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TAKE CONTROL OF

iCloud

by **JOE KISSELL**

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9TH
EDITION

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of iCloud, Ninth Edition*, version 9.4, published in January 2026 by alt concepts. This book was written by Joe Kissell and edited by Glenn Fleishman.

iCloud is Apple’s suite of internet services. This book helps you make sense of iCloud, configure it for your needs, and choose the best ways of using each feature.

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Settings vs. Preferences

In macOS 13 Ventura, Apple replaced System Preferences with System Settings, and in most apps, the Preferences window became a Settings window. In this book, I sometimes use a shorthand like “go to Mail > Settings/Preferences” or “open System Settings/System Preferences” to reflect both possibilities; when the details are significantly different, I spell them out separately for Ventura and later, and Monterey and earlier.

What’s New in Version 9.4

Version 9.4 of this book is what version 9.3 *should* have been. I missed some changes and made mistakes—no excuses. Apart from some small wording changes, here’s what I adjusted in this update:

- Corrected the title (and link) for Kirk McElhearn’s book about Apple Music and other media apps ([Take Control of Apple Media Apps](#)) in [Activate iTunes Match on an iPhone or iPad](#)
- Fixed numerous issues in [Work with iCloud Passwords & Keychain](#), including which versions of macOS can display passwords within Safari vs. the Passwords app (see, for example, [Set up iCloud Keychain on a Mac](#)), overhauling the directions to [Generate a Random Password](#), and correcting both the heading and the contents of [Use Passkeys from Your Keychain](#)
- Corrected the instructions for creating rules in [The Mail Web App](#)

What Was New in Version 9.3

Apple made no changes affecting iCloud in their version 26 operating systems, released in September 2025. However, they did modify and add iCloud-related features during this period:

- Apple added an Invites app to iCloud.com (and iOS)—but only for iCloud+ subscribers. See [The Invites Web App](#).
- Apple removed access to Advanced Data Protection for UK residents. See [Use Advanced Data Protection](#).
- The streaming service formerly known as Apple TV+ was confusingly renamed Apple TV, which is also the name of a hardware box and an app.

In addition, this update drops coverage of iOS 17/iPadOS 17.

Introduction

iCloud, Apple's collection of online services, offers a simple way to keep all your important data in sync across your devices. iCloud's mission is to propagate your documents, music, TV shows, movies, photos, contacts, calendars, passwords, and other data to all your devices so immediately and automatically that you never think about where your data resides anymore.

But iCloud goes far beyond the concept of syncing. Many features you use on a Mac, iPhone, iPad, Apple TV, or Apple Watch want to involve iCloud in some way. You *can* use your Apple device without an iCloud account, but many common tasks will be more awkward or even impossible. And, from Apple's point of view, why would you want to use a device without iCloud? A basic account for syncing, email, and locating devices and people is free, and the iCloud infrastructure makes everything work together much more smoothly.

That's not to say iCloud always works as advertised! When it does, it's wonderful, but the set of services is so complex that problems are bound to occur—and frequently do. Since Apple has made so much of your experience dependent on iCloud, a network outage, software bug, or server malfunction can make the simplest tasks frustrating.

And what about privacy? You can sync your photos and videos instantly across all your devices—great! And the data from your iOS devices is automatically backed up to the cloud—great! And you can share anything with a couple of taps or clicks—great! But storing your private data in the cloud could mean that if someone cracks your account, your private visual moments, your home address, and tons of other personal details could be accessible to identity thieves, financial criminals, and people with prurient interests. You must learn about and take additional steps to address these threats.

And while iCloud is pretty good at keeping your own data in sync, it's poor at sharing data between users. Features like Shared Photo Library, Shared Albums, and Family Sharing point in the right direction, and

they're useful as far as they go. But you still can't easily share a whole address book with your spouse, or a keychain containing usernames and passwords with your family.

There's also the question of hardware support. Apple provides ever-greater support for many of iCloud's features in Windows, but only a smaller subset can be used (after a fashion) on Linux and Android devices. Since Apple is in the business of selling hardware, it stands to reason that iCloud works most fluidly and fully on Apple devices. Macs, iPhones, iPads, Apple TVs, and Apple Watches offer the best support for iCloud.

In this fully revised ninth edition of *Take Control of iCloud*, I focus on what I consider the interesting parts of iCloud. I show you what iCloud is capable of, how to think about it, and how to put its key features to good use. In the process, I hope to expose you to useful capabilities you never knew existed. But I also tell you how to keep private information secure (even if it reduces iCloud's utility), point out cases in which iCloud may not be the best tool, and occasionally mention other options you can consider. This version you're reading, 9.4, incorporates the very latest updates to iCloud as of January 2026.

In the pages ahead, you'll find out all you need to know to master iCloud to your best advantage and troubleshoot services when things go awry.

Note: While this book covers iCloud features that may work across a range of operating systems, the significant changes in recent years, including the addition of the paid iCloud+ service, require that I focus on macOS 10.15 Catalina and later (especially macOS 14 Sonoma and later), iOS 18/iPadOS 18 and later, Windows 11, and tvOS version 18 and later.

iCloud Quick Start

Although you can skip around freely in this book to learn about the topics that interest you most, I encourage you to read (or at least skim) two early chapters before moving on to the rest: [Get to Know iCloud](#) and [Set Up iCloud](#). Those chapters provide important foundational information, which help make sense of material later in the book. If you already read an earlier edition, start with [Catch Up with iCloud Changes](#) and then skip those foundational chapters.

Get started:

- Discover what's new in the last year or so—and do a quick [Storage Checkup](#) of your iCloud online data storage needs and costs—in [Catch Up with iCloud Changes](#).
- Learn about iCloud and iCloud+ features in [Get to Know iCloud](#).
- Set up all your devices to use iCloud. See [Set Up iCloud](#).
- Get your family set up to share purchases, calendars, location data, and more. See [Use iCloud Family Sharing](#).
- Become familiar with iCloud+, Apple's new name for a collection of storage and services offered with paid tiers. See [Use iCloud+](#).

Keep your data in sync across devices:

- Apple has two cloud-based music services: Apple Music and iTunes Match. Learn how these services work and interact, and find details about iTunes Match in [Use iCloud Music Features](#).
- Use iCloud Photos to sync all your photos among Macs, iPhones, iPads, and the cloud, and use Shared Albums to share photos with other people. See [Manage Your Photos](#).
- Keep your documents and app data current everywhere using iCloud Drive and other forms of in-app syncing. See [Keep Documents and App Data in Sync](#).

- Make sure your major forms of personal data (email, contacts, and calendars) are automatically mirrored across all your devices. See [Keep Mail, Contacts, and Calendars in Sync](#).
- Learn about syncing data from other apps, including Messages, News, Safari, Siri, and more. See [Sync Other iCloud Data](#).
- Keep usernames, passwords, and credit card numbers in sync across devices, generate new random passwords, and edit your saved credentials as you [Work with iCloud Passwords & Keychain](#).

