



TAKE CONTROL OF

Apple TV

**WATCH MOVIES & TV
RUN APPS
DISPLAY PHOTOS
AND LOTS MORE...**

by **GLENN FLEISHMAN**

\$14.99

**5TH
EDITION**

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Apple TV, Fifth Edition*, version 5.1, published in October 2025 by alt concepts. This book was written by Josh Centers (through version 4) and revised by Glenn Fleishman (version 5). It was edited by Lynnea Fleming (through version 3.2) and Joe Kissell (version 3.3 and later).

This book is your guide to the Apple TV HD and Apple TV 4K, covering topics like selecting a TV, controlling your Apple TV, using the Apple TV app, and even customizing your screen saver. It also covers the Apple TV app and AirPlay, even for those who don't own physical Apple TV hardware.

If you want to share this ebook with a friend, we ask that you do so as you would with a physical book: “lend” it for a quick look, but ask your friend to buy a copy for careful reading or reference. Discounted classroom and Mac user group copies are available.

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What's New in Version 5.1

Apple released their annual set of updates to operating systems in fall 2025, this year deciding to synchronize the numbers to the last two digits of the following year. Thus, we jump from tvOS 18 to tvOS 26, which is in sync with iOS 26, iPadOS 26, and macOS 26 Tahoe. This version brings everything up to date for these operating systems.

The most notable changes are:

- **Liquid Glass:** Apple revamped all their operating systems' interface to one consistent approach called Liquid Glass. It adds translucency to let more elements bleed through. You see this only slightly on an Apple TV. Because of the paucity of other changes, you will see tvOS 26 screen captures sparingly in this update.
- **Apple TV+ now just Apple TV:** Apple's streaming service has been known as Apple TV+ since its launch. It's now Apple TV—no plus. See [What Are Apple TV and iTunes?](#)
- **Pick a profile when waking from sleep:** If you're in a household with people who set up their own profiles, you can choose to be prompted on every wake or restart instead of resuming the previous profile's session. See [Manage Users](#).
- **TV app posters:** The TV app now shows vertical "posters," or previews, instead of the former horizontal "cards." This means you can see more from left to right, but with fewer rows. See [Navigate the Home Screen](#).
- **FaceTime:** Apple gave FaceTime a, er, facelift in the fall 2025 releases, providing a consistent interface, buttons, and other features across all their platforms. See [Call with FaceTime](#).

- **Sing in Apple Music:** You can sing along in karaoke using your iPhone as a mic. See [Host an Apple TV Karaoke Party](#).
- **Aerials selection:** You can choose which Aerials to show in the Screen Saver. See [Customize the Screen Saver](#).

What Was New in the Fifth Edition

After years of modest improvements, Apple shifted in the last couple of release of tvOS to making significant motion forward. That remained true of tvOS 18, released in fall 2024.

This new edition of the book included significant updates for that release and features found in iOS, iPadOS, and macOS that relate. Many user-interface and other elements you may be familiar with had their name, location, or options changed in this release.

You can find specific updated parts of the book that cover these areas:

- **Siri:** Apple no longer sends audio from Siri requests to their servers on Apple TV 4K 2nd and 3rd generation devices. See [Dictate Text with the Siri Remote](#).
- **Cinematic playback:** Some TVs and projectors offer support for a cinematic-style ultra-wide screen 21:9 and other ratios. Apple added support in tvOS 18.2. See [Decide Which TV to Buy](#).
- **Screen savers:** The approach to screen savers in tvOS 18 changed profoundly, with new options, a new selection method, and more—including a Snoopy and Woodstock animated choice in tvOS 18.2. See [Customize the Screen Saver](#).
- **Subtitles:** Apple TV makes subtitles appear in more circumstances to aid in their use, including when you mute audio or use the skip back feature (up to 30 seconds). See [View and Customize Subtitles](#).
- **Enhance Dialogue:** Did this feature appear before? Newer HomePods support Enhance Dialogue now. See [Adjust Audio During Playback](#).

- **InSight for Apple TV:** You can bring up real-time information about what you're watching on Apple TV for Apple TV shows, including actor details and song information. This feature, called InSight, is also available on an iPhone when you're using it as a remote for your Apple TV. See [Get Real-Time Information with Apple TV](#).
- **Apple Music:** You can treat the Music app on an iPhone like a jukebox, sharing access over SharePlay with those around you, when you use an Apple TV (or other devices) as your AirPlay destination. See [Use SharePlay in Music with an In-Person Group](#).
- **FaceTime for tvOS:** The FaceTime app received a few different improvements. The app can now show Live Captions in English with some provisos; see [Make Calls with FaceTime on Apple TV](#). You set an iPhone as the designed Continuity Camera, reducing setup time; see [Choose a User for Continuity Camera](#). With new ultra wide-screen support for 21:9 and other ratios, FaceTime for Apple TV can use the entire wider display.

Some additions to this update not related to operating system improvements include:

- **Apple Account, not ID:** Since the previous edition, Apple changed the name of its ecosystem account from “Apple ID” to “Apple Account.” That was updated in tvOS 18 and has been revised everywhere in this book.
- **Game Center restrictions:** This edition adds information about restrictions that can be set for games linked via Apple's Game Center. See [Restrict Content](#).
- **Restart your Siri Remote:** I have added instructions on restarting your Siri Remote when it stops responding or its infrared system stops working. See [How To Restart Your Siri Remote](#).

Introduction

Apple introduced Apple TV in 2007. They didn't quite know what it was for, except that they understood they needed some kind of bridge between their hardware and television sets. With the rise of HDTV (still relatively new), YouTube, digital movie downloads, and ripping DVDs, Apple customers had made do with Macs—I went through three Mac minis as A/V interfaces—and Apple TV was a logical evolution.

Apple TV became the home media hub Apple had wanted, letting us use AirPlay or Apple TV apps to view or stream music and other audio, photos, and video from devices on a local network or cloud-stored content. Games eventually arrived, though they were never the draw.

After 10-plus years on the market, streaming began supplanting broadcast, cable, and satellite television, and Apple got in the game themselves with Apple TV streaming original programs and movies. Very few of us store video on our computers anymore, much less rip, mix, or burn physical media, and the Apple TV matured to fit neatly into the future we live in now.

Apple also took the lesson that they had learned on the financial side about “services revenue,” money earned from providing us things like storage, syncing, workout support, streaming music, news, and more. Instead of hardware lock-in, Apple has increasingly looked to service flexibility. Following their previous strategy with iTunes and Apple Music, Apple made Apple TV available on Windows and Android, transforming it into software that is now included on nearly all smart televisions. You can even access it from a web browser.

