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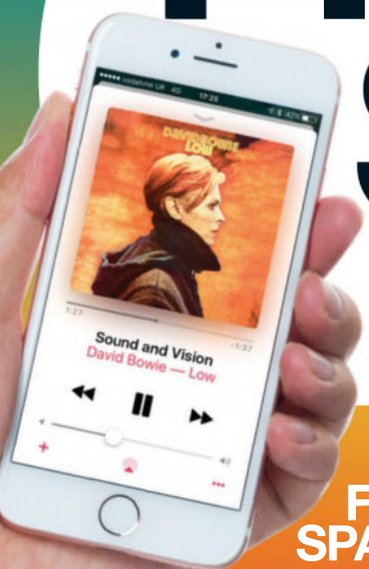

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Welcome

iCreate 169

"We've been rounding up your most pressing queries and finding brilliant, time-saving fixes"

One topic guaranteed to split opinion is iCloud. Of all the questions you send our way (keep them coming!), by far and away the most popular subject is Apple's cloud computing system. You either don't trust it, find it works sporadically or fills up too quickly. iCloud has made our lives infinitely easier, but everyone has problems with their account. That's what we've been looking into this month – rounding up all your most pressing queries and finding brilliant, time-saving fixes. This month's cover feature's highlights include the ultimate guide to iCloud Photo Library and essential privacy and security advice.

macOS Sierra brought with it a raft of new features, including Siri's desktop debut. Apple's personal digital assistant is much more powerful than you think. Be sure to check out our Siri Masterclass and find out everything you didn't know you could ask across your devices.

Enjoy the issue!

Philip Morris

Philip Morris **Editor**

Meet the experts

Dave Clews

Recording engineer Dave is **iCreate**'s resident Logic Pro X expert. This month he shows you how to unlock Logic's most powerful tools. Head to page 32 to check out his guide.

Stephen Ashby

Steve has spent the past month rifling through all your iCloud problems and has turned them into the ultimate iCloud Genius Bar. It's not to be missed, and it starts on page 14.

Roland Waddilove

The files we carry around on USB drives are often ones you don't want falling into the wrong hands. Let Mac guru Roland teach you how to encrypt those files on page 42.

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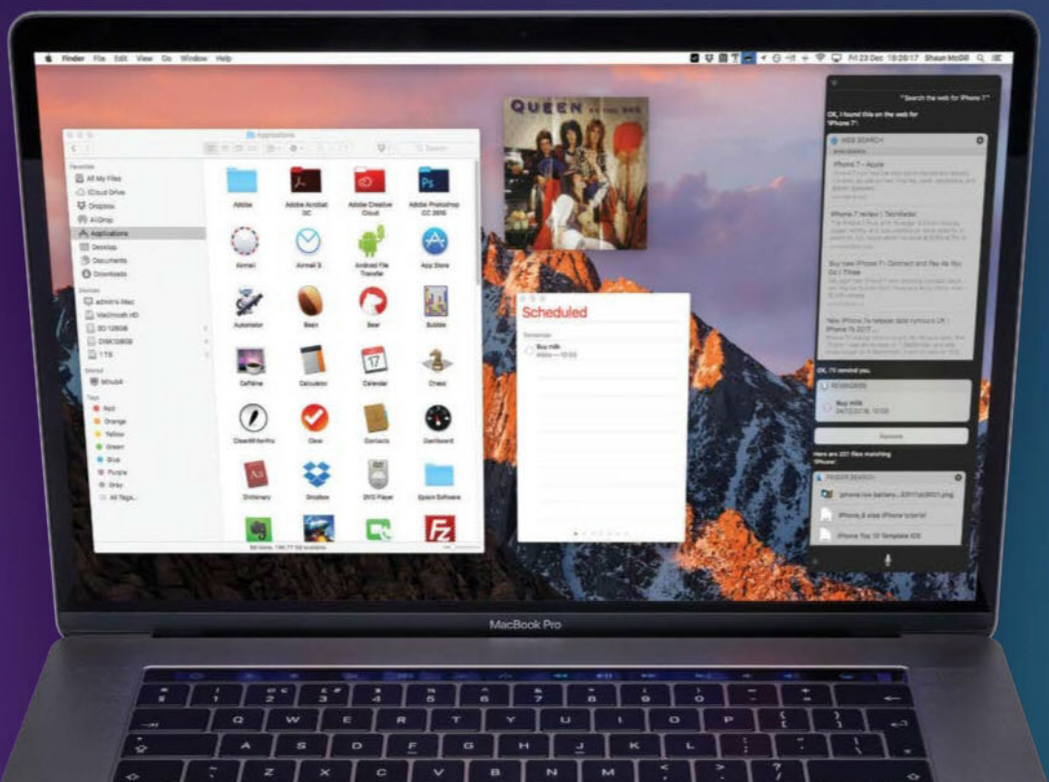

