



TAKE CONTROL OF

Apple Contacts

by **JOE KISSELL**

\$9.99

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Apple Contacts*, version 1.0, published in April 2026 by alt concepts. This book was written by Joe Kissell and edited by Glenn Fleishman.

This book shows you how to use Apple's Contacts app for Mac, iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, and the web. It covers not only the app itself but also how it interacts with other apps, such as Calendar, Mail, and Messages.

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Introduction

For years, people told us they wanted a book on Apple’s Contacts app. Whenever I asked what they wanted to know exactly, they always cited an obvious, reasonable contact-management task—but one that turned out to be something *you can’t do in Contacts*.

So I replied, as I so often do, “It’s not you, it’s Apple. Contacts is a poorly designed app, and you can’t make it do the thing you want it to do because Apple doesn’t care about making Contacts good. I can’t fix that with a book.”

At the risk of starting this book on a sour note, I’ve been mad about Contacts for a *long* time. Apple has apparently ignored most feedback from their users about this app over many years. Contacts remains frozen in the past, with nearly all the missing features and flaws of an app conceived 25 years ago (when it was still called Address Book).

The last meaningful change happened in 2023 with macOS 14 Ventura, iOS 17, and iPadOS 17, when Apple added an optional Pronouns field to Contacts. And that’s fine...But meanwhile, Contacts still has references to defunct instant messaging services (AIM, Google Talk, ICQ, MSN, Skype) and social media providers (Twitter—not X—and My-space), while the Mac version of Contacts has no mention of WhatsApp, Signal, Bluesky, Mastodon, Teams, Threads, Instagram, TikTok, or any of numerous other more modern services you might want to keep track of for your contacts.

And don’t get me started on sharing. (I mean, we’re going to talk a *lot* about sharing later in this book, but boy oh boy is it a sore spot!) iCloud users naturally expect to be able to share contacts dynamically the same way they can share calendars, reminder lists, photos, and so on. But most people can’t do that without a pretty awkward work-around, because iCloud simply doesn’t support two-way contact sharing—even though other contact servers do, including LDAP servers, which Contacts can use.

I could go on. In fact, I mention quite a few other issues throughout this book!

And yet.

For all the oddities and deficiencies of Contacts, it's a crucial hub for Mac, iPhone, iPad, and Apple Watch users. The Mail, Messages, and Phone apps (among numerous others) depend on it. It's important to be able to set it up and use it properly, but Apple makes parts of that process unnecessarily opaque. That, at least, is something I *can* help with. And so, in this short book, I explain what Contacts can (and can't) do, how to use its lesser-known features, and how to make it *almost sorta* do what common sense tells you it ought to be able to do.

Because Contacts is so similar across platforms and has changed but little these many years, anyone who has an Apple device should find useful information here. Screenshots and descriptions were based on macOS 26 Tahoe, iOS 26, iPadOS 26, and watchOS 26 (as well as the Contacts web app at [iCloud.com](https://www.icloud.com)); if you're using an older operating system, you may notice minor differences.

Contacts Quick Start

Contacts has three main aspects: individual records (called *cards*) for people or organizations, the organizational system for managing those cards, and tools for working with cards, such as merging them. You can read these topics in any order, but generally speaking, it's better to read the book in order since later topics assume you know what was covered in earlier ones.

Master the fundamentals:

- Learn the basics of getting around the app in [Navigation Tips](#).
- [Set Up Contact Accounts](#) to connect Contacts to any number of iCloud, Exchange, CardDAV, or LDAP accounts.
- Create or import cards for people you want to keep in touch with. See [Add Contacts](#).
- Add extra fields, images, and a contact poster, and make other changes to contact cards. See [Edit Contacts](#).
- Learn what's special about the card with your personal information on it and how to tell Contacts which one that is. See [Use “My Card”](#).

Do more with Contacts:

- Contact your contacts—and do other things with their data. See [Interact with Your Contacts](#).
- Learn about lists, blocking, linking cards across accounts, and more in [Manage Your Contacts](#).
- Share or export contacts (individually or in groups) and learn what's involved in sharing a whole contact account. See [Share Contacts](#).
- Print envelopes, mailing labels, and lists. See [Print Contacts](#).
- Tweak Contacts behaviors. See [Manage Other Contacts Settings](#).

Navigation Tips

Contacts is a straightforward app, so I'm not going to waste your time with a detailed interface tour. However, I do want to point out a few important details that may help you as you read this book.

The Sidebar

The Mac, iPad, and web app versions of Contacts have a sidebar, which displays your accounts, lists, smart lists, and an All Contacts entry at the top (**Figure 1**). Select All Contacts to see everything. Click or tap the sidebar  icon to display or hide the sidebar.

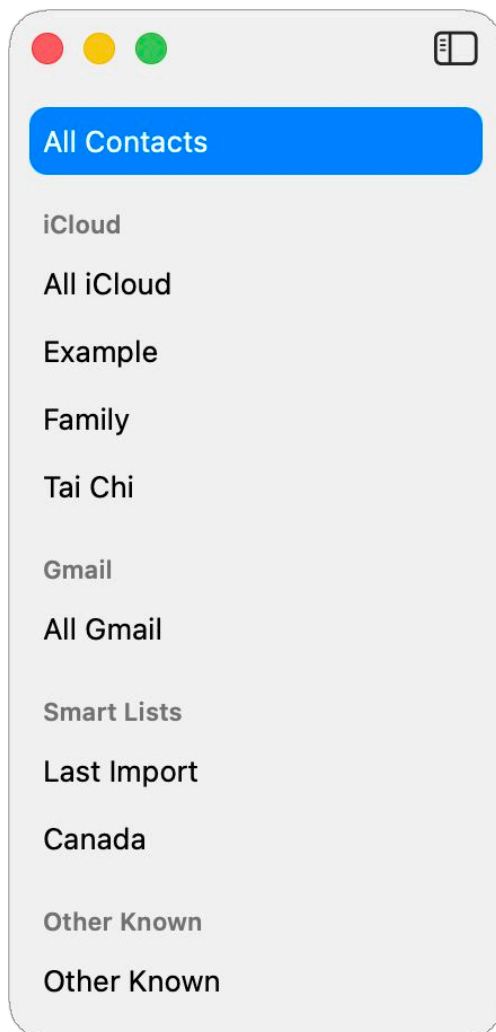


Figure 1: An example of a sidebar in the Mac version of Contacts.