Apple TV has also matured in its integration with other Apple devices. Instead of typing in passwords using a crummy remote-control interface, you can use an iPhone or iPad and tap a QuickType password link. FaceTime arrived with tvOS 17, letting us finally combine an iPhone or iPad as a camera with the large screen many of us own in a living room or den. tvOS 26 brought a consistent interface to FaceTime across all the fall 2025 platform updates, including macOS 26 Tahoe.

The future of Apple TV hardware is never quite clear, as the sales from the devices are a tiny fraction of the company's product revenue. Maybe it will eventually disappear with just the vestigial Apple TV app providing all services—or evolve further into a stick-like HDMI hardware from Amazon and others.

But it's absolutely certain that Apple TV, as a concept, finally found its footing and is here to stay. This book charts out what Apple TV means today and how to use it best.

This Book Covers the Latest Versions

Because each change to tvOS in recent years brings significant revisions, this version of the book assumes you have installed at least the latest version of tvOS 18 and thus have an Apple TV HD or 4K model (any version).

Where appropriate, I also describe how to use an iPhone, iPad, or Mac with a HomePod. Due to significant interface changes in the iOS 18/iPadOS 18 and macOS 15 Sequoia releases, particularly affecting the iPhone/iPad Control Center layout, this version of the book requires those releases or later.

Apple TV Quick Start

You don't want to read a book—you want to watch TV and movies, listen to music, view photos, and play games! I've broken this book into bite-sized chunks, so you can find what you need quickly.

You're in the market for a new TV:

- I offer information to help you [Decide Which TV to Buy](#) and [Decide on Audio](#).
- Ask: [Do You Still Need an Apple TV?](#)

You don't own an Apple TV box, but have a TV or other devices that support the TV app and/or AirPlay:

- Find out how to [Master AirPlay](#) so you can send content to your TV.
- Read [Decipher the Apple TV App](#), which mainly focuses on the Apple TV version, but also largely applies to other platforms.

You're new to the Apple TV hardware:

- Plug it in, take note of what the different ports are designed for, and get started with [Set Up Your Apple TV](#).
- Become familiar with the Siri Remote and all the other ways to [Control Your Apple TV](#).
- Learn the basics of the Apple TV interface in [Learn Apple TV Basics](#).

Once you have the basics of the Apple TV hardware:

- Be sure to [Master AirPlay](#) so that you can beam the display of your Mac, iPad, iPhone, or iPod touch to your TV.
- Learn how to [Decipher the Apple TV App](#).
- Find out how to [Listen to Music and Podcasts](#).
- Use your Apple TV to [View Your Photos and Home Movies](#).
- Skip the cloud and [Play Content from a Computer](#).

What Are Apple TV and iTunes?

It used to be simple to explain Apple TV and iTunes: Apple TV was, and still is, an Apple-designed box that you connect to your TV to expand its capabilities. An Apple TV was the only way to view iTunes video content on your TV set, and it was the only video destination for AirPlay streaming. iTunes was where you bought music or bought or rented video, like TV shows or movies.

These days, Apple TV can mean one of several things, sometimes even more than one in a single bundle:

- **Apple hardware:** The physical Apple TV hardware, which runs an operating system called tvOS and which is largely the focus of this book. In industry terms, it's a "set-top box," even though it usually doesn't sit on top of a "set" and we don't call TVs "sets" anymore.
- **Apple TV app:** The Apple TV app, which is available on the Apple TV hardware, and on iOS, iPadOS, and on many popular TV platforms. I cover this app in [Decipher the Apple TV App](#).

Note: Just to be even more confusing, the Apple TV app is labeled as the "TV" app on iPhone, iPad, and Mac, even though [Apple considers it](#) the "Apple TV" app.

- **Apple TV Channels:** Apple TV Channels, a subset of the Apple TV app, which lets you subscribe to various add-on video services. Again, I touch on this in [Decipher the Apple TV App](#).
- **Apple TV streaming service:** Apple TV (formerly Apple TV+), which is a paid streaming service offered by Apple that competes with services like Netflix and Disney+. (See the sidebar [About Apple TV Streaming and Apple TV Channels](#).)

This entire naming scheme is best described as *Pythonesque*, reminiscent of the [Monty Python sketch](#) where every member of an Australian university's philosophy department is named Bruce, and they ask a new member if they can call also him Bruce “just to keep things clear.”

This became even worse on October 13, 2025, when Apple quietly noted at the bottom of a press release, “Apple TV+ is now simply Apple TV, with a vibrant new identity.” Sure, folks. Now you can watch Apple TV in Apple TV on Apple TV (original programming in the Apple TV app on Apple TV hardware).

Throughout this book, when I refer to Apple TV, I'm usually talking about the hardware product. When I'm not, I try to make it clear if I mean the Apple TV app, Apple TV Channels, or Apple's original Apple TV programming.

iTunes Abides

The iPhone and iPad long had separate apps for different kinds of media—like Books, TV, and Podcasts—while iTunes was the central repository on the Mac. To make their operating systems consistent and media easier to find, Apple split the overstuffed iTunes app in macOS 10.15 Catalina into TV, Music, and Podcasts, and moved audiobooks to Books.

But iTunes isn't quite dead yet! The monolithic media app still exists on Windows—although [Apple wants users to switch](#) to the Apple Music, Apple TV, and Apple Devices apps. To add to the confusion, the iTunes Store remains in place, allowing you to purchase tracks from the iTunes Store within the Music app. Additionally, there is an iTunes Store app for iPhone and iPad, offering music, TV shows, and movies. Finally, the [iTunes Match](#) service still exists, despite the existence of Apple Music!

Do You Still Need an Apple TV?

For years, if you wanted Apple content on your TV, your only option was to buy an Apple TV device or connect a Mac to your TV. Since that changed a few years ago, you have more choices. The two are:

- **AirPlay 2:** [Select TV sets](#) and TV accessories support AirPlay 2, which allows streaming video content from Apple devices. The protocol also lets you turn the TV on and off and switch inputs from the Home app. See [Master AirPlay](#).
- **Apple TV app:** The Apple TV app is [no longer limited to just Apple's devices](#). It can now be found on many third-party TVs and streaming boxes, like those from Roku. However, the Apple TV app on non-Apple platforms isn't tvOS: it doesn't show or support third-party tvOS apps, and it tracks TV shows and movies only from the iTunes Store, Apple TV programs, and Apple TV Channels. See [Decipher the Apple TV App](#).

