



TAKE CONTROL OF
SEQUOIA

by **JOE KISSELL**
\$14.99

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Sequoia*, version 1.2, published in April 2025 by alt concepts. This book was written by Joe Kissell and edited by Kelly Turner (versions 1.0 and 1.1) and Glenn Fleishman (version 1.2).

This book teaches you all about macOS 15 Sequoia, including how to upgrade from an older operating system and how to use the major new features.

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What's New in Version 1.2

Due to *[long, boring story of life's woes omitted]*, a few updates of Sequoia came and went without corresponding updates to this book. I'm sorry it took a while, but version 1.2 of this book catches us up to the many changes that happened from Sequoia 15.0.1 through 15.4.1. The major highlights are:

- Added a note about using multiple displays in [Tile Windows by Dragging](#)
- Added information about changing keyboard shortcuts for tiling in [Tile Windows with Keyboard Shortcuts](#)
- Added a clarification about authentication prompts and described dragging things from one device to another in [Mirror Your iPhone Screen on Your Mac](#)
- Explained how to see a preview of a Keynote presentation before sharing it with FaceTime or another videoconferencing app in [Use Play Preview](#)
- Added information about ChatGPT settings in [Apple Intelligence & Siri Settings](#)
- Updated the [Discover Apple Intelligence](#) chapter to: cover newly supported languages, the addition of ChatGPT (see [A New Siri Interface](#)), and expanded writing tools (see [Writing Tools](#)); include information on [Image Playground](#) and [Genmoji](#); and mention [Notification Summaries](#)
- In [Meet Safari 18](#), updated [View Page Highlights](#) and [Peruse the Redesigned Reader](#) to reflect post-15.0 changes, and added a new topic: [Link to a Specific Spot](#)
- Updated the Do More with Messages chapter with the new topic, [Use Emojis and Stickers More Easily](#)
- Expanded [Use Math Notes](#) to cover Apple's wacky new way of adjusting numbers in an equation

- Added [Hearing Protection](#) to the list of new AirPods Pro 2 features
- In [Quick Start](#), explained how Apple is simplifying the process of moving to a new Mac
- Updated [Calculator](#) to mention the restored [Repeated Operations](#) feature
- Added topics that cover changes in more apps than the previous version of this book included: [Finder](#), [Music](#), [Podcasts](#), [Reminders](#), and [TV](#)
- Significantly overhauled the Mail topic to cover features added in later updates to Sequoia, such as [Mail Categories](#) and [Hidden Contact Photos](#)

What Was New in Version 1.1

Version 1.1 of this book was a minor update that detailed some of the changes between the beta versions of Sequoia and the 15.0 release version. The major changes were:

- Removed references to the beta versions of Sequoia that are no longer relevant
- Mentioned a new PDF Apple published with details on all of Sequoia's new features
- Replaced a screenshot of Software Update; see [Learn About Upgrades via Software Update](#)
- Provided a direct download link for Sequoia; see [Obtain the Installer](#)
- Updated the description of Safari's Highlights feature; see [View Page Highlights](#)
- Removed a mention of Pinned Collections in Photos, which apparently were intended only for iOS 18 and iPadOS 18

Introduction

Every summer, while most people are thinking about relaxing in the sun and going on vacation, I'm thinking about the next version of macOS. In June, Apple announces the next big revisions to all their operating systems, and your faithful Take Control authors get busy writing about them. For a number of years now, Josh Centers has been covering the latest iOS and iPadOS versions, Jeff Carlson has been digging into watchOS to keep his Apple Watch book up to date, and I've been responsible for writing about the new version of macOS.

This book is your guide to what's new in macOS 15 Sequoia. I assume you have a basic grasp of Mac fundamentals already, so I don't explain things like what the Finder is, how to use the Dock, or where to find your apps. (To learn about those things, pick up my book [Mac Basics](#).) The focus here is on what's different from Sonoma (and other recent versions of macOS).

As I've done for several years, I've incorporated into this book instructions for upgrading from earlier versions of macOS. I help you confirm that your Mac is compatible with Sequoia, walk you through all the preparatory steps, and guide you through the installation process.

Then the fun begins! I show you how to use the shiny new features and adapt to the many changes in Sequoia, including significant ones that arrived late, in 15.1 or beyond. I also tell you about some potential pitfalls and how to avoid or work around them.

Although Apple Intelligence, a set of new and much-discussed artificial intelligence features (see [Discover Apple Intelligence](#)), was a marquee feature in Sequoia, few of its features made it into the initial 15.0 release. Instead, Apple began rolling them out in version 15.1, with additional features appearing in versions 15.2–15.4. Even so, as of 15.4.1 in April 2025, several previously announced features are still missing, and Apple recently stated that some of them have been delayed until late 2025 or early 2026.

Sequoia Quick Start

You can read this book in any order, jumping to whatever topics interest you most. However, I recommend reading the first chapter ([Take In the Scenic View](#)) first to get an overview, and if you're upgrading to Sequoia from an earlier version of macOS, you should go through the [Check Your Mac for Compatibility](#) and [Upgrade to Sequoia](#) chapters to ensure a smooth transition.

Learn about what's new:

- Discover what you have to look forward to when you upgrade to Sequoia, as well as what features were added (and removed) in the last several macOS versions. Read [Take In the Scenic View](#).

Upgrade your Mac to Sequoia:

- Make sure your computer can run Sequoia. See [Check Your Mac for Compatibility](#).
- Follow detailed, step-by-step instructions to upgrade your Mac. See [Upgrade to Sequoia](#).

Dive in to the major new features:

- Impose order on the size and shape of your windows. See [Tile Your Windows](#).
- Access your iPhone's screen and notifications from your Mac. See [Use New iPhone Continuity Features](#).
- Share your screen more effectively and replace a cluttered background in FaceTime and elsewhere. See [Improve Videoconferencing](#).
- See what settings are new or different in [Explore System Settings](#).
- Read about Apple's plans to integrate a variety of AI features into Sequoia in [Discover Apple Intelligence](#).
- Learn about new features in Safari, with an emphasis on reducing distractions. See [Meet Safari 18](#).

- Add text formatting, animated text effects, and more to your messages. See [Do More with Messages](#).
- Get quick answers to math problems, transcribe audio, work with collapsible sections, and highlight text in Notes. See [Take Notes Further](#).
- Use Apple's new Passwords app, which provides a better user interface for the existing password-related features. See [Try the Passwords App](#).

Explore other changes:

- Uncover smaller, miscellaneous changes in system-wide technologies. See [Discover Other System Improvements](#).
- Find out which other apps have noteworthy changes. See [Explore Other App Improvements](#).

Take In the Scenic View

Since you’ve bought this book, I assume you’ve already decided to upgrade to Sequoia and don’t need convincing that it’s worth your time and effort. However, I would like to call attention to some of the biggest changes in Sequoia that you can look forward to, especially those I discuss in more detail later in this book.

In addition, if you’re upgrading from an operating system older than macOS 14 Sonoma, you may be interested to know what other features were added along the way—as well as some that were removed.

Find Out What’s New in Sequoia

Apple has a list of new Sequoia features on [this webpage](#), with a more detailed list in [this PDF](#). I won’t catalog them all here, but I will call out some of the most notable changes and improvements since macOS 14 Sonoma:

- **Window tiling:** Make windows snap into place in pleasing geometrical arrangements. See [Tile Your Windows](#).
- **iPhone Continuity changes:** Show your iPhone’s screen on your Mac, and use integrated notifications. See [Use New iPhone Continuity Features](#).
- **Videoconferencing gadgets:** Exercise greater control when sharing your screen or replace your background. See [Improve Videoconferencing](#).
- **System Settings changes:** Learn about new and revised settings in [Explore System Settings](#).
- **Apple Intelligence:** Apple’s spin on artificial intelligence (AI) features permeate Sequoia and other Apple operating systems, with changes to Siri, Mail, Messages, Notes, Photos, and other apps, plus integration with ChatGPT. See [Discover Apple Intelligence](#).

