



TAKE CONTROL OF

Tahoe

by **JOE KISSELL**

\$9.99

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Tahoe*, version 1.2, published in November 2025 by alt concepts. This book was written by Joe Kissell and edited by Glenn Fleishman.

This book teaches you all about macOS 26 Tahoe, including how to upgrade from an older operating system and how to use the major new features.

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.

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Updates and More

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What's New in Version 1.2

Version 1.2 of this book reflects changes in macOS Tahoe 26.1, released in early November 2025. The most significant modifications were:

- **Liquid Glass display option:** Added information on additional ways to change the appearance of Liquid Glass. See [Reduce Liquid Glass Effects](#).
- **Spotlight clipboard history controls:** Described new controls for Spotlight's clipboard history. See [Use Clipboard History](#).
- **Communication safety change:** Added a paragraph about a change to communication safety for Family Sharing members aged 13–17. See [Family](#).
- **Recovery Assistant links:** Updated [Recovery Assistant](#) with links that provide a bit more information.
- **More details on Shortcuts improvements:** Added information about previously unmentioned improvements to Shortcuts. See [Shortcuts](#).

What Was New in Version 1.1.1

Since version 1.1 of this book was wrapped up just before Tahoe's official release on September 15, I discovered only after the new version of macOS shipped that Apple decided to change the way the installer was offered for the first time in many years. The Tahoe installer is *not* available in the Mac App Store. Nor has Apple provided any indication as to whether it will appear there later. As a result, I revised instructions in [Make Final Preparations](#)—particularly [Obtain the Installer](#) and [Copy the Installer to a Safe Place](#).

I also added a bullet point in [Privacy & Security Settings](#) to cover some changes in FileVault.

What Was New in Version 1.1

Version 1.1 of this book addressed a few small changes between the beta version of Tahoe available when version 1.0 was published and the release version of Tahoe 26.0, as well as mentioning one or two new items I didn't catch the first time around:

- Removed the now-obsolete references to the Tahoe beta.
- Added a clarification about display contrast in [Reduce Liquid Glass Effects](#).
- Added a [Battery Settings](#) topic that covers the new High Power option for Mac laptops.
- Removed the Notifications Settings topic, which only pointed out a missing feature that returned during the beta cycle.
- Added [Keyboard Settings](#), with instructions to suppress a potentially annoying Apple Intelligence feature.
- Completely reworked the [Live Translation](#) instructions, which were previously missing crucial steps.
- In [Music](#), included instructions for toggling AutoMix in a playlist.

A Few Words About Terminology

As you read this book, it may be helpful to understand how I use certain terms:

- **“M-series” vs. “Apple silicon”:** In 2020, Apple introduced the first Macs based on their own custom-designed chips rather than Intel chips, referring to the new architecture as “Apple silicon.” These chips were basically fancier and faster versions of the A-series chips Apple had been using in iPhones, iPads, and even Apple TV boxes for some years. But, since they were being used for Macs, these new variants had names starting with M: M1 at first, followed

by M1 Pro, M1 Max, and M1 Ultra, then an M2 line, and M3 line, and an M4 line, with many more iterations expected in the future.

Even though Apple wants everyone to call these devices “Macs with Apple silicon,” that always seemed excessively clunky to us, so in Take Control books we’ve consistently used the shorthand “M-series Macs.” That has worked fine so far.

However, in mid-2025, [rumors began to circulate](#) that Apple would release a low-priced MacBook using not an M-series chip but rather an A-series chip. Are these rumors true? We have no idea. But if and when that does happen, it will be the first “Mac with Apple silicon” that isn’t an M-series Mac. In which case, we might have to rethink how we describe such Macs in our books. But, at least for this version of this book, we’re sticking with “M-series” with the understanding that anything we say about M-series Macs *should* also apply to hypothetical future A-series Macs.

- **“Disk” vs. “SSD”:** In this book I use the term “disk” to refer to your Mac’s primary storage device. For all Macs that can run Tahoe, this isn’t really a disk-shaped object at all, but rather a solid-state disk (SSD), which is far, far faster and more reliable than a mechanical hard drive. However, for largely historical reasons, the word “disk” is still used throughout macOS to refer to storage devices of all kinds.

Introduction

As has been my custom, for these many years, I've spent a good chunk of my summer testing and writing about the latest version of macOS. This year it's called Tahoe, and the version number has jumped from 15 (Sequoia, released in 2024) all the way to 26. Along with iOS, iPadOS, tvOS, watchOS, and visionOS, Apple has decided to use date-based version numbers from now on, with the number referring to the year *after* the version's fall release (somewhat like car model years).

Naturally, Tahoe is full of interface changes, new features, and new apps. Some of the changes are fantastic, some not, and some are very much in the eye of the beholder. I cover all that in the pages ahead. But perhaps what's most surprising about Tahoe is what *isn't* there: the major changes to Siri that were promised more than a year ago as part of Sequoia. Not only has this grand Siri overhaul not occurred yet, but Apple hasn't even committed to rolling it out in any particular time frame. Maybe it'll show up in a Tahoe update later in 2025, or in 2026, or maybe we'll have to wait even longer. For those of us who desperately want Siri to be as clueful as *that other thing* from *that other company*, that's disappointing news. On the other hand, I can't fault Apple for reverting to their old "underpromise, overdeliver" motto.