With Apple playback integrated into so many platforms, is it still worth buying an Apple TV? Let's look at the pros and cons.

Apple TV Pros vs. Other Platforms

Why spend \$129 or \$149 on an Apple TV when you can get a perfectly good streaming device for under \$50? Here are a few good reasons:

- **Third-party apps:** tvOS supports a nice library of games and other various applications that you won't find on other TV platforms. It's also the only easy way to use the [Apple Arcade](#) service on a TV, which gives you access to a large library of games for \$4.99 per month. The Apple TV can also support a variety of game controllers. See [Pair a Game Controller with an Apple TV](#).

- **Home automation:** If you use home automation, an Apple TV is an important accessory to have, since it acts as a hub for Apple Home (formerly HomeKit), and Apple TV models that support Thread help [Matter](#) home automation devices work better.

Note: Apple renamed HomeKit (geeky) to Apple Home (friendly) in the fall 2025 releases. I note both names in this update.

- **Integration:** The Apple TV hardware offers so much more than just the Apple TV app and AirPlay. In addition to the App Store, it seamlessly integrates with AirPods and HomePods, the Music and Podcasts apps, and other aspects of the Apple ecosystem.
- **Picture and audio quality:** The Apple TV box can be set to match the content's original formatting, which is a huge plus for cinema buffs. Plus it supports advanced features like Dolby Atmos.
- **Interface simplicity:** While there are many valid critiques of Apple TV's interface, if you spend 15 minutes with a modern smart TV, you will understand the great difference between "critique" and "loathing." The one exception seems to be Roku, which is arguably as straightforward as tvOS, though with comparable minor flaws.
- **Privacy:** It's incredible how cheap TVs are these days, and there's a good reason for that: [they spy on everything you watch](#). Your viewing habits, browsing behaviors, and even when and how often you pause are analyzed and sold to the highest bidder. The upside is that it allows manufacturers to sell high-quality sets at rock-bottom prices, but in return Big Brother watches you. It's to the point that the [US Federal Bureau of Investigation has warned about it](#). Apple isn't perfect on privacy, but they do advertise better privacy policies than the competition. Plug in an Apple TV box, cut off internet access to your smart TV, and you'll be that much more private.

Set Up Your Apple TV

The Apple TV hardware is simple to set up: just connect the proper cables and follow onscreen instructions. But if you own an iPhone or iPad, you can make that setup even easier by simply turning on your Apple TV and touching it with your device!

In this chapter, I offer advice on what to do if you own an older TV or receiver without HDMI inputs, whether to use a wired or wireless internet connection, and the settings to look at right away.

Make Physical Connections

Before you can do use your Apple TV, you have to connect it to your television, to your network, and to power. Let's look at the ports on the back of your Apple TV (**Figure 1**).

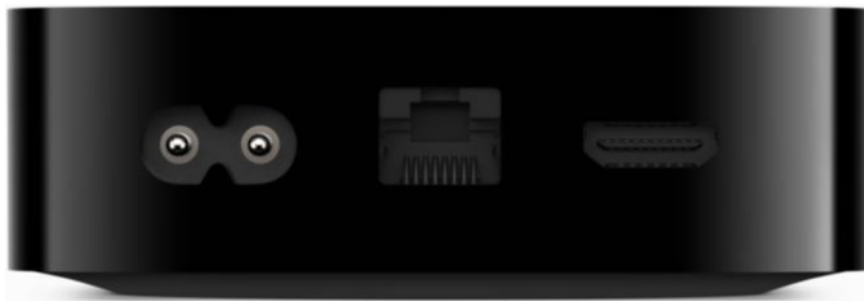


Figure 1: The Apple TV 4K (3rd generation)'s Wi-Fi + Ethernet model is slimmed down to (left to right) power, Ethernet, and HDMI; the Wi-Fi only version has just two ports. Older Apple TV models have more and different ports, including USB-C.

Each generation of Apple TV model has fewer ports than its predecessor. The base 3rd-generation model only has power and HDMI, largely due to HDMI and Wi-Fi improvements that make other ports less necessary.

Here are what the ports on the back of the Apple TV do:

- **Power:** Read through this chapter before plugging it in, as the Apple TV powers on right away. Insert one end of the included power cable into this port and connect the other to a power outlet.
- **Ethernet:** If you purchased an Apple TV with the Ethernet option, connect the Ethernet cable here. Ethernet should be more reliable and consistent than Wi-Fi, as there's no ambient interference from competing networks or other sources. (If an Ethernet cable is connected, you cannot configure Wi-Fi.)
- **HDMI:** HDMI transmits both audio and video from your Apple TV to your television or receiver. Apple has opted not to include an HDMI cable, but the upside is that you can pick the length (and color) that will work best with your setup. After you track down an HDMI cable, connect one end of it to the Apple TV and the other end to your television set or receiver (the connectors are the same on both ends).

Tip: Brick-and-mortar retailers sell HDMI cables at exorbitant markups. Online retailers like [Amazon](#) and [Monoprice](#) offer high-quality cables for \$15 to \$20. For 4K and HDR support, buy an Ultra High Speed certified cable.

Restoring an Apple TV from an iPhone

With no peripheral port, how do you reset an Apple TV? If your Apple TV has a major problem, you are prompted on your iPhone to restore it. I have not experienced this feature myself and you hopefully never will.

Tips for Setting Up Your Apple TV

The Apple TV will guide you through the setup process, but there are specific settings you should pay special attention to.

Control Your Apple TV

The Siri Remote (called the Apple TV Remote in some regions) is simple, yet highly advanced. It's used to navigate the Apple TV's interface, summon Siri, play games, and even to control your home entertainment center. I explain how to use it in the pages that follow.

I also look at other remote options in these topics:

- [Control an Apple TV with an iPhone or iPad](#) explains how to use a shortcut in Control Center to operate your Apple TV.
- [Use a Third-Party Remote](#) talks about mapping pretty much any remote to an Apple TV.
- [Use the Remote App on the Apple Watch](#) explains how to control your Apple TV from your wrist.
- [Become an Apple TV Keyboard Jockey](#) covers connecting a wireless keyboard to your Apple TV.
- [Pair a Game Controller with an Apple TV](#) explains how to better enjoy games on the Apple TV.
- [Control Your Apple TV with Shortcuts](#) gives tips on automating your Apple TV.
- [Control an Apple TV with Siri](#) explains how to use Siri through a HomePod, iPhone, or other device to control your Apple TV.

