

TAKE CONTROL OF **SHORTCUTS**

COVERS SHORTCUTS IN
iOS 15 & 16 • iPadOS 15 & 16
macOS Monterey & Ventura

by **ROSEMARY ORCHARD**
\$14.99

2nd
EDITION

Table of Contents

Read Me First.....	5
Updates and More	5
What's New in Version 2.1	6
What Was New in the Second Edition	7
Introduction	10
Shortcuts Quick Start	11
Explore the User Interface	12
Cross-Platform Similarities	12
iOS/iPadOS Interface	15
Apple Watch Interface	16
macOS Interface	17
Install and Run Your First Shortcut.....	19
Converting Automator Workflows	20
Run Shortcuts	21
Run Shortcuts Manually in iOS/iPadOS	21
Run Shortcuts from Automations in iOS or iPadOS	29
Run Shortcuts on an Apple Watch	40
Run Shortcuts in macOS	41
Build Shortcuts	48
App Shortcuts	48
One-Step Shortcuts	50
Actions	52
Name	59
Variables	59
Input & Output.....	68
If and Otherwise	69
Repeat Loops	71
Lists, Menus, and Dictionaries	74
Device-Specific Actions	76

Run Scripts	78
Debug Shortcuts	79
Run a Shortcut Within Another Shortcut	82
Organize Shortcuts in Folders	83
Per-Shortcut Settings	84
Install, Sync, and Share Shortcuts	89
Install Shortcuts from iCloud Links	89
Sync Your Shortcuts	91
Share Your Shortcuts	92
Import Questions	93
Security	93
Productivity Shortcuts	98
Share PDF	98
Meeting Time and Notes	99
Event Templates	103
Add Tasks in Bulk	109
Daily Overview	113
Focus Mode Shortcuts	117
Disable Work Focus When It's a Holiday	117
Focus Modes—Scheduled Exceptions	119
Remind Me 15 Minutes After I Arrive at Home	121
Media Shortcuts	124
Convert and Share Image	124
Rename and Wrangle Files	125
Play Audio	127
Set AirPods Noise Canceling	129
Add Current Song to Playlist	131
Movie Time with Apple TV	132
Disable Rotation Lock for YouTube	133
Home Shortcuts	135
Make a Button a Toggle	135
When I Get Home and	137
Evil Flashing Alarm Clock	139

Wake Up With AirPlay Music	141
Seasonal Scenes	141
Other Shortcuts	144
Share Your Shortcuts in Bulk	144
Log Expense	145
Tip Calculator	147
Customize the Apple Watch Ultra Action Button.....	150
Work with REST APIs	153
An Introduction to API Calls with Shortcuts	153
Zapier	157
Airtable	157
Manage API Keys with Shortcuts	160
Complementary Apps	162
Apps for iOS, iPadOS, and macOS	162
Apps for iOS/iPadOS Only	165
Apps for macOS Only	168
About This Book.....	171
Ebook Extras	171
About the Author	172
Shameless Plug	172
About the Publisher	172
Copyright and Fine Print	174

Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Shortcuts, Second Edition*, version 2.1, published in January 2023 by alt concepts. This book was written by Rosemary Orchard and edited by Joe Kissell.

This book gives you all the information you need to get started with Shortcuts. After reviewing core concepts, the book shows you how to build shortcuts, and explains exactly what to do to achieve specific results you can use immediately.

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 user group copies](#) are available.

Copyright © 2023, Rosemary Orchard. All rights reserved.

Updates and More

You can access extras related to this ebook on the web (use the link in [Ebook Extras](#), near the end; it’s available only to purchasers). On the ebook’s Take Control Extras page, you can:

- Download any available new version of the ebook for free, or buy any subsequent edition at a discount.

Access the book in both PDF and EPUB formats. (Learn about reading on mobile devices on our [Device Advice](#) page.)

- Read the ebook’s blog. You may find new tips or information, as well as a link to an author interview.

If you bought this ebook from the Take Control website, it has been added to your account, where you can download it in other formats and access any future updates.

What's New in Version 2.1

Version 2.1 of this book brings it up to date with iOS 16, iPadOS 16, and macOS 13 Ventura, with the following changes:

- Updated the text as necessary to account for the change from System Preferences to System Settings, as well as the change from Shortcuts > Preferences to Shortcuts > Settings, in Ventura
- Added information about what changed with Shortcuts in the new operating systems; see [iOS 16/iPadOS 16 Update](#) and [macOS 13 Ventura Update](#)
- Added a topic on [App Shortcuts](#), introduced in iOS 16/iPadOS 16
- Included a clarification in [Documents](#) about a change in translation engines
- In [Scripting](#), mentioned that only the Run Script over SSH action runs in iOS and iPadOS, and listed new actions available for iOS/iPadOS in the System category
- Divided the [Share Your Shortcuts](#) topic into [Share a Shortcut as a Link](#) and [Share a Shortcut as a File](#) with details on the Anyone option, while updating [Use Private Sharing](#)
- Made adjustments as needed to the text of recipes to account for small user interface changes in iOS 16, iPadOS 16, and Ventura
- Added recipes for two new shortcuts; see [Wake Up With AirPlay Music](#) and [Customize the Apple Watch Ultra Action Button](#)

iOS 16/iPadOS 16 Update

In iOS 16 and iPadOS 16, Apple's own apps upped their game to add more Shortcuts actions. From Mail, which kept things simple, to Notes, which allows you to control almost every setting, there are plenty of actions there to let you round out your Safari tour (pun intended)! Unfortunately, the material I added to this book about the new actions is focused on mobile devices, for the simple reason that

many of these actions and updates didn't cross over to macOS Ventura. The reasoning for this isn't clear to me, but I hope to see the increased power show up on the machine that ought to be able to take the most advantage of it soon!

The biggest change, however, came with the advent of [App Shortcuts](#), which are prebuilt shortcuts included with certain apps. These are easier to use from a developer perspective, and bring you shortcuts (and actions) that you can take advantage of in just a few taps.

macOS 13 Ventura Update

Apple's [What's new in Shortcuts](#) page lists a number of small changes in Ventura, though only the last one shows up in this book:

- New actions for the Books, Clock, Reminders, and Safari apps; a new Get Current Focus action; Focus Filter actions for certain apps; and a Search in Shortcuts action
- Updated actions for the Calendar and Clock apps, plus updates to Get Battery State, Get Current Weather, and Send Email
- A new Show in Share Sheet option, mirroring what was already available in iOS/iPadOS

What Was New in the Second Edition

This revised and expanded second edition includes information related to changes brought about by iOS 15 and iPadOS 15 (see [iOS 15/iPadOS 15 Update](#), just ahead), as well as the launch of Shortcuts in macOS. Major changes include:

- Coverage of Shortcuts for macOS throughout the book, including an overview in [macOS Launch](#) and how to [Run Shortcuts in macOS](#)
- An expanded discussion of how to [Run Shortcuts from Automations in iOS or iPadOS](#), now in its own chapter
- How to deal with [Device-Specific Actions](#) when developing cross-platform shortcuts

- A new chapter describing [Focus Mode Shortcuts](#) that let you take advantage of the upgraded Do Not Disturb built into iOS 15, iPadOS 15, and macOS 12 Monterey; the chapter includes step-by-step “recipes” for three new shortcuts: [Disable Work Focus When It’s a Holiday](#), [Focus Modes—Scheduled Exceptions](#), and [Remind Me 15 Minutes After I Arrive at Home](#)
- New shortcut recipes in the Media and Home categories: [Disable Rotation Lock for YouTube](#), [Evil Flashing Alarm Clock](#), and [Seasonal Scenes](#)
- A greatly expanded list of [Complementary Apps](#) that work with Shortcuts, now categorized by which operating system(s) they support

iOS 15/iPadOS 15 Update

In iOS 15 and iPadOS 15 there were many changes, which both help new users and make life easier for those who have been using Shortcuts since it was a third-party app called Workflow. These included showing *all* the actions in Shortcuts using the first option on the Categories tab and new settings for power users. We also saw Reminders and Files make their Shortcuts actions more powerful—Reminders now has support for tags, and shortcuts can now save a file anywhere on your device. Not all the updates landed in the first release of iOS 15. It wasn’t until iOS 15.4 that we saw improved icons for Shortcuts actions and the option to remove notifications from automations when they run.