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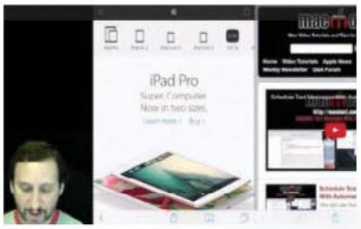

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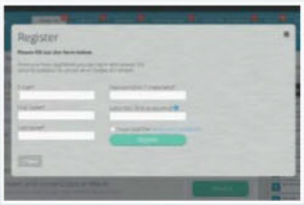

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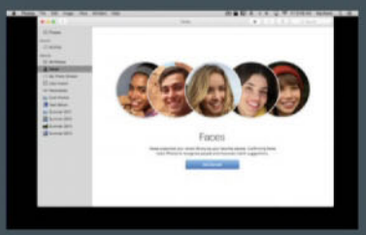

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Apple's missed connection

Has Cupertino cut one port too many for the pros?

When Tim Cook announced Apple's new MacBook Pro at its unveiling in October 2016, he made reference to Apple's ability to skate to where the puck is going. "Every generation of Mac notebooks had some major innovation that wound up pushing the industry forward," Cook said, before unveiling the MacBook Pro with Touch Bar. Of course, his comment was referring to the Touch Bar, but there was another innovation that didn't quite hit the mark.

A new port

The new MacBook Pros have seen equal praise and criticism since their introduction. The latter focuses on a simple question – are they truly for pros? The Touch Bar has yet to fully prove itself (but it hasn't been out in the wild for long) and the lack of end-user upgrade options is troubling (but this is nothing new), but then there's the matter of those ports. Or rather, a lack of them.

Depending on the model you buy, you've got just two or four USB-C ports to play with on your new MacBook Pro. That's it. No HDMI, no Thunderbolt, no USB-A. And if USB-C sounds a little alien to you, you're not alone. It's a relatively new standard in the world of USB. A good one, yes. But it's new and that presents a problem.

A dongle for everyone!

With USB-C ports on your MacBook Pro and a handful of accessories that employ older connection types (USB-A, Micro-USB, Mini-USB), you're left with one option to link them together. Dongles.

USB-C adapters, or dongles, are starting to pop up everywhere. There are plenty of third-party manufacturers touting them (and their quality and reliability varies), while Apple's own offerings are pretty pricey. Such was the wave of negative opinion surrounding the need to buy dongles for the new MacBook Pro, Apple announced a price drop for them in its store. It's a move that harks back to the iPhone 4 and 'Antennagate' days with the free case program.

On the face of it, then, this seems like a misstep for Apple. It introduced a new connection type and left people with the choice of upgrading their accessories or buying dongles. Look into the history of

Top USB-C accessories

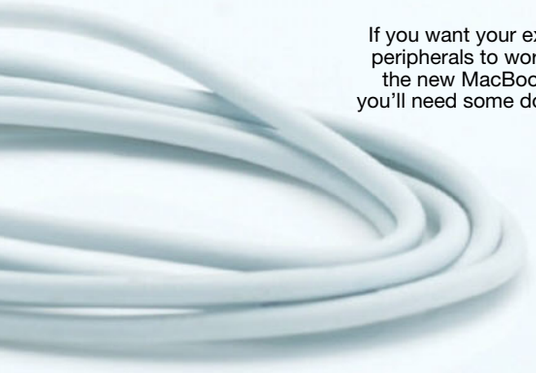
Got a new MacBook Pro? You'll want these accessories

HyperDrive USB-C Hub
£59.95/$59.95
HYPER has been getting attention with its latest USB-C on Kickstarter, but this older model uses just one USB-C port and gives you two USB 3.0 Type-A ports, plus HDMI connectivity.

Belkin Thunderbolt 3 Express Dock HD TBA
On paper, Belkin's Thunderbolt 3 dock (which uses the USB-C connection) delivers. As well as providing a range of connectivity options, including Ethernet and DisplayPort, it supplies 85 watts of power. It's slated for sale 'soon'.

SanDisk Ultra Dual Drive USB Type-C £35.99/$67.49 (128GB)
It's a rarity, but if you're still in a position where you need to move files around the old-fashioned way, SanDisk's latest USB flash drive will ensure you can connect via USB-A and USB-C ports.