Note: Curiously, on an iPad, the sidebar always slides over the contact list, even when you're in full-screen mode and there's plenty of space for it to stay on the screen. That strikes me as an awkward interface and an inefficient use of space.

Display and Sort Order

By default, Contacts shows all cards with first name followed by last name, but sorted by last name. That means Zuzanna Adams comes before Anders Zimmerman. You can change the display order, the sort order, or both if you prefer. I cover how to make those changes later, in [Manage Other Contacts Settings](#).

About “Other Known”

You may see a mysterious Other Known entry in the Contacts sidebar (or, on an iPhone, in the List view), below which is an Other Known list, which you can't delete. What is it?

This entry appears due to screening in the Phone or Messages app on any of your devices. If you screen unknown callers or senders—or if, in the Phone app, you use Call Filtering—you may later review unknown callers or senders and realize that you recognize some of them after all. If so, you can click or tap Mark as Known.

At that point, you have the option to add the caller or sender to Contacts. You may choose not to—perhaps you know who it is and it's a legit contact, but you'll never call or message them again, and you don't want them cluttering up Contacts. If so, your device adds them to this Other Known list. Which...clutters up Contacts anyway. That's how it keeps track of those numbers.

If you select an item on the Other Known list and press Delete on your Mac or open the card on an iPad or iPhone in the hope of deleting it, your only option is Mark as Unknown, which means the number disappears from this list, but future calls or messages from that contact will be treated as unknown. (Note that many of them may say No Name, which means Contacts knows only the phone number, nothing else.) In my humble opinion, this is a terrible design.

Set Up Contact Accounts

The Contacts app handles more than just information stored on an individual device or synced via your iCloud account. You can connect within Contacts to accounts stored on Microsoft Exchange servers; at Google, Yahoo!, or AOL; and on any CardDAV or LDAP server. (See [What Are CardDAV and LDAP?](#), just ahead.) Once connected, Contacts can display, search against, and let you edit the contact information associated with that account, and the contact information is synced to your other devices.

It's likely that you already set up Contacts to connect to one or more of these accounts, perhaps without even realizing it! For example, simply signing in to your iCloud account and accepting default settings automatically connects Contacts to iCloud. (You can connect more than one iCloud account if you have more than one.)

Note: The main point of connecting to an online account is to keep your contacts in sync across your own devices. To learn about sharing contacts with other people, flip ahead to the [Share Contacts](#) chapter.

You can also use Contacts without connecting to any account, storing some or all of your contact data on one specific device. I explain that in [About Local Contacts](#), later in this chapter.

Tip: In some cases, when you add an account, you may be asked whether you want to merge contacts on your device with contacts already on the server. Nearly always, the correct answer is yes!

What Are CardDAV and LDAP?

[CardDAV](#) (vCard Extensions to WebDAV) and [LDAP](#) (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) are both client-server protocols for the syncing of contact-like information. CardDAV is simple to implement but limited in features; LDAP is vastly more powerful (and can be used for much more than just contacts) but correspondingly more complex. Large businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies are likely to use LDAP, while CardDAV is more commonly used for consumer-focused services like iCloud.

Add Your iCloud Account

As I said a moment ago, you probably already have iCloud synchronization enabled. Of all the ways to sync contacts, this is one you're most likely to use, as it's the same account that syncs your calendars, reminders, photos, notes, and many other types of data. But you can (and should) check whether Contacts is set up to use iCloud. If not, you can enable it very easily. Follow these steps:

- **On a Mac:** Open Contacts and go to Contacts > Settings > Accounts. Look for your iCloud account in the list on the left. If it's there, select it and make sure "Enable this account" is checked.

If no iCloud account is listed at all, click the plus  icon at the bottom, select iCloud, click Continue, and follow the prompts to sign in to your iCloud account.

- **On an iPhone or iPad:** Open the Settings app and go to Apps > Contacts > Contacts Accounts. If iCloud is in the list, tap it and make sure the Contacts switch is turned on.

If no iCloud account is listed, tap Add Account, then iCloud, and follow the prompts to sign in to your iCloud account.

Any cards already in your iCloud account appear instantly in Contacts.

Add Contacts

In all probability, your Contacts app already contains lots of contacts, added in a variety of ways over the years. Even so, you should be aware of the main ways to put new contacts into the app, as well as how to move contacts from one account to another. (In the next chapter, [Edit Contacts](#), I go into much more detail about adding and changing various types of information within a contact card.)

Speaking of which...as a reminder, a *card* is the basic unit of storage in Contacts; it's the record for a single contact—a person or business.

Create a Contact Card Manually

To create a contact card from scratch, do the following:

- **On a Mac:** Choose File > New Card (⌘-N) or click the plus **+** icon on the toolbar and choose New Contact.
- **On an iPhone or iPad:** Tap the plus **+** icon.
- **In the Contacts web app:** Click the plus **+** icon in the upper-right corner of a contact card and choose Create New Contact.

When you do any of these actions, a new, empty contact card appears (**Figure 4**). You can then fill in as little or as much of the information as you like. Note that some field labels, such as “mobile,” “home,” and “home page,” are blue pop-up menus. That's because a person may have multiple phone numbers, email and physical addresses, and so on. So, you can use those pop-up menus to specify *which* phone number (home, work, iPhone, and so on) or other data type you're entering in that field; see [Adjusting Field Labels](#), later. (Remember, in the next chapter, we get into more detail about various fields on contact cards.)