Use the other iCloud features:

- Cut, copy, and paste from one device to another when you [Use Universal Clipboard](#).
- Access web-based versions of the core iCloud apps on nearly any platform. See [Use the iCloud Website](#).
- Locate a wayward Apple device, find a friend or family member, and track AirTags and Find My items. See [Find My Nouns](#).
- Learn how iCloud can back up and restore crucial data from your iOS devices in [Back Up and Restore iPhone/iPad Data](#).
- Own an Apple TV? Find out which iCloud features your streaming box can use and how. Read [Use iCloud on an Apple TV](#).
- Update your iCloud account details. See [Manage Your Account](#).
- Keep your account safe and protect your private data, including deciding whether to enable Advanced Data Privacy (ADP) for extra protection. See [Manage iCloud Security and Privacy](#).
- Understand and configure account recovery options for yourself and with the help of trusted people while you're alive, as well as appointing helpers after you're gone. See [Manage Account Recovery](#).

Catch Up with iCloud Changes

If you’ve been using iCloud for a while, the bits that have changed recently will be of most interest to you. This chapter highlights major changes to take advantage of, points you to chapters where I discuss those features in detail, and offers a suggestion about managing your iCloud data storage.

iCloud Feature Changes

Apple sometimes makes changes to iCloud when it suits them, but significant changes commonly appear alongside with updated versions of Apple’s operating systems—particularly macOS, iOS, and iPadOS. Since the eighth edition of this book (version 8.0) was released, the following changes were made and incorporated into the ninth edition you virtually hold in your hands:

- **Higher prices:** Apple raised the cost of Apple Music and Apple One; see [Apple One](#), [Use iCloud Family Sharing](#), and [Understand Apple’s Music Services](#).
- **Higher storage tiers:** You can now increase your iCloud+ storage to 6 TB or 12 TB. See [Increase Your Storage](#).
- **More flexible Family Sharing payments:** You can now have more than one payment method available for Family Sharing members, and it’s possible for each family member to use an individual payment method, too. See [Use iCloud Family Sharing](#).
- **Private Relay improvement:** You can disable Private Relay for a single webpage; see [Enable and Configure Private Relay](#).
- **New Windows features:** Windows users gain access to several features. A Windows user can access iCloud Photos in the Microsoft

Photos app (see [Manage Your Photos](#)); sync iCloud bookmarks with Edge, Chrome, or Firefox; and sync iCloud passwords with Edge or Chrome (see [Set Up iCloud for Windows](#)). Plus, Apple has Music, TV, and Apple Devices apps for Windows; see [About Apple Media Apps for Windows](#).

- **Shared Photo Library:** In addition to sharing individual albums and photos, you can now share an entire Photo Library with up to five other people. See [Share a Photo Library](#).
- **Sharing iCloud Drive data:** In Ventura, iOS 16, and iPadOS 16, Apple completely revamped the user interface for sharing files and folders. See [Share Files and Folders on a Mac or PC](#) and [Use the Files App for iPhone or iPad](#).
- **Contact lists:** Although not a change to iCloud as such, iOS 16 and iPadOS 16 and later support creation and editing of lists in Contacts, which can be used as distribution lists in Mail (and sync across devices using iCloud). See [Work with Contact Lists](#).
- **Revamped iCloud website:** The iCloud.com website was redesigned, so I've updated [Use the iCloud Website](#) accordingly.
- **More privacy:** Apple added an Advanced Data Protection feature that can encrypt more of your data end-to-end...if you can meet the stringent requirements. See [Use Advanced Data Protection](#).
- **Expanded iCloud Keychain support:** It's now possible to access passwords and passkeys in your iCloud Keychain from browsers other than Safari. See [Use iCloud Keychain in Other Mac Browsers](#).
- **Apple Account:** In late 2024, Apple rebranded "Apple ID" as "Apple Account." I've adjusted the wording as needed throughout the book.
- **Rearranged Settings:** Starting in macOS Sequoia, iOS 18, and iPadOS 18, Apple rearranged the Settings/System Settings > *your name* > iCloud pane significantly. I've changed the instructions and updated the screenshots as necessary.

Get to Know iCloud

Before you dive in and start setting up and using this mysterious thing called iCloud, you should take a few moments to get your bearings and understand what you're dealing with.

In addition to explaining what you can and cannot do with iCloud, this chapter discusses what you need to know [About iCloud System Requirements](#), [About Your Apple Account](#), and [About iCloud Storage](#).

What Is iCloud?

The cloud is a general computing concept: a set of software, services, and storage located (gestures broadly) *out there somewhere*. Companies that offer cloud services maintain all the hardware, and you don't need to know where any of it lives. Your access to the cloud is mediated by the service provider.

iCloud follows this notion precisely: it's a cloud-based set of services and storage defined and controlled by Apple that exists as a collection of servers in data centers around the world. As presented to you, it's a bunch of services you can just use with no server knowledge.

Apple uses the label iCloud to cover an ever-growing broad collection of features, services, and settings. The common thread is that they rely on communication among Apple devices (Macs, iPhones, iPads, Apple TVs, HomePods, and Apple Watches), Apple's servers in the cloud, and the broader internet (for anonymized browsing).

Here's what iCloud does for you:

- **iCloud lets iPhones and iPads stand alone.** Originally, the only way to move certain kinds of data on and off your iPhone or iPad was to connect it to a Mac or PC—at first, with a USB cable, and later, via Wi-Fi. A computer was required to activate the device; to back up or restore its data; to sync photos, music, movies, books,

and apps; to transfer documents to and from certain apps; and to install operating system updates.

With iCloud, your iPhone or iPad can operate as a completely standalone product. iCloud lets you transfer data to and from Apple's servers using either a Wi-Fi or cellular connection.

- **iCloud integrates your devices with each other.** If you have more than one device—say, two Macs; or a PC and an iPhone; or an iPhone, an iPad, and an Apple Watch; or an iPad and an Apple TV—it's only natural to want all your devices to share data.

iCloud syncing encompasses many kinds of data. In fact, the word “sync” almost becomes an anachronism; for the most part, iCloud pushes new or changed data almost instantly to all your devices. You can switch between devices with impunity, knowing your data is always wherever you need it.

- **iCloud replaces (some) local storage with streaming.** iCloud reduces the need to keep all your important media on all your devices. As long as you have a good internet connection, your Mac, iPhone, and iPad can now do what the Apple TV has done for many years: fetch the content you want from the cloud in near real time. This makes it practical to get by with less storage space. You also no longer have to decide which content to put on which device; in a sense, everything can be everywhere, automatically, with Apple caching local copies of frequently used stuff. You can also still store local copies of crucial data for times when an internet connection is unavailable.
- **iCloud facilitates (limited) sharing.** Although sharing data between people is one of iCloud's biggest weaknesses, iCloud does help in certain categories. For example, Family Sharing enables family members to easily share purchases, photos, a calendar and reminder list, location information, and more. Shared Albums can pool images and access among a group of people. iCloud Drive lets you send read-only or read-write links to selected files and folders, or even permit others to collaborate with you in real time using iWork apps. And Mail Drop lets Apple Mail (on all platforms) send

Set Up iCloud

iCloud setup, in and of itself, is easy and largely self-explanatory: you enter your Apple Account username and password, and click a few buttons on each of your devices. There's no software to install on a Mac, iPhone, or iPad and it includes only a few options you can turn on or off. You have to go through a few more steps under Windows.

However, you may encounter questions about certain settings, wonder how to handle multiple iCloud accounts, or need help disabling iCloud. So in this chapter I walk you through those topics for Macs, iPhones, and iPads.

Note: The Apple TV is covered later, in [Use iCloud on an Apple TV](#). And, for help with the iCloud website, see [Use the iCloud Website](#).