- **Safari:** The new version of Safari can highlight important information on a page and features improvements to Reader and video viewing and a way to link to specific spots on webpages. See [Meet Safari 18](#).
- **Messages:** You can now use formatted text in Messages, add animated text effects, use an emoji or a sticker as a tapback, and schedule a message to be sent later. See [Do More with Messages](#).
- **Notes:** Notes offers live audio transcription, collapsible sections, text highlighting, and a simple new way to perform math calculations. See [Take Notes Further](#).
- **Passwords:** A new Passwords app provides a more convenient and user-friendly way to access your usernames and passwords. See [Try the Passwords App](#).
- **Other system improvements:** Many technologies in macOS cross app boundaries, and Sequoia has significant changes in two such areas: [AirPods](#) and [Math Notes](#).
- **Other apps:** Smaller, but (mostly) welcome, changes have also appeared in numerous built-in apps, including [Calculator](#), [Calendar](#), [Finder](#), [Freeform](#), [Home](#), [Mail](#), [Maps](#), [Music](#), [Photos](#), [Podcasts](#), [Reminders](#), [TV](#), and [Weather](#).

Disappearing Scripting Languages

Apple announced several years ago that they were deprecating the command-line scripting languages included with macOS. Sure enough, PHP disappeared in Monterey 12.0 and Python disappeared in 12.4 (though it's easy enough to download and install them yourself if you need them). However, no other languages have been removed since then. Perl and Ruby are still around in Sequoia, so it's unclear whether Apple still plans to do away with them at some point.

If you're already running Sonoma, that's all you need to know for now; skip ahead to [Check Your Mac for Compatibility](#). But if your Mac is still using an older operating system, read on to learn about some changes in the past few releases that you may not be fully prepared for.

Check Your Mac for Compatibility

All currently shipping Macs, as well as most models introduced within the past five years or so, can run Sequoia. Sadly, Sequoia does drop support for some Mac models that were able to run macOS 14 Sonoma. The next few pages will help you verify that your hardware is fully compatible with Sequoia.

Model Support

Macs that can run Sequoia include the following:

- iMac (2019 or newer)
- iMac Pro
- MacBook Air (2020 or newer)
- MacBook Pro (2018 or newer)
- Mac mini (2018 or newer)
- Mac Pro (2019 or newer)
- Mac Studio

Unfortunately, that excludes the 2018 and 2019 MacBook Air models, which were able to run Sonoma but can go no further.

To confirm which Mac model you have, choose Apple  > About This Mac (and, if present, click More Info). You'll see something like **Figure 1** in Ventura or later, or like **Figure 2** in Monterey or earlier.

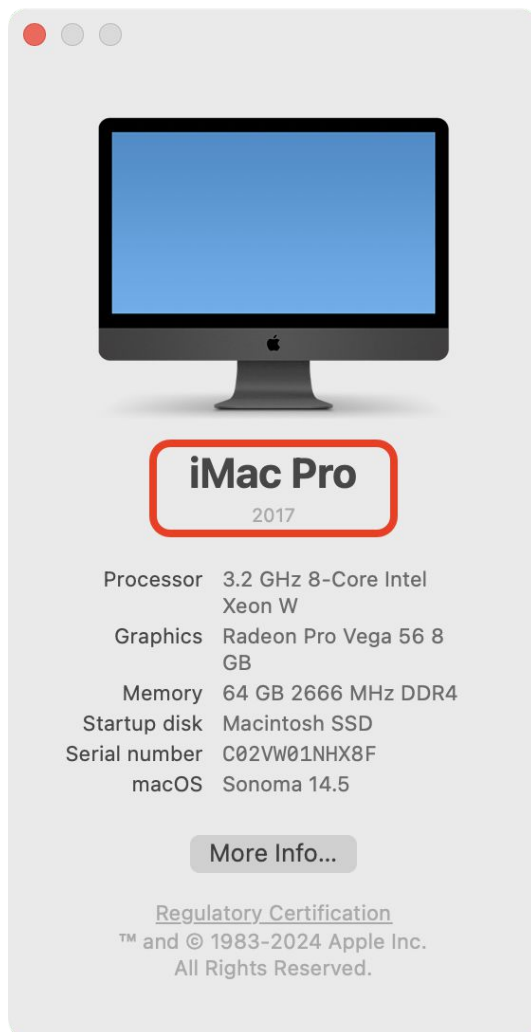


Figure 1: About This Mac (Ventura or later).



Figure 2: About This Mac (Monterey or earlier).

Upgrade to Sequoia

Up through 2019, I wrote an entire book every year on the process of upgrading to the latest Mac operating system. Now, rather than offering a separate *Take Control of Upgrading to Sequoia* book, I've condensed all my upgrading instructions into just this one (admittedly rather long) chapter. Although I've deliberately left out some details and background information from the book-length text, what follows should be more than enough to get you through the process.

If you've already upgraded to Sequoia, you can skip ahead to [Tile Your Windows](#).

You Can (and Should) Skip Versions

Every now and then I get email from someone who hasn't upgraded macOS in a few years and wants to know whether they can jump straight from whatever they have to the latest system, or whether they must apply each major upgrade incrementally along the way.

I must admit that my first thought is always, "Why didn't you install each new version as it was released?" I have always—going back to the pre-Mac OS X days—installed every single update Apple has released, and I've never regretted that approach. You can do that too! Based on my decades of experience, my professional opinion is that it's not only safe, it's also significantly less hassle than waiting years between upgrades.

Be that as it may, if you are running an older version of macOS and want to install Sequoia, then as long as your Mac is compatible (see [Check Your Mac for Compatibility](#)), you should just go for it. **To be crystal clear, you do *not* have to install every new release of macOS between the one you have and the one you want!** Even if your Mac is currently running, say, macOS 10.13 High Sierra, you can (and should) skip straight to macOS 15 Sequoia. No need to step through Mojave, Catalina, Big Sur, Monterey, Ventura, and Sonoma! The Sequoia installer doesn't care where you're starting, and you can save vast amounts of time and effort by upgrading straight to Sequoia.

Update Your Third-Party Software

Every major upgrade to macOS results in software compatibility problems, where some apps work poorly or won't launch. Most of us will have to update at least a few apps to make them work correctly under Sequoia. If history is any indication, some incompatible apps won't have an update available right away, and a few might never have one. But many developers work hard to ensure that their software is ready for each new version of macOS, and "Sequoia-compatible" software updates have already been appearing for months.

Tip: [RoaringApps](#) maintains a wiki listing thousands of Mac and iOS apps and the current status of their compatibility with various operating system versions (including Sequoia), as reported by users. Although this list is neither exhaustive nor definitive, it provides a quick way to check on the apps most important to you.

Check for 32-Bit Apps

If you're already running Catalina or later, you don't have to worry about this; skip ahead to [Update Your Remaining Apps](#). But if you're using Mojave or earlier, you should check for 32-bit apps.

Like Sonoma, Ventura, Monterey, Big Sur, and Catalina before it, Sequoia requires 64-bit apps; older, 32-bit apps simply won't run. As a user, you don't need to know or care about the technical details differentiating 32-bit apps from 64-bit apps. What is relevant, however, is that if you're upgrading from Mojave or earlier, there's a good chance that one or more apps you use regularly won't work under Sequoia, and some of them may *never* work on any future version of macOS.

