

macOS How-To

A simple guide to the everyday features on a Mac.

TIP: Your Mac may look a little different depending on its age and macOS version. Newer Macs use System Settings; older versions may say System Preferences.

1. Know the main parts of the screen

Desktop: The main background area where files and folders may appear.

Menu bar: The bar across the very top. The menus change depending on which app you are using.

Apple menu: The Apple symbol at the top-left. Use it for System Settings, Restart, Shut Down and other system choices.

Dock: The row of app icons usually along the bottom. Click an icon to open an app.

Finder: The blue smiling-face icon. Finder is where you browse files, folders, drives and downloads.

Spotlight: A fast way to find apps, files and settings. Press Command + Space, type what you want, then press Return.

Mouse or trackpad basics

- Single-click: select an item or press a button.
- Double-click: open a file or folder.
- Secondary click: right-click with a mouse, or click with two fingers on many trackpads.
- Scroll: use the mouse wheel, or slide two fingers up or down on a trackpad.

2. System Settings, Control Center and Wi-Fi

Open System Settings

- Click the Apple menu at the top-left.
- Choose System Settings.
- Use the search box if you are not sure where a setting is located.

Open Control Center

Click the Control Center icon near the top-right of the menu bar. It provides quick access to controls such as Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, Focus, sound, display brightness and screen mirroring.

Connect to Wi-Fi

- Open Control Center.
- Click Wi-Fi.
- Choose your normal Wi-Fi network.
- Enter the password if asked.

Change volume or brightness

Open Control Center and move the Sound or Display slider. Many Mac keyboards also have volume and brightness keys.

See notifications

Click the date and time near the top-right to open Notification Center. On a trackpad, you may also be able to swipe in from the right edge.

TIP: If a setting is hard to find, System Settings has a search field. Type words such as Wi-Fi, printer, text size or update.

3. Opening, closing and switching apps

Open an app

- Click an app in the Dock.
- Or press Command + Space, type the app name, and press Return.

The three window buttons

Red: Close the current window.

Yellow: Minimize the window to the Dock.

Green: Enter full screen or show window-arrangement choices.

IMPORTANT: On a Mac, closing the last window does not always quit the app. The app may stay open in the background.

Quit an app completely

Click the app name in the menu bar and choose Quit, or press Command + Q.

Switch between open apps

Hold Command and tap Tab, or click the app you want in the Dock.

Lock your Mac when you step away

Press Control + Command + Q. This immediately locks the screen and helps protect your files and personal information.

If an app freezes

- Wait a few seconds.
- Try Command + Q.
- If needed, press Option + Command + Esc, choose the frozen app, and click Force Quit.

IMPORTANT: Force Quit may cause unsaved work in that app to be lost.

4. Files, internet and printing

Find your files with Finder

Click the Finder icon in the Dock. Use the left sidebar to find common locations.

- Documents: letters and saved documents.
- Downloads: files downloaded from the internet or email.
- Desktop: items saved on the desktop.
- iCloud Drive: files stored in Apple iCloud, if you use it.
- Trash: deleted files stay here until the Trash is emptied.

Use the internet

Open Safari, Chrome or another browser. Click the address bar at the top, type a website address or search words, and press Return.

Copy and paste

- Copy: select the text or file and press Command + C.
- Paste: click where you want it and press Command + V.

Print

- Press Command + P.
- Choose the correct printer.
- Check the preview, pages and number of copies.
- Click Print.

5. Make the Mac easier to see and use

Make text larger

- Open Apple menu > System Settings.
- Choose Accessibility.
- Choose Display.
- Choose Text size and move the slider to the right.

Other helpful Display options

In Accessibility > Display, options can increase contrast, reduce transparency and make the pointer easier to see.

Use Zoom

Open System Settings > Accessibility > Zoom to turn on and customize screen magnification.

Use VoiceOver

VoiceOver reads the screen aloud. Press Command + F5 on many Macs to turn VoiceOver on or off. You can also open System Settings > Accessibility > VoiceOver.

Install macOS updates

- Open Apple menu > System Settings.
- Choose General.
- Choose Software Update.
- Follow the onscreen instructions if an update is available.

TIP: Keeping macOS and your web browser up to date helps protect your computer and personal information.

6. Troubleshooting and staying safe

Try these steps first

Mac acting strangely: Restart it using Apple menu > Restart.

No internet: Open Control Center and make sure Wi-Fi is on and connected to your normal network.

No sound: Open Control Center and check the Sound slider.

Printer not working: Make sure it is powered on, has paper, and that the correct printer is selected.

App is frozen: Try Option + Command + Esc and Force Quit only the frozen app.

Safety reminders

- Do not give passwords, banking codes or verification codes to someone who contacts you unexpectedly.
- Do not install software because a pop-up or unexpected caller tells you to.
- Do not allow remote access unless you contacted a trusted support person yourself.
- Be suspicious of urgent requests for money, gift cards, cryptocurrency or bank transfers.
- A browser warning that says your Mac is infected and gives a phone number is usually a scam. Close the browser and do not call the number.

TIP: When in doubt, stop before clicking, paying or sharing information and ask someone you trust.

7. Keyboard Shortcut Reference

On a Mac, the Command key (⌘) is used for many shortcuts. Press and hold the first key(s), then tap the last key. Some shortcuts work only in certain apps.

Everyday Command shortcuts

- Command + A:** Selects all text or items.
- Command + C:** Copies the selected text or item.
- Command + V:** Pastes what you copied.
- Command + X:** Cuts selected text in most apps.
- Command + Z:** Undoes the last action.
- Shift + Command + Z:** Redoes the last action.
- Command + S:** Saves the current document or file.
- Command + P:** Opens Print.
- Command + F:** Finds a word or phrase in the current app or page.
- Command + + (plus):** Zooms in in most web browsers and many apps.
- Command + - (minus):** Zooms out in most web browsers and many apps.
- Command + 0 (zero):** Returns browser zoom to the normal size.
- Command + W:** Closes the current window or browser tab.
- Command + Q:** Quits the current app completely.

Mac system and window shortcuts

- Control + Command + Q:** Locks your Mac immediately.
- Command + Space:** Opens Spotlight Search.
- Command + Tab:** Switches between open apps.
- Command + ` (backtick):** Switches between windows of the same app.
- Option + Command + Esc:** Opens Force Quit for a frozen app.
- Command + H:** Hides the current app.
- Option + Command + H:** Hides all other apps.
- Command + M:** Minimizes the current window to the Dock.
- Control + Command + F:** Enters or leaves full screen in supported apps.
- Control + Up Arrow:** Opens Mission Control to see your open windows.
- Command + , (comma):** Opens settings or preferences for many apps.
- Control + Command + Space:** Opens the emoji and symbol viewer.

Screenshots, Finder and browser shortcuts

- Shift + Command + 3:** Takes a screenshot of the entire screen.
- Shift + Command + 4:** Lets you select an area for a screenshot.
- Shift + Command + 5:** Opens screenshot and screen-recording controls.
- Command + T:** Opens a new browser tab.
- Shift + Command + T:** Reopens the most recently closed browser tab.
- Command + L:** Selects the browser address bar.
- Command + R:** Reloads or refreshes the current web page.
- Command + Delete:** Moves a selected Finder file or folder to the Trash.
- Command + I:** Shows Get Info for a selected Finder item.
- Spacebar:** Quick Look: previews a selected Finder file.
- Option + Command + V:** Moves a copied Finder file to the current folder.