In any case, this book is your guide to what's new in macOS 26 Tahoe as it now stands. 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 Sequoia (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 Tahoe, 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 Tahoe. I also tell you about some potential pitfalls and how to avoid or work around them.

This book reflects the initial release of Tahoe. There will be still more releases (26.1, 26.2, and so on) with further changes. Depending on the scope and timing of those changes, there may be further updates to this book in the coming year. To check for updates to this book, click the Ebook Extras badge in the upper-right corner of the cover (if you're reading the PDF format). Or, in any format, go to the [Ebook Extras](#) topic and click the "access extras related to this ebook" link. If you purchased your book directly from Take Control Books (in which case you have an account with us), you can log in when you visit the Ebook Extras page. If you don't have an account, you can still view the page without logging in; just click the close (X) button on the login prompt.

Tahoe 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 Tahoe from an earlier version of macOS, you should go through the [Check Your Mac for Compatibility](#) and [Upgrade to Tahoe](#) chapters to ensure a smooth transition.

Learn about what's new:

- Discover what you have to look forward to when you upgrade to Tahoe, 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 Tahoe:

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

Dive in to the major new features:

- Does it seem like you're looking at your screen through slabs of curved glass? Apple wants to give you that impression. See [Discover Liquid Glass](#).
- With your iPhone nearby, your Mac can now do much more than before, not the least of which is making and receiving phone calls with the newly added Phone app. See [Use New iPhone Continuity Features](#).
- One of the biggest changes in Tahoe is a massively reworked Spotlight with many useful new features. See [Meet the New Spotlight](#).
- Tahoe brings several new apps to macOS, some of which were derived from iPhone or iPad apps. See [Try New Mac Apps](#).
- See what settings are new or different in [Explore System Settings](#).

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 Tahoe 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 Tahoe 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 15 Sequoia, 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 Tahoe

Apple has a list of new Tahoe features on [this webpage](#). I won’t catalog them all here (as they’re covered throughout this book), but I would like to call out some of the most notable changes and improvements since macOS 15 Sequoia:

- **Liquid Glass:** This new way of displaying icons, menus, sidebars, toolbars, the Dock, and other controls adds transparency and glitz, sometimes at the expense of readability and usability. See [Discover Liquid Glass](#).
- **Customizable Control Center and Menu Bar:** You can now add many new tools to Control Center and arrange them however you like; and it’s also easier to add and remove menu bar items. See [Customize Control Center & Menu Bar](#) and [Menu Bar Settings](#).
- **More iPhone Continuity features:** The Phone app is now available on your Mac, and it lets you make and receive cellular network calls using your iPhone. The Mac Phone app includes support for new call screening and Hold Assist features. You can now also display live activities from your iPhone on your Mac’s menu bar. See [Use New iPhone Continuity Features](#).

- **Spotlight improvements:** Spotlight has undergone a major redesign, with support for initiating numerous actions without opening an app, jumping right to an action with quick keys, and keeping a history of items you've copied to your clipboard. See [Meet the New Spotlight](#).
- **New apps:** Besides the Phone app, Apple added an app called [Apps](#) (which replaces Launchpad), a Games app (see [Games](#)), and two apps previously available only for mobile devices: Journal (see [Journal](#)) and [Magnifier](#).
- **Live Translation:** FaceTime, Messages, and Phone can now perform audio and text translation in real time as you type and speak when you're conversing with someone who speaks a different language. See [Live Translation](#).
- **Shortcuts improvements:** Now shortcuts can run automatically on a schedule or in response to various events. In addition, new Shortcuts actions offer a variety of Apple Intelligence features you can use to create more powerful automations. See [Shortcuts](#).

If you're already running Sequoia, 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

Tahoe runs on all currently shipping Macs, as well as most models introduced within the past five years or so. Sadly, Tahoe does drop support for some Mac models that were able to run macOS 15 Sequoia. The next few pages will help you verify that your hardware is fully compatible with Tahoe.

Model Support

Macs that can run Tahoe include the following (all of which, it should be noted, use SSDs exclusively rather than mechanical hard drives or Fusion drives):

- MacBook Air (2020 or newer)
- MacBook Pro (16-inch, 2019)
- MacBook Pro (2020 or newer)
- iMac (2020 or newer)
- Mac mini (2020 or newer)
- Mac Studio
- Mac Pro (2019 or newer)

Unfortunately, that excludes several models that were able to run Sequoia but can go no further: the iMac (2019), iMac Pro, MacBook Pro (2018 and 2019, except as noted), and the Mac mini (2018).

Note: Very few of the supported models use Intel processors: the MacBook Air (Retina, 13-inch, 2020), MacBook Pro (16-inch, 2019 and 13-inch, 2020), iMac (Retina 5K, 27-inch, 2020), and Mac Pro (2019). Apple has stated that Tahoe will be the last version of macOS to support Intel-based Macs.

To confirm which Mac model you have, choose Apple  > About This Mac. You'll see something like **Figure 1** in Ventura or later (the layout differs in Monterey or earlier).