Thus, *before* you upgrade to Sequoia, you should find out which of your apps are still 32-bit apps and then, depending on what you learn, decide on appropriate steps. The easiest way to do so is to download the free [Go64](#) app. Open the app and click OK. After a few seconds, it lists all your 32-bit apps (including those, marked with an alert  icon, which contain one or more 32-bit components), along with

Tile Your Windows

In *Take Control of Ventura*, I wrote about the then-new Stage Manager feature, which lets you group, display, and hide different collections of open windows. I find Stage Manager quite useful on an iPad but much less so on a Mac, which already had at least 10 different ways of managing windows at Ventura’s release! Stage Manager made number 11, and now, since Apple apparently feels that’s *still* not enough, there’s a twelfth way to manage your windows: tiling.

macOS has always permitted you to make windows any size you like and put them wherever you want on your screen, but if it offends your sense of order to have windows *just anywhere*, you could choose to arrange them more rigidly—for example, with one taking up the left half of your screen and the other, the right; four rectangular windows of equal size; or some other geometrically appealing layout. Tiling causes windows to “snap” into place, forcing them into one of these predetermined combinations of shapes, sizes, and locations, and saving you the bother of manually dragging them to be just so.

It was already possible to do this using any of numerous third-party apps, such as [Magnet](#), [Moom](#), and [Rectangle](#). Sequoia aims to replace such apps by building that capability—or, at least, a rather limited version of it—right into macOS.

Tiling is enabled by default, which means that you may find yourself moving a window to *just where you want it*, only to find that Sequoia overrides that decision and changes the size and position to something else. After this had happened to me about a dozen times, I changed my settings (as I describe just ahead in [Adjust Tiling Settings](#)) to avoid accidental tiling, though I can still tile windows on purpose whenever I like.

Tiling vs. Full-Screen Mode

The most common way to tile windows using this feature is to put two of them side by side, filling the whole display. But...couldn't you already do that in full-screen mode? What's the difference?

In full-screen mode (accessed by, for example, by clicking the green ● button in the upper-left corner of a window), the menu bar and Dock (as well as the window borders) are hidden, while the frontmost window fills the *entire* screen; you can then move your pointer to the very top of the screen to temporarily reveal the menu bar. To put two windows side by side in full-screen mode, you click and hold the green ● button and then choose Full Screen > Left of Screen or Right of Screen (Sequoia) or Tile Window to Left of Screen or Tile Window to Right of Screen (Sonoma or earlier).

Sequoia's tiling feature does *not* hide the menu bar or Dock. In addition, it provides several other arrangement options besides a single window, or two side-by-side windows, filling the screen.

Tile Windows by Dragging

Given default settings, if you drag a window's title bar all the way to the left or right edge of your screen, a white rectangle appears, filling that half of the screen. That shows you the size, shape, and location the window will assume when you release the button. If you don't want that to happen, drag it back a bit until the rectangle disappears.

If you drag a window all the way to the top of your screen, a larger white rectangle appears, indicating that the window will fill the whole screen (avoiding the menu bar and Dock). And, if you drag the window all the way to any of the corners of your screen, you get a smaller rectangle, representing a quarter of your screen. You can mix and match these locations, too—for example, drag one window so it fills the left half of your screen, and then two others that fill the upper-right and lower-right quadrants, respectively.

If you hold down the Option key while dragging, the white rectangles indicating the tiling targets appear immediately, rather than only when you get to an edge or corner.

Use New iPhone Continuity Features

Continuity is Apple's term for [a long list of features](#) that enable multiple Apple devices to interact in interesting ways. In Sequoia, Apple expands that list even further with two new capabilities that enable an iPhone and a Mac to work together more efficiently: iPhone mirroring and shared notifications, both explained just ahead.

Mirror Your iPhone Screen on Your Mac

iPhone Mirroring lets you display your iPhone's screen in a window on your Mac—and not just *show* it, but also interact with it. You can open apps, configure settings, play games, even watch videos. Sound that would ordinarily play on your iPhone plays through your Mac's speakers. It's a nifty trick, and handy when you occasionally need access to an iPhone app but your iPhone is out of reach.

In order to use this feature, quite a few prerequisites must be met:

- You have either an M-series Mac or an Intel-based Mac with a [T2 Security Chip](#).
- Your iPhone (and note that this is *only* for iPhones, not for iPads) has iOS 18 or later installed.
- Your Mac and your iPhone are signed in to the same Apple Account.
- Both devices have two-factor authentication enabled.
- Both devices have Bluetooth and Wi-Fi enabled, and are on the same Wi-Fi network.
- The devices are near each other (within Bluetooth range).
- Your Mac is not using AirPlay or Sidecar.

If all those things are true, you're ready to use the new iPhone Mirroring app, which Apple adds to your Dock automatically; you can also open the app from the Applications folder.

Once the app is configured, opening it displays your iPhone's screen in a window on your Mac, but configuration (which you have to do just once, thankfully) is a multi-step process:

1. Read the "Your iPhone on Your Mac" information screen and click Continue.
2. When prompted on your Mac, unlock your iPhone and then enter your passcode to tell your iPhone to trust the Mac that initiated the connection.
3. When you see the message "iPhone Mirroring Is Ready to Use" on your Mac, click Get Started.
4. If the iPhone Mirroring app prompts you to do so, use Touch ID or enter your Mac's login password.
5. If the app says "iPhone in Use," lock your iPhone's screen by pressing the side or top button.

Note: iPhone Mirroring requires your iPhone's screen to be locked; you can't use the iPhone itself and iPhone Mirroring at the same time.

6. A dialog (**Figure 17**) asks whether the app should prompt you for your Mac's login credentials every time or authenticate automatically. If anyone else has access to your Mac, it's safest to click Ask Every Time, which will prevent other people from accessing your iPhone without your knowledge. If you're the only person who can access your Mac, you'll have a smoother experience if you click Authenticate Automatically.

Improve Videoconferencing

Sequoia introduces two new features related to videoconferencing: a presenter preview for use when sharing your screen, and an option to replace your actual background with a photo, gradient, or other pattern. They're available to anyone who uses FaceTime, Zoom, Slack, or other apps that permit you to have live, face-to-face conversations online.

Some third-party apps already offer similar features—for example, Zoom has both, while Slack has the preview option. If you're already accustomed to those existing features, you may want to keep using them and ignore the new Sequoia features. Then again, it may be worth trying Apple's versions to see whether you prefer those effects.

I'll show you how to use these features with FaceTime; the process for using them with other apps is nearly identical, though some details may vary from app to app.

Preview Shared Screen Content

When you share your screen (or just a portion of your screen, such as a single app or window), you run the risk that the person or people on the other end will see something you didn't intend. In Sequoia, presenter preview makes it easier to see and control exactly what screen elements you'll share before other people can see them.

Presenter preview requires no setup, and there's nothing to turn on or off. It kicks in only when, during a call, you begin to share your screen. (In FaceTime, you can do this by clicking the Share Screen  button at the bottom of the window; you can also click the green  or purple  Video icon on your menu bar, followed by the Share Screen  icon there.) Once you do that, everything on the screen slides down as a new bar appears at the top (**Figure 20**). To share your whole screen (accepting all the risks that involves), click Share

Entire Screen. You can also click the Show All Windows  icon to show a Mission Control-like view with miniature versions of all the windows currently on your screen (**Figure 21**), and then click one to bring it to the foreground.

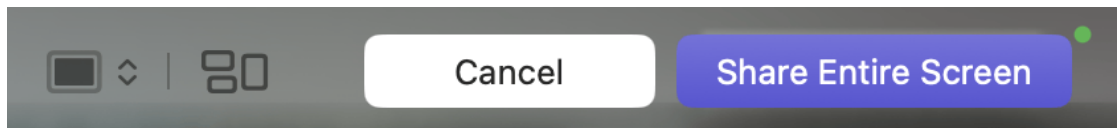


Figure 20: These controls appear at the top of your screen when you start sharing it.