Samsung T3 USB 3 2TB External SSD £762.58/$799.99
Don't be put off by the price. Samsung's external drive uses USB 3.0 (which uses the same connection as USB-C), has a whopping 2TB of storage space and uses solid state storage for speed.



If you want your existing peripherals to work with the new MacBook Pro, you'll need some dongles

Apple, though, and it becomes obvious that there's a different way this could all play out.

A history of cuts

Tim Cook wasn't reciting a marketing line when he talked about pushing the industry forward. History tells us that it's true. Apple dropped the Floppy Disk storage standard with the iMac, and it did a similar thing more recently with the optical disc drive. It's also seen the back of the FireWire port, the VGA port and many other ports before that. The transition was painful – now, though, a lot of these technologies feel like ancient history. The cloud is slowly replacing the need for portable storage, and when was the last time anyone asked you for a FireWire 400 cable?

An early warning

Apple's USB-C 'warning shot' came with the 2015 Retina MacBook. While it was wildly heralded as a beautiful step forward in the MacBook line, it featured just a single USB-C port. In a lot of ways, this move made sense. Apple produced a Mac that balanced portability and power perfectly, possibly more than any of its predecessors. But it still presented issues – how do you charge both your Mac and connect, well, anything at the same time? Dongles, obviously.

The MacBook got away with its single port, though. And that's largely down to its audience: it's not a machine that's designed with pro or power users in mind. Hooking up a peripheral is a less-common occurrence for the casual user, especially for one that fully embraces iCloud. Transferring photos from your iPhone to your Mac feels like an antiquated process in the age of iCloud Photo Library.

A promising future

While it's true that MacBook Pros are ostensibly for pro users, and that you have to resort to a dongle every time you want to use a peripheral that's not natively connected via USB-C, there's still hope here. If history is anything to go by, weathering this rough weather of connectivity might leave us all with a better connected future. USB-C is fast, it's a reversible connection and its size means that Macs can be made smaller.

To make it a success, though, Apple needs to adopt USB-C across the board. That means phasing it into the bottom of every new iPhone and iPad. It might be a while off, or it might never happen, but if anything is clear, it's that USB-C is here to stay. The real question is how long it'll be before we all choose to adopt it.

Apple has continued its flash sale of dongles well into 2017

Griffin 60-Watt BreakSafe USB-C Power Cable
£29.99/$39.99
Griffin's USB-C BreakSafe cables pick up where Apple's MagSafe charger left off, breaking away cleanly from your Mac and avoiding it falling off the table. A new, 100-watt version (pictured) will be out later in 2017.

5

Things we learned this month

The iPhone marks its 10th anniversary

The device that revolutionised the smartphone industry as we know it is officially ten years old. Apple's iPhone was originally touted as being ahead of its time, and it's since become one of the most iconic pieces of technology ever created. Since its inception back in 2007, the iPhone and its numerous follow-ups have been purchased over a billion times, helping propel Apple towards the top of the tech industry.

While Apple's 11 generations of iPhone have all been successes in one form or another, increased pressure from competitors have seen last year's iPhone sales drop for the first time in history. Alongside the creation of the iPhone,

the App Store will also soon be celebrating its ninth birthday. In that time, millions of apps have come and gone and millions more are being downloaded every day. We can't wait to see what the next ten years have in store.

We're expecting a special 10th anniversary model of the iPhone in September this year

iPhone 8 to sport steel frame? iPhone

While everyone has been expecting Apple to switch up the build of its latest iPhone, until now it's been unknown what materials will be used. However, sources close to Apple have revealed that the iPhone 8 will sport an all-glass front and back, surrounded by a reinforced steel frame. The benefit of using a steel frame is of particular interest, as it's believed that using it in the build will cut costs created by the current aluminium build by almost 40 per cent, which over millions of devices soon adds up.

Airmail gains Workflow integration Airmail

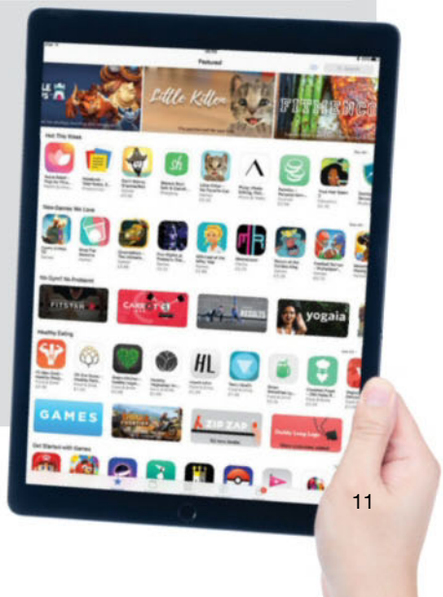
The popular Airmail email client is not only getting a major update, but it's also gaining full support for the Workflow app. The third-party automation tool is notorious for simplifying many key functions of hundreds of iOS apps, and this direct integration is an exciting prospect. For Airmail users, the Workflow support will provide them with the chance to build custom Workflow creations that incorporate and automate email actions, while also providing tools to systematically manage their inboxes. Grab Airmail from the iOS App Store for £3.99/$4.99.