This edition of the book has been updated throughout to address these changes.

macOS Launch

With the release of macOS 12 Monterey, Shortcuts came to the Mac. This was rumored for several years, and I’m pleased to say that it delivers what many of its users hoped for: automations that can be run on any of your devices.

We still retain our previous options for automating the Mac—notably AppleScript, JavaScript for Automation, and Automator—but Automator may eventually leave us (see the sidebar [The End of Automator?](#)). Shortcuts can import Automator workflows and will ultimately replace it. To do this it had to gain a number of actions; these enable features such as direct interaction with Safari and Finder, making disk images, and even quitting apps. Some actions are available only on the Mac (conversely, actions such as Vibrate Device don't work on the Mac), so there's a new section in this book: see [Device-Specific Actions](#). Other Mac-specific changes are covered throughout the book.

Tip: For a comprehensive introduction to Mac automation, including AppleScript, Automator, shell scripts, and many other tools, read Joe Kissell's [*Take Control of Automating Your Mac*](#).

Introduction

Shortcuts is an app built into iOS, iPadOS, and now macOS that allows you to create automations, or programs, without actual code—connecting apps on your device to each other and beyond.

Shortcuts allows you to run a shortcut—a series of actions that can communicate with one another and with you. This allows you to do anything from adding several reminders automatically when you start work to creating complex templates for documents and expanding them with data on the fly.

In this book, I teach you the core concepts you need so that you can build shortcuts by yourself. I also walk you through plenty of sample shortcuts, which help you understand the application of the core concepts and be intrinsically valuable. These include Meeting Time (to create a meeting notes template and automatically turn on Do Not Disturb), a shortcut to control the noise-canceling mode of AirPods Pro and Max, and even one to add the currently playing song to a particular playlist.

Besides learning how to build shortcuts, you will learn how to use them with web services and discover apps with excellent automation support which can improve your workflows.

Even if you are already familiar with Shortcuts, or programming in general, there are many tips and tricks throughout the book to help you improve your understanding and techniques.

This book teaches you more than how to use Shortcuts; it also shows examples of how automation can make your life easier without adding complexity or difficulty to your tasks.

Shortcuts Quick Start

If you're new to Shortcuts, reading the book in order is best. If you have already used Shortcuts or know how to program, you may want to jump ahead in this book and come back to the beginning later to fill in any gaps you think you have.

Get to know Shortcuts and essential concepts:

- Get a quick overview as you [Explore the User Interface](#).
- Find out how to [Run Shortcuts](#), in all the ways, on all the platforms.

Learn the fundamentals:

- Learn how to [Build Shortcuts](#).
- You will want to know how to [Install, Sync, and Share Shortcuts](#) too.

Build shortcuts:

- Learn how to cheat with [One-Step Shortcuts](#)
- Discover [Input & Output](#) and how to handle [Device-Specific Actions](#).
- And when you've had all that fun, you can [Organize Shortcuts in Folders](#).

Steal shortcuts:

- See some [Productivity Shortcuts](#).
- Take advantage of [Focus Mode Shortcuts](#) and take your skills to the next level.
- Have fun with the [Media Shortcuts](#).
- Geek out your residence with [Home Shortcuts](#).
- Or find a few other curiosities in [Other Shortcuts](#).
- And finally, expand your Shortcuts experience with [Complementary Apps](#).

Explore the User Interface

Before we start building shortcuts, let's explore the user interface. Shortcuts is almost the same everywhere, but there's a separate section for each platform where we can explore the various areas of the app.

Cross-Platform Similarities

While Shortcuts has its differences across platforms—as all good apps do—it also has many commonalities. This makes it much easier for you to understand and translate your knowledge from, say, an iPhone to a Mac.

A Shortcut Is a Tile

A shortcut is represented as a colorful tile. When you're in the Shortcuts app, the tile has an icon in the top-left corner, and at the bottom is the shortcut's name and the number of actions in it (**Figure 1**). And yes, you can configure these options: in iOS/iPadOS, tap the More  icon and then tap the shortcut's icon in the top-left corner; in macOS, right-click or Control-click the tile and choose Edit Color and Icon. Tap or click Color or Glyph to see the color and icon choices.

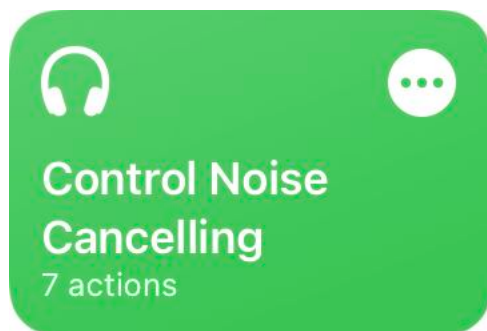


Figure 1: A shortcut tile from All Shortcuts.

The elements from this tile are taken and used elsewhere if you add a Shortcut to your Home Screen in iOS or iPadOS or add it to the Dock on a Mac.

A Rainbow of Shortcuts

In Shortcuts, you can choose from 15 colors (**Figure 2**) to represent your shortcut. You could use these to represent different kinds of shortcuts (such as all Music is pink) or help you identify how shortcuts are usually run (for example, green is share sheet).

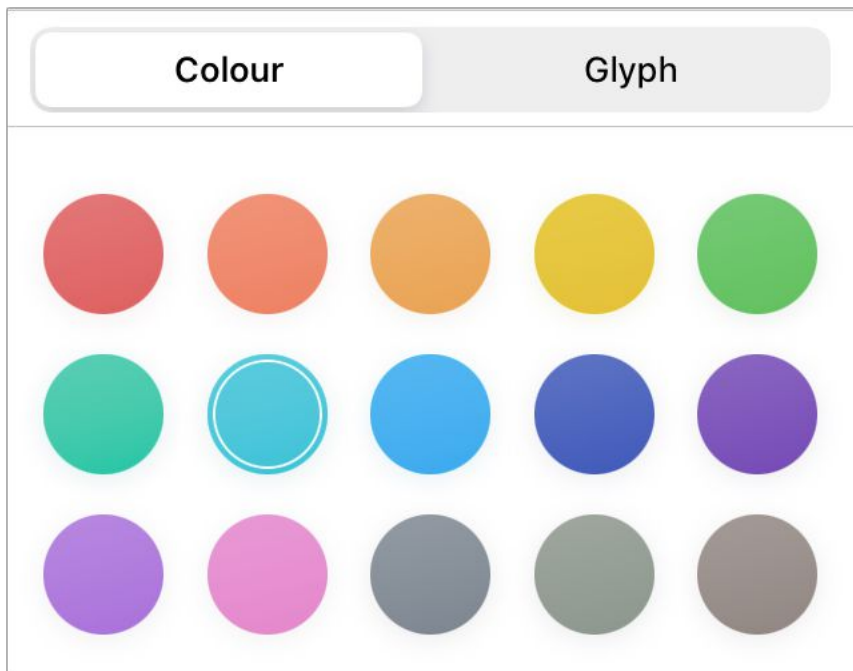


Figure 2: Icon colors in Shortcuts.