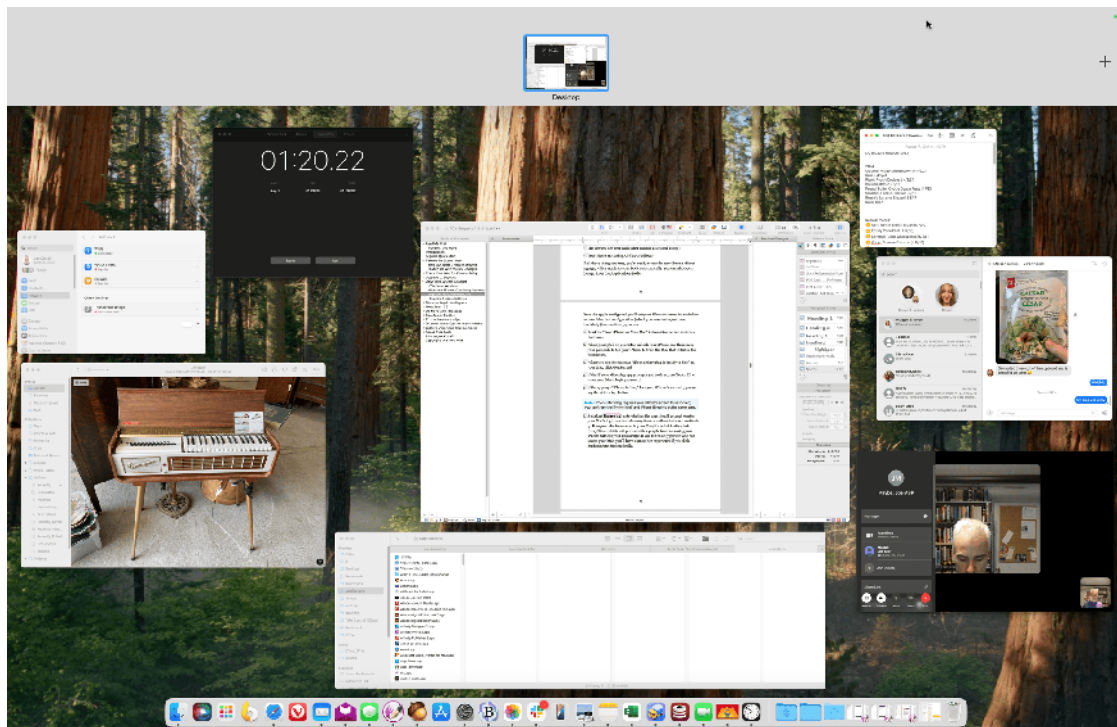


Figure 21: When you click the Show All Windows  icon, you get a Mission Control-like overview of all open windows.

Whether or not you use the Mission Control display, you can move your pointer over any window on your screen to highlight it in purple. If the window is not already in the foreground, you can click to bring it to the front. *This is your preview of what you'll share if you select this window.* While you hover over the window, it displays two buttons (**Figure 22**): Share This Window and Share All App Name Windows (the latter of which appears even for apps that only ever have one window). Click whichever button you prefer.

Explore System Settings

Back in Ventura, Apple replaced System Preferences with System Settings so that the app would more closely resemble the design of the Settings app in iOS and iPadOS. If you're already using Ventura or Sonoma, you are no doubt familiar with this new setup. If not, it can be a bit disorienting at first, so allow me to give you a quick overview before turning to the specific changes between Sonoma and Sequoia.

To open System Settings, click its Dock icon, double-click System Settings in the Applications folder, or choose Apple  > System Settings (**Figure 31**).

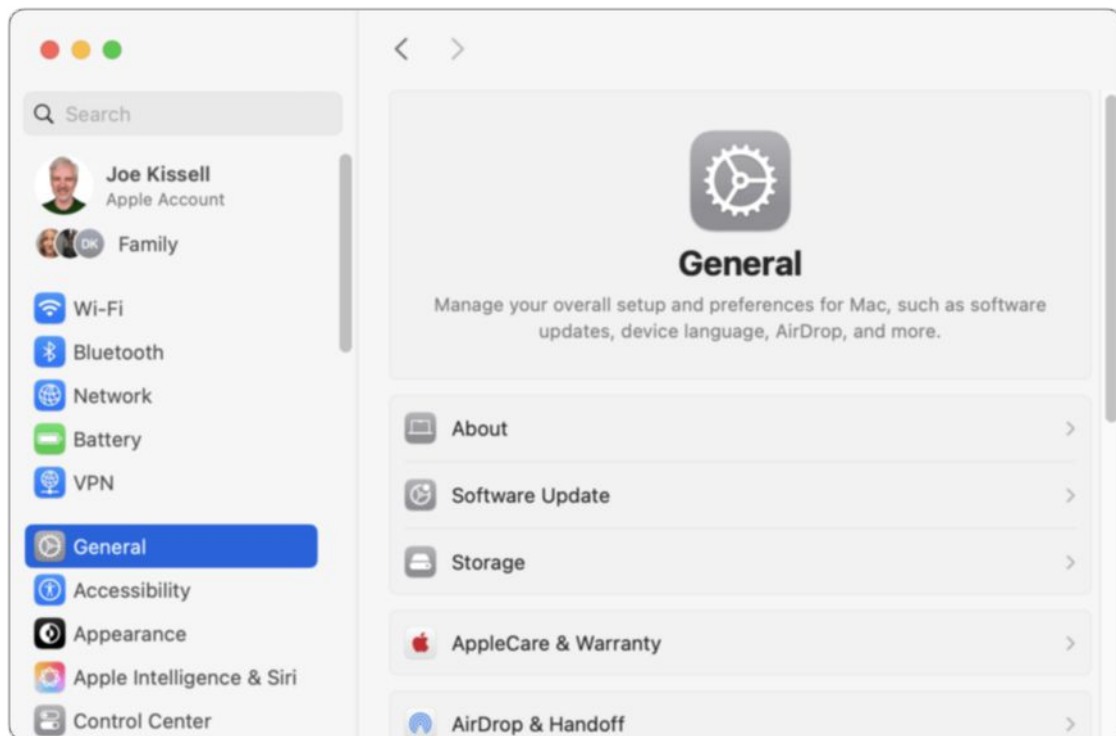


Figure 31: The System Settings app in Sequoia, which opens to the General pane by default.

The first thing you'll want to know is: "Where do I find the controls for *x*?" The arrangement of settings is not entirely intuitive, and even seasoned Mac users often get stumped looking for a particular control. So, if you don't immediately see what you're looking for, your best bet is to use the Search field, which nearly always shows you what you're

looking for—even if you don’t know the exact name of a feature or setting.

Tip: You can see an alphabetical list of all the panes on the View menu (though most users won’t think to look there)—choose a pane to go directly to it.

With those basics out of the way, I want to acquaint you with just what has changed between Sonoma and Sequoia. In the topics that follow, I look mainly at what *capabilities* are new or significantly different, ignoring most minor changes to layout, wording, and the like. Panes are listed in the order they appear in the sidebar.

Apple Account Settings

Starting in Sequoia, iOS 18, and iPadOS 18, Apple has renamed “Apple ID” to “Apple Account.” This is nothing more than a terminology change, but it may get slightly confusing in spots because “Apple ID” previously referred to both your username (usually your email address) *and* the underlying account that binds all your Apple-related data together. Now the account is called an Apple Account (which makes perfect sense), but the username, by itself, is not an Apple Account! Rather, your Apple Account has a username and password.