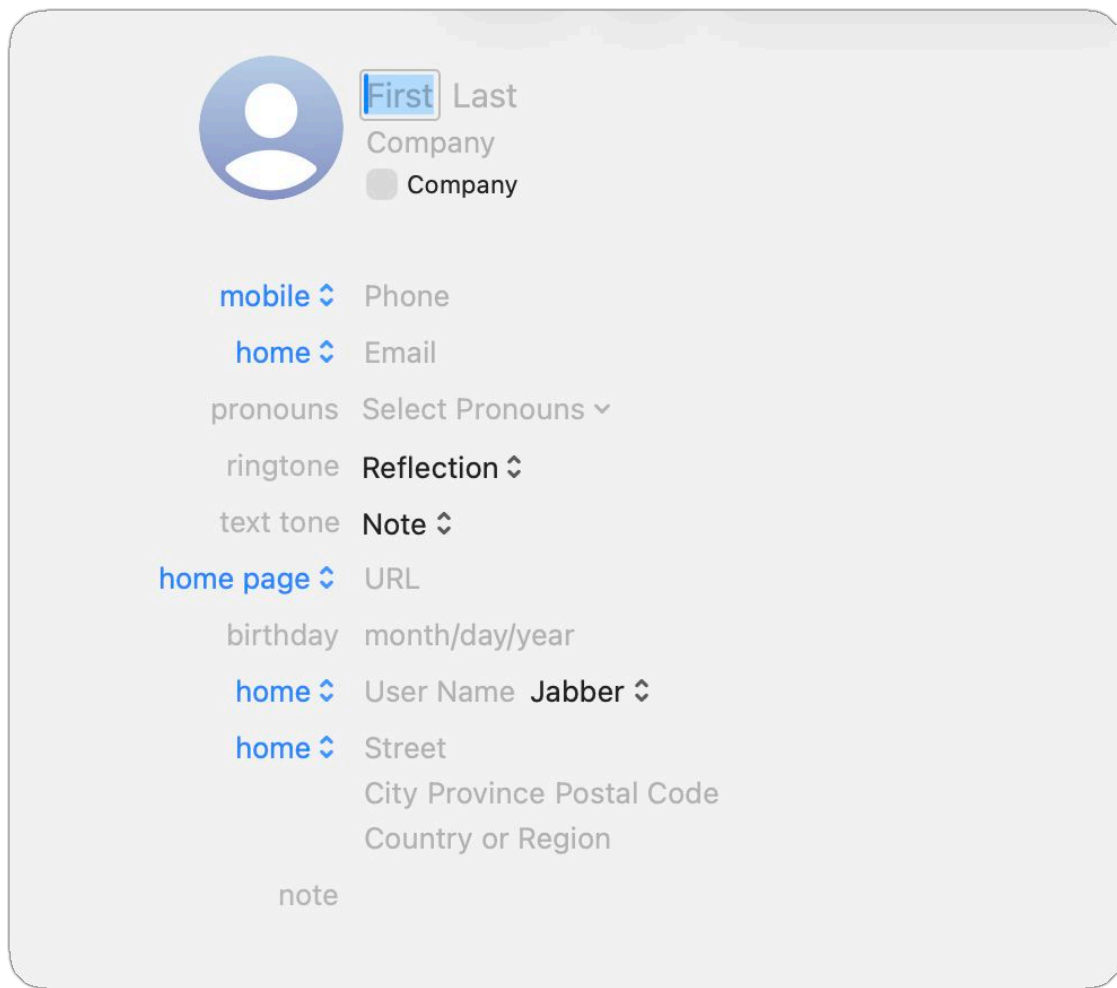


Figure 4: A new contact card looks like this on a Mac. The appearance is a bit different on iPhone and iPad and in the Contacts web app, but the content is basically the same.

Add a Contact from Mail

If you receive an email message in Mail and you want to add the sender to Contacts, click the very tiny arrow to the right of their address when you hover over it in the message header, then choose Add to Contacts from the pop-up menu. The contact is created immediately, with no feedback. If you want to check or edit the contact, you'll have to do so manually in Contacts.

Edit Contacts

It's easy enough to fill in the blanks to add details to a contact card (your own or someone else's). But you can do a number of other things on a contact card that may not be immediately obvious, including adding uncommon fields, creating a template for new cards, and making a wide variety of adjustments to the card's avatar.

Use the Basic Fields

Because I'm sure you understand things like middle names, URLs, and birthdays, I'm not going to go through each of the default fields. However, I do want to call your attention to these predefined options that may be less than obvious:

- **Company:** Each contact can be designated as a person or as a company. When a contact is a company, the company name appears at the top of the card, rather than the person's name, if one appears in the card. The company name is used for sorting, and (in some contexts) the default monogram or silhouette changes to a building icon. To make a card into a company on a Mac, either check the Company box or choose Card > Mark as Company. (To switch it to a person card, uncheck the box or choose Card > Mark as a Person.)

There's no explicit way to designate a card as a company card on an iPhone or iPad, or in the Contacts web app, though if you've made that selection on a Mac, it syncs to your mobile device. You can work around this by deleting the first and last name on the card; if you still need that information (for a particular representative at a company), you can add their name in the Notes field.

- **Phone numbers:** When you enter a phone number on a Mac, iPhone, or iPad, Contacts automatically formats it using what Apple considers the standard for your region, such as (xxx) xxx-xxxx in North America. Unfortunately, you can't change this format if, for

example, you prefer **XXX-XXX-XXXX**. (In the Contacts web app, you have the option to turn this formatting on or off.)

Tip: To add an extension, type a semicolon (;) after the number, and then the extension.

Tip: When entering international phone numbers, type a plus (+) followed by the country code and the number. (It doesn't hurt to add the + to domestic numbers, either, and that could be useful if you're traveling outside your home country and want to call someone back home.)

Note: Editor Glenn Fleishman discovered that Contacts and Messages can interact poorly. For unknown reasons, Messages started displaying phone numbers instead of contact names. He figured out a workaround; see [How to fix Messages when it shows a phone number instead of a name](#) at Macworld. The problem lay in how Messages decided, abruptly, to misunderstand his default country code.