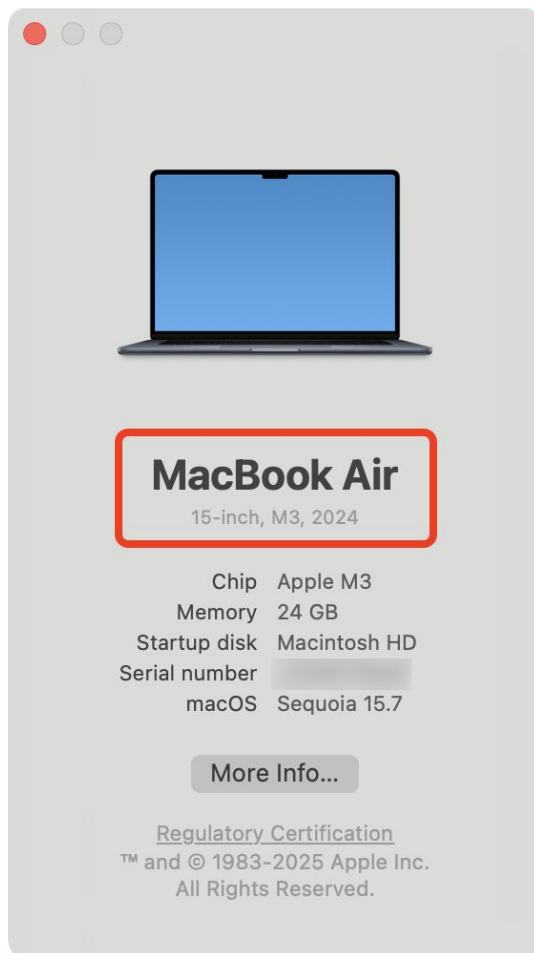


Figure 1: About This Mac (Ventura or later).

If your Mac isn't in the list above, then regardless of its age or speed, I'm very sorry to say that it won't run Tahoe.

Even if your Mac is on that list, however, certain Tahoe features may not work because they have more stringent processor requirements. (For example, Apple Intelligence features require an M-series processor.) I point out these requirements throughout the book.

Upgrade to Tahoe

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 Tahoe* 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 is more than enough to get you through the process.

If you've already upgraded to Tahoe, you can skip ahead to [Discover Liquid Glass](#).

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 Tahoe, 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 10.15 Catalina, you can (and should) skip straight to macOS 12.0 Tahoe. No need to step through Big Sur, Monterey, Ventura, Sonoma, and Sequoia! The Tahoe installer doesn't care where you're starting. The longer the gap, the more likely you will have incompatible third-party software, however.

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 Tahoe. 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 "Tahoe-compatible" software updates have already been appearing for months.

Tip: [RoaringApps](#) maintains a wiki that lists thousands of Mac, iPhone, and iPad apps and the current status of their compatibility with various operating system versions (including Tahoe), 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.

Update Your Remaining Apps

The Tahoe installer looks for, and disables, certain types of incompatible software—but there's no guarantee it will find everything. Given the choice, you're usually better off upgrading third-party software *before* you install a new version of your operating system. (You may occasionally run into an app with a newer version designed to run *only* on Tahoe; in such limited cases, you may have to install the updated software after upgrading to Tahoe.)

Apple built an update mechanism into the App Store, so any apps you downloaded from the App Store can also be updated there—and App Store updates are free. To check for and apply App Store updates:

1. Open the App Store app by choosing Apple  > App Store.
2. Click Updates in the sidebar to display a list of available updates.
3. To update a single app, click the Update button next to it. Or, to update all the listed apps at once, click Update All.

Discover Liquid Glass

Before Tahoe was officially announced at WWDC in June 2025, the internet was abuzz with rumors that the user interfaces in all of Apple's operating systems were about to get a major redesign. I was imagining dramatic shifts in how users accomplished day-to-day tasks, controls and logic being rethought from scratch, and an overall shift in how people interacted with their Apple devices.

But that's not what happened at all. Instead, we got something Apple calls Liquid Glass, which is mostly cosmetic. Which is to say, although things *look* different, nearly everything *functions* just as it did before—unless you consider little things like “being able to read the label on a control” as part of the function. And that sort of problem turned up astonishingly often across the versions Apple released and tweaked in the beta cycle. Indeed, the most complimentary comment I've heard about Liquid Glass amounted to “Oh, that looks kind of cool,” while I've read countless articles and social media posts about the many and sundry ways in which Liquid Glass is an appalling step backward in usability. (If you dislike the new look, you can turn off its most distracting elements; see [Reduce Liquid Glass Effects](#), ahead.)

To summarize Liquid Glass briefly, it's mainly about transparency and giving objects the appearance of slightly curved glass. Things are now transparent that were formerly opaque or merely translucent. Sometimes the level of transparency has increased, or the amount of contrast has decreased, or both. These effects extend to the menu bar, window sidebars and toolbars, the Dock, icons, buttons, folders, Control Center, and more. Here are the main changes:

- **Glass-like effects:** Throughout Tahoe, numerous controls (such as buttons, sliders, and search fields) have been moved to sit atop other content (**Figure 10**). They have translucent backgrounds to show a blurry image of what's behind them, curved around the edges as though you were looking through a lens sitting on the

screen. This lens effect changes in real time as you scroll or move the window contents.



Figure 9: The new, transparent, floating control bar in Music, showing the lens-like distortion of the content behind it.

- **New icons:** Apple redesigned all their app icons in Tahoe. With a few exceptions, they're similar enough to their predecessors that you can still identify them easily, though often more boring. However, Apple also imposed new icon design rules on third-party developers. The long and short of it is that icons must be rounded squares, just like the icons on iPhones and iPads, with no irregular shapes or protruding bits. Any icon that doesn't match Apple's specifications exactly is shrunk down and put into a gray-backed rounded square, which developers refer to as "being in squircle jail," where "squircle" is a portmanteau of "square" and "circle" (**Figure 10**). Over time, most developers will update their icons to eliminate that effect. Besides the overall icon design, icons can now adopt dark, clear, or tinted variations; see [Work with Themes](#).