Meet the Siri Remotes

People had a lot of complaints about Apple's Siri Remotes from their initial introduction—those people included me! The latest versions, which ships with the Apple TV 4K 2nd and 3rd generation, have gotten rid of nearly all flaws and added missing features. (For me, the most important new feature is the Mute.)

Technically these “latest versions” are really one design that comes in two variations:

- **Siri Remote, 2nd generation:** This version comes with the Apple TV 4K 2nd generation. It has a Lightning port for charging.
- **Siri Remote, 3rd generation:** Buy an Apple TV 4K 3rd generation, and get a matching 3rd generation Siri Remote, which uses USB-C for charging.

Tip: If you own an Apple TV HD or later, you can upgrade to the Siri Remote 3rd generation by purchasing it separately from Apple.

Because they are identical besides charging, I’m going to refer to them as just “the Siri Remote.” Let’s look at the buttons on the Siri Remote (**Figure 7**).



Figure 7: Buttons on the 2nd- and 3rd-generation Siri Remote.

Learn Apple TV Basics

Now that you've completed the basic setup for your Apple TV hardware and the various remotes and controls, it's time to learn how to handle your Home screen, learn about built-in apps, how to install and delete apps, and [Search with Siri](#).

Navigate the Home Screen

Apple tries to steer you toward the Apple TV app on your Apple TV hardware. However, in order to access individual streaming services, view your photos, listen to music, or play games, you must use the traditional Home screen, which you can reach in a couple of ways:

- Press the TV button on your remote while in the TV app
- Press and hold the Back button

Tip: Go to Settings > Remotes and Devices > TV Button to make the TV button open the Home Screen instead of the Apple TV app.

It's easy to get around the Apple TV Home screen by swiping on the clickpad, but some features aren't obvious; I cover those next.

Tip: While browsing the Home screen, you can jump back to the first icon by pressing Back.

Pick Your Top Shelf Apps

At the top of the Home screen, above the app icons, is the Top Shelf. What appears in Top Shelf changes depending on which app you've selected in the top row of app icons (such as Apple TV in **Figure 23**).

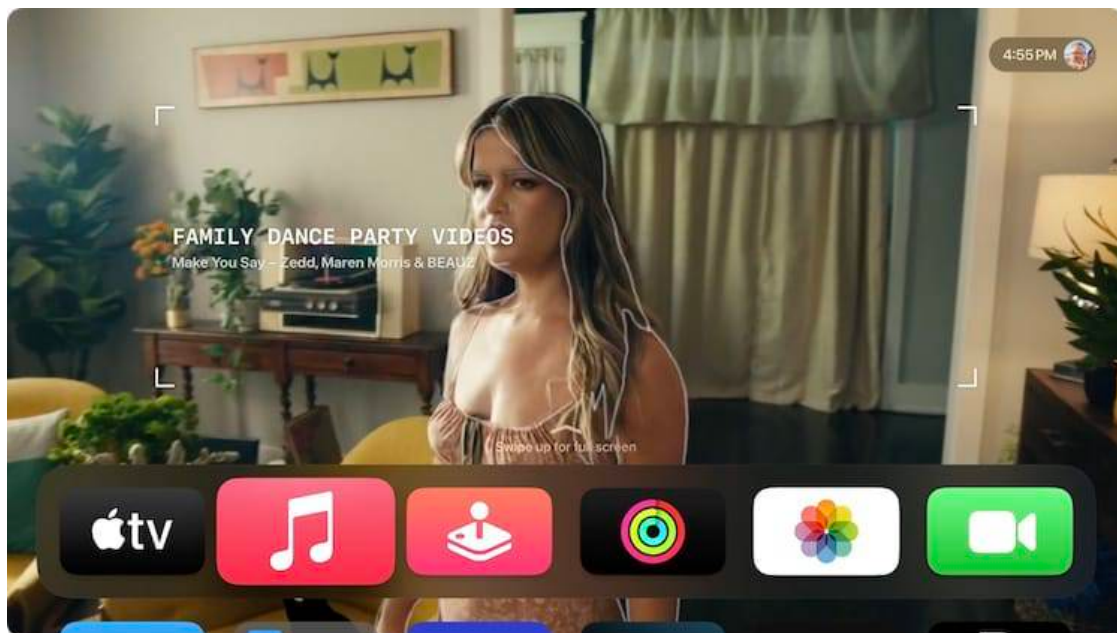


Figure 23: The Top Shelf of the Home screen displays app shortcuts for the selected app below, such as the Music app in this image.

With apps such as Apple TV and Apple Music, you can swipe up on the app icon to enter the Top Shelf, and swipe right and left to quickly access content. But with some apps, such as the Settings app, the App Shortcuts area displays just a single image. Keep that in mind when deciding which apps to place in the top row.

Manage Apps on the Home Screen

To move or delete an app, select it and then touch and hold the clickpad until a menu appears. Then:

- **Move an app around the Home Screen:** Choose Edit Home Screen. The app icons enter Jiggle Mode and start shaking. Use the clickpad to reposition the app and press to set it back in place.
- **Move an app in or out of a folder:** Choose “Move to.” A sub-menu opens where you can choose an existing folder (if one already exists) or New Folder (**Figure 24**).

Master AirPlay

AirPlay lets you wirelessly link together media playback on your Apple devices all over your house. You can use it to:

- Send video from an iPhone or iPad to a TV or Mac
- Send audio from an iPhone, iPad, or Apple TV to an Apple TV, HomePod, or other AirPlay 2 receiver, including Macs
- Mirror an iPhone, iPad, or Mac display to a TV
- Extend your Mac's display

Set Up AirPlay on Apple TV

AirPlay should be set up alongside the Apple TV, but there are a few settings you can check in Settings > AirPlay and Apple Home/HomeKit:

- **AirPlay:** Is this thing on? Because if it's not, you can't AirPlay to the Apple TV.
- **Allow Access:** The first time any device AirPlays to an Apple TV, you must input an onscreen code from the Apple TV on the device. But you can add more security to AirPlay to keep nearby neighbors, children, and annoying house guests from hijacking your TV. You can set AirPlay access to:
 - ▶ *Everyone:* Wide open, no restrictions.
 - ▶ *Anyone on the Same Network:* Whoever is on the same Wi-Fi network as the Apple TV.
 - ▶ *Only People Sharing This Home:* With this set, only the iCloud users set up to share your Apple Home/HomeKit home can AirPlay to the Apple TV. See [Manage Users](#).

Since the risk level is fairly low, I recommend starting with Everyone and then ramping up as need be. Note that these settings apply for *every* Apple TV in your home.

