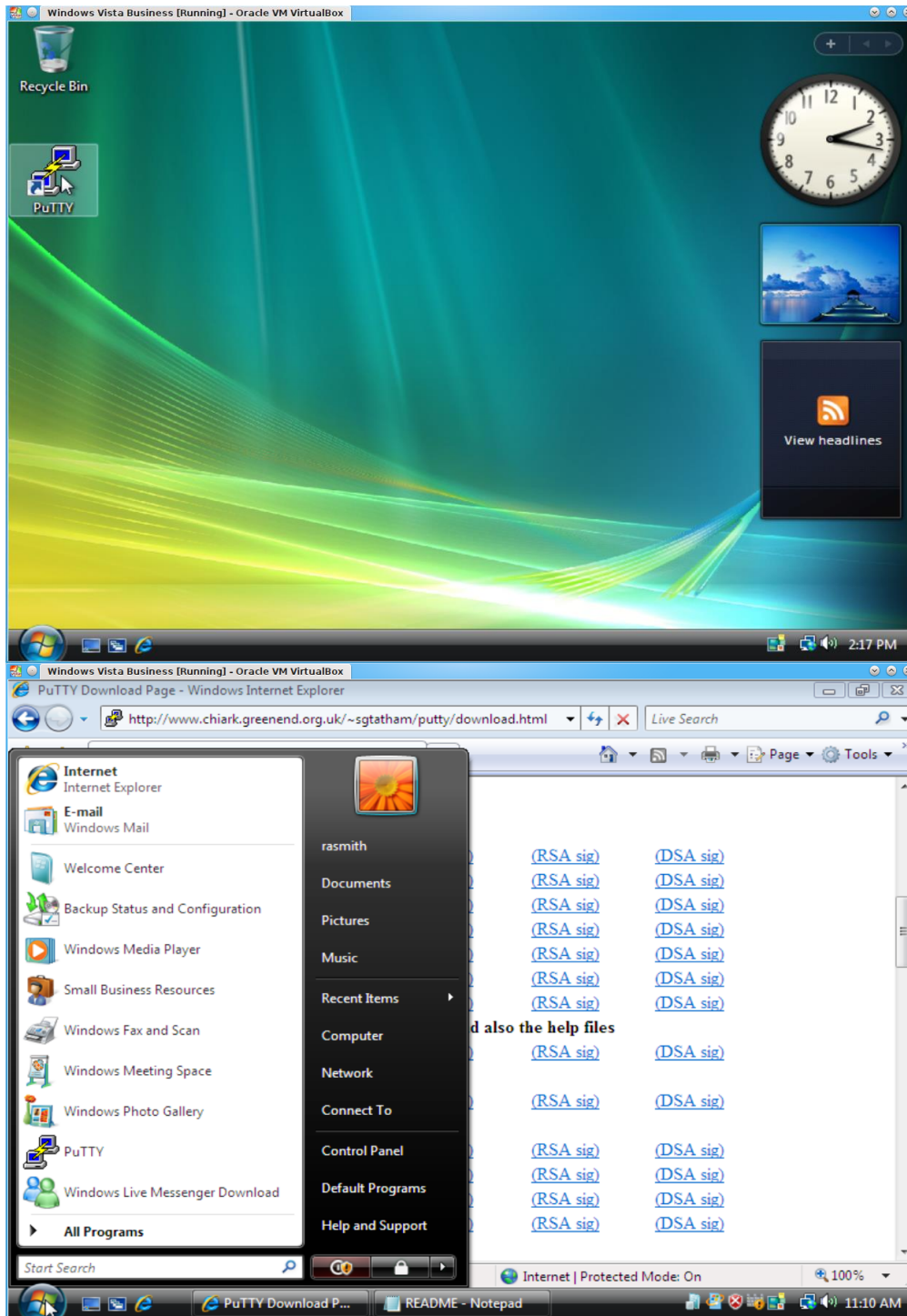
Before you start

Step 0. Before you do anything, decide what your new password is going to be. **This is important:** If you rush off to start changing a password without deciding what you're going to change it to and then suddenly realize in the middle of the process, you may very well forget what you changed it to later, or you may hastily put in a weak password. So, give it some thought ahead of time. I suggest you write it down temporarily before you enter it, to make sure you don't get it wrong. Choose a password at least eight characters long, containing a mix of upper and lower case letters, numbers, and punctuation symbols (!@#%&,.:?=-+ are usually good choices). If you do write it down, **DON'T** put your password on a post-it note attached to your computer, leave it on your desk, or put it in your top drawer. Instead, memorize it. If you did write it down, do something very secure with the paper you wrote it on (burn it, eat it, shred it into ten thousand tiny pieces, put it in a safe, keep it where you keep other things you absolutely don't want anyone to get to).