Figure 10: Icons in Sequoia (top) and Tahoe (bottom), from left to right: Automator, Contacts, Migration Assistant, BBEdit, Acorn. The BBEdit and Acorn icons in the second row show their "squircle jail" appearance before their developers updated them.

- **Rounder window corners:** In keeping with the theme of "Macs should look like iPads," window corners in the Finder and other

Use New iPhone Continuity Features

Last year, in macOS 15 Sequoia, Apple significantly increased the ways your iPhone can interact with your Mac. The iPhone Mirroring app let you see and control what’s on your iPhone screen, while you could also get notifications on your Mac directly from apps on your iPhone. In Tahoe, you have even more ways to interact with your iPhone.

Note: These features, like existing iPhone Continuity features, require that your iPhone is on, near your Mac, on the same Wi-Fi network, and signed in to the same Apple Account.

The Phone App

On your iPhone, you open the Phone app to make calls. It shows you everything to do with phone and calls, including recent calls, favorites, voicemail, and filtered messages; lists FaceTime audio and video calls; and even has an *actual* (virtual) *keypad* for “dialing” calls like they did in the Dark Ages. The new Phone app for Mac is...basically the same, but in a more spread-out configuration suitable to your Mac’s larger screen.

Note: If you have a Mac without a built-in microphone—a Mac mini, Mac Studio, or Mac Pro—you must have an external microphone attached, which can be part of an external display or headset.

Phone in Tahoe also brings with it the groovy new enhancements from Phone for iPhone, such as [Call Screening](#), [Hold Assist](#), and [Live Translation](#) (covered later).

Note: Call Screening and Hold Assist are available in a limited number of languages as of publication time.

Phone App Basics

When you first open the Phone app, what you see on the left side of the screen depends on your situation. Either you'll see Favorites at the top and Recents below, or only Recents. Here are the details of each:

- **Favorites:** If your iPhone is running iOS 26 and you have any favorites set on your iPhone, the upper-left corner of the Phone app shows three or four small Contact Posters (or initials, or a photo in a Contact Poster frame) in the order you set the favorites. If you have more than four favorites, then to the right of those thumbnails is a group of up to four even smaller Contact Posters and a Show All button link below it (**Figure 18**). (Show All really means Show Favorites List.)

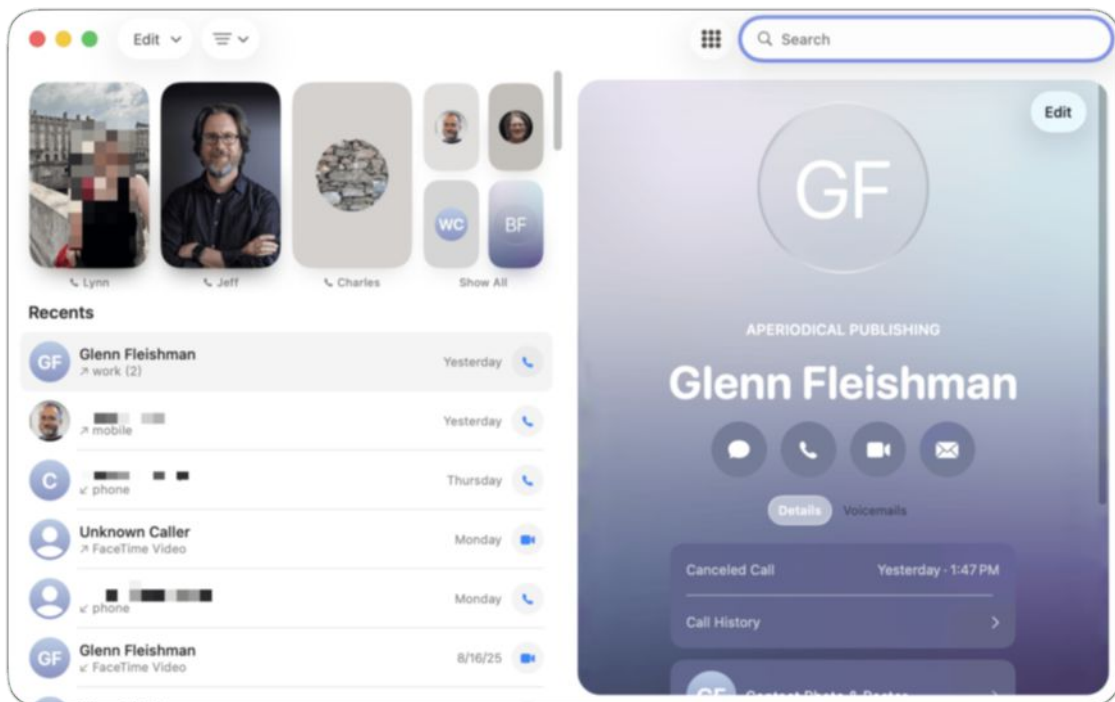


Figure 18: The Phone app looks something like this when favorites are available.