Apple bans app finding lost AirPods Finder for AirPods

An app to help locate a lost AirPod may seem incredibly helpful, but not to Apple. The App 'Finder for AirPods' used the iPhone to track the wireless signal emitted from the AirPods, and had quickly garnered thousands of downloads. However, the excitement was short lived, as Apple deemed the app 'not appropriate' and subsequently pulled it from the App Store. While developer Raajit Sharma has said the app will not return to the App Store, we expect to see further spin-offs appear in the not-so-distant future.

iOS app developers earned $20 billion in 2016 App Store App Store

The App Store is renowned for breaking records and due to the fact it's now available in 155 countries, even more records are being smashed. Official statistics have shown that iOS App Store developers earned just over $20 billion in 2016. "2016 was a record-shattering year for the App Store. We want to thank our entire developer community for the many innovative apps they have created," said Apple's senior VP of worldwide marketing, Philip Schiller.

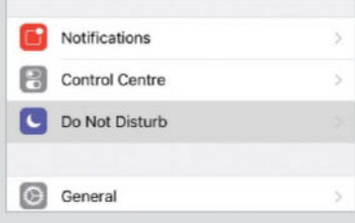


5 MINUTE PROJECTS TO TRY TODAY

You know how much we love quick tips for making your life that bit easier here at **iCreate**, and this month is no different. Whether you're being bothered by unknown callers on your iPhone, running out of storage space on your iPad after a flurry of winter photos, or wanting to use a cool new feature of macOS Sierra's Messages app, we've got the tricks you need to get more from your iPhone, iPad and Mac. Dive in with these handy tips and make your life that bit easier in 2017.

1 Block all unknown callers

It's always a pain getting calls from numbers you don't recognise – or even worse, numbers with No Caller ID. With this handy tip, you will only hear your phone ring when someone in your contacts tries to get in touch with you.



1 Find the options

Open the Settings app and navigate to the Do Not Disturb section. This can be used to turn off notification for all calls and texts if you want.

2 Go manual

Switch on the Manual option at the top. This way, Do Not Disturb will stay on at all times – you'll see the half moon symbol appear in the top bar.

3 Allow calls

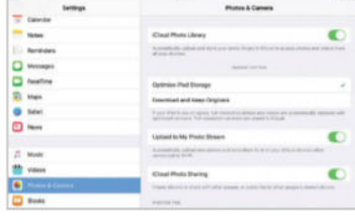
Choose the Allow Calls From option and you can choose one of your groups. Choose All Contacts. Now, your phone will only ring when your contacts call.

2 Free up space quickly

If you have a 16GB device – or just love taking photos or downloading apps – you've probably had the Storage Almost Full warning pop up a number of times. With these useful tips you can quickly make some space on your iPad.

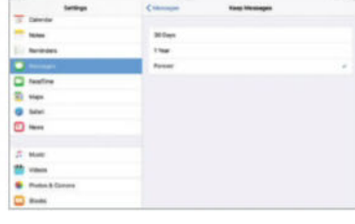
1 Check your storage

First, open Settings and choose General, then Storage & iCloud Usage. Tap Storage and you'll get an overview of the apps using the most space.



2 Optimise photo storage

If you use iCloud Photo Library, open Settings>Photos & Camera and check the Optimize iPad Storage option to save space on your iPad.

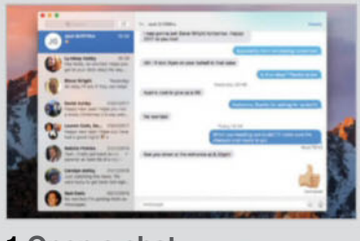


3 Auto-delete messages

If you share a lot of media in iMessages, the app can quickly eat up space. Open Settings>Messages and change Keep Messages to 30 days or 1 year.

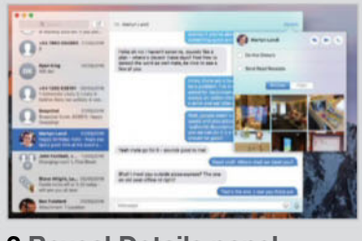
3 Send individual Read Receipts

In macOS Sierra you have the option to send Read Receipts to individual people in individual conversations, rather than having to send them to everyone you ever speak to. Here's how to make your messages more personal.