An Icon Is Worth Several Words

If your shortcut has only actions from one app, it automatically shows that app's icon in Shortcuts and in widgets (in iOS/iPadOS). If you have steps from multiple apps, including Shortcuts actions, it shows the glyph you choose (**Figure 3**), defaulting to two stacked diamonds.

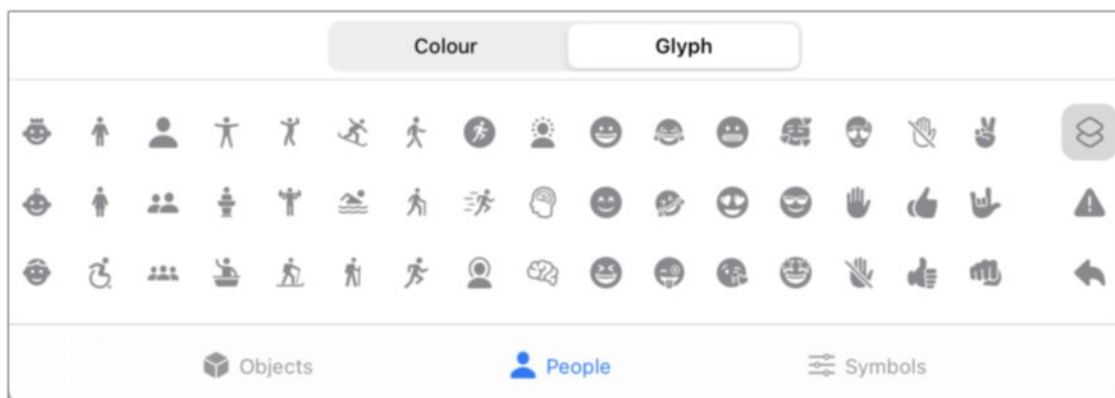


Figure 3: Some of the many glyphs available for a shortcut.

Run Shortcuts

There are lots of ways to run shortcuts, and I would be remiss if I didn't tell you how to do so! The ways you can run a shortcut vary depending on which platform you're using. I start by showing you how to run shortcuts manually in iOS/iPadOS, and then explain how to [Run Shortcuts from Automations in iOS or iPadOS](#), [Run Shortcuts on an Apple Watch](#), and [Run Shortcuts in macOS](#).

Run Shortcuts Manually in iOS/iPadOS

On either an iPhone or iPad, you can run a shortcut manually, starting it yourself, or automatically based on various triggers such as a focus mode turning on or off, or starting a workout on your Apple Watch. Let's look at the manual options first; automatic options are covered later, in [Run Shortcuts from Automations in iOS or iPadOS](#).

Run Shortcuts Directly in the App

One way to run shortcuts is directly in the Shortcuts app. In iOS, go to the My Shortcuts tab; or, in iPadOS, select All Shortcuts (**Figure 10**). Then you can tap any individual shortcut, and it runs. This hides the inner workings of the shortcut as much as possible during the execution. It also means you see dialogs where you can select something or input data, and see the results of your shortcut—if it is programmed to show them to you!

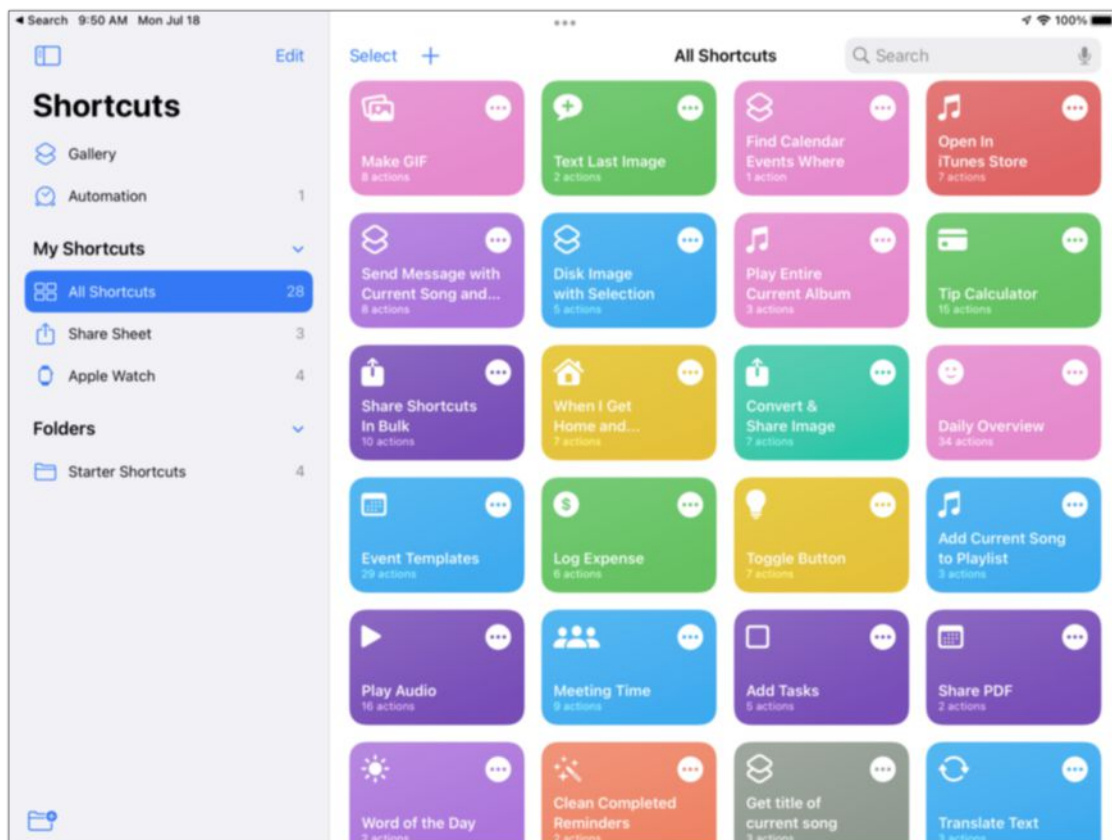


Figure 10: The All Shortcuts tab in iPadOS 15.

In the shortcut editor (refer back to [The Shortcut Editor](#)), found by creating a new shortcut or editing one (on an iPhone or iPad, tap the More  icon in the top-right corner of a shortcut tile; on a Mac, double-click the tile), there's also a Play  icon to let you run the shortcut. If you have a keyboard attached to your iPhone or iPad, you can also press ⌘ -R to run the shortcut.

Run Shortcuts from a Widget

Many apps use widgets to display information on your Home Screen, and in iPadOS 15 they broke out of the not-obvious column on the first Home Screen to be everywhere.

To add a Shortcuts widget to your Home Screen, touch and hold in a blank space, tap or click the plus  button in the top-left corner, and scroll down to find Shortcuts.

