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TAKE CONTROL OF

Your Apple Account

by **GLENN FLEISHMAN**

\$14.99

2ND
EDITION

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Your Apple Account, Second Edition*, version 2.0, published in September 2025 by alt concepts. This book was written by Glenn Fleishman and edited by Joe Kissell.

This book offers all the information you need to manage your Apple Account (formerly Apple ID), from setting up two-factor authentication to using it with Apple’s various services and stores, including troubleshooting access to your account if (or, perhaps, *when*) something goes wrong.

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

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What’s New in the Second Edition

This update brings the book in line with the new iOS 26, iPadOS 26, macOS 26, and other operating system releases in September 2025, along with minor changes to associated Apple websites.

Apple also revamped and reworked several aspects of key Apple Account related systems. As a result, the following sections have been updated to reflect how things work today:

- **Change payments methods:** Apple has finally added support for changing your Apple Account payment methods on a Mac and on the Apple Account website. I’ve overhauled the section [Add or Change Payment Methods](#) to incorporate this and other changes.
- **Legacy password accounts:** Due to the number of years since Apple has forced nearly all users to upgrade or create accounts with two-factor authentication, I’ve moved password-based account

recovery help to its own section heading, [Legacy Password Users Can Recover](#), in [Prevent Apple Account Problems](#).

- **Forcing a different 2FA path:** Apple tries to have you use Touch ID or Face ID after your first two-factor authentication logging in to one of their websites from a given device. You may want to bypass this, even to test a 2FA method. See the new section, [Force a Hardware Key Login](#).
- **Improved workflow explanation for passkeys:** With some changes Apple made to the passkey login process, I have reworked [Sign In to Apple Websites with a Passkey](#).
- **Significant workflow and other changes for recovery contacts and legacy contacts:** Apple has tweaked the process for adding and managing recovery contact and legacy contact, making it nearly identical across platforms. This required quite a bit of revision throughout [Recover iCloud Data with a Recovery Contact](#) and [Leave Permission with a Digital Legacy](#).

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:

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- 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.

Supported Operating Systems

With ongoing changes in Apple’s four major operating systems—iOS, iPadOS, macOS, and watchOS—this book now covers the three most recent releases:

- iOS 26/iPadOS 26, iOS 18/iPadOS 18, and iOS 17/iPadOS 17
- macOS 26 Tahoe, 15 Sequoia, and 14 Sonoma
- watchOS 26, watchOS 11, and watchOS 10

Most of the book’s screen captures are from the very latest operating systems.

Note: As you have likely already encountered, Apple has moved from unique successive numbers for each operating system to synchronize their number as the last two digits of the year following their introduction. The year of this release, 2025, means all the operating systems are numbered 26.

Introduction

Your Apple Account is the center of your identity when it comes to managing Apple accounts and gear. It's your iCloud sign-in. It proves you own hardware devices. It's associated with purchases and subscriptions you make at Apple's various stores. It's a way to group your family's accounts and Apple financial transactions. It can also be used to lock a stolen or lost iPhone, iPad, Mac, or Apple Watch, which protects your data and turns a stolen device into little more than an expensive doorstop.

But Apple's security for this important identifier is so robust that it can sometimes trip you up. You may run into trouble if you forget a password or your password seemingly stops working; when you lose trusted devices or phone numbers; when a credit-card number expires or a card number is stolen and deactivated; when you can no longer receive email at the main address registered to your Apple Account; or when you move or travel from one country to another.

Additionally, Apple engages in strong automated account security monitoring that alerts it when people try to access your account without proper credentials, like your password. That means that even if you never have a problem entering a password yourself, someone else trying to hijack your account could lock you out.

Unfortunately, when something goes wrong with an Apple Account, you're often left to flounder. Apple's online and phone support may provide conflicting or incorrect information, or you may be told there is nothing they can do to help. That's where this book comes in.

This book covers how to manage an Apple Account on the Apple Account website, on an iPhone, iPad, Mac, and on Windows (iCloud and iTunes), and Android (Apple Music). I'll help you navigate account security, especially working with two-factor authentication. I'll explain how to manage multiple Apple Accounts (and why you might intentionally set more than one up), family sharing, and subscriptions. And

you'll learn a lot about getting out of trouble if any of that lengthy list of issues above ever happens to you.

Once an ID, Now an Account

In September 2024, Apple changed the longstanding Apple ID name to Apple Account with their release of iOS 18, iPadOS 18, macOS 15 Sequoia, and watchOS 11. The Apple ID website changed its name to the Apple Account website. You can reach it via account.apple.com.

Apple Account Quick Start

Because an Apple Account gets used in so many different ways, you likely want to jump to specific chapters that address your immediate needs, and then read background information as appropriate.

Learn the basics:

- You can manage and modify your Apple Account settings from a number of places. Learn [Where to Sign In with Your Apple Account](#).
- From iTunes to iCloud, your Apple Account is the key. Explore the many ways Apple uses it in [Understand Your Apple Account](#).
- Opt to use “Sign in with Apple” and anonymized email addresses to preserve privacy in [Sign In with Your Apple Account](#).
- Learn to use Family Sharing, an option to share purchases, storage, and subscriptions across family members, in [Share with Your Family](#).
- Apple’s subscriptions have multiplied, and understanding your options can help you when you [Subscribe to Services](#).

Take action to keep control of your account:

- Take a few precautions up front to [Prevent Apple Account Problems](#).
- Make your account more secure by requiring an Apple-provided token or a third-party hardware device to complete the Apple Account sign-in process. Read [Authenticate Your Apple Sign-In](#).
- You might want to [Pick a Recovery Pathway for 2FA and Keys](#) both to block unwanted attempts at changing your account password and to ease access recovering a locked account.