If you've already set up iCloud, you can skim most of this chapter, starting with [Set Up iCloud on a Mac](#)—just to make sure you've enabled all the features you may want to use.

Update Your Software

If you want to access all the latest iCloud features, make sure the Apple software that uses iCloud is up to date on each platform you use.

Here's what you need to do:

- **iPhone/iPad:** For any iPhone or iPad you haven't already upgraded, tap Settings > General > Software Update and follow the prompts to install the latest update.
- **Mac:** Choose Apple  > App Store and click Updates. If newer versions of macOS, Photos, or the iWork apps (Pages, Numbers, and Keynote) are found, follow the prompts to install them. In particular, be sure to install macOS 13 Ventura—a free upgrade—if you have not already done so and your Mac supports it.

- **Windows:** Download and install [iCloud for Windows](#) from the Microsoft Store.

Note: If you had a much older version of iCloud for Windows installed, and if you downloaded that version directly from Apple, Apple Software Update may *not* update it to this new version. Be sure to install the latest version from the Microsoft Store.

- **Apple TV:** For information on updating the Apple TV software, see Apple’s article [Update your Apple TV](#).

Set Up iCloud on a Mac

Your Mac may already have prompted you to set up iCloud—in which case, just skim this section to make sure everything is configured to your liking. If not, you can set it up manually. The exact sequence of steps depends on your circumstances.

Note: Each user account on a Mac can have its own iCloud account, although only one account per Mac can use Find My Mac at a time. In addition, you can set up multiple iCloud accounts within a single user account with some limitations; for more on such configurations, see [Work with Multiple iCloud Accounts](#), later in this chapter.

To begin, I’ll show you what to do if you ignored any prompts to set up iCloud earlier (or if you subsequently signed out completely). Follow these steps:

1. Go to System Settings > *your name* (Ventura or later) or System Preferences > Apple ID (Monterey or earlier); if you haven’t yet signed in, that pane is labeled “Sign in” (**Figure 1**). (If you’ve signed in to one or more individual apps on your Mac, such as App Store or Books, with your Apple Account but haven’t yet signed in to iCloud, select Start Using iCloud in the sidebar, then click the Start Using iCloud button.)

Use iCloud+

In recent years, Apple added an increasing number of services associated with iCloud storage. In 2021, they made a branding decision to split services available for free as *iCloud* (such as 5 GB of storage) and additional features, like Private Relay and HomeKit Secure Video, as *iCloud+*. All paid storage tiers starting at 50 GB are iCloud+.

Each iCloud+ tier includes the same set of services, although in the case of HomeKit Secure Video, the number of cameras you can use varies by tier. All other features are identical.

Let's look at what iCloud+ encompasses.

Increase Your Storage

One of the key reasons to subscribe to iCloud+ is to increase your storage beyond the 5 GB included in the free iCloud tier. In the United States, you can pay \$0.99 per month for 50 GB of storage, \$2.99 per month for 200 GB, \$9.99 per month for 1 TB, \$29.99 per month for 6 TB, or \$59.99 per month for 12 TB.

Family Sharing users can share that storage with other family members; see [Share iCloud+ Features](#).

You can also opt to get more storage by subscribing to [Apple One](#). Each of the three Apple One subscription levels include a tier of iCloud+: Individual has the 50 MB tier; Family, 200 GB; and Premier, 2 TB. Apple lets Apple One subscribers purchase *additional* iCloud storage on top of what the bundle provides, allowing a maximum of 14 TB.

Note: Both Glenn (this book's editor) and I both meet the criteria to upgrade to 4 TB and beyond, but while I see the option to do so, Glenn does not. Glenn put out a call on Mastodon asking others if they saw this—and received screen captures revealing the same storage split. We are pretty sure it's an account bug.

To buy more storage on a Mac or PC:

1. Go to System Settings > *your name* > iCloud (Ventura or later), System Preferences > Apple ID > iCloud (Monterey or earlier), or the iCloud app (Windows).
2. Near the iCloud Storage indicator, click the Manage button (Mac) or Storage (Windows).
3. Click Change Storage Plan (if you're already paying for extra storage and want more) or Add Storage/Buy More Storage (if you're not yet paying for extra).
4. Click the plan you want to purchase, and click Next.
5. Enter your password when prompted and click Buy, and Apple upgrades your storage level.

To buy more storage on an iPhone or iPad:

1. Tap Settings > *your name* > iCloud.
2. If you *don't* already subscribe to iCloud+, then tap Upgrade to iCloud+. If you *do* subscribe to iCloud+ already and want to change your storage level, tap Manage Plan.
3. Tap the plan you want to purchase, then tap Buy.
4. Confirm your purchase when prompted and Apple upgrades your storage level.

No matter the method you used to upgrade, your subscription to additional storage will be renewed automatically each month unless you cancel it before the renewal date.

Note: Follow the same procedure to decrease or remove your iCloud+ plan; if you've subscribed to Apple One, click or tap Change Apple One Plan.

Use iCloud Family Sharing

If you live in a household in which multiple family members would like to share the music, movies, TV shows, books, and apps they purchase from Apple—and especially if your family includes children who use Apple devices—you’re the target audience for iCloud’s [Family Sharing](#) feature. (If not, there’s nothing to see in this chapter—skip ahead to [Use iCloud Music Features](#).)

Here’s what you’ll get for up to six family members (including you):

- All family members’ purchases of media from Apple can be charged to the payment method(s) of the person designated as the family organizer. (I provide more detail in the “Purchase sharing” bullet point under [Configure Apps and Services](#), ahead.)
- Kids can request media purchases from a parent, who must approve each one individually. (You can register special Apple Accounts for kids, even if they’re under 13.)
- All family members can access each others’ media, although you can hide particular items of your own that you don’t want to share.
- Family members can download and use apps, in-app purchases, and subscriptions made by someone else in the group as long as that other person enables purchase sharing.

Note: App developers choose whether to allow Family Sharing for apps; it seems like most do. They can also opt to allow Family Sharing for in-app purchases and subscriptions. That varies a lot more by app.

- iCloud automatically creates a shared family photo album, calendar, and reminder list. (You don’t have to use them.)
- Family members can more easily share their locations and locate their devices (with Find My).

- A family can join Apple Music as a group for \$16.99 per month instead of paying \$10.99 per person per month.
- With an Apple One subscription at the Family or Premier level, all subscriptions are shared. See [Apple One](#).
- If the family organizer is paying for iCloud+, the organizer can turn that into a shared pool of storage. Family members also gain access to iCloud Private Relay and Hide My Email.
- Parents can limit their kids' screen time on iPhones, iPads, and Macs.

Note: Every family member's individual settings and data for Apple services remain private, and all files stored in their portion of the shared storage are inaccessible to all other family members unless explicitly shared. The only exception is Find My, where other members' devices are always shown in your Find My app.

I won't pretend Family Sharing is perfect—for example, can't add someone with a billing address in another country, and Family Sharing offers no way to share data like contacts, bookmarks, and passwords within a family—but it's definitely helpful for what it does.

Child Safety Provisions in iCloud

Apple offers a feature they call Communication Safety that lets a parent enable a warning for Family Sharing members under the age of 18. With this feature enabled, the child is warned before they see or send an image or video that Apple's machine-learning system has identified as containing nudity. This applies to Messages, as well as in Sonoma or later when sending or receiving via AirDrop, when selecting media in the Photos library, viewing FaceTime video messages, or seeing Contact Posters for incoming callers.