- **Ringtone:** Choose the sound that will play when this contact calls you.
- **Text Tone:** Choose the sound that will play when this contact sends you a text message (iMessage or SMS/RCS).
- **Notes:** Add any freeform data you want to remember about this contact.
- **Linked Contacts:** These are cards for the same contact that appear in different accounts. I explain this later, in [Link Contacts Across Accounts](#).

Add an Emergency Override

The Ringtone field is also, bizarrely, the place on an iPhone where you can enable Emergency Bypass. This option passes through sounds and vibrations when they call, even when you've set Silent mode on (or used a switch on an older iPhone) or have a Focus mode enabled. See Glenn Fleishman's [Take Control of Focus](#) for more.

Use “My Card”

We think of Contacts as containing contact data for other people, but perhaps the most important card in Contacts is the one containing your own contact info. This looks like every other card, but it appears at the very top of the list, with the label My Card underneath it.

So, it's *your* card, the one you've marked as containing your data, but Apple calls this My Card. If I'm talking about my own card for myself, is that my card, or my My Card? Apple's own documentation uses the phrase “*your* My Card,” which sounds so wrong. Pronouns are hard.

In any case, My Card serves several important functions:

- In Maps, there are entries for locations on your My Card, such as Home and Work, if you've added them.
- Siri can use information on your My Card for a variety of purposes, including getting a location to send to Maps (per the previous bullet) or contacting other people based on their relationship to you (“Call my wife,” “Message my son,” “Email my agent,” and so on).
- Calendar (and perhaps other apps) can fetch your birthday from your My Card.
- Safari can autofill your contact information from your My Card.
- If you've set up a [Medical ID](#) for yourself on an iPhone, that's linked from your My Card. (Open the Health app, tap your avatar in the upper-right corner, then tap Medical ID.) Emergency personnel can access that information via your iPhone's lock screen, even if the iPhone is locked, unless you change the default settings.
- Your name and contact image as shown on your My Card become part of your Contact Poster when you share the card with others.
- Speaking of sharing, you can easily send someone else some or all of the details from your My Card, as described later in this chapter.

You probably already have a designated My Card with at least some of your details (derived from your Apple Account). If not, you can assign a new card to yourself, as discussed next.

Designate a Card as Yours

If the card with your personal information is not shown at the top of the list with the label My Card, you can fix that easily. (And if, somehow, there's *no* card with your personal information, you can easily add one as described in [Create a Contact Card Manually](#).) Here's how:

- **On a Mac:** Select the card with your info and choose Card > Make This My Card.
- **On an iPhone or iPad:** Touch and hold the card, then tap Make This My Card on the pop-up menu.
- **In the Contacts web app:** Select the card, click the More  menu, and choose Make This My Card.

Share Your Card

Later, in [Share Individual Contacts](#), I discuss how to share *other people's* contact cards. You can share your own card, too, but the process is a bit different because it contains details you might never want to share.

Share Your Card via an App

To share your own via an app, do this:

- **On a Mac:** First, see [Hide Details When Sharing](#), just ahead, to tell Contacts which fields you do and don't want to share. (You have to set this up in advance because you're not prompted to this on the fly, as you are on an iPhone or iPad.) Then choose Card > Share My Card > Email My Card or Card > Share My Card > Message My Card to send your card to Mail or Messages, respectively. Alterna-

Interact with Your Contacts

Contacts was never intended to be a mere reference source. In this chapter, I show you the main ways to interact with people in your Contacts.

Contact a Contact

Most of us have entries for people and companies in Contacts because we want to get in touch with them easily, and Contacts gives you quick shortcuts to reach your contacts via Messages, Phone, FaceTime, or email. On the contact card, click or tap the appropriate icon on a Mac, iPhone, or iPad:

-  Message: Click or tap this icon to start (or continue) a conversation with them in Messages.
-  Phone: Click or tap this icon to call the contact using the Phone app. If the contact has more than one phone number, a pop-up menu appears; click or tap the number you want to use.
-  FaceTime: Click or tap this icon to start a FaceTime call.
-  Email: Click or tap this icon to create a new message addressed to that contact in your default email app. If the contact has more than one email address, a pop-up menu appears; click or tap the email address you want to use. (To email a list, refer to [Address a Message to a List](#) in the next chapter.)

Note: The icons for each of the above can be tapped or clicked only if the corresponding items are populated in the card: for Message, a phone number or email associated with an Apple Account; for FaceTime, a phone number or email associated with an Apple Account; for Phone, a phone number; and for Email, an address.

- **On an iPhone or iPad:** Swipe left on a contact, then tap Remove. This removes the contact from the list but does not delete it from Contacts.
- **In the Contacts web app:** Select the list in the sidebar, then select the contact and press Delete. This removes the contact from the list but does not delete it from Contacts.

Delete a List

Deleting a list or smart list (discussed next) does *not* delete any individual contact cards. Here's how to delete either kind of list:

- **On a Mac:** Select the list, press Delete, and then click Delete to confirm.
- **On an iPhone or iPad:** Touch and hold the list, tap Delete, and then tap Delete again to confirm. Or, swipe left on the list, tap the trash  icon, and then tap Delete.
- **In the Contacts web app:** Hover over the list, click the More  icon, and choose Delete List from the pop-up menu.

Create and Use Smart Lists

Contacts has something called *smart lists*. Regular lists are created manually and have an unchanging set of entries until you edit the list again. Smart lists are built dynamically from criteria you specify, and update every time you add, delete, or edit a card. Whenever you view a smart list or use it in another app, it is up to date.

You can think of them as saved searches. As examples, you might have a smart list of every contact who lives in Canada, everyone with a phone number in the 212 area code, or everyone with a birthday in the next two weeks.