Work with multiple Apple Accounts:

- Migrate purchases from one Apple Account to another; see [Migrate Purchases from One Account to Another](#).

- Many of us wound up with two (or more Apple Accounts). I cover how to deal with that in [Manage Multiple Apple Accounts](#).
- If you're ready to stop sharing an Apple Account or need to create a new one, I walk you through the steps in [Split or Migrate Apple Accounts](#).
- Spend a lot of time abroad? Discover winning strategies for when you need to [Work with Apple Account Across Countries](#).

Solve problems:

- It can be particularly unnerving when hackers attack. I talk you through how to [Cope with a Hack of Your Apple Account](#).
- From resetting your password to updating a credit card, learn how to [Solve Common Problems](#).

Where to Sign In with Your Apple Account

You can manage and modify your Apple Account settings, such as passwords and associated personal information, from a number of places. I'll refer to these throughout the book, but here's a summary:

- **The Apple Account website:** Some Apple Account settings can only be dealt with at account.apple.com, like generating app-specific passwords with two-factor authentication, while most account details can be changed either at the site or on an iPhone, iPad, or Mac (**Figure 1**).

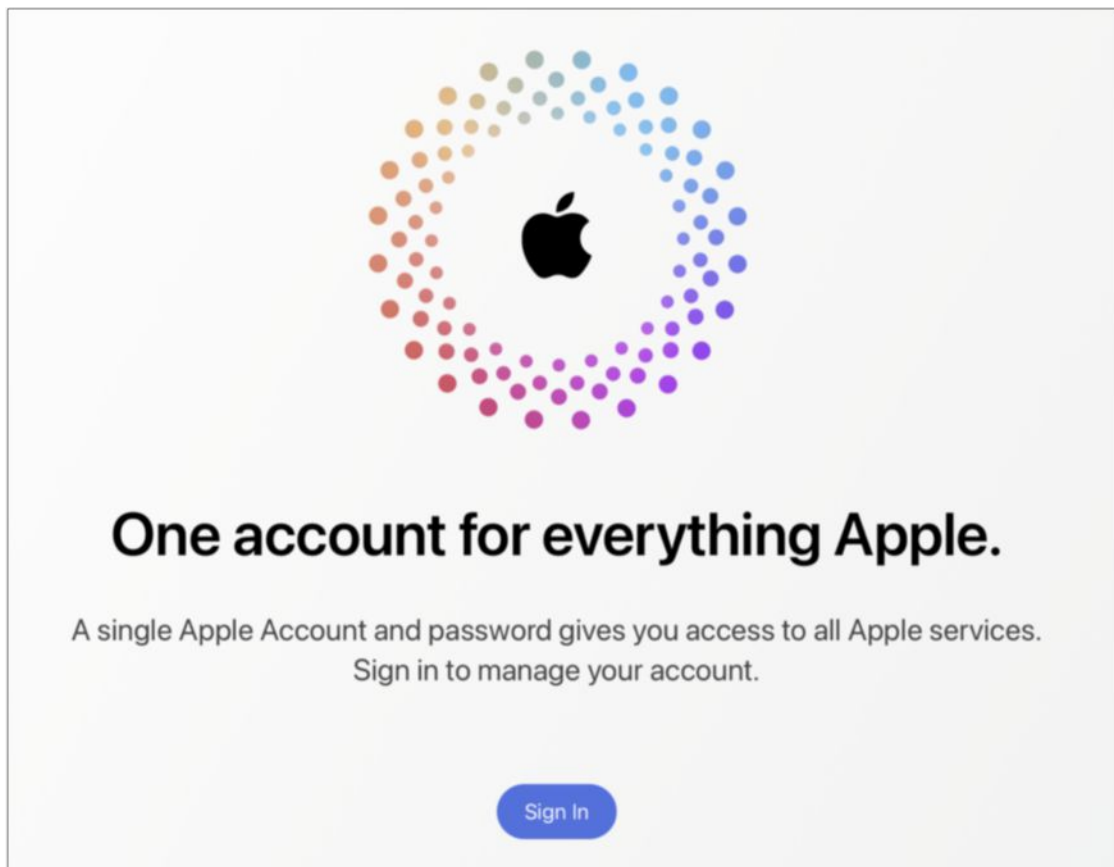


Figure 1: Use the Apple Account website for many account-related modifications and updates.

- **Apple's iForgot website:** Visit iforgot.apple.com when you need to reset a password or recover other lost account details.

- **Account settings on an iPhone or iPad:** Go to Settings > *your name* > Sign-In & Security for authentication details. The iCloud and Media & Purchases sections control which account is registered for those purposes. You can also change which Apple Account you use for a particular service by going to, for example, Settings > Apps > Messages > Send & Receive or Settings > FaceTime.
- **Apple Account settings on a Mac:** Manage all iCloud settings for an associated Apple Account by going to System Settings > *your name*. A label appears below your avatar that displays associated services, like Apple Account and iCloud+.
- **Apps on a Mac:** The Music and TV apps manage Apple Account info in Account > Accounts Settings. The Podcasts app's Account > View Apple Account takes you to the Media & Purchases view in System Settings > *your name*.
- **iCloud app on Windows:** Windows users will find everything related to iCloud in this app.
- **iTunes on Windows:** Manage which Apple Account you use in the iTunes Store to purchase and download media by going to Account > View My Account.
- **Books on an iPhone, iPad, or Mac:** The Apple Books Store has its own Apple Account sign-in. Find it on an iPhone or iPad in the Reading Now tab by tapping the account icon at the upper-right corner, and on a Mac in the Books app by selecting Store > View Account.
- **App Store on a Mac:** The Mac App Store also manages its own Apple Account sign-in in Store > Sign In and Store > View Account.
- **Apple Music:** The Apple Music app on an iPhone, iPad, and Android and Apple Music within Music on a Mac and iTunes on Windows all rely on an Apple Account.
- **Find My on an iPhone, iPad, and Mac and at iCloud.com:** All versions of this app can help you find a lost or stolen device; the

Understand Your Apple Account

Your Apple Account acts as an informational and financial clearing-house for all the ways in which you interact with Apple’s hardware, apps, and services. As a result, it sometimes feels like 20 pounds of flour crammed into a 5-pound sack.