Note: Glenn Fleishman’s book [Take Control of Your Apple Account](#) reflects this new reality and covers other changes to your Apple Account in Sequoia, iOS 18, and iPadOS 18.

In any case, the topmost item in System Settings (the one with your name and avatar) is now labeled Apple Account rather than Apple ID, and it features a few changes from the Apple ID pane in Sonoma:

- **iCloud:** The layout of the iCloud view is completely different than in Sonoma, with a grid of tiles replacing a linear list. This permits a few more iCloud features to appear at the top level; to see the rest, click See All.

Discover Apple Intelligence

Let's begin this topic with a quick reality check. The term *artificial intelligence* (or AI) is not a reflection of technological reality: machines haven't somehow crossed over a mysterious threshold to gain human-like powers of thought, reasoning, and creativity. "Artificial intelligence" is a *marketing* term. It's a phrase tech companies use to help convince you to buy their products and services, and it's a more consumer-friendly term than "machine learning," "neural networks," or "large language models," which are more technically accurate terms for the behind-the-scenes technologies that often lead to the AI label.

To be sure, some of the things AI technology can do are quite impressive! Equally true, AI tools have a well-known tendency to hallucinate—for example, generating text that sounds good but is patently false, or creating realistic-looking images of people with seven fingers on each hand. And, of course, big tech companies have played fast and loose with copyrights in particular, and ethics in general, while trying to squeeze as much profit as they can out of the AI boom.

Nevertheless, with everyone else on the AI bandwagon and public interest peaking, it was inevitable that Apple would enter the fray. They've done so in a big way in Sequoia, iOS 18, and iPadOS 18 with their own spin on AI: Apple Intelligence.

Even though that term is new, Apple has been using machine learning technologies for many years, for everything from enhancing photos to processing audio input when you talk to Siri. But what's supposed to differentiate Apple Intelligence from other "artificial intelligence" is an emphasis on privacy. Many of the relevant features work directly on your device, without sending any data to Apple or other companies. That means it can access data on your device to improve its results without the risk that your personal information will fall into the wrong hands. For those aspects of Apple Intelligence that need more processing power than your device can provide, Apple uses something they call Private Cloud Compute, which runs on specially designed servers

powered by Apple silicon but doesn't store your data or risk mingling it with that of other users.

Starting in macOS 15.2, Apple Intelligence can also lean on an outside source: OpenAI's ChatGPT, which is one of the best-known examples of generative AI using large language models. ChatGPT has become popular as a way to get quick answers to questions, perform more in-depth research, or even generate stories, reports, email messages, and recipes (among much else) from scratch. It also has a much-discussed tendency to make up nonsense and sometimes provide misleading or even dangerous replies: fair warning. ChatGPT is integrated into both Siri and Writing Tools, described further in the pages ahead. Apple has built safeguards into Sequoia to reduce the chance that ChatGPT will lead you astray or learn your personal information.

In short, if you've never tried any AI tools before, Apple aims to make it both as safe and as easy as possible to get started. And, if you have tried other tools, Apple hopes you'll find the Apple Intelligence feature more powerful and trustworthy.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the Apple Intelligence features in Sequoia, *but* with a few important qualifications:

- Although Sequoia runs on some Intel-based Macs, Apple Intelligence is available only on Macs with M-series processors.
- Your Mac must be set to use one of the supported language/locale combinations. As of 15.4.1, those are:
 - ▶ English (United States, India, Singapore)
 - ▶ French (France, Canada)
 - ▶ German
 - ▶ Italian
 - ▶ Japanese
 - ▶ Korean
 - ▶ Portuguese (Brazil)

Meet Safari 18

Safari 18 ships with Sequoia, and is available as an optional download for Ventura and Monterey. Version 18 looks and acts very much like version 17, but with a few interesting new features.

View Page Highlights

Highlights shows you a quick overview of key information from a page when you click the Highlights  icon in Safari's address bar (which appears only on supported pages). Those details might include, for example, a map to a business or links to learn more about the page's topic (**Figure 44**).

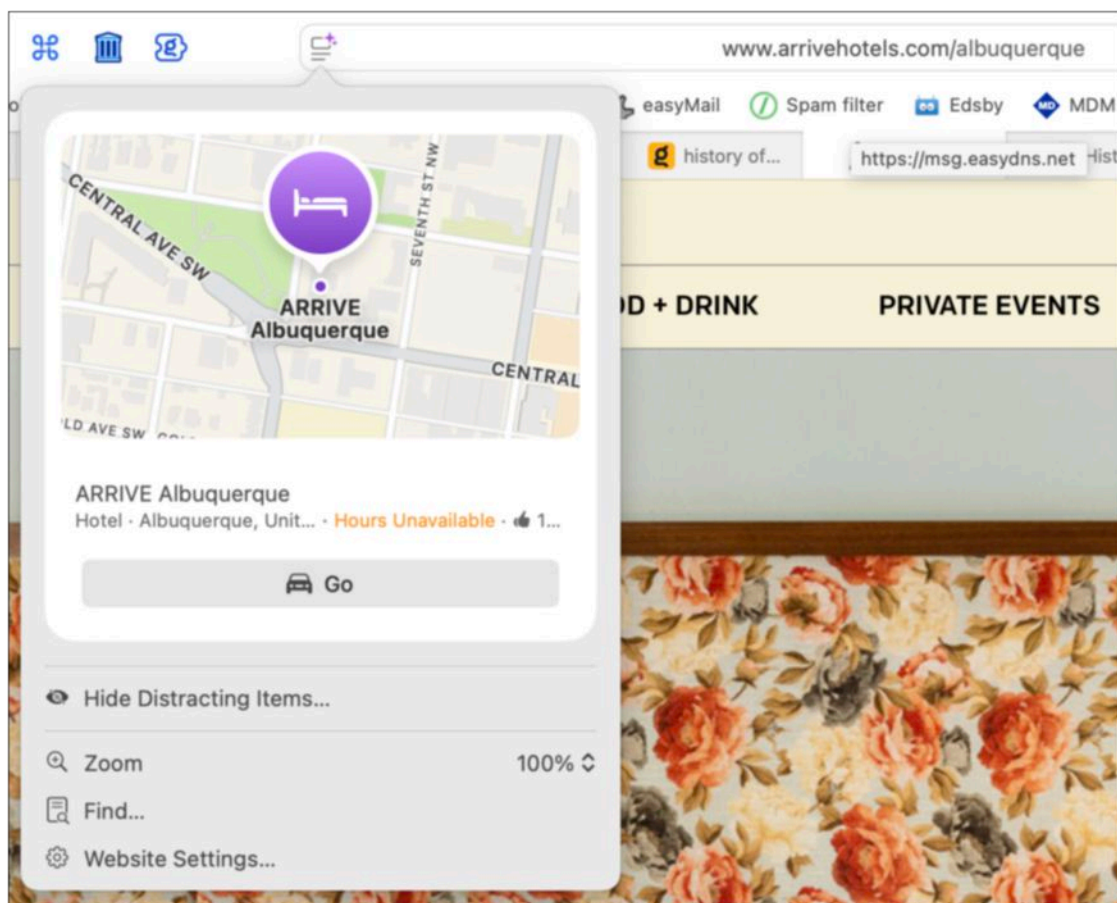


Figure 44: The highlights popover for this hotel website displays a map to the property.

To use this feature, you must first make one change to Safari's settings. On the Safari > Settings > Advanced pane, there's a new checkbox: "Allow Highlights to share web addresses with Apple." When it's checked, Apple anonymously receives the page's URL so that the summaries can be extracted in the cloud and sent back to your Mac. Unchecking this box disables the Highlights feature.

In practice, I've found very few pages that provide highlights. More often, clicking the Highlights  icon displays a page summary (**Figure 45**)—useful, but not the same thing.