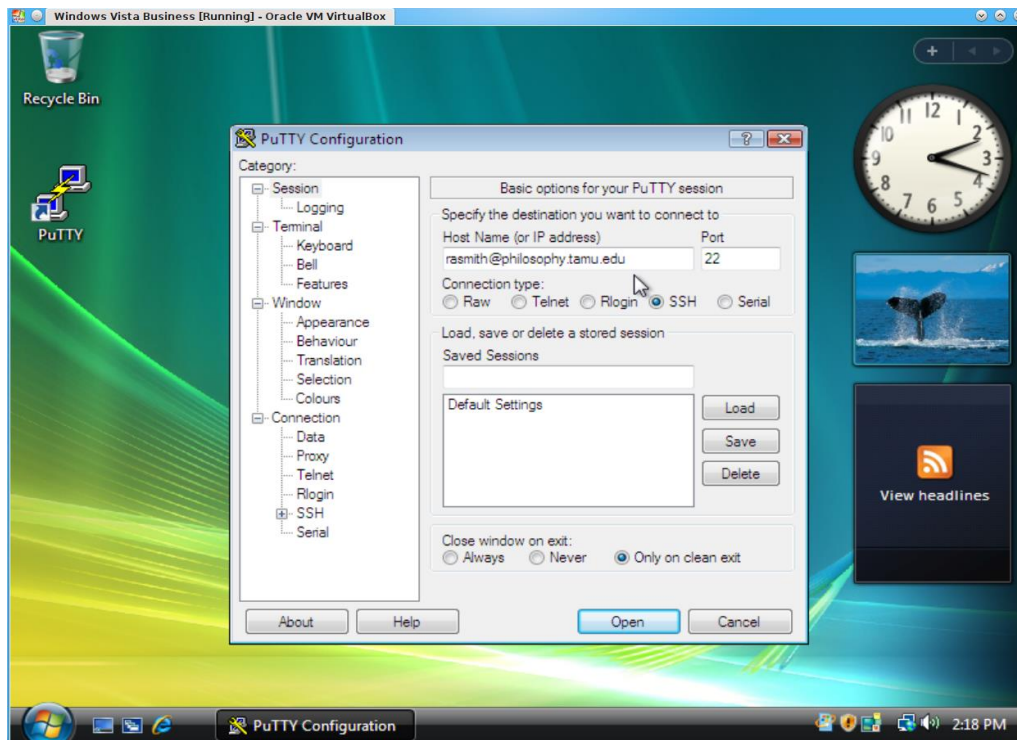
The steps

I am assuming that the PuTTY program is already installed on your computer. If not, you may download it free of charge from <http://the.earth.li/~sgtatham/putty/latest/x86/putty.exe>

Step 1. Find the PuTTY program, either on your desktop or in the start menu. Its icon shows two computer terminals connected by a sort of lightning bolt:



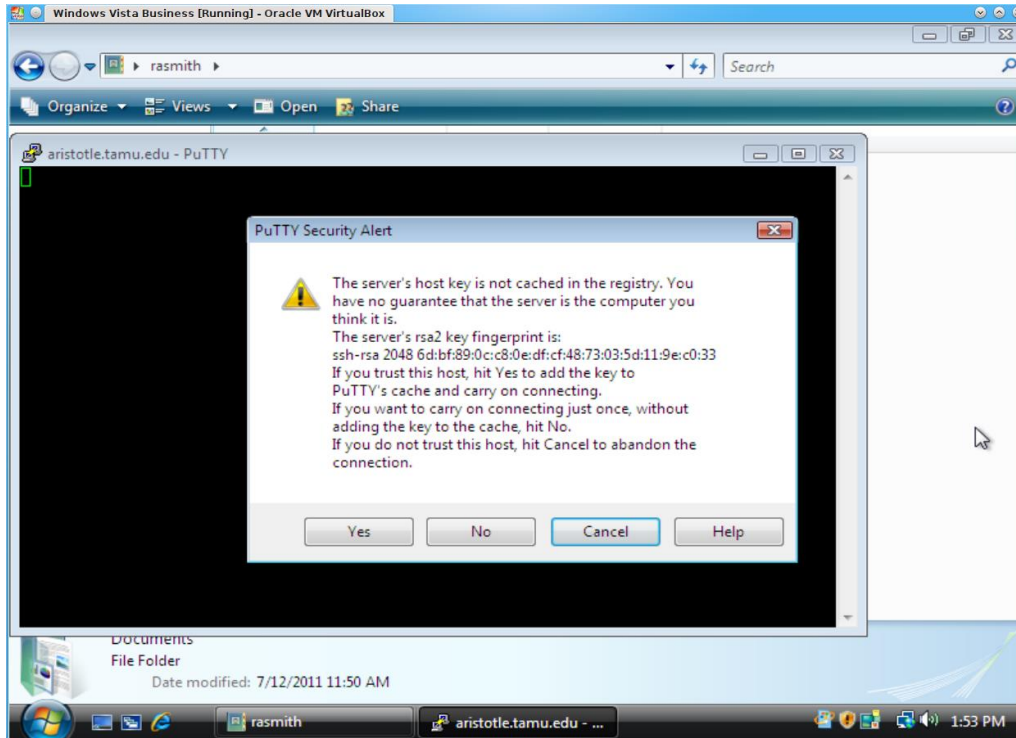
Step 2. Click on the PuTTY icon. You will see the following interface (the window in the middle of the screen with "PuTTY Configuration" at the top):



Note the field the mouse pointer is pointing at labeled "Host Name (or IP address)". Enter your username for the server followed by "@philosophy.tamu.edu" there (see the example, but change "rasmith" to your user name).

Step 3. Click the "Open" button at the bottom of the PuTTY interface window.

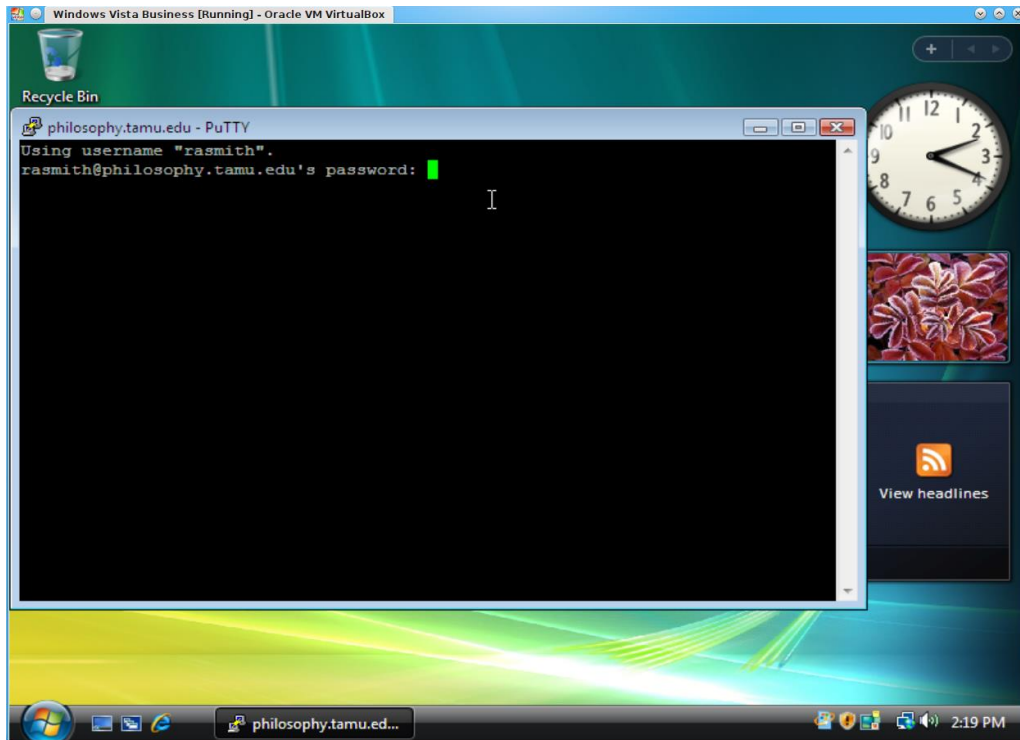
What happens next depends on whether you've used PuTTY to connect to the department's server before. If you haven't, then you will get the following somewhat intimidating message:



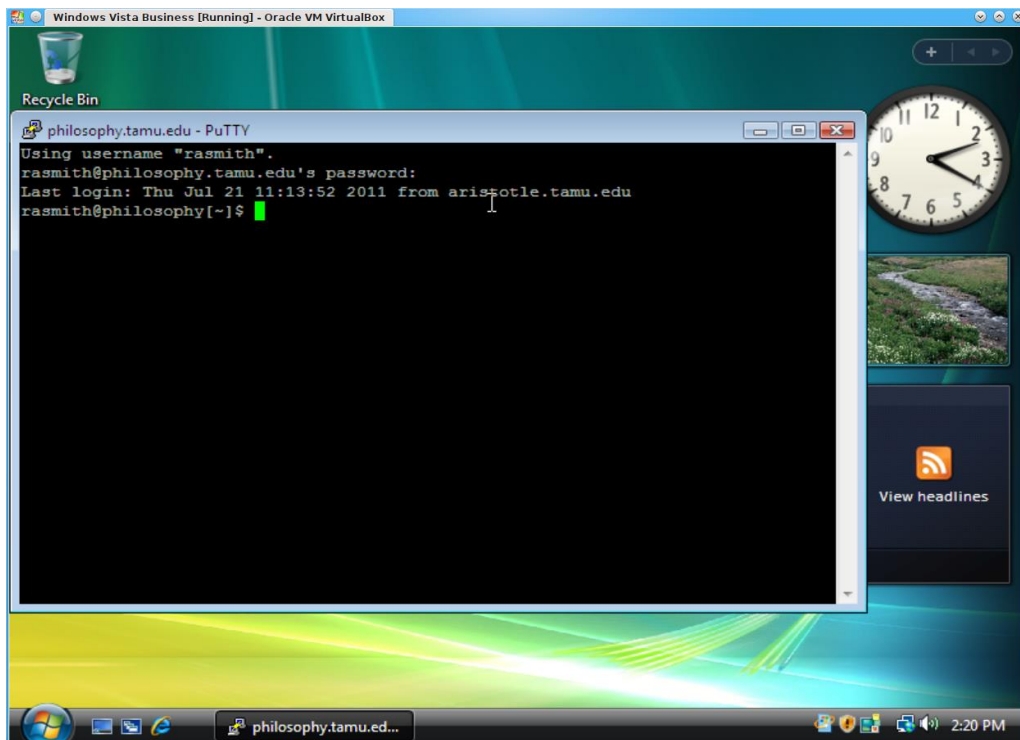
What this means is that *your* copy of PuTTY doesn't recognize the server as a computer it's connected to before. Since SSH is a high-security protocol, it gives you the option at this point of bailing out by clicking on "Cancel", which will make PuTTY exit. There's an identifying string that you can actually use to verify that our server really is our server (but the one you see in the picture is *not* the real one for our server). And so ...

Step 3a. Click "Yes" in the warning message. PuTTY will then remember our server's identity for future sessions, and you will not need to do this again.