Fundamentally, Apple Accounts are usernames with passwords attached, but they’ve accrued a lot of disparate data and responsibilities because they’re used in so many different ways. You see this as a user in the Apple ecosystem. For instance, you have to enter your Apple Account and password over and over (and over) again, because Apple oddly doesn’t let you manage your Apple Account identity in one place and then apply it across all its services and apps, especially on a Mac. Every service seems to have its own sign-in dialog and procedure.

In this chapter, I introduce how the Apple Account evolved, what the credentials are used for, and the many places in which you enter one.

What’s an Apple Account?

An Apple Account always comprises two parts: a username that’s in the form of an email address, which is also the primary way for Apple to reach you; and something that *authenticates* you—a way to prove you’re the valid holder of the account.

While an Apple Account can have multiple email addresses associated with it, for backup communications and rescue purposes, it only has a single password associated with it.

Depending on the way your account is set up, authentication may be through a password or a password plus a sign-in token. I explain how sign-in tokens work in [Authenticate Your Apple Sign-In](#).

Tip: You can use as an account name the primary email address, any other associated email address, or any phone number connected to the account.

From a Murky Past, Apple Account Emerged

Long-time Mac users will remember that Apple started offering cloud-based services many years ago, before the term *cloud* began to mean “a bunch of servers that appear like one entity and I don’t know where any of the hardware is.”

Apple started its internet-based offerings under the name iTools in 2000, not long after Steve Jobs resumed control of his company (**Figure 2**). It included some online storage and let you host a website.

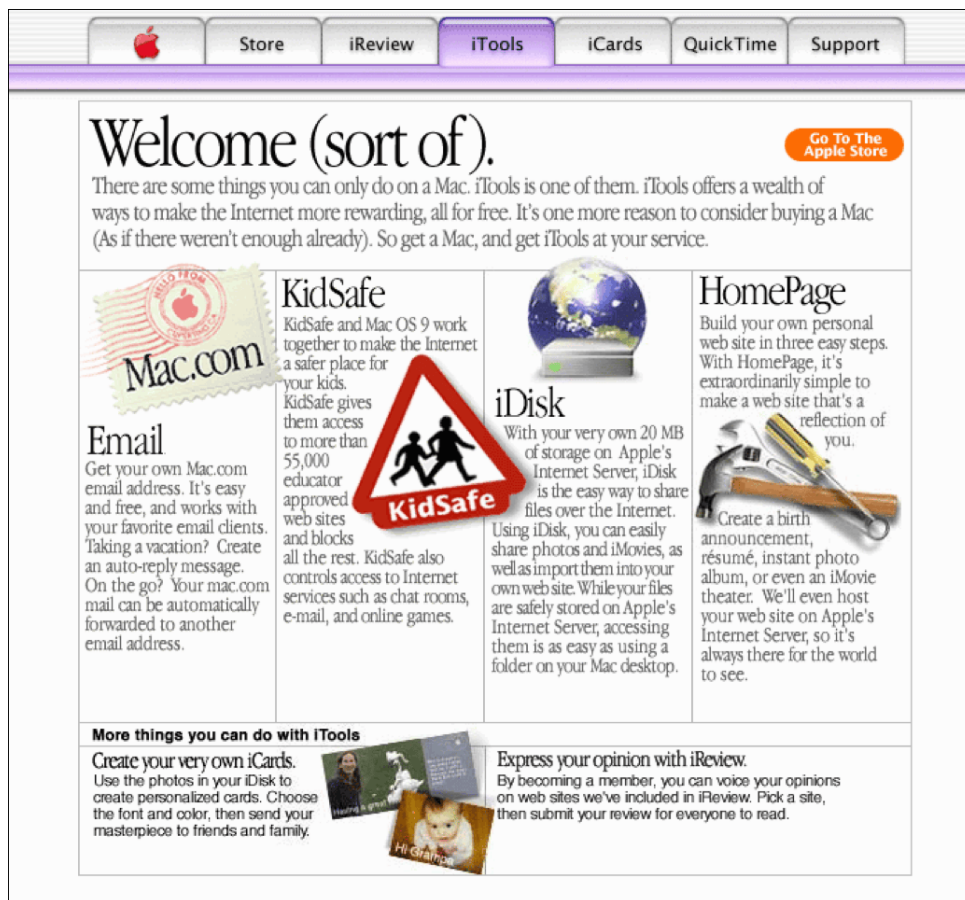


Figure 2: The original Apple cloud service: iTools.

Prevent Apple Account Problems

It's likely you acquired this book to solve problems, but I want to start off by telling you how to *prevent* common ones. These issues mostly affect account access when you lose a device, forget or lose a password, experience a hacking attempt that leads Apple to lock your account, or otherwise need to regain access.

Tip: These options vary by how your Apple Account is protected: with a code-based two-factor authentication (code) or hardware security keys. I mark in parenthesis **(code)** and **(keys)** to mark features specific to those types. For more information about 2FA and security keys, read [Authenticate Your Apple Sign-In](#).