Swipe left or right to pick a size (small gives you a single shortcut; medium and large give you a folder), then tap Add Widget. Position the new widget on your screen as desired. Then tap the widget and select a

Build Shortcuts

Building shortcuts is not unlike creating a project with Lego—there is a series of actions (blocks) and we need to put them together in a way that fits (aligning the bumps), while creating the end goal we want (the model). This chapter outlines the key concepts you need to understand to be able to do this. Don't feel that you need to read and understand everything here before you can build a shortcut; you can jump ahead at any time and come back later to “fill in the gaps” as you see fit!

Tip: As you go through this chapter, you may want to refer back to the [Explore the User Interface](#) chapter to remind yourself of what interface items are called and where they're located.

App Shortcuts

App Shortcuts are new in iOS 16/iPadOS 16 and macOS Ventura. They are simple, one-action shortcuts that are ready to use as soon as you install an app from the App Store that has been updated to include them. App Shortcuts come bundled with apps, and you don't have to do anything to set them up.

In the Shortcuts App, when you go to the topmost level on an iPhone or and scroll to the bottom, or look in the sidebar on an iPad, you'll see a new section titled App Shortcuts (I bet you never saw that coming!). Here you should see a number of apps, including Voice Memos. Tapping any of these apps reveals one or more shortcuts, and along with a prompt to turn on Siri integration for that app if you haven't already done so (**Figure 23**).

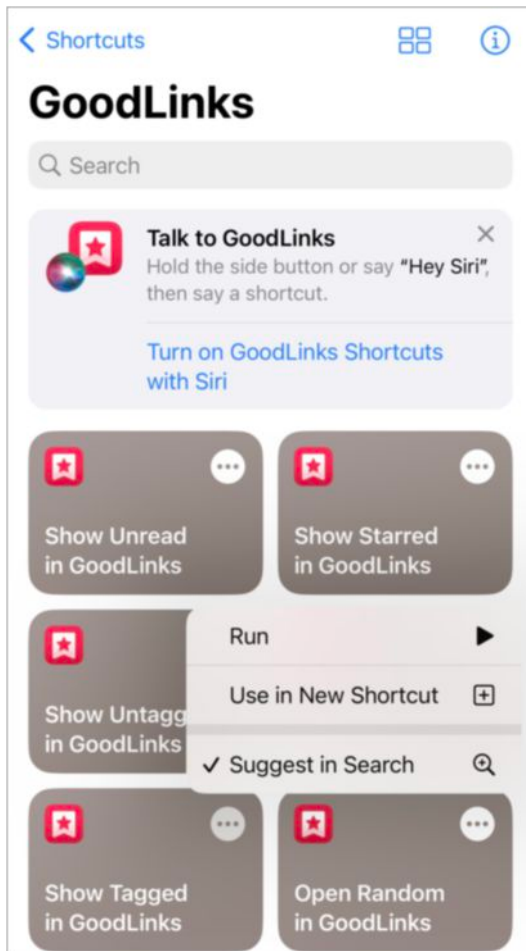


Figure 23: App Shortcuts for GoodLinks.

When you tap the main block then this runs just like a regular Shortcut. With App Shortcuts the More  icon in the top right reveals three options, Run which will execute the action in the Shortcut, Use in New Shortcut, and a toggle for Suggest in Search (checked by default).

The menu option “Use in New Shortcut” creates a new shortcut with the action in this App Shortcut as the only action—and from here you can go ahead and build onwards, outwards, and upwards!

Have I Seen This Before?

There was previously something similar: in an app you may have had to go to a list of shortcuts and tap them to add them—or just do an action an unknown number of times and hope the Shortcuts action showed up. That system hasn’t gone away, but this new version ought to replace it over time!

Install, Sync, and Share Shortcuts

Before we dive further into the world of shortcut creation, we should look at how to cheat and let someone else do all the hard work—after all, that’s another step on the rung of the automation ladder.

Back in [Install and Run Your First Shortcut](#) I showed you how to install a prebuilt shortcut from the Gallery, and Apple has many to choose from. But you can also install shortcuts via links shared by other people, and that’s what this chapter mainly concerns.

Install Shortcuts from iCloud Links

Throughout this book and on the internet, there are links to shortcuts you can download and install. Anyone can make and share these shortcuts. However, unlike in the App Store, there is no vetting process, so you must judge whether something is safe for yourself.

Note: There is, however, a new feature called Private Sharing, which lets someone share shortcuts with you as files, rather than links, in such a way that you can install the shortcuts only if that person is in your Contacts. I discuss later in [Use Private Sharing](#).

The process to install these is simple:

1. Tap or click the link to the shortcut (in this book, on a website, or elsewhere). A page opens in your default browser.
2. On that webpage, tap or click Get Shortcut. (If you see an additional prompt asking whether the page can open the Shortcuts app, click Agree.) The Shortcuts app opens, showing a tile representing the new shortcut.

3. If you want to examine the shortcut before installing it—and you should!—tap the More  icon in the top-right corner of the tile. A new view opens where you can preview what’s in the shortcut (**Figure 49**). Scroll through this as needed, evaluating it as I describe below, then click Done.

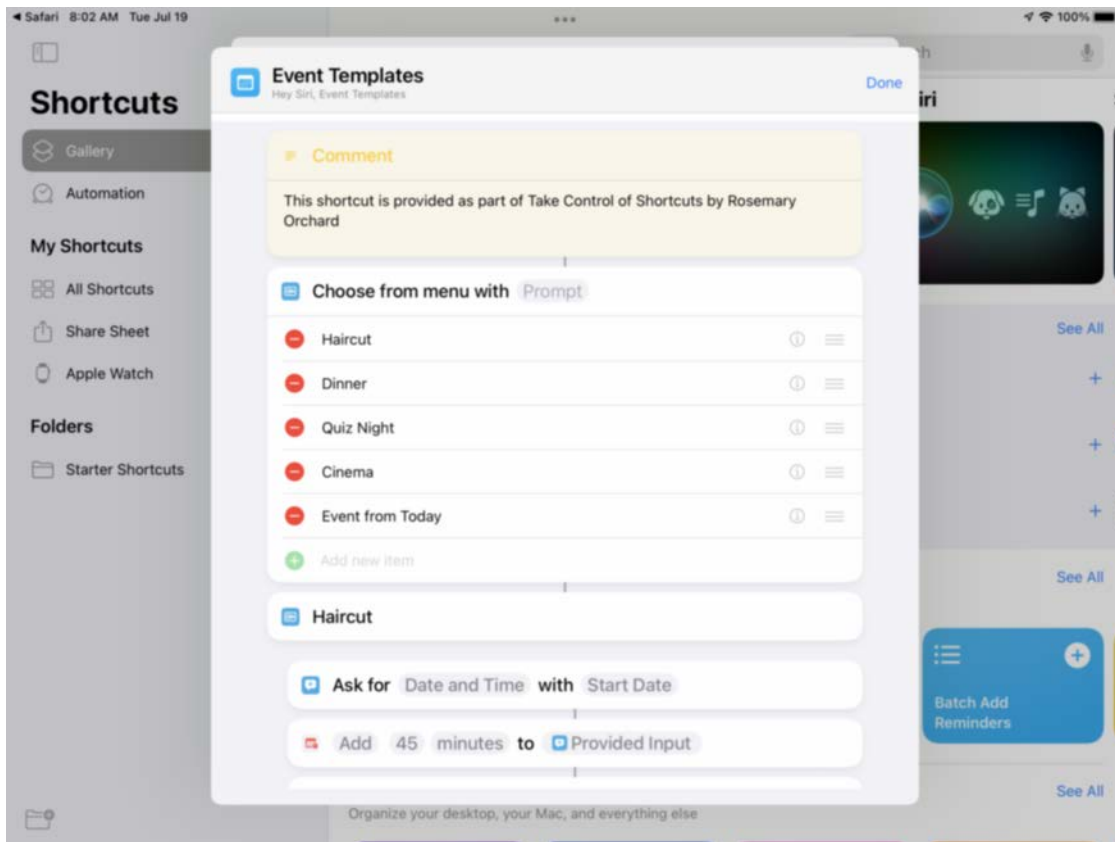


Figure 49: In this view, you can review a shortcut’s contents before installing it.