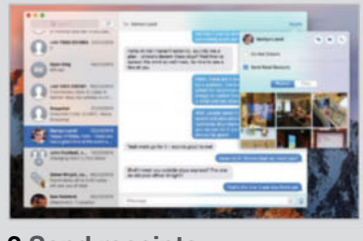
1 Open a chat

If there's someone that you're happy to inform when you've read their messages, select their name from the list on the left of the app.



2 Reveal Details panel

Click the Details button in the top right of the Messages window to see information about the chat, including media sent and a Do Not Disturb option.



3 Send receipts

Check Send Read Receipts and your friend will see when you have read their messages. They need to do the same for you to see when they've read messages.

FUSION 8

The world's most advanced visual effects and motion graphics software is now available on Linux as well as Mac and Windows!

For over 25 years Fusion has been used to create visual effects on thousands of blockbuster films, TV shows and commercials. Fusion features an easy to use and powerful node based interface, a massive tool set, true 3D workspace and GPU accelerated performance all in a single application! Now with support for Linux, Fusion 8.2 is easier than ever to integrate into your existing VFX pipeline!

Hollywood's Secret Weapon

Fusion has been used to create groundbreaking visual effects and motion graphics for Hollywood films such as The Martian, Thor and The Hunger Games, as well as on hit television shows like Orphan Black, Breaking Bad, Grimm and Battlestar Galactica! If you've ever gone to the movies or watched television, then you've seen Fusion in action!

Work Faster with Nodes

Fusion uses nodes to represent effects and filters that can be connected together to easily build up larger and more sophisticated visual effects! Nodes are organized like a flow chart so you can easily visualize complex scenes. Clicking on a node lets you quickly make adjustments, without having to hunt through layers on a timeline!

Incredible Creative Tools

Whether you need to pull a key, track objects, retouch images, animate titles, or create amazing 3D particle effects, Fusion has the creative tools you need! You get a true 3D workspace, the ability to import 3D models and scenes from software like Maya and 3ds Max, along with hundreds of tools for compositing, paint, animation and more!

Scaleable Studio Power

Fusion's GPU acceleration gives instant feedback while you work, so you spend more time being creative and less time waiting! Fusion 8 Studio also includes optical flow and stereoscopic 3D tools, along with unlimited free network rendering and tools to manage multi user workflows, track assets, assign tasks, review and approve shots, and more!

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iCLOUD PROBLEMS SOLVED

FIX YOUR iCLOUD SYNCING, SHARING AND STORAGE WOES

iCloud is Apple's vision of a shared ecosystem, and for the most part it's great. You can use it to ensure all of your files are shared between several devices (and up to date on every one of them), find lost devices with ease, sync contacts, calendars and messages between Macs, iPhones and iPads, and much more.

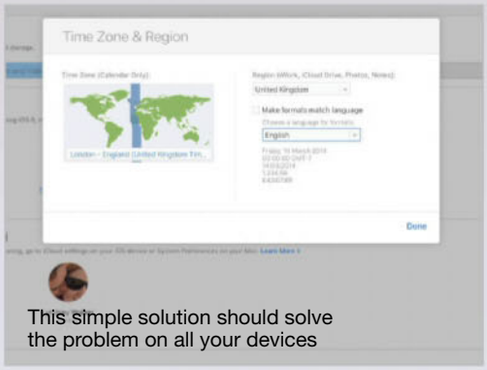
But, like many similar services, it unfortunately doesn't always work exactly as it should. Cloud services are notoriously temperamental, and when iCloud stops doing its job properly, it can be a real pain. Whether it's a device not backing up its content, a series of password requests or when you just run out of space, iCloud errors can quickly become frustrating. And, worst of all, if you don't sort the problem out quickly, it might even mean you lose important data, photos or documents when backups fail or just don't happen.

So, with that in mind we've got a very special, Genius Bar-style section in this month's **iCreate**, dedicated entirely to solving problems with iCloud. We're covering everything from account issues to security and Photos backups, so no matter what kind of problem you're having, you're likely to find the solution in here. In some cases, the answer can be quite simple and in a few seconds you'll be set up once again, while others might take a little longer to remedy. Either way, we've got a whole host of iCloud-related problems (and solutions) for you to take a look at here. Let's get started.

Setting up two-factor authentication on your iCloud account is a brilliant idea, and will make your account much more secure.