Make Sure You Can Self-Recover

Apple offers a fairly large number of methods that let you regain access to your account without having to convince someone at Apple that you're the legitimate owner of your Apple Account. You can ease self-recovery by ensuring your account has extra recovery information in it before something goes wrong. Here are several actions you can take:

- **Include “reachable at” addresses (code, keys):** Apple lets you list other addresses that you're “reachable at,” but these are only used by Apple in assisted account recovery, not in normal efforts to regain access. (Add these addresses via the Apple Account website under Personal Information, or in Apple Account settings on an iPhone, iPad, or Mac.)
- **Add trusted phone numbers (code):** With code-based two-factor authentication accounts, you can receive a verification token on an iPhone, iPad, or Mac associated with the same Apple Account, or via a phone number as a text message or automated voice mes-

sage. It may be difficult to add trusted devices, because they can only be associated with a single account. Trusted phone numbers, however, can be reused across Apple Accounts. You could employ a VoIP number, like Google Voice, or that of your partner, spouse, sibling, or other trusted person. (Add numbers using the Apple Account site under Sign-In and Security, or in iCloud settings on an iPhone, iPad, or Mac. See [Work with Code-Based 2FA](#).)

- **Make sure you have your Recovery Key (*code*, *keys*):** If you enabled the Apple Account Recovery Key feature, you received a long alphanumeric code when you opted in. The key is used to restore access to your Apple Account in certain limited but critical circumstances. If you can't immediately find your key, you can regenerate it. Do that now via instructions at [Pick a Recovery Pathway for 2FA and Keys](#).
- **Store your security keys safely (*keys*):** Apple requires that you enroll with at least two different security keys if you opt for that method of Apple Account authentication. Store your keys safely, including one in a place that's safe from fire, flood, and other damage that you can get to in case you need to access your account and have also lost access to all your trusted devices. See much more in [Deploy a Security Key with Apple Account](#).

Avoid Losing Access

If you need to get help from Apple to recover access, having taken these precautions can dramatically improve the odds that the company's customer service representatives will restore your account:

- **Only use email addresses you control:** I routinely hear from people who registered an Apple Account to an address at what is now a former workplace or a former mail host. Don't get stuck in a situation like that. Change to an email you control on the Apple Account site.

Authenticate Your Apple Sign-In

Authentication is a single word for a broad concept: proving to an entity, in this case Apple and their Apple Account system, that you are the person with the rights to a given Apple Account. Apple requires that you prove your identity in one of several ways:

- **Account name:** First, and in every case you have to have the account name of the Apple Account. This can be any phone number or email address associated with the account.
- **Password:** Apple requires a password for your Apple Account.
- **Second factor:** Nearly every Apple Account is also protected by some form of two-factor authentication, or 2FA for short. (Some legacy accounts remain password-only, but I reckon they are few.)
- **Touch ID, Face ID, Apple Watch, or passkeys for website sign-ins:** On an iPhone, iPad, or Mac, you can use Touch ID, Face ID, an Apple Watch, or a passkey (see [Where Passkeys Fit In](#)) to sign in to iCloud.com and some other sites. These methods rely on existing trust backed by biometric or other proof.

In this chapter, I explain the ins and outs of managing the technologies required to access your Apple Account on all your devices.

Pass on the Singular Password

Using a password generator and manager to create a long, strong, and unique password for your Apple Account is the right way to start. But it's only one part of the security problem. If someone acquires the password to your Apple Account, it can be game over. With a password in hand, a malicious party can sign in to see your contacts and calendar entries, read your email and send email as if from you, access private

photos, lock you out of your devices, and make purchases that they can download.

If you use your iCloud email as a sign-in or a backup email for other services, the password lets an attacker reset your accounts elsewhere because they can receive password-reset emails.

But what if there were a way to keep your password from being the key to the castle? There is! Two-factor authentication (2FA), widely used across the computer industry, is something that you likely have encountered in a variety of forms in addition to your Apple Account sign-in. Apple enforces 2FA Apple Account sign-ins on devices and through their various websites, with certain exceptions described below.

Note: I'll generally use 2FA as an abbreviation for this approach, because it's tedious to read two-factor authentication over and over!

Get To Know and Deploy 2FA

Apple offers two kinds of 2FA for Apple Account sign-ins: the six-digit *code-based* approach you already know, and a newer *hardware security key*. Security keys connect via a physical interface (USB or Lightning) or via NFC for touchless use; some do both.

A hardware security key has a tiny built-in computer used to create unique encryption keys for every site or service you enroll the device at that can't be spoofed. Apple added support for security key authentication for your Apple Account in February 2023. It's complicated, and I explain it in [Deploy a Security Key with Apple Account](#).

I'll start with a general overview of 2FA, proceed to code-based 2FA, and finish up with security keys. The end of this chapter offers troubleshooting advice for 2FA sign-in problems.

A second factor strongly protects your Apple Account sign-in. It's also used more generally for many sites and app sign-ins. Let's first look at how 2FA works in the abstract before proceeding into how Apple has tied a second factor into the Apple Account sign-in process.

Recover Your Account

Apple used to make it difficult to recover access to an Apple Account and iCloud data when you'd forgotten a password, lost access to devices, or had your account locked. Apple now has three recovery modes: two for you and one for your future heirs or executor.

These modes correspond to the party who has the right pieces of information to help:

- A recovery process and a Recovery Key, which are exclusive options you can choose between to help *you* recover access to an Apple Account when a lot goes wrong.
- A Recovery Contact lets you lean on a trusted person or people to help you restore access to iCloud.com-accessible data if you can't sign in to your account via Recovery Assistance (formerly iCloud Data Recovery Service).
- Apple's Digital Legacy service lets your heirs or estate gain access to your data after your passing, should you so choose. This fills a gap in how our data is handled posthumously.

In this chapter, I explain each of the above in that order.

Recovery's Relationship to Advanced Data Protection

Advanced Data Protection (ADP) lets you enable end-to-end encryption between your devices for most iCloud data categories. However, it has many requirements, including that you have either a Recovery Key or a Recovery Contact. You can also have both. (It also enables a device-based recovery method that uses a device passcode.)