You can also turn on Require Password to require a password every time someone tries to AirPlay to that Apple TV. I don't recommend that except as a last resort.

- **Room:** AirPlay has been integrated into the Apple Home/HomeKit framework, which means you must tell the Apple TV which room it's in. If you have more than one Apple TV, this helps distinguish them, and lets you do things like tell Siri to play a movie in the living room (see [AirPlay Media with Siri](#)).

Note: If you want to connect an Apple TV and a HomePod, they must both be set to the same room.

Use HomePods as Apple TV Speakers

You can use one or two HomePods or HomePod minis as the default audio device(s) for your Apple TV. HomePod audio offers solid quality and the integration offers several advantages. Even one full-size HomePod sounds surprisingly good in a home theater, and the HomePod mini, though less powerful, is far better than most built-in TV speakers.

Using a HomePod or two has some drawbacks you should consider:

- **Identical models for dual use:** When you want to use two HomePods for fuller sound they must be identical models, down to the generation. A full-sized HomePod can only pair to another full-sized model, and a 1st-generation HomePod works only with another 1st-generation HomePod.
- **Apple TV takes over audio:** Once a HomePod is set as the default audio output for an Apple TV, the HomePod becomes useless if the Apple TV is offline. If you need to disconnect the HomePod, you'll want to unset it as the default audio output first.

Decipher the Apple TV App

Apple's Apple TV app on the Apple TV (say that five times fast) is intended to be your portal to all of your video content on the Apple TV. The Apple TV app is also available outside the Apple TV: on macOS, iOS, iPadOS, and multiple smart TV platforms.

The Apple TV app for tvOS, iOS, and iPadOS also integrates content from third-party streaming services (with the notable exception of Netflix), and helps you track sporting events.

Note: Its name is an icon-and-word combo of  and TV: it appears as TV, but the app's exact name on a Mac, iPhone, or iPad is "TV.")

About Apple TV Streaming and Apple TV Channels

Apple TV Channels are additional video services that you can subscribe to inside the Apple TV app. They offer a few advantages over subscribing through third-party apps:

- ✦ Simply install the Apple TV app on any available platform, log in, and all of your channels are available.
- ✦ No need to create an additional login or add payment information, since Apple handles it.
- ✦ No additional apps are required.
- ✦ You can download content for offline viewing on an iPhone or iPad.
- ✦ Your subscriptions are shared with your [Family Sharing](#) circle.

In the United States, Apple TV Channels include favorites like AMC and Showtime, as well as more niche channels like Rakuten Viki and Marquee TV. But the most prominent is [Apple TV](#), Apple's own streaming service (formerly Apple TV+).

Browse Apple TV for Content

You make your way through the app using a navigational menu. In the upper-left corner of the screen is a little lozenge that tells you the current screen you're on (**Figure 49**).

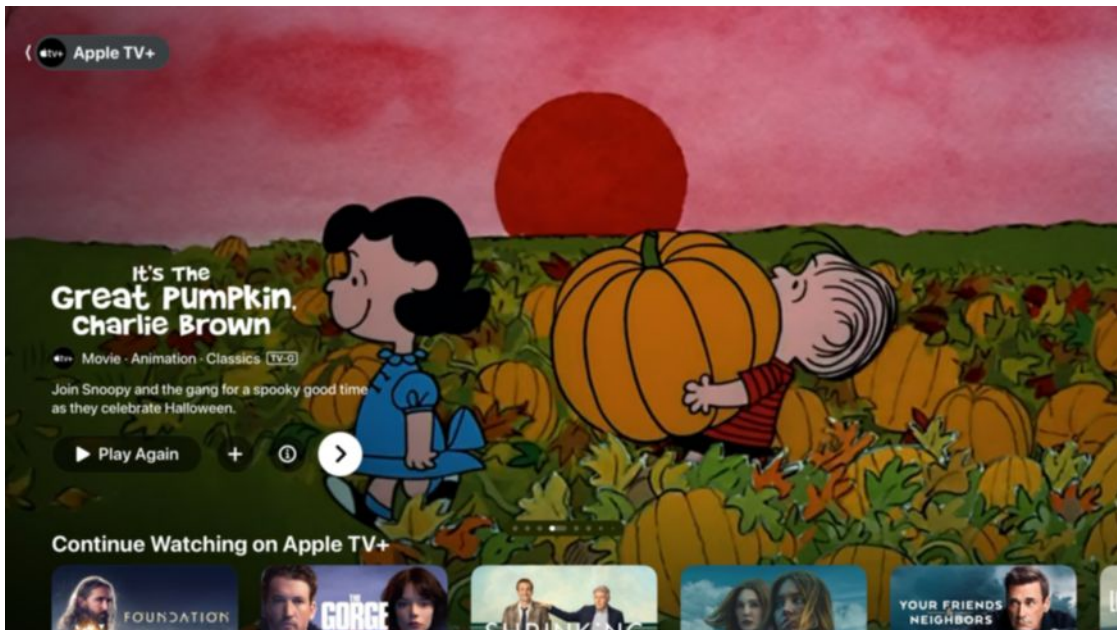


Figure 49: The lozenge in the upper-left corner tells you the current screen. Select it to open the menu.

When you navigate to the lozenge, it opens a menu (**Figure 50**).