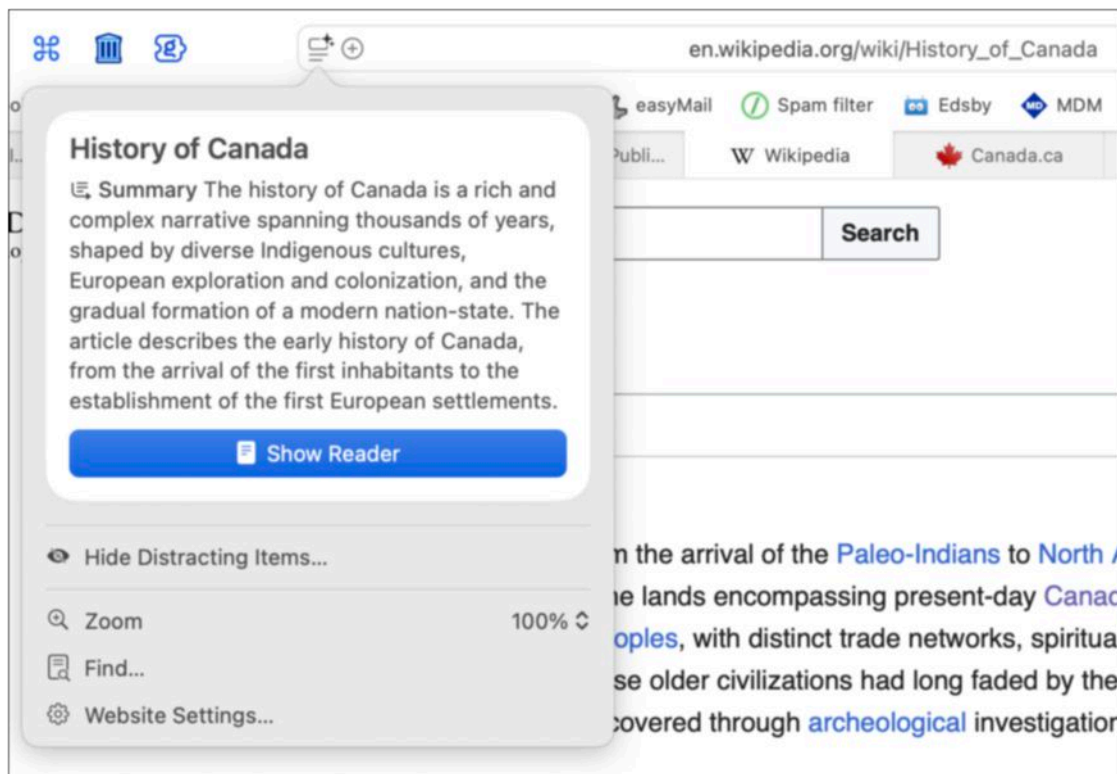


Figure 45: The automatically generated summary of a webpage.

Peruse the Redesigned Reader

Safari's Reader feature has been around for years. You choose View > Show Reader or click the Page Menu  icon in the address bar followed by Show Reader (on supported pages), and Safari displays a simplified view of the current page with just text and graphics—no navigation controls, sidebars, ads, or other clutter.

Do More with Messages

Apple’s Messages app offers much more than just text-based chat—and a way to figure out which of your friends use Apple devices (those with blue bubbles) and which don’t (those with green bubbles). Messages can also be used for voice messages, screen sharing, sending documents, and more.

Tip: To read all about the “more,” see Glenn Fleishman’s [Take Control of FaceTime and Messages](#).

Sequoia, iOS 18, and iPadOS 18 add some spiffy new features to Messages, though they are mostly geared toward people who use Messages a lot differently than I do.

Add Text Formatting

We’ve all used formatting in email messages for years, but iMessage, and before that, SMS and other similar messaging systems, have only ever supported plain text. Until now! As long as you’re sending a message using iMessage to another Apple (blue bubble) user, your texts can now include bold, italics, underline, and strikethrough. (Note, however, that only users running Sequoia, iOS 18, iPadOS 18, or later will see the formatting.) You can use the usual keyboard shortcuts (such as ⌘-B for bold, ⌘-I for italic, and ⌘-U for underline) or find these commands on the Format menu or the right-click/Control-click contextual menu (**Figure 49**).

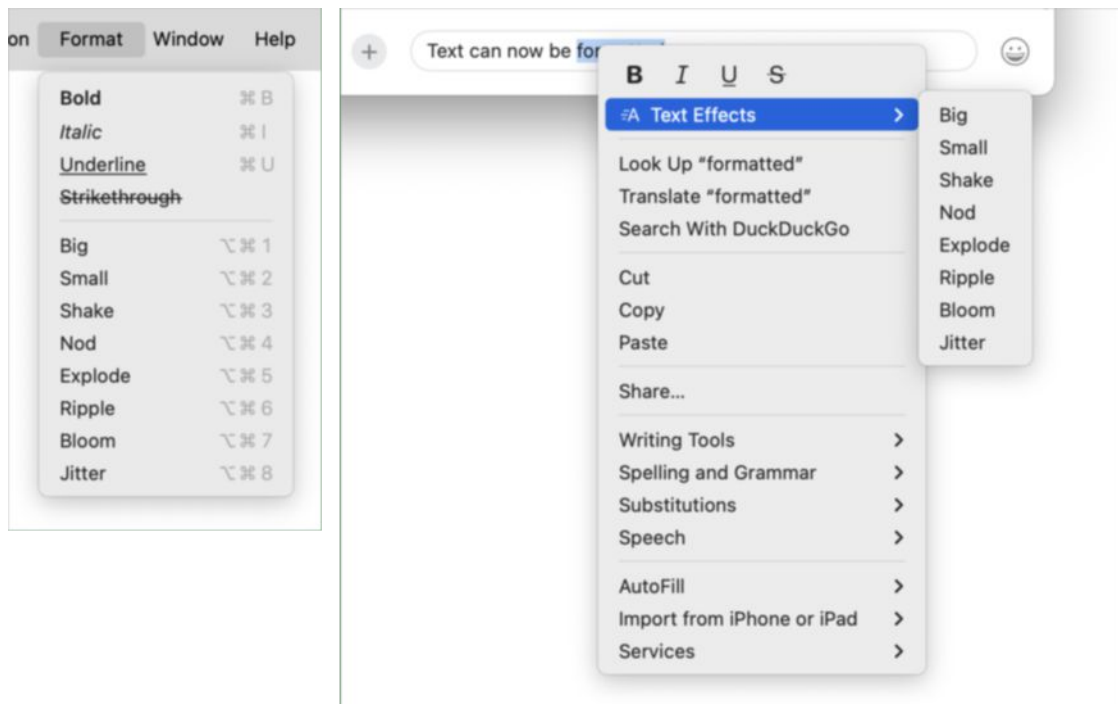


Figure 49: The Format menu (on the main menu bar, left) and the contextual menu for selected text in Messages (right) contain a bunch of new commands, including text effects.

Use Animated Text Effects

If you’ve just opened one of the aforementioned formatting menus, you may have noticed a new set of commands—at the bottom of the Format menu and on the Text Effects submenu of the contextual menu. These commands (such as Shake, Nod, and Ripple) add animations to whatever characters you selected before applying them. (You may also see suggestions to add these effects as you type.) To see what they look like in action, select some text and apply each effect in turn.

Once again, these effects apply only to messages sent via iMessage, and the animations will appear only for recipients using Sequoia, iOS 18, or iPadOS 18, or later.

Use an Emoji or Sticker Tapback

Tapbacks, which have been around for some time, are responses to messages that consist of only an icon. To send a tapback, you click and

Take Notes Further

Apple's Notes app has become increasingly powerful in recent years. It's now capable of much more than holding simple notes, with full support for styled text, lists, tables, graphics, attachments, tags, hyperlinks, and more.