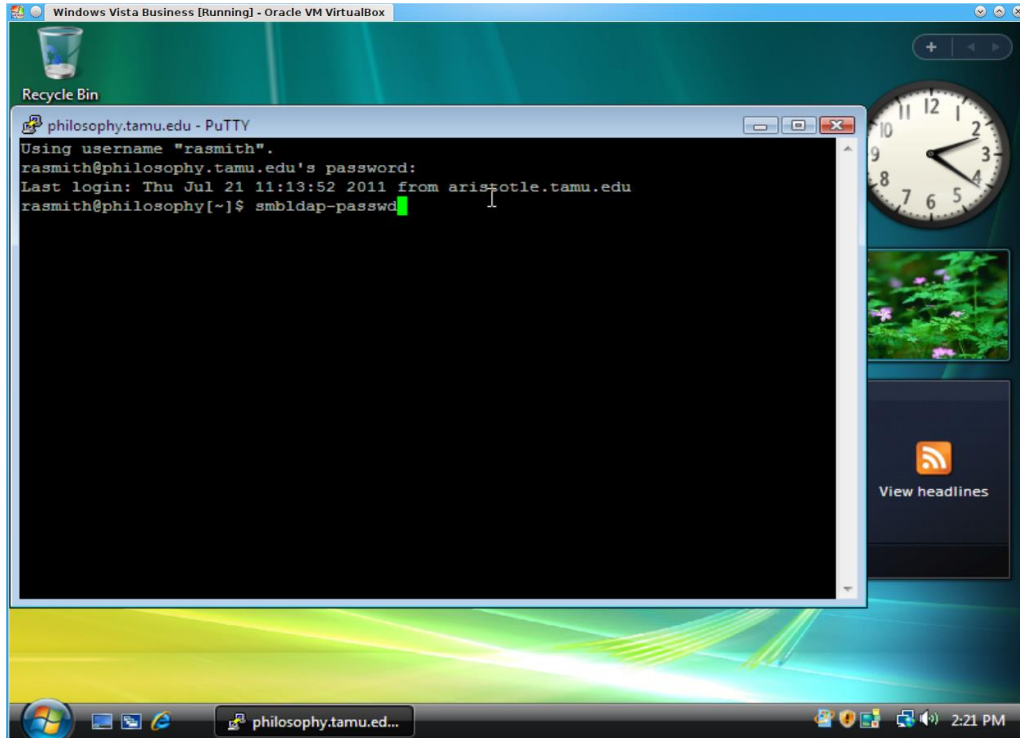
With or without Step 3a, you will now see a window with a black background and white letters, like this, asking for your password:



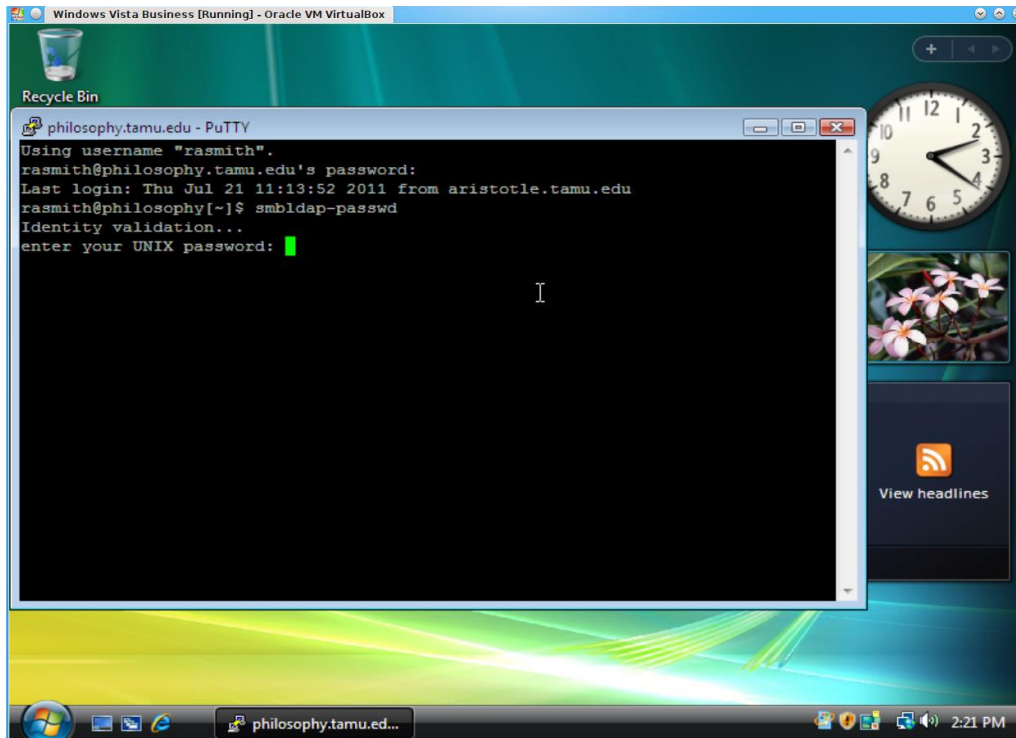
Step 4. Enter your password and press the Enter key. Then you'll see this:



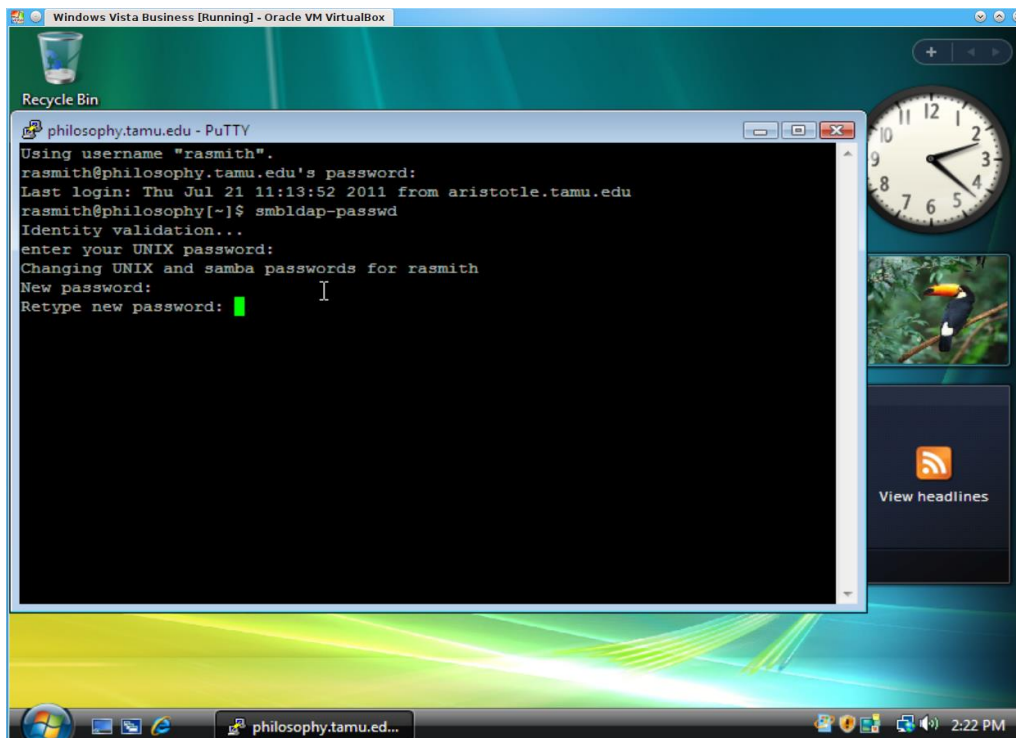
Step 5. Type "smbldap-passwd" and press the Enter key. When you do, the computer will ask you to "Enter your UNIX password" (yes, you're asked for your password twice. The first time gets you access to the server. The second time is to make sure it's you that's trying to change your password):



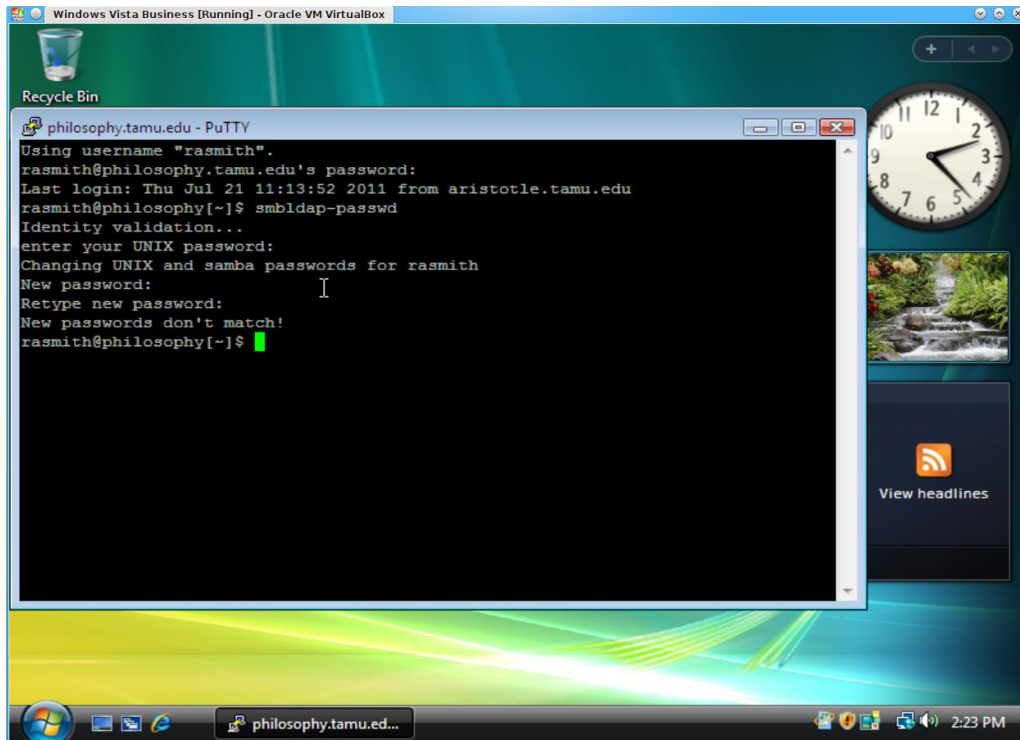
Step 6. Type your current password and press Enter. The computer will then ask you for your NEW password (i.e. what you want to change it to):