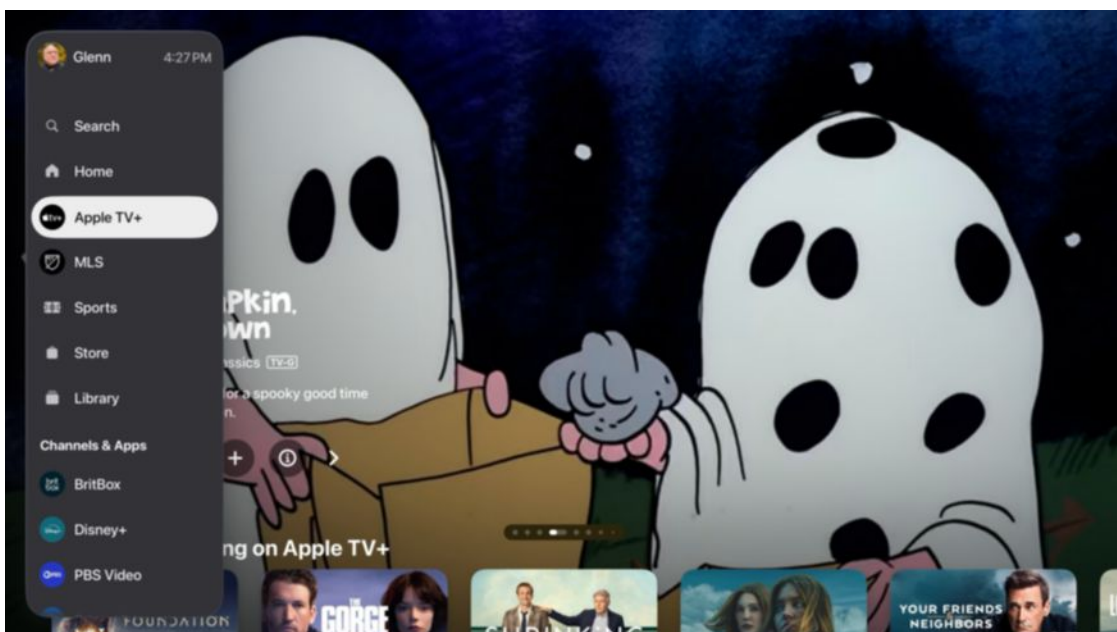


Figure 50: The TV app menu.

Listen to Music and Podcasts

The Apple TV hardware isn't just great for watching movies and TV—it's also a fantastic hub for audio. While AirPlaying audio to the Apple TV often makes the most sense, the Apple TV has built-in apps for music and podcasts.

The Music app is built around the [Apple Music](#) streaming service, which provides access to tens-of-millions of songs and optionally syncs your music among your devices through the cloud.

The Music app can also play tracks purchased from Apple, synced with [iTunes Match](#), and streamed from the free Beats 1 radio station, but some features won't work as I describe or as you might expect.

About Apple Music and iTunes Match

[Apple Music](#) syncs your music library with the cloud and provides access to millions of songs. It's also available in the [Apple One bundle](#). [iTunes Match](#) stores your music on Apple's servers—either by matching your tracks to what's in the iTunes Store, or uploading unrecognized tracks.

Listen to Music

Let's look at how to find and play music in the Music app, accessible from the Home screen.

Discover Apple Music

The Home tab offers several sections tailored to your interests and listening habits with Apple Music:

- **Top Picks for You:** At the top are several panels that the algorithms thinks you'll find most appealing (**Figure 59**). This can include mixes (see below), collection with a given artist (like "Featuring Lorne Balfe"), "mood" playlists, new releases and more.

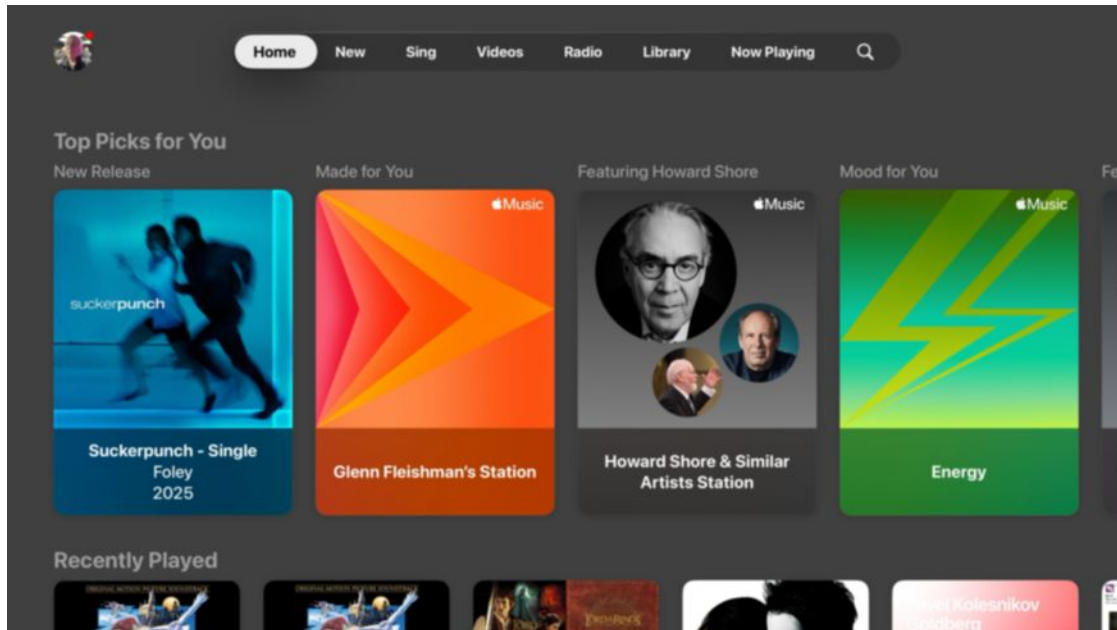


Figure 59: On the Home tab, the Music app offers a lot of directions you can take for diving deeper into how it views your musical taste.

- **Recently Played:** You can review what you've listened to recently in reverse chronological order, with the newest at far left.
- **Generated categories:** More selections designed to appeal as you scroll down. For instance, right now I see "Film, TV & Stage" (I've been listening to a lot of soundtracks) and The Genius of Chopin.
- **Made for You:** This section contains an assortment of albums and playlists that Apple thinks you'll like, based on your listening history and what you've marked as loved. Several Apple Music playlists are generated every week:
 - ▶ *Get Up! Mix:* This mix features upbeat music, based on your tastes, for waking up or working out.

View Your Photos and Home Movies

Nothing says “Party!” like 700 vacation photos. All kidding aside, the Apple TV’s Photos app makes it easy to display your photos and home movies on your TV.

I also show you how to use your photos for [Customize the Screen Saver](#).

Note: Refer back to [View Photos and Videos with AirPlay](#) to learn how to display photos and home movies from your iPhone or iPad to your Apple TV.

Get Around the Photos App

The Photos app displays photos from iCloud Photos. Make sure to turn on iCloud Photos and Shared Albums in Settings > Profiles/Users and Accounts > *Username* > Photos.

The Photos app has four screens:

- **Memories:** Memories are automated collections of photos generated in Photos for iPhone, iPad, and Mac and synced to your Apple TV through iCloud Photos. They’re based on photo attributes like date taken, location taken, and who or what is in the picture. Be sure to check Memories regularly, because more are added all the time (**Figure 67**). Be sure to enable Memories in Settings > Profiles/Users and Accounts > *Username* > Photos.