Parents must choose to opt in to this system; it is not enabled automatically. Apple's system does not notify parents if their children were warned, nor if they bypass the warning. (A similar version is now available for adults for incoming images and video.)

For more about the ins and outs of this feature, see Glenn Fleishman's book [Keep Safe Using Mobile Tech](#).

Use iCloud Music Features

Apple has two different services—iTunes Match and Apple Music—that enable you to sync music to the cloud and share it across your devices, among other capabilities.

The two services have a simple relationship: all the capabilities of iTunes Match are incorporated into Apple Music, which includes many more features. Thus, if you subscribe to Apple Music, iTunes Match becomes irrelevant to you.

In this chapter I help you understand the differences between the two services and decide whether either works for you. I also walk you through setting up and using iTunes Match—but *not* Apple Music, because Apple Music isn't part of iCloud. To learn about Apple Music (and all of Apple's media apps for Mac, iPhone, and iPad), read Kirk McElhearn's book [*Take Control of Apple Media Apps*](#).

About Apple Media Apps for Windows

In 2019 Apple replaced iTunes for macOS with separate apps for Music, TV, Podcasts, and Books, and turned to using the Finder for syncing iPhones and iPads. [iTunes for Windows](#) stuck around for several years as the all-purpose tool for dealing with Apple media on PCs.

Then, in early 2024, Apple released [Apple Music](#) and [Apple TV](#) for Windows, as well as an [Apple Devices](#) app for syncing and backing up iPhones and iPads. However, as of January 2026, Apple has not released Podcasts or Books apps for windows, so if you want to consume those types of content from Apple on your PC, you must still use iTunes for Windows.

Understand Apple's Music Services

iTunes Match and Apple Music are optional add-on services. With either service, you pay a fee to subscribe, and then activate the service

on each of your devices. After you subscribe, there's one additional setup step:

- On a Mac, turn on the feature (open Music, go to Music > Settings/Preferences > General and select Sync Library).
- On an iPhone or iPad, go to Settings > Music and turn on Sync Library.

After that, your device, the iTunes Store, and iCloud collaborate to make the following happen with both services:

- Music scans the music library on your computer and compares what you have to Apple's vast iTunes Store selection—with tens of millions of tracks. This process should take just a few minutes unless you have a huge music library.
- Whenever Music finds a track in your library that wasn't purchased from the iTunes Store but matches a track in Apple's library, it makes Apple's version available for download or streaming on all your devices (including your Apple TV and HomePod). The files aren't downloaded automatically.

The music in Apple's library is stored as high-quality 256 Kbps AAC files. So, if the song already on your Mac was stored at a lower quality, the version now available to all your devices will be superior. Furthermore, any matched (i.e., previously owned) tracks that you download come without DRM (digital rights management), commonly known as copy protection. And you get to keep those upgraded, DRM-free tracks, even if you later cancel iTunes Match or Apple Music.

Note: When you download a higher-quality track from Apple, it maintains your existing metadata (such as play count).

- When Music encounters a track it can't match—for example, a rare version of a song, or a track you recorded yourself, or music by an artist who's not in the iTunes Store—it uploads that track to iCloud, after which it's available to all your other devices for download or streaming. (This may take a while, depending on the quantity of

Manage Your Photos

As we've seen, iCloud's main *modus operandi* is “just put all my data everywhere,” and you'll undoubtedly want to include your photos and videos among that data.

iCloud has three separate features you can use with your Photos library in iOS/iPadOS, macOS, and Windows:

- **iCloud Photos syncs media across devices.** iCloud Photos keeps your entire Photos library in sync automatically across your devices via the cloud. Synced photos and videos count against your iCloud or iCloud+ data storage quota.
- **iCloud Shared Photo Library lets you share a library with a small group.** Use this for your family or another group of up to six people (including yourself). The person sharing a Photo Library has its contents count against their iCloud storage.
- **Shared Albums shares and pools items with others.** Set up albums that contain media you share with other people. You can optionally let them comment or add their own images and videos. These items don't count against your or their iCloud storage, and you don't have to use iCloud Photos to use Shared Albums. (This feature was previously called iCloud Photo Sharing.)

This chapter helps you understand the advantages and limitations of iCloud Photos, and how best to use Shared Albums or iCloud Shared Photo Library to allow others to view media, add their own, or interact with your images and movies.

Sync with iCloud Photos

iCloud Photos synchronizes your photos, videos, albums, and people across all your devices as well as storing all of that in the cloud. The

cloud-stored version is available via your account on the [iCloud web-site](#) and accessible from an Apple TV HD or later.

Note: [Smart albums](#), ones that have criteria that are matched to assemble at set of matching media, can be created and viewed only in Photos for Mac. You can't create or view them on an iPhone or iPad or in Windows, and they don't sync via iCloud Photos.

Apple always stores the full-resolution original versions of images and movies in the cloud no matter what option you choose in macOS, iOS, iPadOS, or Windows. But because Photos libraries can be enormous, Apple offers a choice in iOS/iPadOS and macOS between holding a full-resolution copy of everything or optimized versions.

If you choose optimization, your device retains thumbnails of every piece of media, which dramatically reduces the space required to hold the library. When you add items to Photos on other devices, only the thumbnail is retrieved to this device. Images added locally are uploaded to the cloud and the full-resolution version deleted as storage space on the drive is required. However, Photos always downloads the full-resolution version when you view, edit, or share a photo or video if only the thumbnail is currently stored locally.

Note: Edits to your photos and organizational changes to your library also sync across devices.

Even minimal use of the Camera app on an iPhone or iPad, or managing media you captured in the past in a Mac Photos library, may outstrip the free 5 GB tier of iCloud storage. You will almost certainly need to upgrade to iCloud+ at 50 GB, 200 GB, or 2 TB.

Tip: This is a great use of Family Sharing pooled storage, as each of you in a family might have over 200 GB of media and only need to pay \$9.99 per month to get the pooled 2 TB of storage and all the other iCloud+ features.

Keep Documents and App Data in Sync

iCloud Drive is Cloud’s online file storage component, which includes mechanisms to sync files and folders among your devices and apps.

To learn all about iCloud Drive, read the next topic, [Use iCloud Drive](#). In addition, you’ll want to read [Use In-App Data Syncing](#), later in this chapter, for information on working with apps that don’t rely on documents but do need to sync data across devices.

Use iCloud Drive

iCloud Drive is cloud-based storage you can access from any of your devices. That includes in the Finder in macOS, in the Files app on an iPhone or iPad, in Windows, on the iCloud website, and from within apps that support it.

With iCloud Drive, an authoritative copy of each of your documents—called the “truth” or the definitive version among multiple versions—is stored in the cloud. Your Mac normally maintains a local copy of each document, too, and any changes you make to the contents of your iCloud Drive on one device immediately sync to the others via Apple’s servers so long as you have an internet connection.

Warning! When you’re offline, you can make changes to locally cached copies. If changes are made to those files anywhere else—on other devices or at iCloud.com—you could wind up with conflicted copies. iCloud syncs conflicted copies and names the versions it thinks aren’t the “truth” with the date of the problem. When you open a file that has conflicted versions, the app prompts you to select the correct version.

Note: Your Mac might delete the local copies of some files if you've enabled [Optimize Mac Storage](#) and your disk starts running low on free space. They always remain in iCloud.