If you click any of the larger Contact Posters, your Mac immediately places a call, starts a conversation in Messages, or starts a FaceTime session, depending on what method of contact you marked for someone as a favorite method. Look carefully: you can see a tiny Messages , Phone , or FaceTime  icon underneath the Contact Poster, which identifies that default action. If you click

Meet the New Spotlight

Spotlight started as a tool to search for and open files, folders, and applications on your Mac; over time, it gained the capability to search for email messages, definitions from the Dictionary app, tracks in Music, photos in iPhoto (and later Photos), and so on. Then Apple added web search to Spotlight, too, making it a one-stop shop for finding just about anything.

In Tahoe, Apple extends Spotlight's capabilities even further, but also dramatically rethinks the Spotlight interface. It's now a step closer to third-party utilities such as Alfred, LaunchBar, Raycast, and Quick-silver—though whether it can replace such tools depends on your personal usage habits.

As always, you can invoke Spotlight by clicking the magnifying glass  icon on your menu bar or by pressing ⌘ -Space. (You can change that shortcut in System Settings > Keyboard > Keyboard Shortcuts > Spotlight).

Initially, the new Spotlight overlay looks much the same as before (**Figure 22**). You can enter search terms as before, and Spotlight returns matches from all the usual places on your Mac, as well as from the web. The appearance of search results is a bit different (**Figure 23**).

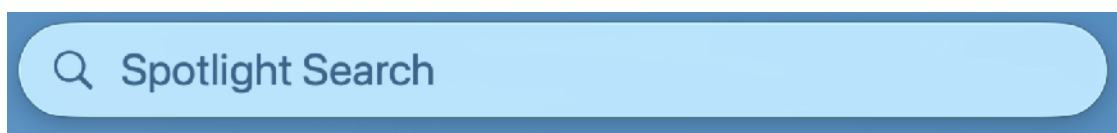


Figure 22: The Spotlight overlay looks the same as always...until you breathe on it (as explained next).

Tip: Sometimes you may see the old kind of Spotlight search for a couple of seconds before the new version appears. It seems that Apple wants to give you some results immediately even as the system is gathering and collating the more advanced new answers.

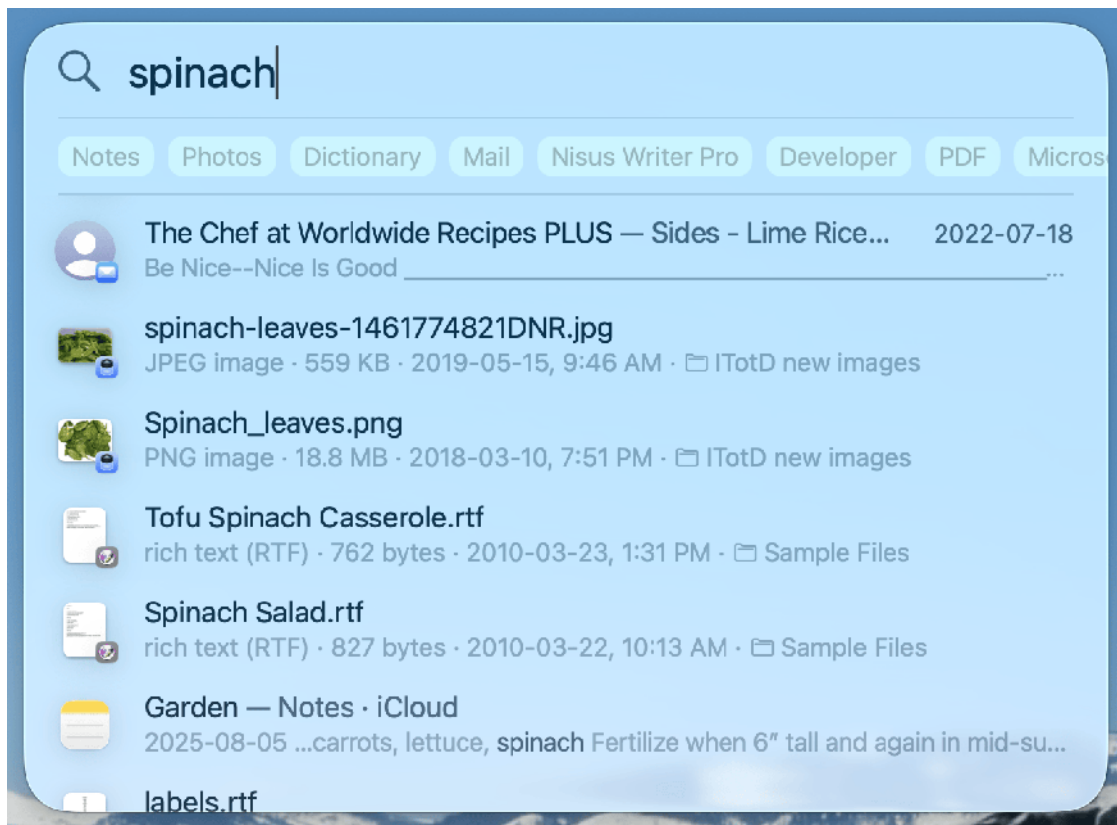


Figure 23: Search results look similar to their old appearance, but notice that row of bubbles below the search term. Those are filters, which limit the scope of the search.