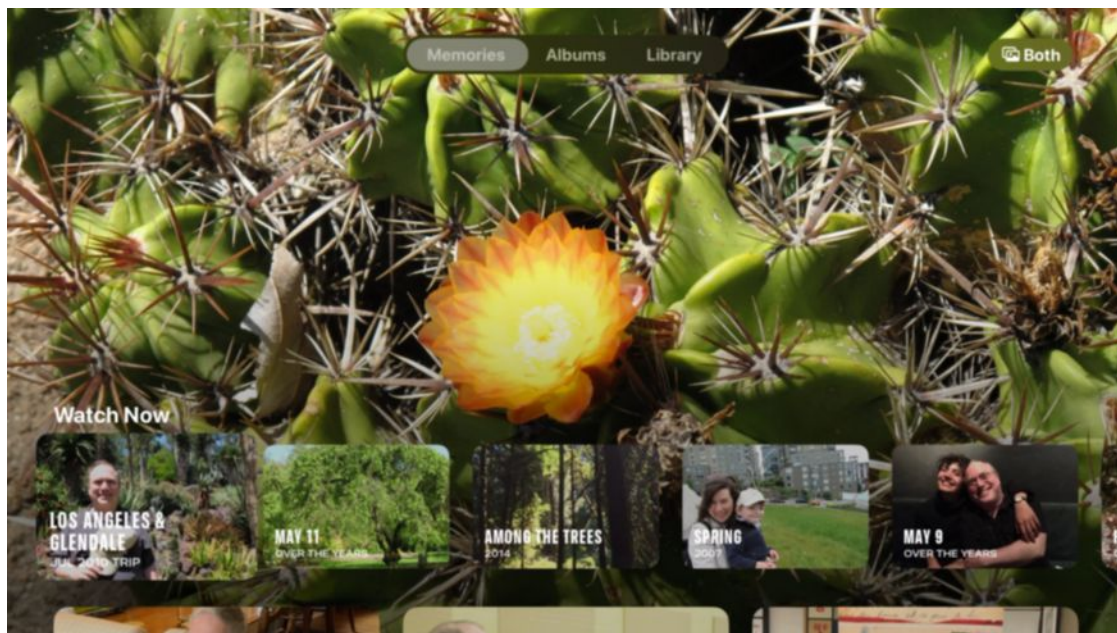


Figure 67: Memories are based on date, location, and who or what is in the picture. Check them often, as Apple regularly updates them.

Open a Memory, and a slideshow with music begins to play. Swipe left or right to manually cycle through the photos.

- **Shared Albums:** This screen appears only if you've turned on Shared Albums, and shows albums shared by you and family and friends who share iCloud albums with you (**Figure 68**).

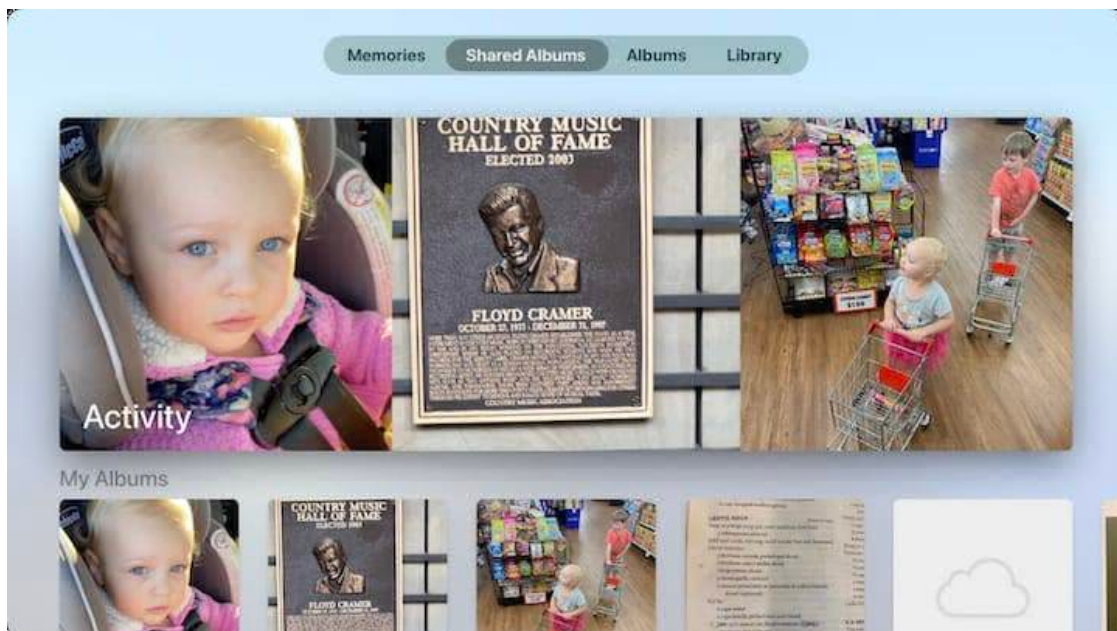


Figure 68: The Shared screen displays iCloud albums you share with others and albums others share with you.

Play Content from a Computer

Apple heavily positions the Apple TV as a device to stream internet content, especially from Apple's own services, but the Apple TV can still stream content from a computer on a local network with the built-in Computers app.

Personally, I recommend the [Plex](#) media server, which has clients for iOS, iPadOS, tvOS, and most smart TV platforms. The Plex server can run on macOS, Windows, Linux, and many popular NAS platforms. You can throw pretty much any media type at Plex, and it can transcode it to a format your Apple TV can play. Plex changes too much to reliably document in a book (I know, I've tried), but it's [pretty well documented](#).

Enable Home Sharing

Home Sharing is the technology Apple uses to share media between computers on a local network. Here's how to enable it:

- **On the Apple TV:** Home Sharing should be enabled on the Apple TV from the get-go, but to make sure, go to Settings > Profiles/Users and Accounts > Home Sharing. If it's not enabled, choose Turn On Home Sharing and log in with your Apple Account password.

Home Sharing is tied to a single Apple Account, so you must be logged into the same Apple Account both on the Apple TV and the computer acting as a media server. If the Apple TV isn't logged into your preferred Apple Account for Home Sharing, go to Settings > Profiles/Users and Accounts > Home Sharing and choose Turn Off Home Sharing. Then choose Turn On Home Sharing and Use Another Apple Account.

Note that user switching (see [Manage Users](#)) does not affect Home Sharing.

- **Mac:** Go to System Settings > General > Sharing and turn on Media Sharing. Edit the library name if you want and select Home Sharing. Enter your Apple Account email, select Turn On Home Sharing, enter your Apple Account password, and then select Turn On Home Sharing again.