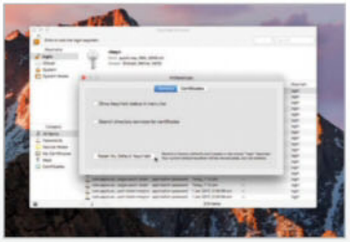
My emails and calendars all show the wrong time zones. What is going on?! Lucas Hiorns

This is a simple case of the time zone on your account being incorrect. Log in to your account at **iCloud.com** and open up the Settings section. In the top right you'll see a Time Zone/Region section – click here and you'll be able to choose which time zone you are currently in, and the nearest city. When you've set it, you'll see that the times should update across all of your devices. You can choose the format of things like times, dates and money too.



This simple solution should solve the problem on all your devices

When I try to input my iCloud details into my Mac, I get an 'Error setting up iCloud' message. What should I do? Maya Grisham

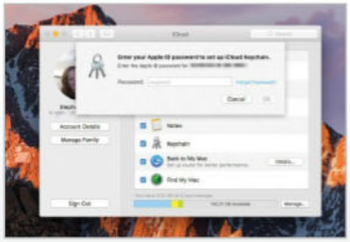


1 Reset your Keychain

First, search Keychain Access with Spotlight, then open File>Preferences and choose Reset My Default Keychain. Enter your login password (not iCloud password) when prompted.

2 Re-enter your password

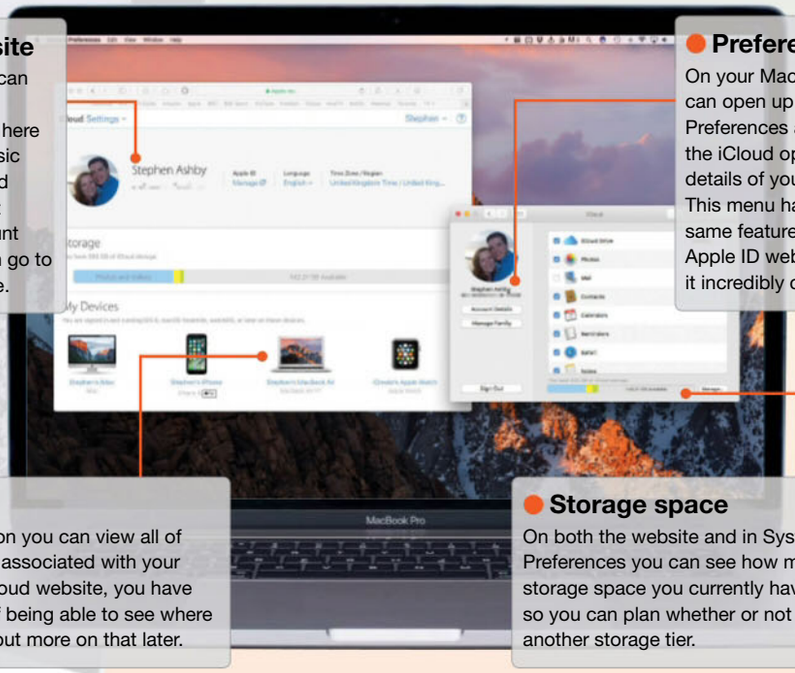
Now, open System Preferences and go to iCloud Preferences. Enter your iCloud password when prompted, then click the 'Verify your password' button and enter the password again.



3 Connect it up

To ensure your Keychain syncs from iCloud, uncheck the box, then check it again. Enter your iCloud password to verify your details, and click Request Approval to securely add it again.

How do I manage my iCloud account details on my Mac? I'm confused by it all. Tina Arwen



iCloud website

The iCloud website can be logged into from anywhere, and from here you can manage basic details of your iCloud account. If you want more detailed account information, you can go to the Apple ID website.

Preferences

On your Mac, you can open up System Preferences and choose the iCloud option to see details of your account. This menu has all the same features as the Apple ID website, making it incredibly convenient.

Devices

In the Devices section you can view all of the devices that are associated with your Apple ID. On the iCloud website, you have the added benefit of being able to see where they are on a map, but more on that later.

Storage space

On both the website and in System Preferences you can see how much iCloud storage space you currently have available, so you can plan whether or not to upgrade to another storage tier.