Search results are ranked by what Apple thinks is their relevance. However, the really cool stuff in the new Spotlight is slightly hidden. One way to see it is to press the Tab key or move the mouse a bit before entering any text. The display changes to show four new icons (**Figure 24**). From left to right, they're Applications , Files , Actions , and Clipboard . Click one of these icons to focus Spotlight on that search element; you can also press ⌘-1 for Applications, ⌘-2 for Files, ⌘-3 for Actions, or ⌘-4 for Clipboard, whether or not you previously pressed Tab, moved the mouse, or started typing.

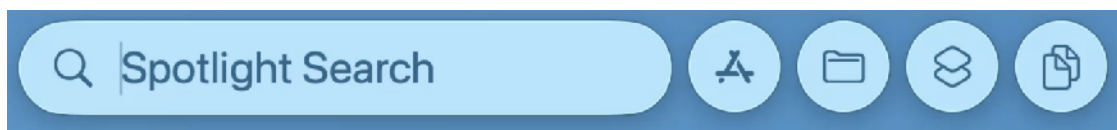


Figure 24: Press Tab or even move the mouse, and the Spotlight overlay sprouts four new icons on the right.

Try New Mac Apps

In addition to [The Phone App](#) covered earlier, Tahoe adds four new built-in apps to macOS, two of which were already present on iPhones and iPads.

Apps

For a long time, macOS included an app called Launchpad that did nothing but show you icons for all the apps on your Mac, much like the App Library feature on iPhones and iPads. Besides opening any app with a single click, you could rearrange them, group them into folders, and search them, but that's it.

I confess I never understood the utility of Launchpad, given that there were already numerous easy ways to open apps, such as double-clicking an icon in the Applications folder, clicking a Dock icon, or using Spotlight. It seems someone at Apple felt the same way, so Launchpad is no more in Tahoe. In its place is a new app for viewing and opening apps called—wait for it—Apps.

The Apps icon looks similar to the Launchpad icon, and if you had Launchpad in your Dock previously, Apps replaces it seamlessly. Open it by clicking its Dock icon or double-clicking its icon in the Applications folder. When you open Apps, you see something like **Figure 30**.

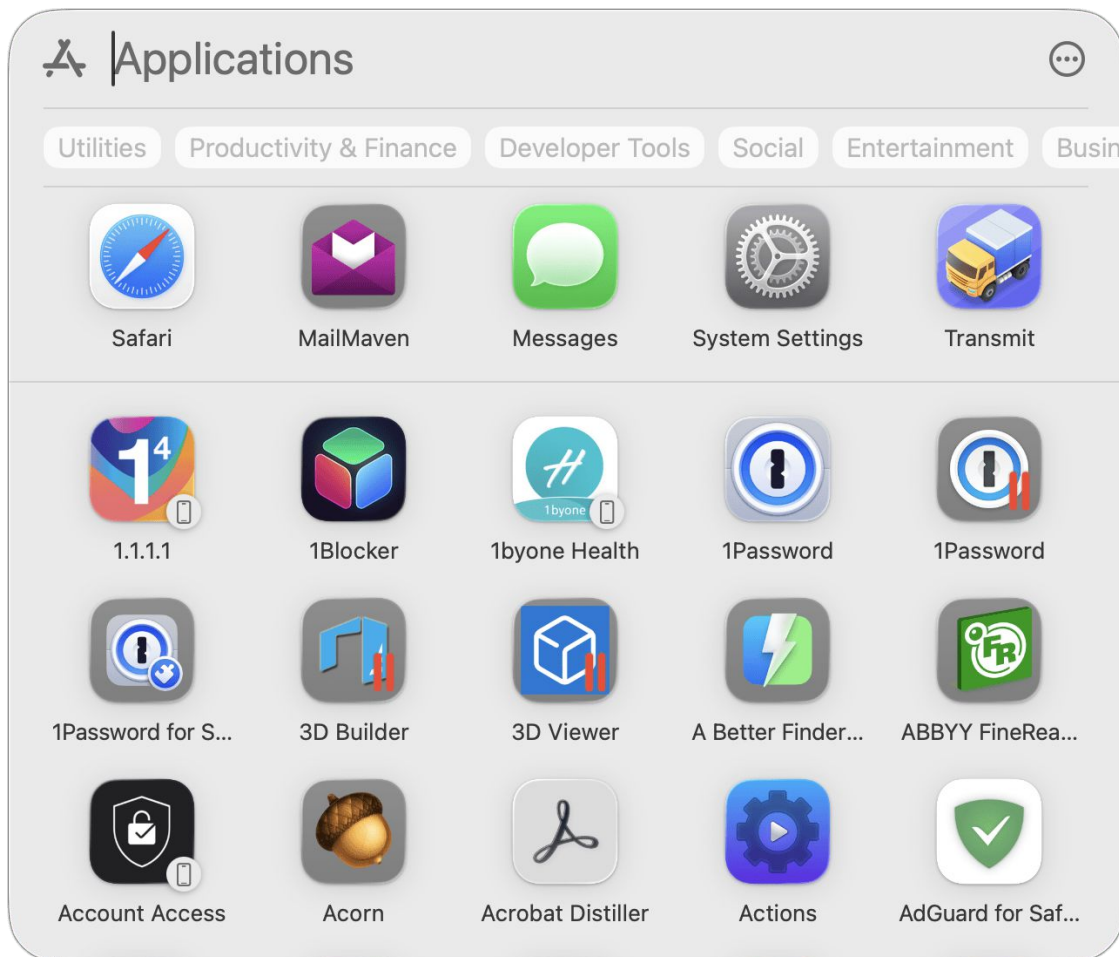


Figure 30: The Apps app as it appears by default on my Mac.