Smart lists are available only in the Mac version of Contacts. To create a smart list:

1. Choose File > New Smart List. A dialog (**Figure 14**) appears.

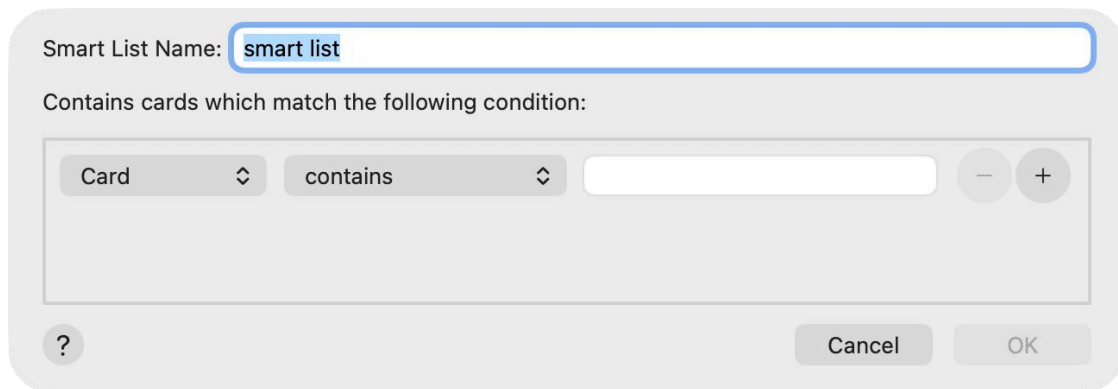


Figure 14: Create a smart list using this dialog.

2. In the same way as you'd create a smart mailbox in Mail or a smart playlist in Music, fill in one or more conditions using the pop-up menus and fields. From the leftmost pop-up menu, choose either Card (to search for card-level attributes) or a field. Then use the second menu to qualify the search (for example, you might choose “contains,” “starts with,” “is not set,” or other matching filters appropriate to the thing you're searching for). Finally, if applicable, fill in the third field with specific data. For example:

[Address] [contains] Canada

[Email] [ends with] apple.com

[Birthday] [is in the next] 2 [weeks]

[Card] [was updated after] 10/11/2023

3. To add another condition, click the plus + button and repeat step 2. If you have two or more conditions, a pop-up menu appears above them; choose “any” to search for contacts matching at least one of the conditions or “all” to search only for contacts matching all the conditions.
4. Click OK.

Now, you can select the smart list in the sidebar to see all currently matching contact cards. You can use smart lists in exactly the same ways as regular lists—for example, use them to export, print, or email all and only the people currently on the list.

Note: On a Mac, you may see a Last Import smart list, which can't be deleted. Logically, this should be whichever contacts you most recently imported, but I've seen on multiple occasions that instead shows cards created a long time ago and never imported—including my own My Card!

Edit a Distribution List

Any member of a list (conventional or smart) may have multiple email addresses. If you plan to use a list to address email messages (see the next topic), that could pose a problem, because your email app might choose a different address for each person than you would—for example, a work address when you intend to use a personal address.

Similarly, contacts may have multiple addresses and phone numbers, and these could lead to incorrect results when printing contacts (see [Print Contacts](#)).

Contacts for Mac (only) has a solution to this: *distribution lists*. Simply put, you can select any list or smart list and, for each recipient, choose which email address, street address, and phone number to use when working with the list as a whole.

To edit a distribution list:

1. Choose Edit > Edit Distribution List. A window (**Figure 15**) appears.
2. In the Group column on the left, select the list or smart list.
3. On the right, use the pop-up menu at the top of the second column to choose Email (as shown above), Phone, or Address.
4. For each contact in the list, click the address or phone number you want to use. The selected item is shown in bold.
5. Click OK.

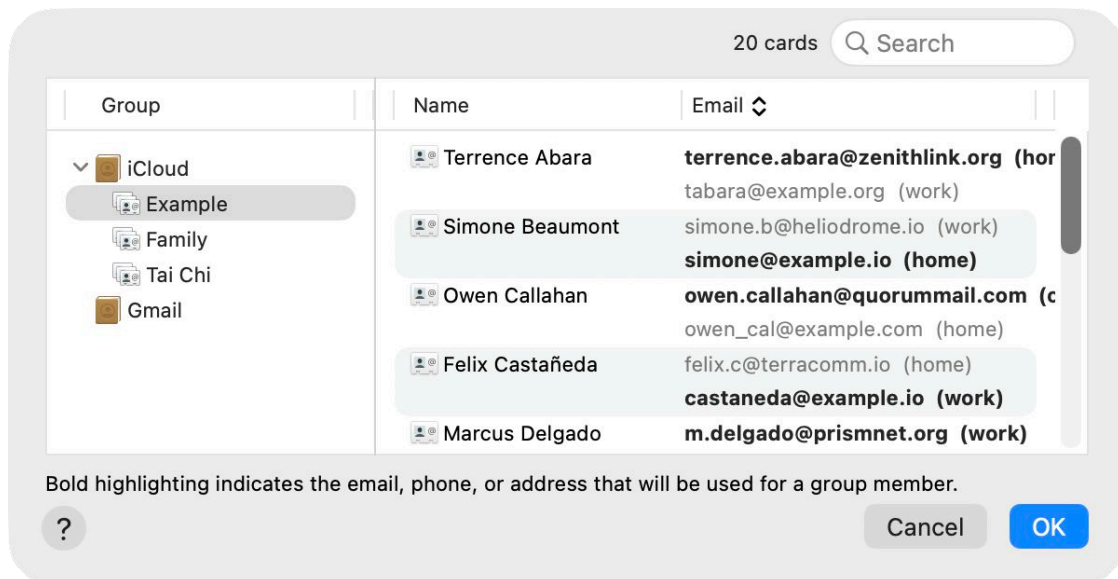


Figure 15: In this dialog, choose which email address (or street address or phone number) is used for each member of a list.

Note: As yet another example of “I don’t think Apple is actually paying any attention to Contacts,” this window uses the term *group* (both in the left column and in the text at the bottom) rather than *list*. Lists used to be called groups, but that changed years ago!

Address a Message to a List

When you type the name (or partial name) of a list or smart list in a Mail message’s To, Cc, or Bcc field, the pop-up menu that lists potential matches from Contacts includes matching lists and smart lists. Click or tap a list to add all its members as recipients. (See [Edit a Distribution List](#), above, for which address is used for each person!)