In Sequoia (as well as in iOS 18 and iPadOS 18), Apple takes Notes even further with four new features: audio recording (with transcription), Math Notes for instant calculations, collapsible sections, and text highlighting.

Transcribe Live Audio

Notes already offered support for styled text, tables, and graphics. New in Sequoia (and iOS 18/iPadOS 18) is support for audio recordings. Open a note and click the Record Audio  icon on the toolbar to insert a new recording. A panel opens on the right side of the window (**Figure 55**) with audio controls.

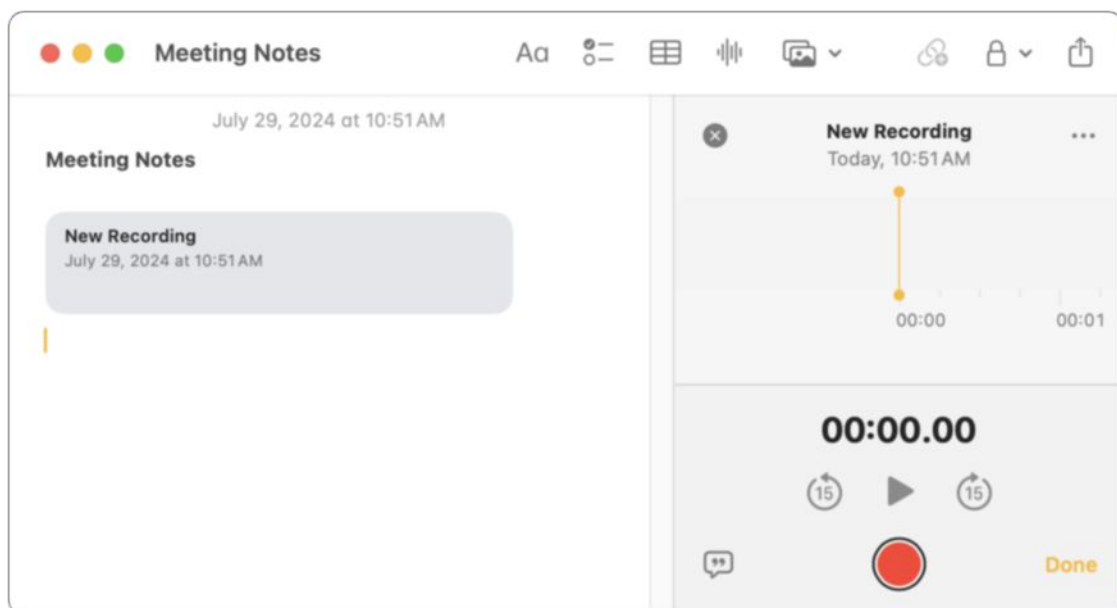


Figure 55: Notes is now ready for you to start a new recording.

Click Record  and Notes begins recording audio using your Mac's microphone. You can pause and resume recording, if needed. When you're finished, click Done. Notes transcribes the recorded audio instantly and shows its text (**Figure 56**), along with a Play button you can click to hear the audio.

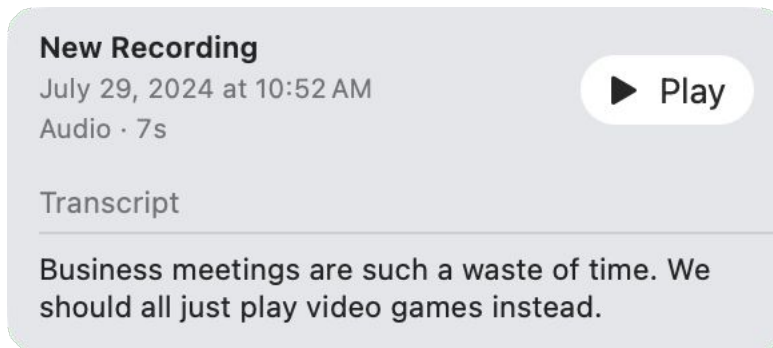


Figure 56: Once you've finished recording, Notes transcribes the spoken text and also lets you play back the audio.

Note: Audio transcriptions require a Mac with an M-series processor, and are currently available only in English.

Use Math Notes

In the process of writing or editing notes, you may need to do some simple math, or even complex calculations. You could, of course, open the fancy new [Calculator](#) app to do that, or even Apple's [Numbers](#) app. But now Notes makes it incredibly easy to perform calculations by simply typing an expression followed by the equals (=) sign. Apple calls this capability *Math Notes*.

Note: Math Notes supports both Arabic numerals (the kind familiar to western readers) and Devanagari numerals, as well as common mathematical symbols. Variables must be written using the Latin alphabet.

For example, if you wanted to find out what 22 divided by 7 is, you could type $22/7=$ and as soon as you type the = character, Notes fills in 3.143. (Spaces, if any, are ignored.) Type a space or press Return to

Try the Passwords App

Following the WWDC keynote introducing Sequoia in June 2024, the tech press and social media widely reported that Apple was essentially obsoleting all third-party password managers by building a new app, Passwords, into macOS, iOS, iPadOS, and visionOS. With this new app, people said, there would be no more need for tools like 1Password, Bitwarden, or Dashlane.

Except...

None of the people saying that were actually paying attention. Yes, there is a new Apple app called Passwords! It's useful in the sense that it puts a more user-friendly face on tools that have already existed in macOS (and elsewhere in the Apple ecosystem) for a long time. But it doesn't add any fundamentally new capabilities, and it still can't do half the things that an app like 1Password can do. To make matters worse, it doesn't even replace Keychain Access, a terribly designed app that is still, after many years, the only way to accomplish certain tasks on your Mac.

Let's take a look at what the new Passwords app actually does, how it compares to what you could do before, and how to use it.

A Quick Review: iCloud Keychain

In order to understand what the new Passwords app brings to the table, it helps to have a bit of historical context.

macOS (along with other Apple operating systems) has always had a systemwide storage mechanism called *keychain*. Keychain contents are securely encrypted, providing a way for macOS itself and various apps to safely store and retrieve sensitive data such as usernames, passwords, certificates, and encryption keys.

Your Mac has not just one, but several keychains—containers for keychain data—all created automatically. (In most cases, there are four altogether.) Most of these keychains remains solely on your Mac at all times. But, assuming you’re signed in to an iCloud account, your Mac also contains a special keychain whose contents sync securely, via iCloud, across all your Apple devices: iCloud Keychain.

Username and passwords for websites and Wi-Fi networks, as well as passkeys, payment cards, and other resources you might have to access from multiple devices, are stored in iCloud Keychain automatically—as long as you entered them using Safari or some component of macOS itself (as opposed to a third-party web browser or other app). Similarly, when you use Safari’s AutoFill feature, the app looks in your iCloud Keychain for the information it needs.

So far so good?

For a long time, the only way to view, edit, or otherwise interact with the data in keychain was to use a built-in utility (in [/Applications/Utilities](#)) called Keychain Access. As I have complained for many years, Keychain Access is a *terrible* app. It’s not merely “not user-friendly”; it’s downright user-hostile. It’s confusing and infuriating to use, especially compared to every other password manager I’ve ever seen. It has desperately needed an overhaul, but Apple has made no meaningful changes to the app’s usability for as long as I can remember. I’ve always counseled people to avoid it whenever possible.