Note: Weirdly, I have been unable to figure out how to open the Apps app via Spotlight, though of course I can search for and open any individual app that way.

This window initially shows an alphabetized grid of all your apps. If you've connected your iPhone using the iPhone Mirroring app, this grid includes apps on your iPhone. You can scroll through the list and click an app to open it, or start typing part of the app's name to filter the list so it shows only apps containing those characters. With or without filtering, you can use the arrow keys to select an app and press Return to open it.

Besides manually locating an app and using the search field, you can also click a category at the top (such as Utilities, Productivity & Finance, or Entertainment) to display only apps Apple considers to be in

Explore System Settings

With each new release of macOS, Apple adds, removes, relocates, and renames a bunch of controls in System Settings. Tahoe is no different, although the changes from Sequoia are relatively small compared to previous years.

To open System Settings, click its Dock icon, double-click System Settings in the Applications folder, or choose Apple  > System Settings (**Figure 34**).

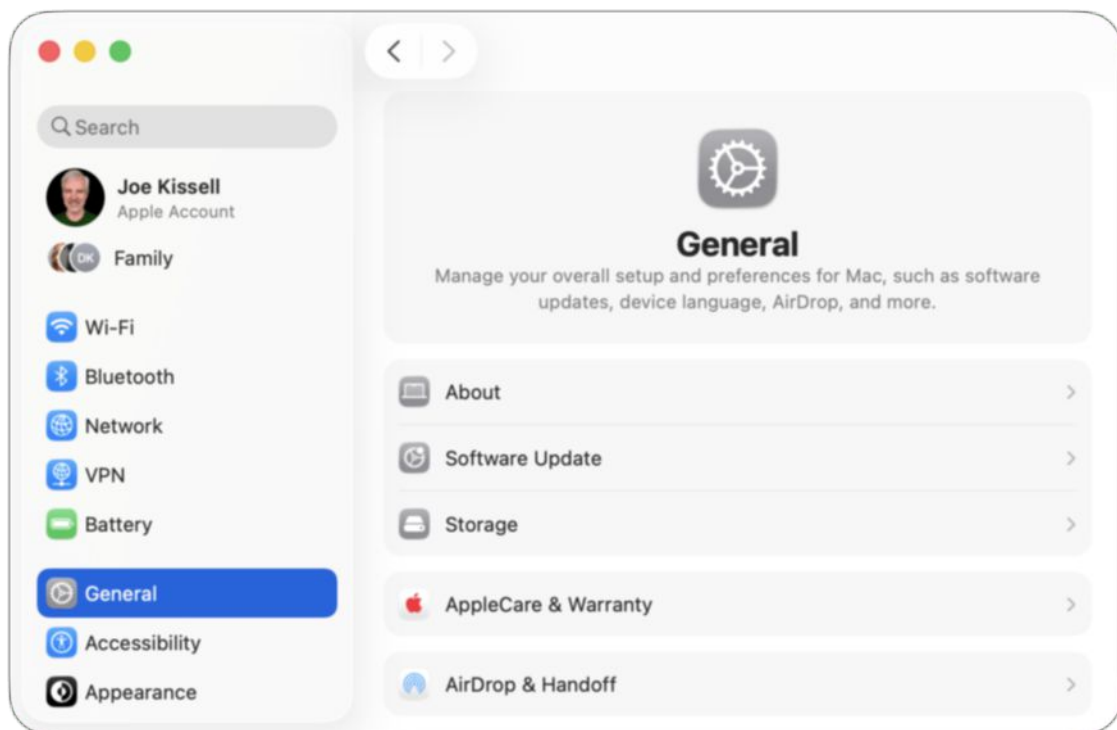


Figure 34: The System Settings app in Tahoe, which opens to the General pane by default.

As always, it can be difficult to locate a particular setting among the hundreds in System Settings. If you happen to know where a setting is, you can select a category in the sidebar on the left and then navigate to the desired spot on the right. If not, 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.

In this chapter, I want to acquaint you with just what has changed between Sequoia and Tahoe, and which is *not covered elsewhere in this book*. 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. (Apple likes to fiddle with things and be inconsistent in capitalization, naming, and interaction.) Panes are listed in the order they appear in the sidebar.

Apple Account Settings

Assuming you've already signed in to your Apple Account, you can display this pane by going to System Settings and clicking your name at the top of the sidebar. Apart from cosmetic changes, there's one substantive new feature here: Age Range for Apps, which you can see after clicking Personal Information.

Some apps—and I'm not just talking about *those* kinds of apps—restrict some or all of their content to adults. Rather than having to separately confirm that you're over 18 for each one of these, Apple now enables developers to update their apps so that they query macOS. If you've entered your birthday here, and enabled the feature (both of which actions are entirely optional), then as long as you're at least 18, Tahoe simply reports that fact when an app asks. Tahoe does *not* tell apps your actual age—only that you're over 18, if you are.

To set this up, click Set Up next to Age Range for Apps. A dialog appears, explaining how the feature works. Click Continue. A second dialog (**Figure 35**) appears.

Discover Other System Improvements

In addition to the bigger features that each deserved their own chapter, Tahoe includes dozens of smaller, 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](#).)