Note: Some third-party email apps, including [MailMaven](#), also offer support for addressing messages to lists and smart lists that you created in Contacts.

Be aware that because Contacts for iPhone/iPad has no concept of *smart* lists, any smart lists you created on your Mac won’t appear in Contacts on your iPhone or iPad, and thus won’t be available to Mail on your mobile device.

Block a Contact

macOS, iOS, and iPadOS share a mechanism for blocking people you don't want to hear from again, whether by phone or in Mail or Messages. Put someone on the “block” list and any attempts to contact you are silently prevented.

Normally, you'd use the tools in the Phone, Mail, or Messages app to block a specific phone number or email address. To see who you've blocked in that way, go to Settings/System Settings > Privacy & Security > Blocked Contacts and click or tap *X* Unknown.

If, for some reason, there's a person or company you've already added to Contacts that you want to block, too, you can do so within Contacts on a Mac, iPhone, or iPad: Select the card and click Block Contact. Contacts you block this way still appear in Contacts, but with a Blocked badge; they do *not* also appear on the global Blocked Contacts list. To unblock a contact, click Unblock Contact.

Manage Duplicates

Over time, you may accumulate contacts with overlapping information—even perfect duplicates of the same person or company's card. This can happen for any number of reasons, as our devices all gather cruft over time. You can leave them as is—they generally do no harm—but you may want to reduce clutter and the risk of selecting the wrong version of a contact with outdated or incorrect details.

Contacts can search for suspected duplicates and merge them for you. In the same operation, it can check for duplicate entries (such as two copies of the same email address) within a given card. However, I urge you not to use this feature blindly, because I've personally had situations in which I needed to have separate cards for someone (perhaps in two different accounts) or where I knew two people with the same name, and allowing Contacts to merge suspected duplicates without reviewing them carefully made a mess of things.

To check for duplicates:

- **On a Mac:** Choose Card > Look for Duplicates. If any are found, an alert (**Figure 16**) appears. You have only two options: Merge or Cancel. I find it unconscionable that Contacts doesn't show you which cards and fields will be affected or what the result of the merge will be, so if you click Merge, you just have to hope for the best. Contacts won't even tell you afterward what was merged—and even undoing a merge doesn't work!

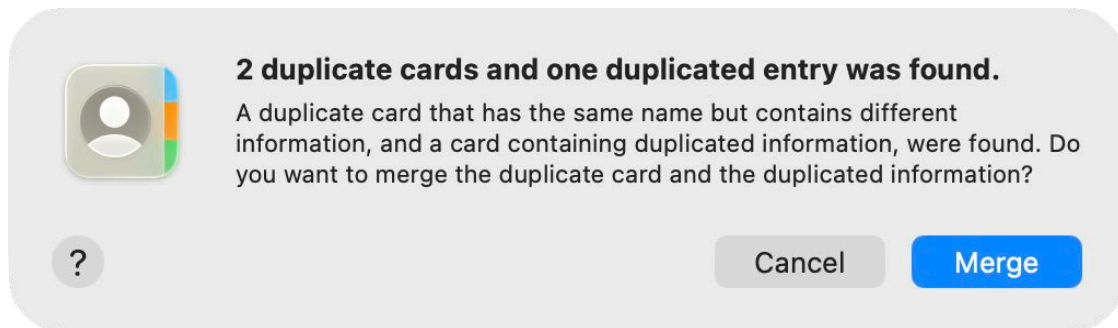


Figure 16: This alert tells you that Contacts thinks it has found duplicates.

Warning! Because the merge feature is so awful on Macs—but actually really good on iPhones and iPads!—I recommend using your mobile device to merge duplicates.

- **On an iPhone or iPad:** Tap All Contacts and scroll to the top of the list. If Contacts has identified any duplicates, a message appears under your My Card. Tap View Duplicates to see what Contacts has found. Unlike on a Mac, your iPhone or iPad then shows you the individual contacts, allowing you to check their contents. Tap a name, then review the data and tap Merge or Ignore. Or, to merge all duplicates, tap Merge All.

Link Contacts Across Accounts

If you use only one account in Contacts, there's nothing to see here; move on to [Manage Other Apps' Access to Contacts](#). However, if you connect to more than one contact server (for example, an iCloud

account and a Gmail or Exchange account) *and* you have any contacts with cards that appear in more than one account, the result would be a cluttered display that seems to include duplicates. A contact's card may have different data on each server, too, making it harder to figure out which card to use.

Contacts has a solution for this: link a given contact card across accounts. When you link cards across accounts, Contacts displays only one card for each person or company, but that one card merges the data from multiple servers. Anything that's identical across servers appears only once on the card, while unique items from each server are all shown individually.

Note: Behind the scenes, Contacts maintains two separate cards, so linking cards affects only the display, not the underlying data.

To link cards from two or more accounts, or to later revert and unlink them:

- **On a Mac:** Select the cards and choose Card > Link Selected Cards. To unlink cards, select the card, click Edit, and then click the remove  icon for one of the accounts. Now click Done.
- **On an iPhone or iPad:** Tap one of the cards, then tap Edit. Scroll down to the Linked Contacts heading, tap “link contacts...,” and tap the other card. Then tap Link. To unlink cards, edit the card, then return to the Linked Contacts heading and tap the remove  icon for one of the accounts. Tap Unlink to confirm.

Tip: If you have duplicate cards for a contact in one account *and* a card for that contact in another account, you can combine the duplicates and link the cards across accounts in one step—on a Mac only. Select all three (or more) and choose Card > Merge and Link Selected Cards.

If you edit a linked card, your changes normally apply to the cards on both servers, though changing an account image affects only the card where the image was originally. To edit only the data on a single contact server, edit the card and click an account name at the bottom

under Cards. The version of the card stored on that server opens in a separate window. Edit that card, and the changes are stored only on that server.