In OS X 10.8 Mountain Lion, Apple added a Passwords pane to Safari’s preferences window, but initially it displayed only locally stored passwords. It wasn’t until OS X 10.9 Mavericks that Apple introduced iCloud Keychain, and once that happened, Safari’s Passwords preference pane enabled you to see, edit, and delete items in iCloud Keychain without having to open Keychain Access—a great step in the right direction. (It didn’t, and still doesn’t, provide access to any of your other keychains.) Then, in macOS 12 Monterey, Apple duplicated the contents of that pane in System Preferences (that was before it was called System Settings), a more logical place for it, since you might

Discover Other System Improvements

In addition to the bigger features that each deserved their own chapter, Sequoia includes dozens of smaller (but sometimes quite significant) changes. In this chapter, I offer a quick overview of new things that apply to multiple apps or to the system as a whole. (For app-specific changes, see the next chapter, [Explore Other App Improvements](#).) This year, the other system improvements fall into only two categories: AirPods and Math Notes.

AirPods

If you have AirPods and use them to listen to audio from your Mac, you may be interested in a few new features, beyond the general Headphone Accommodations discussed earlier in [Accessibility Settings](#). (If you don't have AirPods, or if you use them only with mobile devices, move along—there's nothing to see here.)

Tell Siri Yes or No Silently

If you're using AirPods Pro (2nd generation) and Siri prompts you with a yes/no query (such as whether to answer a call or reply to a message), you can nod your head for yes or shake it side to side for no, and Siri will take the appropriate action—no talking required.

Voice Isolation on AirPods Pro

Macs, iPhones, and iPads already had a (somewhat obscure) Voice Isolation feature that could be used with their built-in microphones. With Voice Isolation enabled, your device uses computational audio to filter out most background noise, reducing distractions and making your voice clearer for other participants. On a Mac, while in a support-

ed app such as FaceTime or Zoom, click the Video ( or ) icon on your menu bar, then click Mic Mode and select Voice Isolation.

Starting in Sequoia, iOS 18, and iPadOS 18, this feature can also be used with AirPods Pro. (Other AirPods, including the AirPods Max, aren't supported.) I'm guessing that you'll turn it on or off in the same way; it's just that the setting will become available when you have your AirPods set as the audio input source.

Spatial Audio for Gaming

As I take pains to mention whenever a gaming-related topic comes up in a new version of macOS, my interest in gaming is dramatically lower than my interest in watching paint dry. So, all I can tell you about the latest efforts in Apple's quixotic and seemingly endless quest to convince the world's gamers that the Mac is, contrary to all appearances, an excellent gaming platform, is to reiterate Apple's own statements.

Here's what Apple says is coming to Sequoia for gamers using AirPods:

- **Spatial audio:** Already available for music, TV shows, and movies on your Mac, spatial audio creates the audio illusion that sound is coming from a fixed direction even as you move your head. Game developers will be able to put this capability to even fancier uses to enhance your gaming—as long as you have AirPods (3rd generation), AirPods Pro, or AirPods Max.
- **Better voice quality:** Sequoia will reportedly include better voice quality for gamers talking to other participants in online games.
- **Lower latency:** Apple says there's an even lower lag than before between when a sound is supposed to play and when you hear it, but only if you're using AirPods Pro (2nd generation).

Hearing Protection

In addition to the features above, AirPods Pro 2 with the latest firmware update also support Hearing Protection, which helps to limit loud sounds nearby. [This Apple support page](#) explains how the feature works and how to use it with your Mac, iPhone, or iPad.

Explore Other App Improvements

The previous chapter, [Discover Other System Improvements](#), reviewed changes in Sequoia that affected the entire system or multiple apps. In this final chapter, I walk you through some of the most interesting changes to specific apps. Although fewer apps received noteworthy updates in Sequoia than in past versions of macOS, there are still some useful, new things to discover.

Once again, I cover these in alphabetical order, not in order of importance.

Calculator

The humble and underrated Calculator app, which hasn't been updated in as long as I can remember, has significant changes in Sequoia, iOS 18, and iPadOS 18.

As before, the calculator has Basic, Scientific, and Programmer modes (available from the View menu, or the new Calculator  key located in the window's bottom-left corner), and the buttons available in each mode remain the same. The visual appearance has changed, though, moving from the old rectangular buttons to new round ones (**Figure 69**). But dig a bit deeper and you'll find much more.

Note: The new View > Open Math Notes command (which also appears on the Calculator  menu as Math Notes) simply opens the Notes app. See [Use Math Notes](#) for details.

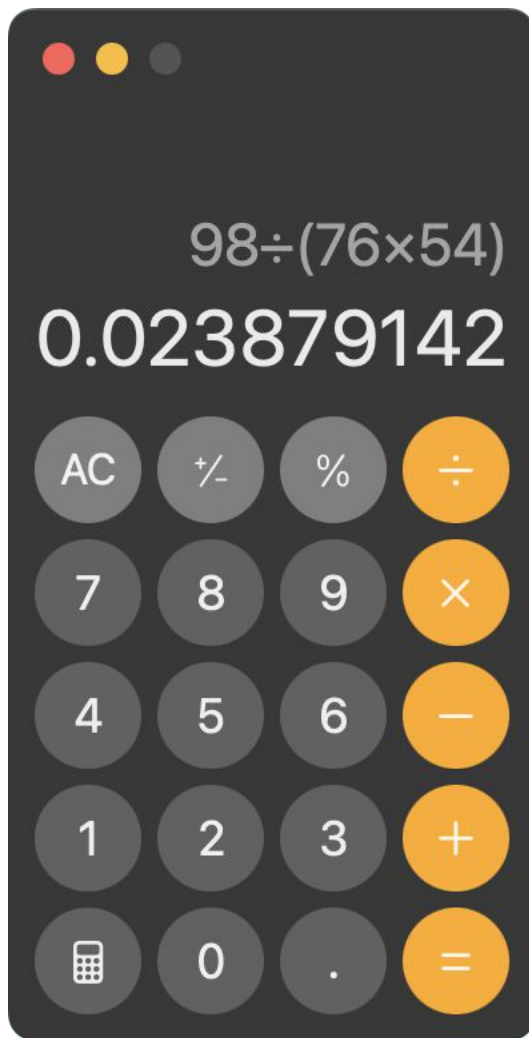


Figure 69: The new Calculator has surprising tricks up its sleeve.

Complex Expression Support

One thing you may have noticed in **Figure 69** is that above the current result, in smaller and darker characters, is the expression you entered, which is a handy reference. Also notice that the expression includes parentheses, which you couldn't enter in the Basic view of the old Calculator, though the Scientific view supported them. In fact, you can now type almost any sort of expression, of any length, and only when you type **=** or click the **=** key does the result appear. This allows for a more natural style of calculation.

Tip: If you want to enter the division $\div$ symbol from the keyboard, without having to remember that it's Option-/, you can simply type a slash (/) and Calculator automatically converts it to $\div$. To enter an exponent, type the caret $\wedge$ symbol followed by the power.

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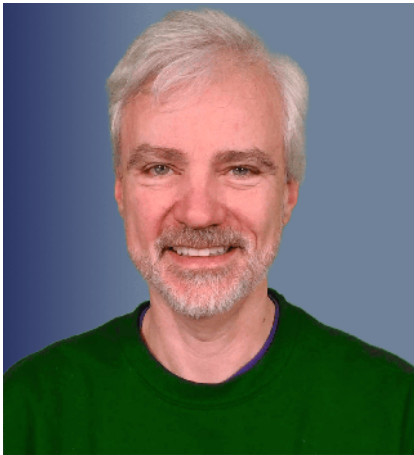
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Joe Kissell is the author of more than 60 books and hundreds of articles about technology. In 2017, he also became the publisher of Take Control Books, when alt concepts—the company he runs along with his wife, Morgen Jahnke—acquired the Take Control series from TidBITS Publishing Inc.’s owners, Adam and Tonya Engst. Before he began writing full-time in 2003, Joe managed software development for a living.

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