Farewell, FireWire

Although I can't exactly call this an improvement, it's certainly a change: Tahoe finally drops support for FireWire, the high-speed interface that debuted on Macs in 1997 and appeared, in one form or another, on most Macs released through 2012. Even though no new Mac has had a FireWire port in 13 years, it was still possible to use FireWire peripherals by way of an adapter—or a string of two or more plugged into each other. Because Tahoe removes the underlying support for FireWire, those adapters no longer work.

AirPods Beta Firmware

According to [this MacRumors article](#), Tahoe also now offers a way to install beta firmware on AirPods. I'll have to take their word for it; I tried the procedure described there but did not see an option to install beta firmware. This is likely because my AirPods are too old, but if you have AirPods 4, AirPods Pro 2, or newer models and want to be on the cutting edge of AirPods features, it's worth checking out.

AutoFill

Safari has always offered an AutoFill feature for usernames, passwords, credit cards, and other information you might want to enter

into web forms. For a couple of years now, it has also offered another cool trick: if you log in to a site that sends you a one-time verification code via SMS or email with Messages or Mail open at the time, merely clicking in the verification code field on the webpage shows an option to automatically fill in that code—no copying, pasting, or retyping required.

In Tahoe, that capability is also available to other browsers (or, for that matter, other apps) on your Mac, assuming the developer supports it. This makes it a bit more convenient to log in to these websites when using an app other than Safari.

Note: In iOS 26 and iPadOS 26, Safari and other apps can autofill verification codes sent to third-party apps (such as Gmail, Google Voice, and WhatsApp)—not just Mail and Messages. As far as I know, that extra capability hasn’t made its way to Tahoe yet.

Family

According to [this press release](#), Tahoe and the other version 26 operating systems will include additional controls for Communication Limits, Communication Safety, and the App Store, particularly for children ages 13–17. As of version 26.0, I saw only one difference in System Settings for my own teenager, which is the capability to send apps your child’s age range if they ask for it (see [Family Settings](#)), just like the comparable feature for adults (see [Apple Account Settings](#)).

Apple’s [What’s new in the updates for macOS Tahoe](#) page says that, as of version 26.1, “Communication Safety and Web content filters to limit adult websites are enabled by default for existing child accounts for ages 13–17 (age varies by country or region).” However, after updating to 26.1, I checked those settings for the teenager in our Family Sharing group, and they were unchanged. I have no further information on why that may be.

Explore Other App Improvements

The previous chapter, [Discover Other System Improvements](#), reviewed changes in Tahoe 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 Tahoe 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.

FaceTime

FaceTime received a small facelift: The contacts on the left are now shown as tiles (which show Contact Posters, if available), which syncs up its appearance with the new Phone interface across iOS, iPadOS, and macOS. In place of Create Link and New FaceTime buttons on the main screen, there's now a single New  button, which displays a dialog with your contacts as well as a Create Link button. Along with Phone and Messages, FaceTime also supports [Live Translation](#).

Image Playground

The Image Playground app, which works only on M-series Macs with Apple Intelligence enabled, uses AI to generate images based on your descriptions (which can also draw on photos of people, pets, nature, or food). I've never found the images to be of good quality, and my impression is that even Apple considers it no more than a toy.

Be that as it may, the app has a couple of new options. Using the Style pop-up menu at the top of the main window, you can choose the

previous options (Animation, Illustration, or Sketch) or two new ones: Genmoji, which creates images just like the ones you can create in Messages (see [Genmoji](#)), including all the new features like combining emoji and adding attributes to emoji, and ChatGPT (which lets you describe your own image style).

Messages

The Messages app adds several new features, including [Live Translation](#) as discussed earlier. They fall into three categories.

Tip: There's also now a setting you can use to disable Smart Replies in Messages! See [Keyboard Settings](#).

Reducing Spam

If you want to reduce the number of unwanted messages you receive, two new options may help, both found in Messages > Settings > General:

- **Screen unknown senders:** After you select this checkbox, Messages hides any incoming messages from numbers or addresses you haven't interacted with before (as in, you haven't sent or replied to them, and they're not in your contacts). You don't receive notifications about these messages, but a badge with a number of unseen calls appears; you can see the calls by clicking the filter  icon and choosing Unknown Senders.

If a message is from a legitimate source, click Mark as Known, and messages from that sender won't be filtered anymore. (Messages also gives you the option to add that number to your contacts, if you like.) You can also click Delete to erase all messages from that sender, then click either Delete or Delete and Report Spam. Delete and Stop also appear if there are instructions in the text to stop receiving messages (think: political fundraising).

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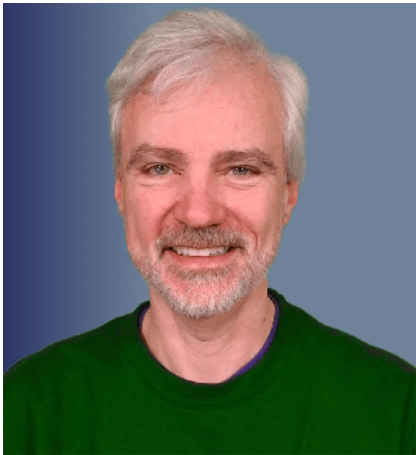
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Joe Kissell is the author of more than 60 books and hundreds of articles about technology. In 2017, he also became the publisher of Take Control Books, when alt concepts—the company he runs along with his wife, Morgen Jahnke—acquired the Take Control imprint 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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