4. Tap or click Add Shortcut or Set Up Shortcut to add the shortcut. (If the Set Up Shortcut button appears, that means the shortcut contains [Import Questions](#) that you can optionally answer now.) To back out, tap Cancel in iOS/iPadOS or close the window on a Mac.

In step 3 above, I suggested that you look carefully at what a shortcut does and what it is trying to access before you install it. Let’s dig into that a bit more.

First, scan through the list of actions to see what apps and URLs the shortcut uses and whether or not it currently has access to them. Even if you take no action right now, when the shortcut runs, it asks for any

Productivity Shortcuts

Automation to be productive is highly logical, and this chapter is dedicated to making and explaining shortcuts with precisely that purpose. A download link for each shortcut is provided at the end of its section, but I also explain how to build each manually.

Tip: I highly recommend you build the shortcut as you read, as this lets you see how everything works and connects. Find the action with the Search box, look for it in one of the groups, and tap or click it to add it to your shortcut.

Share PDF

This shortcut, for iOS and iPadOS as well as Ventura or later, takes anything you give it, makes a PDF with it, and shows you the sharing options for a PDF. Here's what we need to do to build the shortcut:

1. Tap the Shortcut Details ( or ) icon and toggle on Show in Share Sheet and Use as Quick Action. Then tap or click Done.
2. At the top of the Shortcut change the Continue after “If there’s no input” to “Stop and respond.” I typed in “Sorry, you need input to make a PDF!”.
3. Add the **Make PDF** action. As the name says, it makes a PDF.
4. Add the **Share** action.

When you add this action, it should automatically say “Share PDF”. If you tap or click PDF, you can tap or click Reveal Action to see that the PDF comes from the Make PDF action.

Tip: The Reveal Action button doesn't always look like it has done something—you have to look at your screen to see that *one action has more shadow than the others*—that action is the source of your magic variable!

5. Tap or click the name at the top, rename it to “Share PDF,” and optionally tap the icon to change its color or glyph. Then, in iPadOS, tap Done; in iOS, tap the close  button.

That’s it! You just built a handy shortcut in five steps! Let’s test it. Go to Safari and open a webpage (such as [TakeControlBooks.com](https://takecontrolbooks.com)). Tap or click the share  icon, and scroll down in the list of actions until you find Share PDF—tap it. (The first time you run it on any given website, you may be prompted to give it permission to access your web content. Tap Allow Once or Always Allow, as you prefer.) The shortcut makes a PDF of the webpage and opens another share view to let you share it.

Install the Shortcut

Tap or click the link below to install the shortcut on your device. When you do, Safari opens briefly, and then Shortcuts opens and asks you to review the shortcut and install it. If you get an error message, go back and read the section on [Share Your Shortcuts](#).

Install Share PDF shortcut: <https://alt.cc/shsp>

Meeting Time and Notes

Usually, as we walk into a meeting (whether that be a meeting room or clicking a link to join a teleconference), there are plenty of things running through our heads—everything from “Is Bob’s cat back from the vet?” to “I need to check who is on holiday in two weeks and see if it affects our deadlines.” This leaves precious little space for the small but important things like creating a new meeting note and making sure Do Not Disturb is enabled. This shortcut is designed to help us tackle the little things with just a tap.

This shortcut gives you a list of events from your calendar today, asks you to choose from them, and turns on Do Not Disturb until the end of the event. Then it formats the data from your event into a usable format and creates a note with it. Finally, it searches for that note and opens it.

Focus Mode Shortcuts

As mentioned earlier, when looking at how to run shortcuts through automations, [Focus Modes](#) allow you to run shortcuts entirely automatically in the background. Whether the trigger for the focus mode is location-based or time-based, or you enable it through a lock screen notification or Control Center, your automation will run! As focus modes sync across our devices (unless you disabled that in Settings or System Settings/System Preferences), when you turn on a focus mode on your Mac (running macOS Monterey or later), that will hand off the automation baton to all your devices—so your iPhone and iPad can take the reins.

No Sleep for iPad?

Focus modes include sleep, sort of. It's there under Settings and in Control Center. But the sleep focus mode is unique—the time triggers have to be configured through the Health app on an iPhone, and it's not grouped in with the rest of the triggers in the Shortcuts app. Instead, it's at the top with Time of Day and Alarm in iOS. This, unfortunately, has led to it being missing in iPadOS. It seems intentional, but sadly, I can't use a reliable part of my routines to "reset" my devices for the next day.

Disable Work Focus When It's a Holiday

If you have a focus mode for Work and schedule it for your regular working day, your iOS/iPadOS device will turn that on even if it's a holiday. While you can't *prevent* the focus mode from turning on, you can use an automation to check whether it should be on and turn it off if not. You will need a calendar on your device with events on the days you will not be working for this—the built-in holiday calendar will do the trick for many people. If you've already played with the [Daily Overview](#), you'll notice that this shortcut starts similarly.

Here are the step-by-step instructions to build this shortcut:

1. On the Automation tab, add a new **Personal Automation**.

Select **Work** in the focus modes group and ensure **When Turning On** is checked. Then tap Next.

2. Add a **Find Calendar Events** action.

Tap **is in the next** and change it to **is today**—this limits the events to those today. Tap **Add Filter** and change the 3rd placeholder in the **Calendar Is** row to the calendar with your holidays.

If you have more than one calendar, add another Find Calendar Events action after the first one. It automatically swaps **All Calendar Events** for a magic variable of calendar events from the previous action. Change the action to use *Any* instead of *All* filters, and add filters for each of your calendars.

Note: There's no need to change the date on the subsequent Find Calendar Events actions—the first action filters that for us, and these events take only what they're given to work with.

3. Add another **Find Calendar Events** action, which appears as **Filter Calendar Events** in your shortcut. Add another filter, tap **Calendar**, and then select **Is All Day**.
4. Add an **If** action.

When you add this, it automatically changes to **If Calendar Events**, but change the **condition** to **has any value**. Now we know if there is a calendar event for today, which means it's not a working day.

5. Add a **Set Focus** action inside the If before the Otherwise.

Tap **Do Not Disturb** and choose your **Work** focus mode. The second option should say **Off**.

6. Add a **Show Notification** action right underneath your Set Focus action.

Media Shortcuts

Shortcuts can do a lot with media, which includes music, images, and more. Here are a few examples of what you can do with media-related actions.