Tip: Select “Share Photos with Apple TV” to make your photo library viewable through the Computers app on the Apple TV.

- **Windows:** To turn on Home Sharing in iTunes for Windows, choose File > Home Sharing > Turn on Home Sharing. Enter your Apple Account password and select Turn On Home Sharing.

Share Music and Video with an Apple TV

To see what’s available to stream on your home network, open the Computers app from the Apple TV Home screen. If you only have one computer sharing on the network, it will automatically open to it, otherwise, you can pick a media library from the menu.

Note that the Computers app only shows content that is stored *locally* on that computer. It won’t show media that’s stored in iCloud but displayed locally. See Kirk McElhearn’s [Take Control of Apple Media Apps](#) for a definitive guide to managing your Mac media libraries.

Outside of iCloud, here are quick tips on adding stuff to the media libraries you share:

- **Add music to Music:** In the Music app, choose File > Import. Choose the music file or files to import or a folder full of music files and select Open.
- **Add video to the TV app:** Drag the video file to the sidebar. After a few seconds, it appears under Home Videos in the sidebar. In the

Call with FaceTime

FaceTime arrived on Apple TV in fall 2023, and Apple has done two rounds of improvements since, in tvOS 18 and tvOS 26. The latter overhauled the interface to bring it in line with how FaceTime now looks and works on an iPhone, iPad, and Mac.

An ever-improving app is all well and good, but how do you get video input on a device with no camera or the option to add video via USB? Through the magic of Continuity Camera, you can use an iPhone or an iPad as an external camera.

FaceTime for Apple TV also lets you use SharePlay to watch or listen to content with others. SharePlay doesn't have the same recent-hardware limitation, working on every Apple TV that runs tvOS.

Tip: For in-depth coverage of all things FaceTime, see my book [*Take Control of FaceTime and Messages*](#).

Note: To use FaceTime on your Apple TV, you must have a 2nd-generation Apple TV 4K or later and an iPhone or iPad running iOS 17 or later.

Use FaceTime on an Apple TV

For a quick start, here's everything you need to know to place a call from an Apple TV.

Choose a User for Continuity Camera

When you open the FaceTime app, it prompts you to connect an iPhone or iPad via Continuity Camera (**Figure 74**).

You have two options:

- Set up Continuity Camera for an existing Apple TV user:
 1. Select the username in the list.
 2. Tap the notification on an iPhone or iPad logged in the same iCloud account.
 3. Tap Accept.

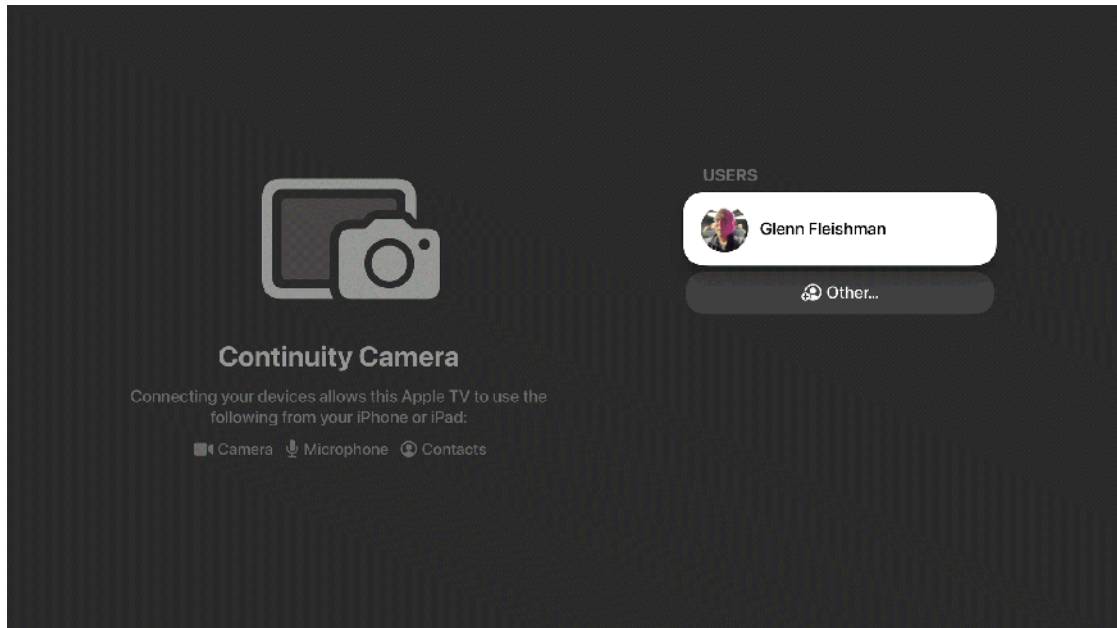


Figure 74: To make a FaceTime call, you must connect an iPhone or iPad to your Apple TV via Continuity Camera.

See [Manage Users](#) and [Manage Users with Control Center](#) for more on using Apple TV user profiles.

- Select Other to set up Continuity Camera for someone not already connected to the Apple TV.

If you select Other, scan the onscreen QR code with an iPhone or iPad. The easiest way is:

1. Open the Camera app.
2. Point the viewfinder at the QR code until a yellow square appears around it in the viewfinder (**Figure 75**).
3. Tap Connect to Apple TV in the Camera app.

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Take Control Books Executive Editor Glenn Fleishman never stops writing about technology and its implications. He's in his third decade of writing for publications as varied as *American History*, *Fast Company*, the *Economist*, *Increment*, the *New York Times*, *Macworld*, and *TidBITS*, and many others. In 2012, he was a two-game champion on *Jeopardy!*

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Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Josh Centers for creating and updating this book across several releases, and for trusting me to take over its updates.

Shameless Plug

I have two recent books about technology that mostly aren't about computers. [How Comics Are Made](#) traces the history of newspaper comics in North America from 1896 to the present, looking at the path from a cartoonist's hand to the printed page. [Available in bookstores worldwide](#), you can also [order a signed copy from me!](#)

The other title is the second edition of *Six Centuries of Type & Printing*, a brisk but thorough look at the technological development that took us from Gutenberg (and even before) to the present day. You can [order directly from me](#).

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- Publisher: Joe Kissell
- Editors: Lynnea Fleming (through version 3.2), Joe Kissell (version 3.3 and later)
- Cover design: Sam Schick of [Neversink](#)
- Logo design: Geoff Allen of [FUN is OK](#)

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Take Control of Apple TV, Fifth Edition

ISBN: 978-1-990783-70-8

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