One final note here: Contacts provides no way to *sync* all your cards across accounts—which would probably be more confusing than helpful, anyway—but you can [Move a Contact to Another Account](#). You can even move all your contacts to another account.

Manage Other Apps' Access to Contacts

As you use your devices routinely, you will almost certainly get alerts from apps other than Contacts asking you to grant them permission to access your Contacts. Sometimes this is entirely reasonable; for example, since you may store social media handles for your contacts in Contacts, it makes sense that a social media app would want access to them. Other requests may feel odd or inappropriate. You should go with your gut and deny requests that don't make sense to you—why does the Cat Paint app want access to contacts?—or perform a search to see if you can determine how an app uses contacts before you agree.

Regardless of how you respond to those alerts, you can review which apps currently have access to Contacts and turn access on or off for each of them. Here's how:

- **On a Mac:** Go to System Settings > Privacy & Security > Contacts. Use the switch next to each app to turn access on or off.
- **On an iPhone or iPad:** Go to Settings > Privacy & Security > Contacts. Tap an app, then select None (no access), Full Access (the app can see all your contacts), or Limited Access. If you select Limited Access, you're then prompted to select exactly which contacts the app may access.

Note: If you're thinking, "Hey, wait, I'll just run my own LDAP server!" I urge you to reconsider. It can be done, sure, but it's complicated—and more so if you want that server to be accessible beyond your local network. Unless you're a certified propellerhead (in which case, more power to you), this is something best left to the pros.

There is a workaround, but it's far from perfect. In a nutshell: create a second account. Here's an outline of how to set this up:

1. Create a second account at iCloud, Gmail, Yahoo!, AOL, or any provider that offers standard contact syncing.
2. Share the user name and password with all the other people who need to access this common set of contacts. (This is, of course, not great in terms of security, but you're sharing a limited set of information among a known set of people.)
3. As each person logs in, they make sure to disable all other associated services, which may be items for iCloud or just email and calendars for most other kinds of accounts.

And...that's it. Because the server treats every device logged in to that account as the same person, everything in the account automatically syncs to all devices connected to the same account.

As an example, suppose you wanted to do this with an additional iCloud account. First, go to account.apple.com and [follow these instructions](#) to create a new iCloud account. Then, on a Mac, go to System Settings > Internet Accounts, click Add Account, and enter the credentials for the secondary iCloud account; or, on an iPhone or iPad, go to Settings > Apps > Contacts > Contacts Accounts, and tap New Account, followed by iCloud. Follow the prompts to set up the account.

Note: Many people don't realize this, but you can have one or more *secondary* iCloud accounts active on each of your devices in addition to your main iCloud account. The secondary accounts have a somewhat restricted range of features. See also Glenn Fleishman's [Take Control of Your Apple Account](#).

Next, on each device, make sure every service in that new account *other than* Contacts is turned off:

- **On a Mac:** Go to System Settings > Internet Accounts > *Your Secondary iCloud Account*, click See All, and go through the entire list, turning off every service except Contacts.
- **On an iPhone or iPad:** Go to Settings > Apps > Mail > Mail Accounts, tap the secondary iCloud account, and turn off Use on this iPhone (or iPad). Then repeat this process, looking for switches in the settings for Calendar, Notes, Photos, and Reminders.

Export Contacts

When you share a single contact as described earlier in this chapter, the recipient gets a vCard (.vcf) file with that contact's info. You can also export a vCard as a file; for example, to import into another contact manager. When you do so, it can include the information for as many contacts as you like. The Mac version of Contacts also lets you export as a PDF or as a Contacts Archive.

Note: A Contacts Archive is an Address Book backup file, .abbu, which is useful only when copying contacts to another Mac.

To export contacts, do the following:

- **On a Mac:** Select the contacts you want to export, which can be a single card, any number of arbitrary cards (Shift-click to select a range or ⌘-click to select multiple, noncontiguous cards), a list or smart list, or all contacts. Then choose File > Export > Export vCard, File > Export > Export Contacts Archive, or File > Export as PDF. Select a location and name for the exported file and click Save.

Note: See below for additional settings that apply to exported contacts on a Mac.

- **On an iPhone or iPad:** Navigate to the topmost screen in Contacts (Lists) on an iPhone, or display the sidebar on an iPad. Then

touch and hold either All Contacts or an account or list. On the pop-up menu, tap Export. Just as when sharing a contact, select the fields you want to include in the exported vCard file, tap the Done  icon in the upper-right corner, then use the share sheet to pick a destination (such as Save to Files).

Note: Although you can share an individual contact as a vCard or export an entire list or account, you can't select an arbitrary set of contacts to export on an iPhone or iPad.

- **In the Contacts web app:** Select the contacts you want to export, which can be a single card, any number of arbitrary cards (Shift-click to select a range or -click to select multiple, noncontiguous cards), a list, or all contacts. Then click the Share  icon and choose Export vCard from the pop-up menu. The exported file is saved to your Downloads folder.

The Mac version of Contacts gives you several additional export options, which are found in Contacts > Settings > vCard:

- **vCard Format:** In almost all cases, you want to choose 3.0, the default format. If you have the very unusual need to share a vCard with someone using an extremely old computer or an app that doesn't understand version 3, select 2.1 instead. You can then choose the desired vCard encoding from the pop-up menu.
- **Enable private me card:** If you select "Enable private me card" (it's selected by default), you can restrict which fields from your My Card are included when you share your own card (see [Hide Details When Sharing](#)). I strongly recommend leaving this selected.
- **Export notes in vCards:** Select this to include notes when you export a vCard; deselect to omit the notes. (If you use notes to record private information about a contact, you probably do *not* want that included when you share the card with someone else.)
- **Export photos in vCards:** Select this to include the contact's photo, if any, in the exported vCard.

Manage Other Contacts Settings

Earlier in this book I described settings related to accounts (see [Set Up Contact Accounts](#)), templates (see [Configure a Template](#)), and vCard export (see [Export Contacts](#)). Contacts has a few other settings you may want to adjust, as well. This chapter covers only the settings that I haven't addressed elsewhere.