Convert and Share Image

By default, photos we take on our devices are in [HEIC](#) format—and because of those great cameras, they’re pretty big too. If we want to share them, some of our apps convert them automatically for us and even resize them. For consistent results, though, we can use a shortcut:

1. Right after creating the shortcut, tap or click the Shortcut Details ( or ) icon, make sure the Details tab is selected, and enable Show in Share Sheet. Change Share Sheet Types and Deselect All before you select Images. If you will run this on a Mac, too, select Use as Quick Action and select both Finder and Services Menu.
2. Add an **If** action and delete the Otherwise section.

The first part is set to [Shortcut Input](#), and we need to change [Condition](#) to [has any value](#).

3. After the If but before End If, add a **Select Photos** action.

This runs only if you don’t use your shortcut from the share sheet (so if you don’t share an image to it). It outputs either what you shared to the shortcut or what you just selected.

4. After the End If statement, add a **Convert Image** action.

This should automatically update to Convert [If Result](#) to [JPEG](#). Tap the disclosure  arrow (iOS/iPadOS) or click Show More (macOS) and slide down the Quality to an appropriate level (see **Figure 61**). Preserve Metadata tells Shortcuts whether it should keep data like the location attached to the image.

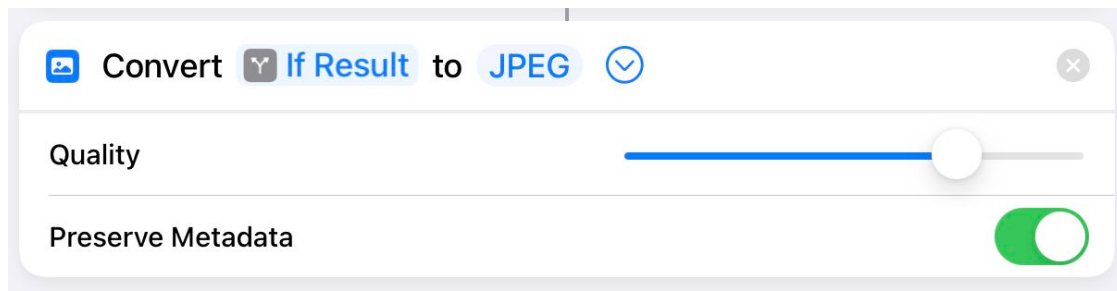


Figure 61: Convert and set the quality of an image.

5. Add a **Share** action.

This is automatically changed to *Converted Image*.

6. Give the shortcut a name and icon. In iPadOS, tap Done; in iOS, tap the close  button.

Install Convert & Share Image shortcut: <https://alt.cc/shci>

Note: The best way to run this on a pre-Ventura Mac is to select an image in the Finder, right-click/Control-click it, and choose Convert and Share Image from the Quick Actions submenu of the contextual menu.

Rename and Wrangle Files

[Hazel](#), [Keyboard Maestro](#), [Name Mangler](#), and many other apps might be oft-recommended (even by me) tools for renaming files and moving them to specific folders. But if you're reaching the limits of the Finder's advanced rename tool (available when you have multiple files selected), Shortcuts could be the upgrade you need to help you clean up filenames and move files. Here's one example, taken from this book, to show how I rename image files and move them to the correct folder for Take Control. I have this as a Quick Action, so it's always under the right-click/Control-click menu. Because it is a Quick Action and looks for a specific folder on a Mac, it won't run correctly in iOS/iPadOS.

Home Shortcuts

This selection of shortcuts is for use with the home automation triggers. If you previously created any home automations in the Home app, they appear in the Automation tab in Shortcuts *and* are available in the Home app. This area has a limited number of actions, which means that you are unlikely to do something to upset anyone you share a home with, but also need to be creative to achieve all the results you want.

Note: There are download links for most of the shortcuts in this chapter, but they are just for reference, *not* for use. Unfortunately, you cannot run an existing shortcut as part of a home automation (as you can with personal automations) nor import one into it—you will have to recreate all of these yourself.

Run Shortcuts on a HomePod

Shortcuts can also be invoked on a HomePod or HomePod mini using Siri; you will need Personal Requests enabled on the HomePod through the Home app for this to work. There is a caveat, which is that you can run Shortcuts only using Apple’s actions, so you can’t take advantage of the actions of your preferred task management app or a local weather app.

Make a Button a Toggle

It astounds me that I cannot make a button a simple replacement for a light switch directly in the Home app. The good news is that Shortcuts is perfectly equipped to handle this! For this to work you need a physical HomeKit button, such as the IKEA Shortcuts button (sadly, it can’t actually run Shortcuts), or you can make a shortcut to toggle your light.

To create this shortcut:

1. Open the **Home** app—not Shortcuts.

A button must be configured in the Home app. I don't know why and it seems like a strange limitation, but if you try to do it in Shortcuts, you get an error that it must be done in "Settings" (which translates to the Home app).

2. Find a button or switch and touch and hold to open the settings.
3. Tap Add next to one of the actions.
4. Scroll to the bottom and tap Convert to Shortcut.
5. Delete the Set **Scenes and Accessories** action.
6. Add an **If** action.

Tap the Input and then tap Select a Home Accessory (**Figure 64**). If you have multiple homes, choose one and select the light you want to toggle. Tap Done.

Tap the Name bubble that is now in your If and choose **Is On**.

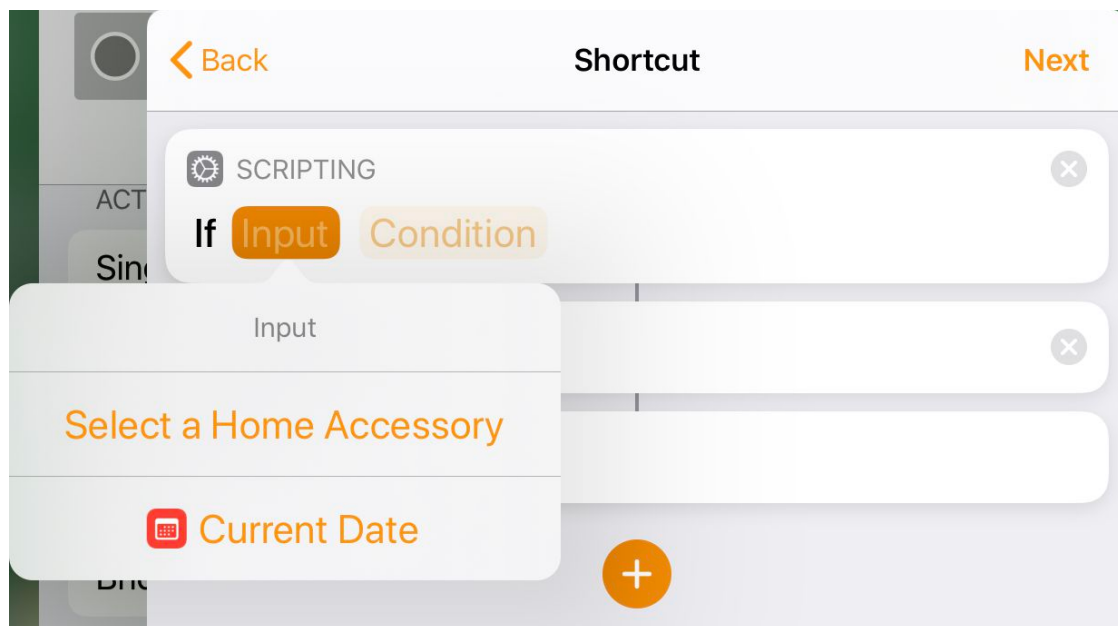


Figure 64: Check the status of a home accessory with an If action.