That sounds simple enough, but iCloud Drive has quite a bit of hidden complexity and doesn't always make sense. You'll be able to use iCloud Drive more effectively if you understand at least some of Apple's logic. After I tell you how to turn on iCloud Drive (next), I'll give you a quick overview of what you'll see there (see [Explore iCloud Drive on a Mac or PC](#)). Later I delve into how you can use it in various environments, including within Mac and iOS/iPadOS apps.

Activate iCloud Drive

For most users, iCloud Drive was already activated at some point within the past few years, typically while upgrading to a new version of macOS, iOS, or iPadOS. If you deliberately skipped enabling iCloud Drive for some reason, you can activate it whenever you're ready by turning on iCloud Drive in System Settings > *your name* > iCloud (Ventura or later), System Preferences > Apple ID > iCloud (Monterey or earlier), or Settings > *your name* > iCloud (iOS/iPadOS). In Windows, open the iCloud app and check the iCloud Drive box.

There are a few other iCloud settings you can change. While the default settings are fine for almost anyone, you should be aware that they exist, just in case.

First, you can prevent a particular app in macOS, iOS, or iPadOS from using iCloud Drive (for added security or to save space):

- **Mac:** Go to System Settings > *your name* > iCloud > Drive/iCloud Drive and click "Apps syncing to iCloud Drive" (in Sequoia or later) or the Options button (in Ventura through Sonoma) or go to System Preferences > Apple ID > iCloud and click the Options button next to iCloud Drive (in Monterey or earlier). Then uncheck any app you want to prevent from using iCloud and click Done. This hides that app's folder in iCloud Drive on this Mac, but does not affect the data already saved to iCloud Drive or its appearance on other devices.

Keep Mail, Contacts, and Calendars in Sync

Email, contact, and calendar data work together to help you with many day-to-day tasks, and those sets of details are the ones you'll most likely want to keep in sync across your Macs, iPhones, and iPads. Behind the scenes, they rely on different technologies to do their work. But the end result is that when you change email, contact, or calendar data on one device, iCloud immediately pushes those changes to your other devices.

This chapter discusses these three data types. In the interest of simplicity, I've left out most of the boring instructions for tasks you already know how to carry out or can figure out easily, as well as anything for which Apple offers detailed instructions via the Help menu on your Mac or visiting the [iCloud User Guide](#)).

In this chapter, I also explain how to [Use Mail Drop](#), an iCloud feature that simplifies sending large attachments.

Work with iCloud Mail

An iCloud account includes an email address in the icloud.com domain, at least 5 GB of storage (shared with other iCloud services), and a lovely web interface for checking your email (see [The Mail Web App](#)).

Note: Apple also lets you still use *account@me.com* if your Apple Account dates back to MobileMe; and *account@mac.com* if it dates back even further. These addresses are all interchangeable, though you can use filtering at the iCloud website or in Mail to distinguish among messages sent to them.

In most respects, iCloud Mail is a conventional IMAP account. (For more on what that means, read my article [FlippedBITS: IMAP Miscon-](#)

[ceptions](#).) Your email host's mail server stores all the messages in your inbox, messages you've filed in folders, and your sent mail. The server also tracks which messages you've read, replied to, or forwarded. Because mail is stored remotely, you can access your email on any device (even with a third-party email client) or in a web browser, and see exactly the same messages, in the same locations, with the same status. (iCloud offers no POP support at all.)

Note: You can choose to move any messages out of the server's folders in any Mac mail client and some iPhone/iPad ones to store them just on a single device, removing them from the server.

With default settings, as soon as you enable Mail in iCloud's settings on each device, your iCloud Mail stays in sync across devices without any manual intervention—not because iCloud does anything special but because that's the way IMAP works. However, iCloud Mail differs from run-of-the-mill IMAP accounts in several respects:

- Setting up an iCloud Mail account on any Apple device is as easy as it gets: all you have to do is make sure Mail is turned on after entering your iCloud username and password.
- When used with iPhones and iPads, you can choose *push* updates, which send messages to your device the instant they come in, rather than having to wait for the next scheduled check.
- iCloud Mail has a good webmail interface that supports searching message contents, setting up auto-responses, forwarding email to another account, uploading attachments with Mail Drop (see [Use Mail Drop](#)), and creating rules that automatically sort messages.
- Apple's mail servers provide basic spam and malware filtering. *However*, when iCloud Mail encounters an incoming message that matches certain criteria that Apple doesn't disclose, it doesn't merely label the message as Junk or move it to a Spam mailbox; instead, the iCloud server summarily deletes it without any notice to the sender or recipient. (You can read about this in [Silent email filtering makes iCloud an unreliable option](#) at Macworld.) I disagree with this approach because all spam filters make mistakes.

Sync Other iCloud Data

In much the same way that iCloud delivers immediate push updates to your email, contacts, and calendars, it syncs numerous other types of information, among which are Safari bookmarks, iCloud Tabs, and your Reading List; data from the iPhone’s Health app; Siri data; Reminders (a.k.a. tasks or to-do items); Notes; iMessage conversations; and data from built-in Apple apps such as News, Stocks, Home, and Voice Memos.

Note: I discuss yet another type of data syncing in the next chapter, [Work with iCloud Passwords & Keychain](#).

These features aren’t at all flashy and there’s not a great deal to say about them, but in this chapter, I give you an overview of how they work—and point out a few cool things you may not have noticed.

Work with Browser Bookmarks, Tabs, and Reading List

The list of iCloud services on your Mac, PC, iPhone, or iPad includes either Safari (Mac, iPhone, and iPad) or Bookmarks (Windows). Either way, this item, when enabled, syncs the following items.

Note: Apple enables end-to-end encryption for Safari history, tab groups, and iCloud Tabs. No one—even Apple—can inspect those synced items except with access to your devices. Bookmarks lack this extra protection, however.

Bookmarks and History

When Safari enabled, iCloud syncs Safari bookmarks and your browser history among your Apple devices. In Windows, iCloud syncs bookmarks with Edge, Google Chrome, or Firefox.

Note: iCloud won't sync Edge, Google Chrome, or Firefox bookmarks on a Mac.

Reading List

For Macs, iPhones, and iPads, iCloud syncs the Reading List, which comprises webpages you've saved to read later by choosing Bookmarks > Add to Reading List (Mac) or by tapping the Share  icon and then Add to Reading List (iPhone/iPad).

Tab Groups and iCloud Tabs

Safari lets you create *tab groups*, essentially browser “desktops.” A tab group is a named set of tabs, each open to a given webpage or the Start Page. You can switch any open Safari window among available tab groups. With Safari syncing enabled, tab groups sync across all applicable devices. Apple explains how to use these features on their [Group tabs in Safari](#) page.

Unrelated to tab groups are iCloud Tabs, Apple's name for a list of all tabs in open windows that syncs across all your Macs, iPhones, and iPads. (The feature has sported various names, but it dates back several years.) You can find iCloud Tabs in macOS in two places:

- **Show the Start Page:** Choose File > New Window or New Tab (if the option in Safari > Settings/Preferences > General for “New windows open with” or “New tabs open with” is set to Start Page), or choose Bookmarks > Start Page on any page. iCloud Tabs appears as a popup menu listing your device names and the tabs open on that device. If it doesn't appear, click the Start Page customize button in the lower-right corner and select iCloud Tabs. Use the popup menu to switch among your devices.
- **Add an icon to the toolbar in Safari for macOS:** Choose View > Customize and drag iCloud Tabs onto the toolbar. You can now click that to reveal a popover that shows a list of tabs with favicon and the window title under headings for each of your devices (**Figure 33**). Click an item in the list to open it.