Apple Expert

The one-stop column for Genius advice

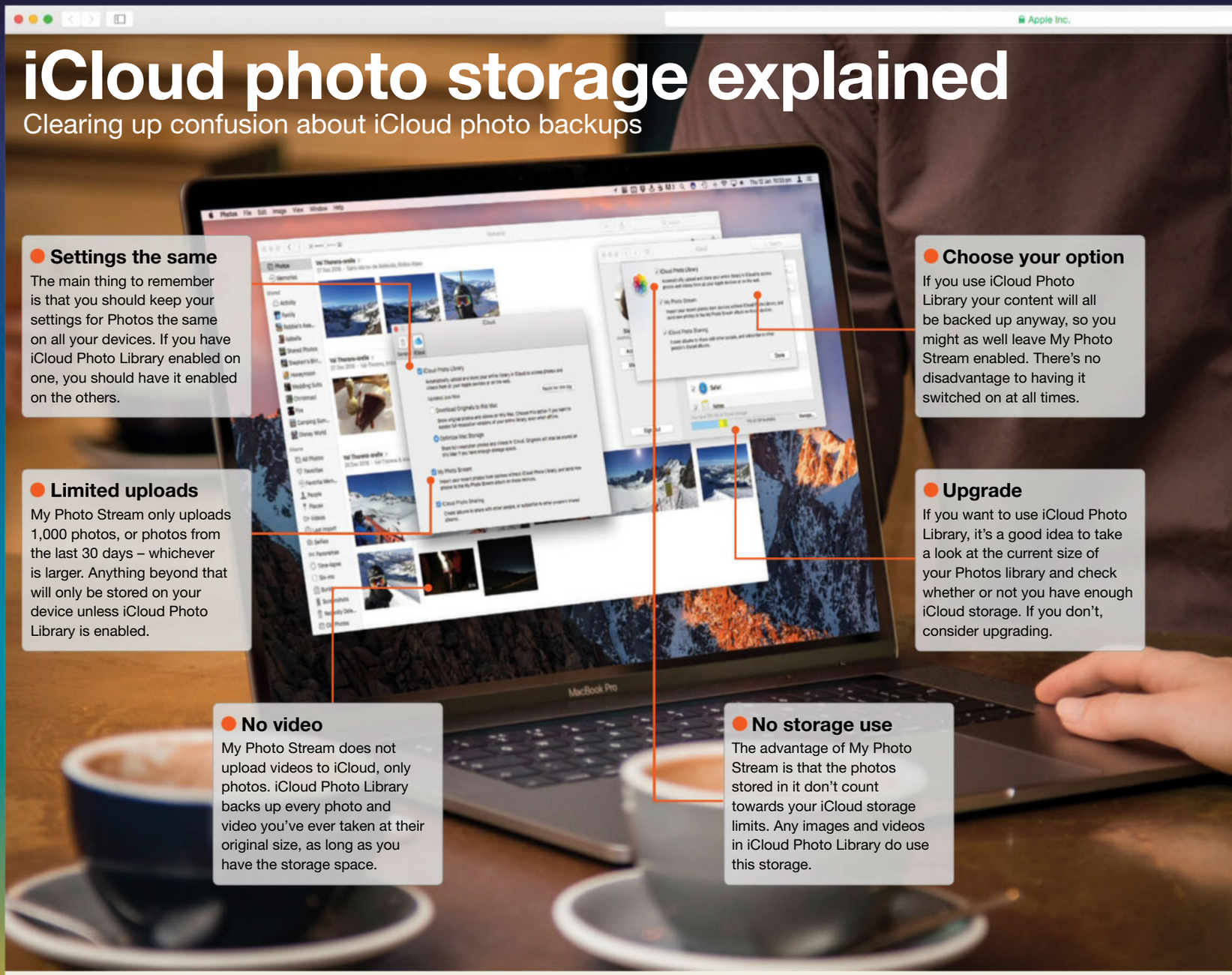
I forgot my password! What should I do?
Don't panic! You'll need to go to **iforgot.apple.com**. If you've set up two-factor authentication you can put in your number to get access, or alternatively you can answer the security questions you set up to unlock your account.

I set up a new account but none of my App Store purchases are listed anymore. What's happened?
Your iCloud account uses the same login details as your other Apple account (your Apple ID). If you already have one set up with iTunes or the App Store, you don't need to set up a separate account – just log in with those details!

It keeps saying Authentication Failed when I try to log in to my account.
You're putting in the incorrect password! Open up the Apple ID account page in a browser (**appleid.apple.com**) and try to log in. If your password is wrong it will tell you this, and you will need to go to **iforgot.apple.com** to gain access to your account.

iCloud photo storage explained

Clearing up confusion about iCloud photo backups



Settings the same

The main thing to remember is that you should keep your settings for Photos the same on all your devices. If you have iCloud Photo Library enabled on one, you should have it enabled on the others.

Limited uploads

My Photo Stream only uploads 1,000 photos, or photos from the last 30 days – whichever is larger. Anything beyond that will only be stored on your device unless iCloud Photo Library is enabled.