7. Under the If, add a **Control My Home** action (where Home is the name of your HomeKit Home).

Other Shortcuts

These shortcuts don't fall into the category of productivity, focus modes, media, or Home shortcuts, but that doesn't make them any less useful!

Share Your Shortcuts in Bulk

If you want to share all your shortcuts, or just some of them, all at once, I have a shortcut to do just that. Here's how you make it:

1. Add a **Get My Shortcuts** action.
2. Add a **Choose from List** action.

This should automatically set the List to *My Shortcuts* from step one. Tap the disclosure  arrow (iOS/iPadOS) or click Show More (macOS) and toggle Select Multiple on.

3. Add **Get Link to File**.

This becomes Get link to *Chosen Item*.

4. Add **Repeat with Each**.

The Repeat action is automatically set to use the *Link to File* magic variable.

5. Right under Repeat with each item in *Link to File*, add **Get Item from List**.

Tap *First Item* and change it to *[Item at Index] [Repeat Index]*, then tap or click the *Repeat Item* after from, clear it, and use the magic variable *Chosen Item* (from step 2).

6. Below Get *[Item At Index] [Repeat Index]* from *Chosen Shortcut(s)*, Add a **Text** action.

Set the text as follows (see **Figure 67**):

- [Item from List](Repeat Item)

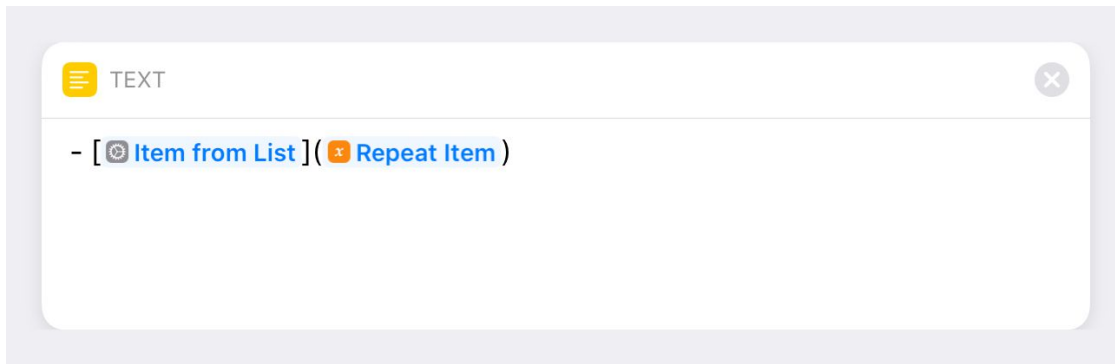


Figure 67: The text action in Bulk Share Shortcuts.

7. After Repeat with Each, add a **Combine Text** action.

This automatically selects the **Repeat Results** and combines them with **New Lines**.

8. Add a **Share** action.

9. Give the shortcut a name and icon. In iPadOS, tap Done; in iOS, tap the close (x) button.

Install Share Your Shortcuts in Bulk shortcut: <https://alt.cc/shsb>

Log Expense

I don't know about you, but I struggle to stay on top of my expenses—especially on work trips. Thankfully I can make my life much easier with shortcuts. Here are instructions to build this:

1. Add an **Ask for Input** action.

Set the Prompt (or Question) to **Date**. In Ventura or later, or iOS 16/iPadOS 16 or later, click or tap the **Text** field and choose **Date and Time** from the contextual menu. In Monterey, click Show More, or in iOS 15/iPadOS 15, tap the disclosure (blue arrow) arrow, and set the Input

Work with REST APIs

Thankfully for us, most developers have quickly caught onto the power that is Shortcuts. But there are some web services for which developers haven't (yet) added Shortcuts support, there is no app, or that enable you to do more by working directly with the service through its *REST* (Representational state transfer) *API* (Application Programming Interface). An API is a way we can talk to (web) applications and get information or send them commands, and a [REST](#) API is a common, standardized format for web services. This means that with the right skills and actions, we can enhance Shortcuts ourselves.

An Introduction to API Calls with Shortcuts

We talk to these APIs primarily using one action, Get Contents of URL. This action does let us get the content of a regular webpage, but it also allows us to make requests with specific *parameters* (options we send to the server), *authentication tokens* (also known as *API keys*) to prove who we are, and different kinds of requests.

Make the Request

In there are five kinds of calls you can make to a URL for an API request:

- **GET:** This kind of request is used to look things up.
- **POST:** This request can create new items, or replace content in them—if you use this for updates, then in many cases it will delete any data you do not send to the API again. (For example, if you get data that has a title, and content, and an author, but only send author back, then the title and content will be deleted.)
- **PUT:** Use this to update a resource and send all the fields.

- **PATCH:** You can use this to update an item without sending all the data again.
- **DELETE:** As the name implies, this deletes something—you must specify *what* will be deleted for this to work.

Not every API uses these actions in the same way (whether or not it is correct to do so), so the answer to “Which HTTP method do I use?” is unfortunately “Read the documentation.” To make this easier, I’ve chosen three different APIs below and will walk you through each one.

Use Authentication

Lots of APIs need you to verify who you are. In some cases this is because the provider wants to charge you, or because you want to access data which is not available to everyone. There are two common methods to do this:

- **Specify an API key in the URL:** For example, the URL <https://api.example.com/dictionary/aardvark> could call a dictionary API, give it your key, and request a definition for the word “aardvark”.
- **Send an Authorization Header:** See **Figure 71**. Some keys must be specified as [Bearer \[key\]](#) or [Basic \[key\]](#); this is dependent on the type of authorization used, and should be clearly detailed in any REST API documentation.

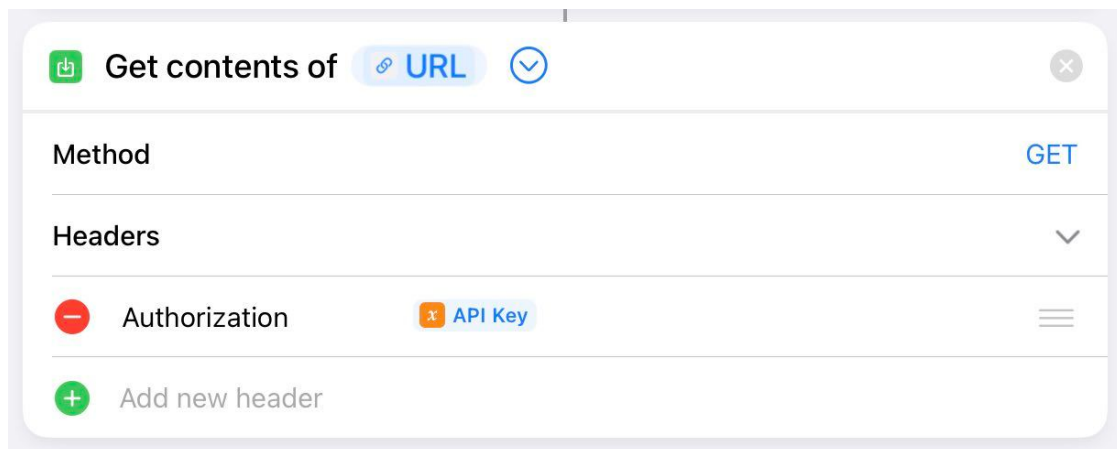


Figure 71: Get Contents of URL with an Authorization Header.