Because these options vary somewhat depending on which device you're using, I've organized this chapter by device for readability, even though that involves a bit of repetition.

Adjust Mac Settings

To view and edit your settings, choose Contacts > Settings (**Figure 17**), then click a category (General, Accounts, Template, or vCard).

The settings we haven't covered yet are all in the General category:

- **Show First Name:** If you want first names to appear before last names (e.g., Tim Cook), select "Before last name" (the default). To reverse the order (e.g., Cook Tim), select "Following last name." To override this setting for a single card, select it and choose Card > Show Last Name Before First or Card > Show First Name Before Last.

Note: The order in which you display first and last names is independent of the sort order (next item).

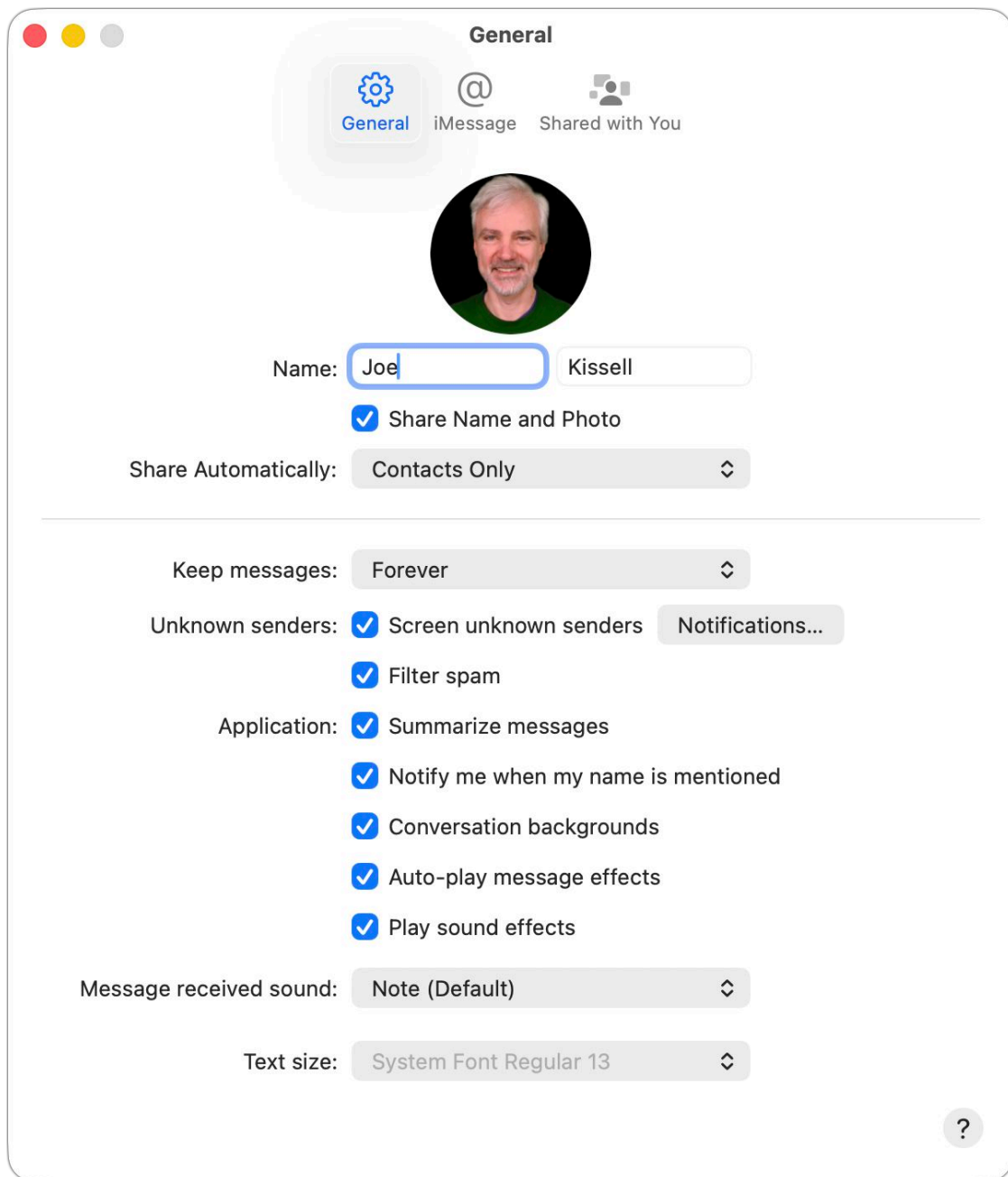


Figure 17: Adjust general settings for the Mac version of Contacts here.

- **Sort By:** Choose Last Name (the default) to sort by last name, regardless of whether the last name is displayed first. Choose First name to sort by first name.
- **Short Name Format:** Not in Contacts itself, but in certain other contexts where contact information is used (such as when addressing a message in Mail), you can display a shortened version of your contacts' names. From this pop-up menu, choose whether to show

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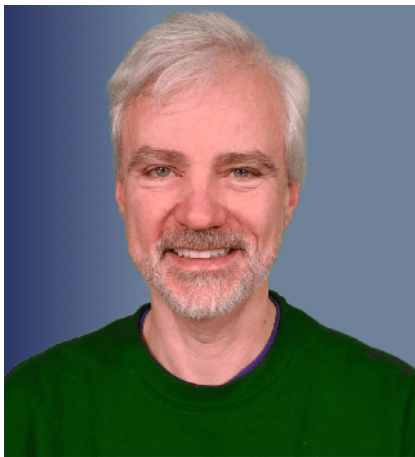
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Joe Kissell is the author of more than 75 books about technology. In 2017, he also became the publisher of Take Control Books, when alt concepts—the company he runs with his wife, Morgen Jahnke—acquired the Take Control imprint from TidBITS Publishing Inc.’s owners, Adam and Tonya Engst. Before he began writing full-time in 2003, Joe managed software development, a *totally normal* profession for someone with degrees in philosophy and linguistics.

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