Work with iCloud Passwords & Keychain

iCloud Keychain allows you to sync a *keychain* containing passwords, credit card numbers, and other sensitive data across your Apple devices securely via the cloud. This lets Safari autofill usernames and passwords on any of your devices no matter which device you initially created the login with. It also syncs Wi-Fi passwords among all your devices, avoiding the need to reenter them.

Note: Starting in Sequoia, iOS 18, and iPadOS 18, Apple started to downplay the term “iCloud Keychain” in favor of “iCloud Passwords” or “Passwords & Keychain,” depending on the context.

Apple’s keychain lets you do the following on any single device:

- Store and enter credit card information in web forms.
- Create multiple sets of credentials per site and credentials that can be used across subdomains of the same site.
- View and remove passwords in the Passwords app in Sequoia or later or iOS 18/iPadOS 18 or later, within Safari for macOS in Sequoia or earlier, or in System Settings/System Preferences on a Mac running Sonoma or earlier.
- Enable and use one-time codes that are used for second-factor authentication and have them available from all your devices.
- Create private notes you add to password entries.

Note: Apple also offers to generate strong passwords within Safari.

That’s great, but you don’t want to re-enter information and keep it up to date across your equipment. When iCloud Keychain is enabled, that information is synced across your devices and available within Safari

and other locations. iCloud Keychain can also sync the history of your iMessage and SMS communications (see [Sync Messages](#)).

In addition, the following items sync automatically amongst your other Macs (but not, alas, iPhones or iPads):

- Settings for the accounts listed in the Internet Accounts pane of System Settings/System Preferences, such as email accounts
- Signatures you scanned or wrote in Preview (see [Take Control of Preview](#), by Josh Centers and Adam Engst), or using the Markup feature of Mail
- Entries in the default macOS login keychain—viewable via the Keychain Manager app—that can be used across Macs but aren't relevant to iPhones or iPads

iCloud Keychain offers great utility to those who use Apple devices exclusively, especially if they stay within the Safari browser and Apple's Passwords app. However, iCloud Keychain entries can also be accessed from several other places across apps and operating systems:

- Apple and third-party apps on a Mac, iPhone, or iPad
- System Settings/System Preferences > Passwords in Monterey through Sonoma
- iCloud Passwords in Windows
- The iCloud extension for Edge or Google Chrome in Windows or macOS, or for Firefox for Mac

Use the iCloud Website

iCloud is mostly about keeping data in sync across all your devices, but several key types of data can also be viewed and edited on the [iCloud website](#) in robust web apps—Mail, Contacts, Calendar, Photos, iCloud Drive, Notes, Reminders, Invites, Pages, Numbers, Keynote, and Find Devices.

The native apps running on a Mac, iPhone, or iPad are more powerful and convenient. But there are several reasons you may want to use the iCloud website:

- **Non-Apple platforms:** If you use Windows, Linux, Android, or other operating systems where these apps aren't available natively, the iCloud site can make crucial features available to you. (Windows users with iCloud for Windows installed have access to some of these features; see [Set Up iCloud for Windows](#).)
- **On someone else's computer:** When you use someone else's computer (or a public computer), the [iCloud website](#) is the best way to access your iCloud data.
- **Exclusive settings:** A few features are exclusively available only in the website's [iCloud Settings](#) (notably, the option to [Data Recovery](#).) These options are not found in any native app.
- **Find My for a lost device:** If your iPhone or other device is lost or stolen, you may have to use Find Devices app on the iCloud website—on someone else's mobile device or computer, even—to report it lost, trigger a sound, or erase it.

Because Apple updates the iCloud website features and user interface regularly and on no fixed schedule, I can't provide detailed instructions for each of the ever-changing iCloud web apps. Instead, this chapter offers a general overview of what's on the site as of December 2025 and how to navigate it. I then offer a few tips for getting the most out of the web apps and locating obscure features.

Check Your Website Access

Before you can do much on the iCloud website, make sure you haven't turned off your own access. To check, go to System Settings > *your name* > iCloud (Mac) or Settings (iPhone/iPad) > *your name* > iCloud, scroll to the bottom, and make sure Access iCloud Data on the Web is on. If you [Use Advanced Data Protection](#) you will need to take additional steps described in that section.

Navigate the iCloud Website

When you visit the [iCloud website](#) and click Sign In, you can enter your Apple Account username, press Return, and enter your password. There's also an optional "Keep me signed in" checkbox.

Note: If you visit the site on a Mac with Touch ID configured, you'll instead see a Touch ID authentication dialog.

Once you are signed in, keep in mind just a few things:

- **Opening and switching apps:** On the home screen is a tile with app names (**Figure 44**); click an icon to go to that app.

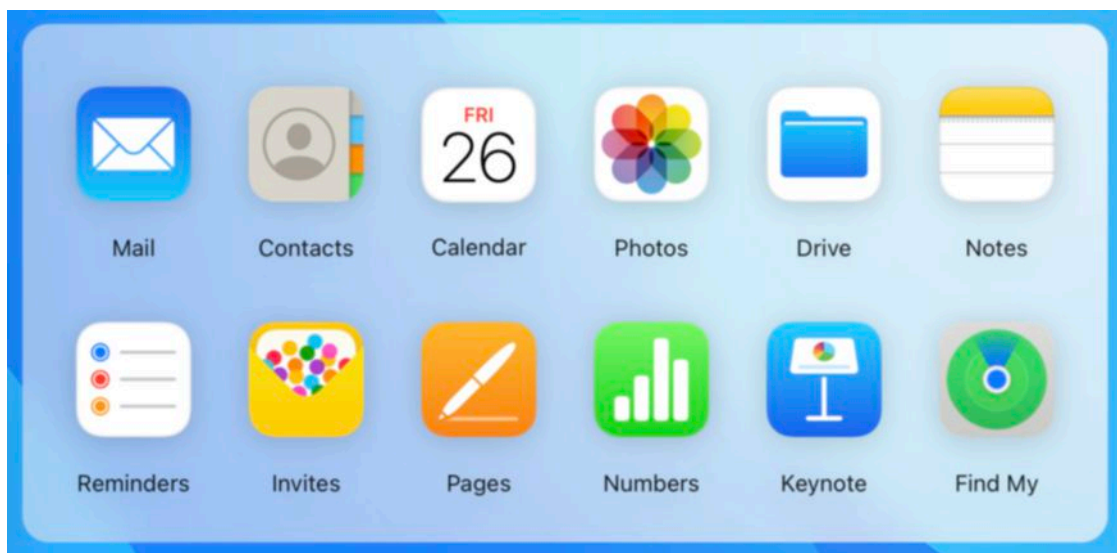


Figure 44: Click an icon on the home page to go to the web app.

Or, you can click the always-visible menu  icon and then click the app you want to use in the popover that appears (**Figure 45**).