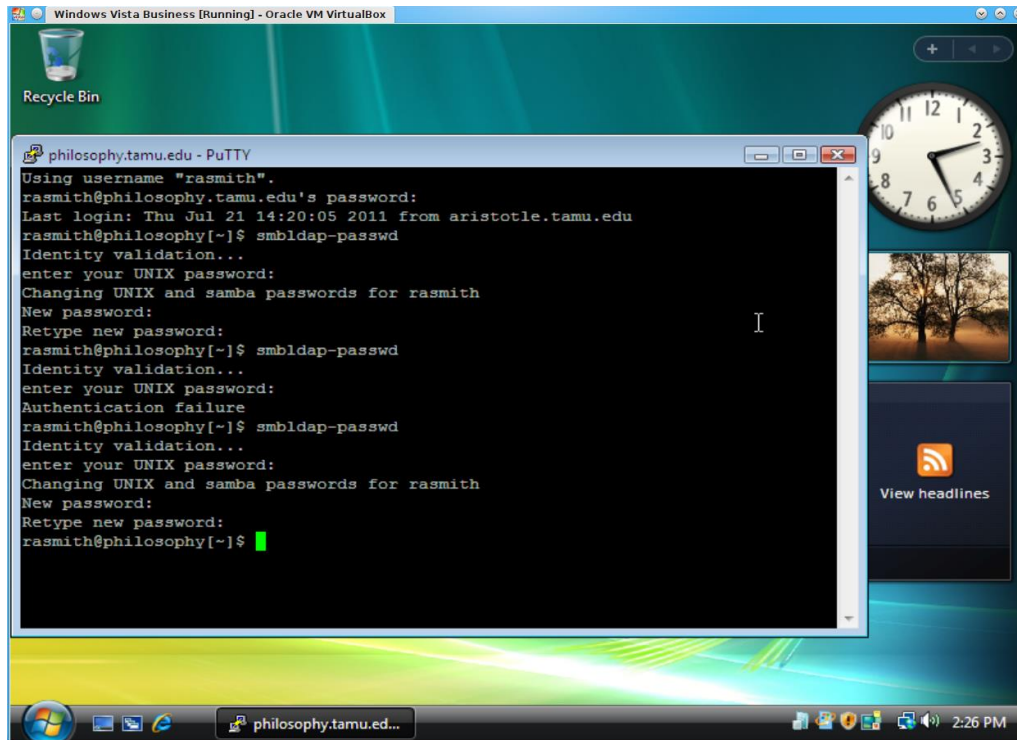
Step 7. Enter the same NEW password again and press Enter:



If you made an error retyping the new password, the computer will complain "New passwords don't match!":



Step 7a. If that happens, repeat Steps 5-7. When they do match, you'll see this unexciting result showing that you are done:



Step 8. Type Ctrl-D (that is, hold down the Ctrl key and press "d") and PuTTY will exit..

The pictures above were done on my computer (using the old copy of Windows Vista that came with my computer, but running in VirtualBox as a virtual machine). Make allowances for differences in other versions of Windows.