For more on ADP, [read Apple's advice](#) or Joe Kissell's [Take Control of iCloud](#). Note that enabling ADP is [unavailable in the United Kingdom](#) starting in late February 2025, and the service will become unavailable there even for existing users at some later point.

Pick a Recovery Pathway for 2FA and Keys

With code-based two-factor authentication or security keys enabled, it's possible to wind up with too little information, hardware, and access to gain access to your account as described in [Troubleshoot Apple Account Sign-In Problems](#).

Apple offers two pathways you can select between for recovering access by regaining the ability to reset the password for your Apple Account. These options are *exclusive*: you must pick one or the other.

By default, Apple has you rely on a complicated recovery process that involves human interaction and personal documentation. You can instead opt to enable a *recovery key*, which prevents Apple from recovery access to your account by any method, but makes it somewhat easier for you to do so than with their human-driven process.

Here's the key differences between the two:

- **Apple recovery:** It takes time, requires identity documents, and could be turned down.
- **Recovery key:** You must have your recovery key and one of your account's trusted phone numbers. Without those two elements, your account's password can never be reset and will be lost forever.

With that in mind, let's dig into how the two work so you can make an informed choice.

Use Apple's Account Recovery Process

Apple's procedure is [described on their website](#). The initial stages takes up to 72 hours and a subsequent step is noted as "several days or more." You have to provide personal details to proceed, including credit card numbers associated with purchases used on the account.

The company makes this process tough to deter thieves' attempts to use a stolen identity to gain access to a user's account. However, I have

Sign In with Your Apple Account

Major digital firms—including Amazon, Meta, and Google—set up a way to reduce the number of accounts you needed to create across the internet by letting you proxy your account with them instead. Instead of creating a new account in an app or at a website, you would click a Connect with Facebook button or something similar.

Over the years, it's become increasingly clear how much information gathering goes along with that third-party sign-ins, as each of these companies can collect more information about everything you do via your behavior at these unrelated sites.

Apple has staked out privacy as one of their tentpoles, and their “Sign in with Apple” option lets you create accounts while limited exposure of personal data and behavior.

In this chapter, I explain how Apple's third-party sign-in works, and the options offered to let you be more or less identified.

Sign in with Apple Relates to Hide My Email

Apple actually offers two services that are blended together depending on what level of iCloud service you subscribe to:

- ✦ Sign in with Apple is free and includes email masking with an anonymous address, a feature called Hide My Email.
- ✦ Hide My Email, a generic way to generate masked iCloud addresses, requires a paid tier or service, iCloud+.

Masked addresses created with Sign in with Apple and iCloud+ are managed through the same interface. Apple has changed how this interface looks and works with almost every operating system release in the last few years.

Learn How Sign in with Apple Works

There's no setup required to use Sign in with Apple, a free feature for both website operators and Apple Account users. When you visit a site or use an app that offers the option, you see a standard button. However, because it relies on standard browser technology, you should be able to sign in using any brand of browser running on one of the supported operating system releases, not just Safari.

When you click Sign in with Apple from a device that has Touch ID or Face ID, you can authorize the usage biometrically. On a device without Touch ID or Face ID available, you'll be presented with a typical Apple Account sign-in request, including a 2FA entry field.

Apple handles all this behind the scenes, so the party with which you're interacting (if it's other than Apple) never gains access to any of your Apple Account information at all. In this way, it's identical to the other third-party sign-in systems.

The site or app receives a token associated with your account and stores that in its systems. But it can also request a full name and email address. In that case, Apple presents an additional dialog into which you can choose what information to use.

Use Sign in with Apple

While Sign in with Apple is simple in practice, as with so many things we get used to, there's an initial learning curve, as Apple presents a variety of screens with unique and fresh information.

Sign in with Apple lets you create a private address that the website gains access to, but which has no other association with you. Email sent to that address is relayed through Apple's servers to your iCloud address. In some cases, you can select an email address associated with your iCloud, in which case Sign in with Apple just streamlines logins via Apple's privacy-enhancing policies.

Manage Multiple Apple Accounts

Working with iCloud, Apple devices, and Apple’s various stores and subscription offerings is easiest when you have a single Apple Account. But I’m not alone in having two for historical reasons, and many people have even more!

In this chapter, I talk about how to manage multiple Apple Accounts in an efficient and consistent way.

Migrate Purchases from One Account to Another

Many of us who are long-time Apple users wound up with two Apple Accounts, because at one point, Apple managed purchases separately from iCloud’s predecessors (like MobileMe). When Apple fully embraced the Apple Account (or, at the time, Apple ID) approach, all our legacy accounts converted.

Dealing with the duplication across two accounts wasn’t as easy as shutting down one of the accounts. Purchases of permanently licensed digital goods—movies you bought (not rented), any apps, and non-subscription in-app purchases—are associated with an account. We couldn’t just abandon an account without also losing all that. Likewise, because the other account was often associated with a mac.com or me.com address we’d used for data or as an incoming address, we couldn’t abandon that one, either.

Apple didn’t offer an opportunity to merge those accounts’ purchases until February 2025, when they introduced a new feature that lets you migrate purchases from one Apple Account to another. There are certain requirements, limitations, and exclusions, described below. But

Apple also neatly provided an “un-migrate” option so you can revert back if things don’t work out the way you wanted.

Warning! After migration, the former purchasing Apple Account can no longer be logged in to or used from an Apple device. However, you can continue to use it via iCloud.com and via email, calendar, and contact apps.