Find My Nouns

Apple offers three overlapping services that let you find hardware and people in varying combinations and with varying degrees of permission and consent. Loosely, these can be categorized in the way that Apple breaks them out as views in the native Find My apps for Mac, iPhone, and iPad:

- **People:** You can share your location with friends, family, and others, and view the location of people who have shared theirs.
- **Devices:** All your iCloud-linked computing and audio hardware appears here, as well as all the devices logged in by members of your Family Sharing group (if any). You can track any iPhone, iPad, Mac, or Apple Watch, and AirPods (nearly, via Bluetooth only), AirPods Pro, AirPods Max, and a variety of Beats audio hardware.
- **Items:** AirTags and other items paired with an iPhone or iPad that make use of the crowdsourced Find My network appear in this view. This includes third-party licensed devices, such as Pebblebee and Chipolo's trackers and Knog's bike tracker. This also includes shared items starting in iOS 17/iPadOS 17 and Sonoma.

For people, devices, and items, you can view or ask Siri for their current location. For all devices and some items, you can cause a sound to play. With a Mac, Apple Watch, iPad, or iPhone, you can lock the device (to keep it from being used) and display a message with a phone number (or reward!), or erase it, rendering its data inaccessible. You can even see your wayward hardware's battery level.

For devices, tracking works more reliably when they have an active cellular connection. That works with all iPhones, iPads with cellular modems, and Series 3 or later cellular Apple Watch models. These devices are likely to have a network connection at all times—cellular access is pretty ubiquitous—whereas Wi-Fi is spotty, and may require a login and even payment.

Note: Series 2 and later Apple Watch models, iPhones, and iPads (only those with cellular support) also have GPS receivers, so their reported location over Wi-Fi is more precise than for Macs and for earlier iPhones and iPads that lack satellite positioning circuitry.

Apple has increasingly made device “sleep” more of a “nap with one eye open.” The iPhone, iPad, and Apple Watch maintain their mobile connections even when seemingly in a standby mode. Macs with SSDs—most of them these days—send updates even while ostensibly asleep.

Most newer Apple hardware also uses a clever technique to rely on nearby Apple devices to securely pass along their location by broadcasting a special Bluetooth signal if they have no internet connection.

In this chapter, I explain how iCloud acts as the pivot around which location information, actions, privacy, and security rotate.

Tip: For vastly more detail on Find My and Apple’s AirTags and third-party trackers that use the Find My network, see Glenn Fleishman’s [*Take Control of Find My and AirTags*](#).

Activate Find My

Find My can track a broad array of devices and items, but the service works only when that device or item has Location Services enabled and then Find My or the Find My network is also turned on.

To enable Location Services:

- **macOS:** In Ventura or later, go to System Settings > Privacy & Security > Location Services and turn Location Services on if necessary; you may be prompted to authenticate when you do this. Then scroll down to the bottom, click Details next to System Services, and make sure Find My Mac is also turned on. Click Done.

In Monterey or earlier, go to System Preferences > Security & Privacy > Privacy > Location Services, click the lock  icon and

Back Up and Restore iPhone/iPad Data

iCloud can automatically back up most of the important data from your iPhone or iPad to Apple's servers. This feature is usually invisible once you've set it up, but there are a few options you may want to adjust, and you'll want to know how to [Restore an iPhone or iPad from a Backup](#) should the need arise.

Note: As I mentioned in the sidebar [iCloud Drive and Backups](#), iCloud is *not* designed to back up data from Macs. For that, you should use a local option (such as Time Machine or Carbon Copy Cloner) or a cloud service such as Backblaze. For more details, see my book [Take Control of Backing Up Your Mac](#).

Understand How iCloud Backup Works

Backups are as important on an iPhone or iPad as on your computer—after all, your mobile device stores lots of crucial personal data, including photos and videos that may be irreplaceable. If it dies or needs replacing, backups can also save you time and aggravation.

But backing up an iPhone or iPad is a lot different from backing up a Mac or PC. Conventional backups methods won't work, because each app is *sandboxed*—prevented from interacting with other apps' data—and because iPhones and iPads have no browsable file system. (Yes, there's the Files app, but that app only provides access to a small portion of all the data on your device.)

It's possible to back up your iPhone or iPad by connecting it to your Mac or PC via Wi-Fi or with a USB cable and clicking Back Up Now in the Finder (or Apple Devices for Windows). But with iCloud, you can back up over Wi-Fi directly to Apple's servers.

This means:

- **Back up on the go:** You can back up your data while away from any computer; you're not tethered to a machine for backups.
- **Restore without a computer:** You can restore an iPhone or iPad—such as one whose data was corrupted, or that had its data wiped as part of a repair—or set up a new device to use your existing data without a computer.
- **Differential backups:** When you back up via iCloud, only the first backup copies *all* your personal data. Subsequent backups upload only information that's new or different since last time, making iCloud backups faster on subsequent backup runs.

For all these reasons, I generally recommend using iCloud Backup. But, as I said in [About iCloud Storage](#), backups can consume lots of space. To solve this problem, you can buy more storage, limit which types of data are backed up (as I describe ahead), or delete old backups. But if you're short on space and unwilling to buy more, you might stick with backups using the Finder (or Apple Devices for Windows).

Note: For the privacy implications of iCloud Backup, flip ahead to [Protect Your Privacy](#).

What does iCloud Backup back up, anyway? It covers the following:

- The photos and videos you've taken on your iPhone or iPad if you haven't enabled iCloud Photos
- Photo albums you've created *on the iPhone or iPad* (but not those created on and synced from your computer)
- Documents and app settings, including Health (on an iPhone)
- All account data and iPhone/iPad settings, which includes those configured in the Settings app, HomeKit configuration, and your Home screen and folder organization

Use iCloud on an Apple TV

The Apple TV is a small box that gives your TV access to media from Apple and other providers, Apple Arcade and third-party games, media stored on other Apple devices on your network, and other categories of apps. It also acts as a hub for HomeKit-connected devices, extending certain features and adding remote access.

Note: Although the third-generation Apple TV supports several iCloud features, this chapter covers HD and 4K models only.

In this chapter I talk briefly about Apple TV features that involve iCloud, but not about the rest of Apple TV. For a full look at Apple TV, consult [*Take Control of Apple TV*](#) by Glenn Fleishman.

Set Up iCloud on an Apple TV

There are two main places to configure iCloud-related settings on your Apple TV. Depending on the choices you made when you set up the Apple TV, either or both of these may already be set, but it doesn't hurt to check.

Set Up iCloud Account Features

To configure an Apple TV to work with iCloud Photos, Family Sharing, and the AirPods paired with your iPhone (if you have them), navigate to Settings > Users and Accounts > *your name* > iCloud. If your Apple Account isn't already listed, select Sign In.

If you've already entered your Apple Account for the iTunes Store, you may be asked if you want to use that same Apple Account for these other features. If you do, select Yes (and enter your password); if not, select No, Use a Different Apple Account (and enter both the Apple Account username and password for a different iCloud account).

The Users and Accounts screen shows two additional options related to iCloud:

- **One Home Screen:** When enabled, your Home screen will be the same on every Apple TV signed in to your iCloud account.
- **Photos:** Turn this on to provide access to your personal iCloud Photos library via an Apple TV. You can also separately enable or disable Show Memories and Shared Albums.

After that one-time setup procedure, to view your photos, follow the steps ahead in [Use iCloud Photos on an Apple TV](#).

Set Up iTunes Store and iTunes Match

To set up your Apple TV to stream purchased media from iCloud, navigate to Settings > Users and Accounts > *your name* > Store. If your Apple Account isn't already listed, select Sign In and enter your credentials. Then select Yes, if prompted, to remember your password for rentals and purchases.