Complementary Apps

Shortcuts is popular, which means there are numerous apps out there that give us more actions, and those in turn let us automate more things. I've listed a selection of these apps, grouped by which operating systems they support (and in alphabetical order within each group).

Apps for iOS, iPadOS, and macOS

The first group of apps all come in versions for iOS/iPadOS and macOS, though features and interface may vary by platform.

Actions for Shortcuts

[Actions for Shortcuts](#) is much like [Toolbox Pro](#), described later, in that it adds a variety of useful actions to Shortcuts. Whether you need to parse a CSV file, or remove duplicate or empty lines from lists or text, the actions in this app are free and ready to help you automate the next task.

Dark Noise

iOS and iPadOS have an accessibility feature to [mask background sounds](#), done by playing one of a variety of white noise or similar tracks. This is also available on the HomePod by saying something like “Hey Siri, play river sounds.”

If you like Siri's background sound options, such as rivers, then it's disappointing to search Shortcuts and find that there's no way to automate this. [Dark Noise](#) is an excellent background noise app that is automatable, though. You can simply start and pause sounds, or you can set it to play for a specific duration. Inside the app you can also turn on advanced controls, allowing the sounds to mix with other audio you play back.

Data Jar

If you want to save the information and make it available to a shortcut later or to different shortcuts, you can try to save data to a file (on your device or in iCloud Drive), add it to a reminder, or save it to Notes. But all of these have one thing in common—they’re not designed to work as global variables. [Data Jar](#) is, at its core, an extensive dictionary you can store items in to use in Shortcuts again and again.

You can add data directly to the app or through Shortcuts and its plentiful Shortcuts actions. Each data entry in your jar has a type—it could be a number, text, a boolean (`true` or `false`), a file, a dictionary, or a list. A dictionary will allow you to nest data as deep as you like—so you can have a top-level `work` dictionary containing all your useful data.

Data Jar is free on all platforms and syncs through iCloud.

Drafts

When you hit the limitations of what you can automate with Shortcuts and Notes, take a look at [Drafts](#). Drafts was originally designed as “the place where text starts”—back in the days where our iPhones (there were no iPads) didn’t even have Copy and Paste actions. Nowadays this is less of a problem, but Drafts is still an excellent note-taking app and has evolved significantly. It has functions such as unlimited dictation (the dictate button on your keyboard stops after a minute or so), and a whole [directory of actions](#). You can install these actions in Drafts and then through Shortcuts use them on text or a note you create in Drafts. In addition, the core functions are wider reaching than those of Notes. You can prepend to a draft, or append (the latter is available in Notes). One of my favorite features is the ability to open a specific Draft. Use the Open Draft action, and then tap or click the `Draft` variable to open it—much easier than the “Find Note” and “Open Note” combination I showed you in the [Meeting Time and Notes](#) shortcut.

About This Book

Thank you for purchasing this Take Control book. We hope you find it both useful and enjoyable to read. We welcome your [comments](#).

Ebook Extras

You can [access extras related to this ebook](#) on the web. Once you're on the ebook's Take Control Extras page, you can:

- Download any available new version of the ebook for free, or buy a subsequent edition at a discount.

Access the book in both PDF and EPUB formats. (Learn about reading on mobile devices on our [Device Advice](#) page.)

- Read the ebook's blog. You may find new tips or information, as well as a link to an author interview.
- Find out if we have any update plans for the ebook.

If you bought this ebook from the Take Control website, it has been automatically added to your account, where you can download it in other formats and access any future updates.

More Take Control Books

This is but one of many Take Control titles! We have books that cover a wide range of technology topics, with extra emphasis on Macs and other Apple products.

You can buy Take Control books from the [Take Control online catalog](#) as well as from venues such as Amazon and the Apple Books Store. But it's a better user experience and our authors earn more when you buy directly from us. Just saying...

Our ebooks are available in two formats, PDF and EPUB, which are viewable on any computer, smartphone, tablet, or e-reader. All are DRM-free.

About the Author



Rosemary Orchard is the cohost of [Automators](#), an automation-themed podcast on Relay FM with David Sparks, and [iOS Today](#), a podcast about learning and making the most of your non-Mac Apple devices with a Shortcuts section every week on TWiT with Mikah Sargent.

When she isn't writing, she's busy eating chocolate and planning world domination with Shortcuts.

Shameless Plug

You can find my website at RosemaryOrchard.com. I also host [iOS Today on TWiT](#) every week with a section called Shortcuts Corner and [Automators on Relay FM](#), where David Sparks and I cover automation on many platforms—with plenty of Shortcuts content too.

About the Publisher

alt concepts, publisher of Take Control Books, is operated by [Joe Kissell](#) and [Morgen Jahnke](#), who acquired the ebook series from

TidBITS Publishing Inc.'s owners, Adam and Tonya Engst, in 2017. Joe brings his decades of experience as author of more than 60 books on tech topics (including many popular Take Control titles) to his role as Publisher. Morgen's professional background is in development work for nonprofit organizations, and she employs those skills as Director of Marketing and Publicity. Joe and Morgen live in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, with their two children and their cat.

Credits

- Editor and Publisher: Joe Kissell
- Cover design: Sam Schick of [Neversink](#)
- Logo design: Geoff Allen of [FUN is OK](#)

Copyright and Fine Print

Take Control of Shortcuts, Second Edition

ISBN: 978-1-990783-00-5

Copyright © 2023, Rosemary Orchard. All rights reserved.

[alt concepts](#), 419 8B-3110 8th St. East, Saskatoon, SK S7H 0W2 Canada

Why Take Control? We designed Take Control electronic books to help readers regain a measure of control in an oftentimes out-of-control universe. With Take Control, we also work to streamline the publication process so that information about quickly changing technical topics can be published while it's still relevant and accurate.

Our books are DRM-free: This ebook doesn't use digital rights management in any way because DRM makes life harder for everyone. So we ask a favor of our readers. If you want to share your copy of this ebook with a friend, please do so as you would a physical book, meaning that if your friend uses it regularly, they should buy a copy. Your support makes it possible for future Take Control ebooks to hit the internet long before you'd find the same information in a printed book. Plus, if you buy the ebook, you're entitled to any free updates that become available.

Remember the trees! You have our permission to make a single print copy of this ebook for personal use, if you must. Please reference this page if a print service refuses to print the ebook for copyright reasons.

Caveat lector: Although the author and alt concepts have made a reasonable effort to ensure the accuracy of the information herein, they assume no responsibility for errors or omissions. The information in this book is distributed "As Is," without warranty of any kind. Neither alt concepts nor the author shall be liable to any person or entity for any special, indirect, incidental, or consequential damages, including without limitation lost revenues or lost profits, that may result (or that are alleged to result) from the use of these materials. In other words, use this information at your own risk.

It's just a name: Many of the designations in this ebook used to distinguish products and services are claimed as trademarks or service marks. Any trademarks, service marks, product names, or named features that appear in this title are assumed to be the property of their respective owners. All product names and services are used in an editorial fashion only, with no intention of infringement. No such use, or the use of any trade name, is meant to convey endorsement or other affiliation with this title.

We aren't Apple: This title is an independent publication and has not been authorized, sponsored, or otherwise approved by Apple Inc. Because of the nature of this title, it uses terms that are registered trademarks or service marks of Apple Inc. If you're into that sort of thing, you can view a [complete list](#) of Apple Inc.'s registered trademarks and service marks.