Apple defines the account receiving migrated purchase as *primary* and the one migrating purchases away as *secondary*. In most cases, your primary account is the one you use for iCloud and is the main one signed in on your various Apple devices. The secondary account is the one you use for Settings or System Settings > *your name* > Media & Purchases on your iPhone, iPad, or Mac, or Settings > Users & Accounts > *your name* > Store on your Apple TV (**Figure 53**).

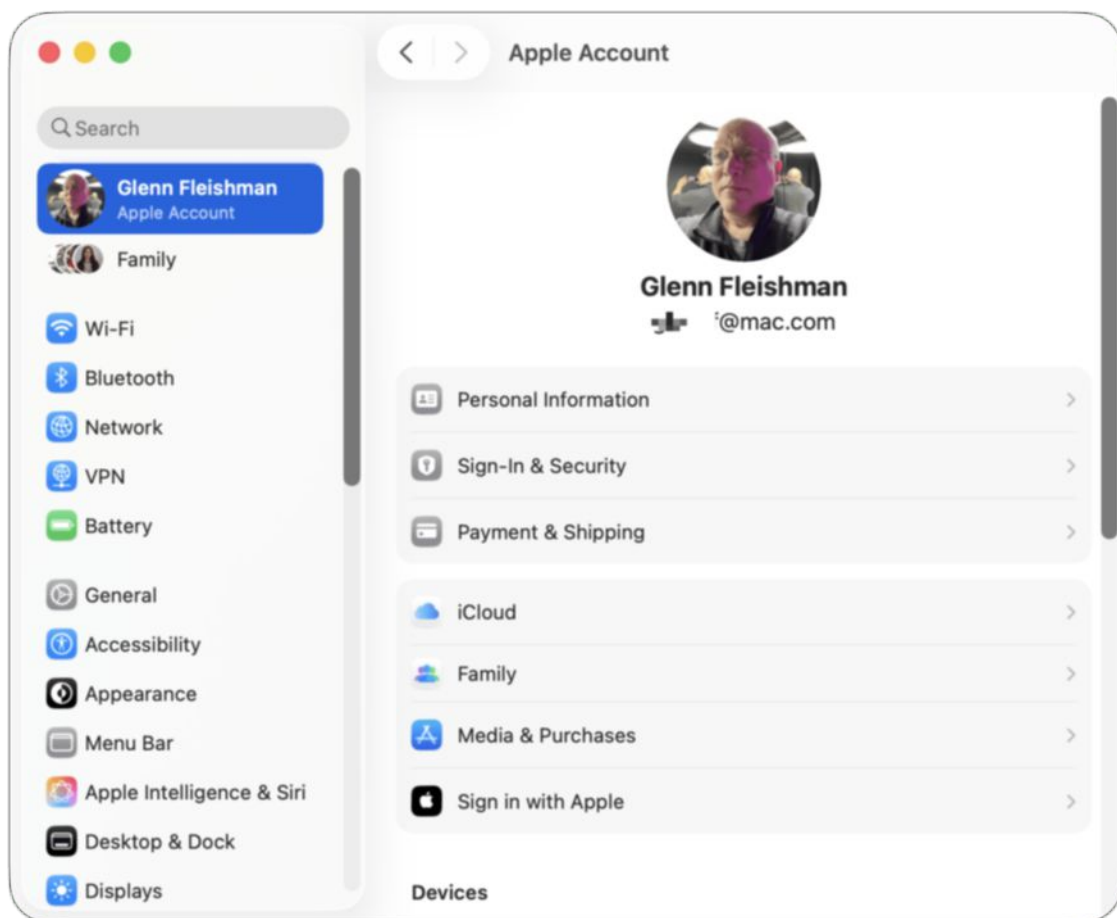


Figure 53: On an iPhone, iPad, or Mac (shown), your primary account almost always appears along with your name and avatar (top); a secondary account is found in Media & Purchases.

Split or Migrate Apple Accounts

The two scenarios I hear about the most from readers and friends are when two (sometimes more) people have opted to share an Apple Account to sync data and purchases, or when someone finally gives up on having multiple Apple Accounts and wants to migrate as much as they can to a single Apple Account—sometimes a new one.

This chapter provides advice for both those tasks, although I want to warn you upfront that the results can be disappointing. Apple doesn't provide help for either process, which means any split or migration will be by necessity incomplete.

Note: In all the below locations when I refer to iCloud settings, go to Settings/System Settings > *your name* > iCloud.

Split an Apple Account Between Two People

As the long-term writer of Mac 911, a how-to column about Mac, iPhone, and iPad issues, I heard a lot about people's relationships. Our digital devices are, after all, part of our sometimes complicated lives. I receive emails weekly from people with a shared Apple Account who no longer want to share it. The cause can be a breakup, a sibling or child leaving home for school, or just the realization that an individual account will work better for them.

This section offers advice that helps in these cases:

- Permanently separating data (as with a breakup or divorce)
- Creating a second personal account that will continue to share some data, such as recurring calendar events or photos

- Sharing a single Mac currently (with one or more Apple mobile devices shared or each), but with a plan to use separate Macs or have separate accounts on a Mac that use different Apple Accounts
- Using different Macs (or accounts on a single Mac) that are currently signed in to the same Apple Account, but which will be signed in to separate ones

The point of view of the instructions below is the person setting up or transitioning to a new Apple Account, thus “taking” data from the current Apple Account.

Warning! If you use your Apple Account *only* for purchases or free downloads, this section won’t help you. Apple has never offered any way to transfer ownership of digital assets purchased by an account, nor a way to mark data in an account that could be used to split it. (The new migration feature discussed earlier is only for merging, not splitting.) Read the sidebar just below for one potential strategy.

Manage Local Copies of Shared Data

Start by figuring out where you want all shared data to reside after a split. In all of the cases below, you already have synced copies. What actions you take depend on what you want to keep sharing and whether you’re using a single account on a single Mac or not.