Tip: You may want to avoid storing your password if your Apple TV is accessible by kids or guests who might rent or buy things on your account without your permission.

You may enter more than one Apple Account (for example, if multiple people in your household have purchased content from the iTunes Store that you want to view), and switch between them easily. To enter an additional account, once again go to Settings > Users and Accounts, select Add New User, and follow the prompts. (To switch between accounts, return to the Users and Accounts screen and select a different account.)

If you subscribe to iTunes Match, it's automatically enabled when you add your iCloud account, though you will need to turn on Sync Library in the Music app the first time you use it.

Manage Your Account

Your iCloud account has a handful of settings you may want to adjust, including your photo, default language, and time zone. And, if you've inadvertently deleted something from Bookmarks, Contacts, Calendar, or iCloud Drive within the last 30 days, you can restore it using the Settings app on the iCloud website; see [Data Recovery](#). You can also use account-level controls to [Increase Your Storage](#).

Use the iCloud Website Settings Page

The iCloud Settings page shows you a few settings related to your use of the iCloud website as a whole, as well as data recovery tools and links to other Apple Account resources. To use these features, sign in to the [iCloud website](#), click your name at the top, and choose iCloud Settings from the menu. The iCloud Settings page includes a navigation bar at the top, and you should be in the Settings category by default. You can now change settings in any of several categories. Any changes you make take effect immediately.

Note: I don't cover every setting here, but those I omit can be changed in other ways, as discussed elsewhere in this book.

Settings

The Settings category is the main place for making changes.

Change Personal Information

You can adjust certain pieces of personal information:

- **Photo:** Your iCloud account can have a photo or picture associated with it, which other iCloud members will see in certain contexts (such as in email messages). To add or change a photo, first click Change Apple Account Photo under the Photo heading. Then, to replace the image, click “Browse your device for a new image,”

locate the graphic you want, and click Upload. You can also drag the slider to adjust the zoom level, drag the photo around to reposition it, or change the rotation in 90° increments. When satisfied, click Save.

- **Apple Account Settings:** To make changes to your Apple Account (such as choosing a new password or changing the security settings), click the account.apple.com link under Apple Account Settings. This opens the Apple Account site in a new tab or window.

Sign Out of All Browsers

If you think you may still be signed in to iCloud on another browser and you want to be sure all browser sessions (including the current one) are closed, click Sign Out of All Browsers.

Manage Apps That Can Look You Up

You can choose which apps let other people find you by your email address for the purpose of sharing documents. To do so, click Manage Apps under the Look Me Up by Email heading.

Your iCloud Storage

Click Your iCloud Storage on the navigation bar at the top to view a multicolored graph, as well as a high-level breakdown of major storage categories. That graph's color corresponds to a breakdown by major storage category below it. Apple provides more information when you view your storage details from a desktop computer, iPhone, or iPad, and I talk about that in [Check and Modify Your Storage Usage](#), later in this chapter.

Data Recovery

iCloud keeps a copy for 30 days of several kinds of data: Contacts entries, Calendar events, Safari bookmarks, and iCloud Drive files. If you deleted a create item in one of those categories, you can recover it within that period.

Manage iCloud Security and Privacy

Throughout this book I've mentioned security and privacy issues connected to iCloud. But because of high-profile incidents involving data theft from iCloud users and increasing privacy concerns overall, I want to end the book with some advice about protecting your data.

In the digital world, the words security and privacy are often used interchangeably, but even though they're related, they're not the same. *Security* is freedom from danger or harm, whereas *privacy* is freedom from observation or attention. Someone can harm you by impersonating you, taking over your account, stealing or deleting data, and so on; security makes such harm less likely to occur. On the other hand, if someone reads your email messages, sees your photos, or learns your location without your permission, you've lost your privacy.

It's possible to have security without privacy and vice versa. But when it comes to a service like iCloud, it turns out that all the steps you might take to improve your security also protect your privacy. For example, choosing an excellent password reduces the likelihood that a stranger might sign in to your account and thereby obtain access to your private data.

Start by enhancing your security with a good password and two-factor authentication, discussed just ahead. If you plan to buy a used Mac, iPhone, or iPad, read [Check Activation Lock](#) first to make sure you aren't buying a locked device—potentially one that was stolen. And you can take additional steps to [Protect Your Privacy](#), such as turning off syncing for sensitive data and using a passcode on your iPhones and iPads.

Tip: Although I hit the main points about iCloud security and privacy here, you'll get a more complete story in Glenn Fleishman's [Take Control of Your Apple Account](#). Another book Glenn wrote also addresses privacy and security on Apple platforms: [Take Control of Securing Your Apple Devices](#).

Choose a Good Password

The password associated with the Apple Account you use for iCloud is incredibly valuable. With your username and that password, someone can see all your email, contacts, calendar events, backed up photos—even your current location. And, using Find My, anyone with your password can remotely lock or wipe your Macs, iPhones and iPads!

So, choosing a good password is a big deal. You don't want a password that any other person can guess, or that an automated cracking tool could uncover by brute force. For complete details on what makes one password stronger than another, how an attacker might go about guessing your password, and techniques for increasing password strength while not overtaxing your memory, read my book [Take Control of Your Passwords](#). If you don't have time to read that whole book, at least follow these tips:

- **Make your iCloud password unique.** Don't use your iCloud password for any other site or service, because if your password for one site is compromised through a database breach or other leak, every account that uses the same password is at risk.
- **Choose a good password.** Apple requires that your iCloud password be *at least* eight characters long and include uppercase and lowercase letters and at least one digit. But I strongly suggest choosing a password that improves upon the minimum requirements: pick either a long, memorable one with dashes or punctuation between words, or a randomly generated one that has a lot of variation, including some punctuation. Better still, use a password manager—see the next bullet—to create and store a long, random one that you never have to enter by hand (or finger).

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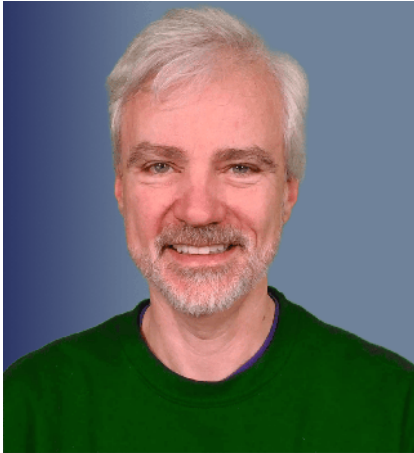
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Joe Kissell is the author of more than 75 books about technology. In 2017, he also became the publisher of Take Control Books, when alt concepts—the company he runs along with his wife, Morgen Jahnke—acquired the Take Control imprint from TidBITS Publishing Inc. Before he began writing full-time in 2003, Joe managed software development, a *totally normal* profession for someone with degrees in philosophy and linguistics.

In his hypothetical spare time, Joe likes to walk, cook, read, and practice tai chi. He lives in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, with Morgen and their sons. To contact Joe about this book, [send him email](#) and *please* include [Take Control of iCloud](#) in the subject. You can also sign up for [joeMail](#), his low-volume mailing list, follow him on Mastodon ([@joeKissell](#)) or Bluesky ([@joeKissell.com](#)), or visit his blog at [JoeKissell.com](#).

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