Note: There’s no way to bulk export contacts, calendar entries, email, photos, or music from an iPhone or iPad or the iCloud website. You need to use a Mac for all those tasks. Some third-party apps can access various data storage on an iPhone or iPad, but I haven’t tested those extensively enough to recommend them.

In the instructions below, go to iCloud settings and disable individual sync services by unchecking a box in the preference pane. When you do, you’re prompted about retaining or deleting information, among other choices.

Share with Your Family

Family Sharing is Apple's sometimes awkward attempt to let multiple people in a family group share digital items and subscriptions the way one would in a household. Apple Accounts—specifically, those used with iCloud—are the binding force in a family group.

Family Sharing includes a large grab bag of things:

- App purchases (see sidebar below)
- In-app purchases and in-app subscriptions (see sidebar below)
- Media purchases, including music, movies, and TV shows
- Pooled storage in iCloud+ (semi-optional; explained in detail later)
- Location of all your devices that have Find My enabled
- Your location, defined by the iPhone or Apple Watch acting as a proxy for where you are
- Add-on subscriptions, such as Apple Music and Apple One, which are available in individual and family flavors (see [Subscribe to Services](#) for more detail)

Note: Apple also creates a family-shared calendar and photo album. To learn about how Family Sharing works with iCloud services, read Joe Kissell's [Take Control of iCloud](#).

Shared Apps and In-App Items

Apps reveal in their App Store pages under the support section whether Family Sharing is included. In-app purchases and subscriptions from within apps are also shareable among family members if a developer has approved that.

Shared Things Not Tied to Family Sharing

While Family Sharing used to be the group unit for multiple-person sharing that Apple focused their efforts on, the company has unshackled several recent features from that nuclear option:

- ✦ **Shared Photos Library:** The [iCloud Shared Photo Library](#) can be shared with up to five other people, regardless of their Family Sharing status. Family Sharing groups get an iCloud *album*. The iCloud Shared Photo Library is an entire shared *library* (as in its name) that up to six people total can participate in equally. The person who creates the library invitation also incurs the storage used against their iCloud storage allotment. You may join only a single shared library.
- ✦ **Shared password and passkeys:** Create groups in the Passwords app and share them with anyone, family or otherwise.
- ✦ **Shared AirTag/Find My item location:** Share an AirTag or Find My network item's location with up to five other people with Apple Accounts. They do not need to be in a Family Sharing group.

Family Sharing group members can split their Apple lives between iCloud and purchases within Family Sharing just as they can on all their Apple devices.

Apple defines a “family” as having no more than six members, including its creator—which irks people who have written to me with larger families (there's no workaround).

Note: People can be a member of only a single family, and after having joined cannot change to another family for a year.

Nonetheless, it's a terrific feature when all the stars align and the set of features matches your family or household's needs.

Enable Family Sharing

Family Sharing starts with an *organizer*, who initiates the process; let's say that's *you* for the purposes of this chapter.

Subscribe to Services

Apple used to mostly sell you things, whether it was hardware, software, or digital downloads. True, you could rent movies, but you could only subscribe to iCloud storage for quantities above the meager included amount that comes with every iCloud account.

But at the scale of Apple's device sales, it's hard to reap the same kind of growth over time. With the growth in hardware slowing as a percentage, Apple has increasingly turned to subscription offerings, the market for which seemed unbounded. Particularly as they knew their customers were happy to pay recurring fees to Netflix, Spotify, Amazon, and other firms for streaming video, on-demand music, security-camera storage, and lots of other stuff.

That led to Apple Music, Apple TV+ Apple Arcade, Apple News+, and Apple Fitness+. Tying those all together is Apple One, a bundled subscription offering that comes in three forms.

And iCloud's paid tiers transformed into iCloud+, which combines storage, Private Relay for anonymized browsing, Hide My Email to create masked email addresses, a custom domain name, and HomeKit Secure Video for home security cameras.

Note: Apple has really stagnated with iCloud+. The services offered are minimal and haven't expanded in years.

Subscriptions may be priced only for individuals, whether or not they are part of a Family Sharing group; some cover everyone in a Family Sharing group at the same price as an individual subscription; and some have a higher price for Family Sharing subscriptions! Apple also discounts some services for up to four years for college and university students who verify enrollment.

Let's look at the subscription offerings available and how they tie into your Apple Account and iCloud accounts.

Note: Subscriptions vary by country. I include here all the services it offers, and provide U.S. pricing. Apple [has a rundown](#) of which services are available in each country.

Apple's Many Subscription Offerings

Apple competes avidly for music listeners, where Apple Music is a robust offering. Apple TV+ has an increasingly large library, but it can't hold a candle to Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, Hulu, or Netflix. Apple News+ is nearly unique: an aggregation of free and paid sources in a single interface.

For all their services, however, the big advantage is that they're integrated with Apple's operating system, including the Apple TV and Apple Watch, making them an easy default choice.

Apple Music

The oldest of Apple's subscription services, [Apple Music](#) compares to Spotify and Pandora. It offers a streaming library of over 100 million tracks you can access across all your devices linked to the same Apple Account. It also allows up to 100,000 song downloads for offline playing, and live streams curated like radio stations. There are no advertisements. In recent years, Apple has tied in their audio hardware by offering some music encoded with Spatial Audio, which can give the listener the impression of being in an auditorium or theater.

Supported hardware is the broadest for any Apple service. It includes all Apple devices, including HomePod, Apple Watch, and Apple TV; Windows and Android; some models of streaming-service boxes, smart speakers, and smart TVs; via a web app.

Note: The company offered a discounted Apple Music Voice subscription that only lets you ask Siri to play songs, albums, playlists, and so forth, but set November 2024 as the date that plan would end.

Cope with a Hack of Your Apple Account

It's no fun when someone manages to hijack your account. That can be especially unnerving with an Apple Account, because of how it's used widely among Apple's devices, iCloud services, and purchases.

However, Apple has some built-in safeguards to protect your account. Even if someone obtains your password (when 2FA isn't enabled), you'll be notified of many kinds of activities, the hacker may be blocked (even if they have the password), and you should be able to reassert control.

Next, I explain Apple's new safeguard against an Apple Account hack that relies on theft of your iPhone and its passcode, but one that comes with lots of provisos.

Finally, it's one of the steps of mourning: acceptance that your Apple Account could be lost to you forever.

Recognize an Attack in Progress

Be prepared to recognize the signs of an attack *before* someone manages to hijack your account. Here are some things to look out for:

- Apple alerts you when certain changes take place to your Apple Account information. You'll be pinged, for example, when a new trusted phone number is added or an app-specific password is generated on the Apple Account website for a 2FA account. If you start seeing messages and you haven't made the changes or requests, something's afoot.
- You receive emails to an iCloud address that appear to relate to actions you're taking at other sites, but that you haven't done.

- Your email or other iCloud services stop working on any device or in any program.
- You start to receive two-factor alerts about sign-ins that you didn't initiate.
- The phone company that manages your iPhone's account calls or texts or emails you with a change in service you didn't initiate.
- You receive text messages, like authentication codes for non-Apple services, that you didn't request.
- One of your devices was put into Lost Mode or locked, which can only be accomplished using the Find My service.
- You start seeing charges on cards you own via apps that alert you to charges or email warnings, or you receive a call from a credit card company about suspicious charges.

Tell the Difference Between a Hack and Phishing

It's critical to tell the difference between emails coming from an attack in progress and *phishing*, where people attempt to fool you into providing your sign-in information or financial details.

With phishing, an email message, a text message, or even a phone call originates from dubious sources. Look at the actual return address or Caller ID-provided number. Links are suspicious if, for example, they don't lead to a company's main site. For example, a link to Apple leads to something like [apple.euw098sf08.90809808ads-f8a0d.net](#) instead of to apple.com.

You can also usually tell something's off when the message includes misspellings, weird logos, odd grammar, or strange requests you'd never expect of the sending company or service.

In a hijack, you'll receive emails that typically alert you of a problem *without* providing a link, because real companies know that a link may have you thinking that the email is a phishing attack!

If any of the above are true, it's time to take immediate action to see if you can stop a hacking from gaining control.

Solve Common Problems

You might encounter a few more tight spots with your Apple Account that you'll need help solving. This chapter rounds up the rest.

Set Up 2FA Codes Without a Device

Apple requires the use of iCloud on an iPhone, iPad, or Mac to convert an Apple Account from a regular password-only sign-in into an account protected with code-based two-factor authentication (2FA). But what I've heard from many people with multiple Apple Accounts is that they only use one across all their iPhones, iPads, and Macs, and yet want to enable enhanced security on one or more accounts without messing up their current systems. (For more on 2FA, see [Authenticate Your Apple Sign-In.](#))

Many developers posted on Twitter that they never use their developer account with iCloud on any device.

There's a way around this that will work for as long as Apple allows users to opt to send a 2FA verification code to a phone, either as a text message or an automated voice call: set up a macOS account on your own computer or on a trusted Mac. It can even be temporary. Follow these steps:

1. Set up a new macOS user account on the target machine: on a Mac, go to System Settings > Users & Groups.
2. Sign in to that account.
3. In System Settings > *your name*, sign in with the Apple Account that you want to upgrade to 2FA. Follow the steps in [Enable 2FA on a Mac](#) to complete the setup. Make sure and include at least two phone numbers at which you can receive codes, and read the [Avoid Losing Access](#) section carefully, too.
4. Optionally delete the macOS user account when complete.

The next time you want to sign in to any Apple service or site, click “Didn’t receive a verification code” in the dialog, click Text Me, and choose one of your trusted numbers. You can then use the code provided. (See a more detailed step-by-step for this method in [Sign In with Code-Based 2FA by SMS or Voice Call](#).)

Reset a Password-Only Account’s Password

What happens when your password stops working? You may have forgotten it—it can happen!—or you may have it stored in a password manager and can’t retrieve it. Whatever the reason, you’re not sunk. Apple lets you reset the password associated with your Apple Account.

Tip: You can also recover your Apple Account name, although it’s less likely you’d need to, because Apple typically prefills the account name anywhere you’ve previously entered it.

Note: Apple used to have a recovery method accessible via Find My iPhone in iOS, but that was removed with the Find My update a few years ago. It now just redirects to the website mentioned in the first method below.

After resetting your password, you will need to re-enter your password on various devices and for various services.

If your account is protected with only a password, follow these steps:

1. Visit [Apple’s password recovery site](#), amusingly named “iforgot.”
2. Enter your Apple Account and click Continue.
3. Choose to reset your password.
4. You can opt to answer the security questions set on the account or receive an email with a reset link either to the primary address on the account or a rescue address.

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Take Control Books Executive Editor Glenn Fleishman never stops writing about technology and its implications. Among other pursuits, he was a two-game champion on Jeopardy! in 2012.

After nearly 30 years of writing for publications like *American History*, *Fast Company*, the *Economist*, *Increment*, the *New York Times*, *Macworld*, and *TidBITS*, Glenn now focuses his time on Take Control Books, *Six Colors* (columnist), and his own micro-publishing endeavor.

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Shameless Plug

I have two recent books about technology that—mostly—aren't about computers. [Six Centuries of Type & Printing](#) is a brisk yet thorough look at the technological development that has taken us from Gutenberg (and even before) to the present day. You can order a copy of the print, ebook, or audiobook edition [directly from me](#).

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