No video

My Photo Stream does not upload videos to iCloud, only photos. iCloud Photo Library backs up every photo and video you've ever taken at their original size, as long as you have the storage space.

Choose your option

If you use iCloud Photo Library your content will all be backed up anyway, so you might as well leave My Photo Stream enabled. There's no disadvantage to having it switched on at all times.

Upgrade

If you want to use iCloud Photo Library, it's a good idea to take a look at the current size of your Photos library and check whether or not you have enough iCloud storage. If you don't, consider upgrading.

No storage use

The advantage of My Photo Stream is that the photos stored in it don't count towards your iCloud storage limits. Any images and videos in iCloud Photo Library do use this storage.

I want my photos to be backed up to iCloud, but I don't want them taking up loads of space. However, if I delete them on my device, they'll also be deleted from my iCloud Photo Library? Lisa White

1 Open Photos preferences

On your Mac, open Photos, then click Photos>Preferences and choose the iCloud tab. You can get the same options on an iOS device in Settings>iCloud>Photos.

2 Optimise device storage

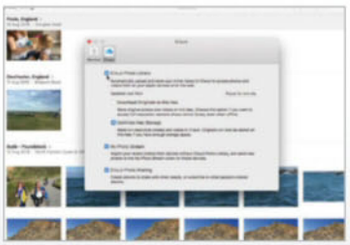
You'll have two options here – choose Optimize Device Storage and the full-sized versions of your photos will be stored in iCloud, while only small thumbnails remain on your device.

3 Check your storage

Wait a little while for the changes to be implemented, then tap General in Settings and choose Storage & iCloud Usage. This will show the available space on your iPad.

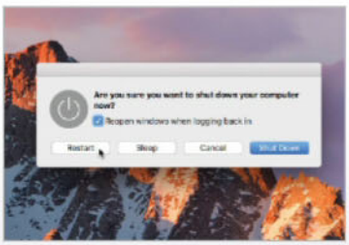
If you set up an iCloud family, you will automatically have a shared photo album with the other members. Turn the page to find out more.

Photos taken on my iPhone appear on my iPad within a few seconds, but they just won't appear on my Mac. Lee Park



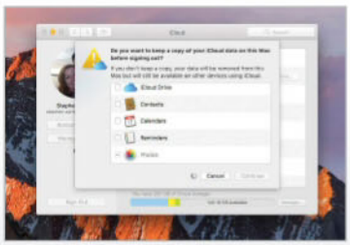
1 Check it's on

First, you need to make sure iCloud Photo Library is enabled on your Mac – if it isn't, switching it on will fix your issue. The option is in Photos>Preferences.



2 Restart your Mac

If that doesn't solve your problem, try the age-old technique – turn your Mac off, unplug it for a couple of seconds, then plug it back in and switch it back on again.



3 Sign out and in

If your problem still isn't solved, open System Preferences, choose iCloud, sign out, then sign back in again with the same account. This should jump-start the sync.

I'm having problems with iCloud Photo Sharing, and I'm not sure what's going on. Can you help? Viktor Petrov

Display name

Your display name will be the same as the name you've added to your iCloud account. To change it, open System Preferences>iCloud and edit it in Account Settings.

Video backup

Videos can't be backed up to iPhones or iPads, but they can be saved to Macs and PCs. Find them in the shared album within Photos, then right-click them and choose Import.

Missing comments

If you aren't seeing all the comments on a photo, try closing the app, turning off the iCloud Photo Sharing option in System Preferences>iCloud, waiting around a minute, then switching it on again.

Back up shared photos

When you are invited to a shared album, the photos in it aren't automatically added to your own Photos library. To back them up, select them all and choose Share>Save Photos.

Apple Expert

The one-stop column for Genius advice

My friend shared photos with me through iCloud, but he changed his account details and now they're gone. Can I get them back?

They won't be available to you again unless your friend shares them a second time. If you want to keep them permanently after that, select the album, then choose Share and select Save Images to add them to your library.

I deleted a photo by accident! What do I do!? Is it gone forever?

Don't panic – open up the Albums tab and find Recently Deleted. Here, all your deleted photos are kept for 30 days, so if you accidentally scrap something you can get it back almost instantly.

I've edited a photo on my iPhone, but I want to see the original on my Mac. Where has it gone?

Editing in Photos is non-destructive, so you can simply restore the image back to its original state on your Mac. Open it, choose the Edit menu, then click Restore to put it back to the original image.

iCloud problems solved

Apple Expert

The one-stop column for Genius advice

Someone in my iCloud family bought an in-app purchase with their Apple ID, but when I choose Restore Purchases it doesn't appear. Why not?
In-app purchases unfortunately don't transfer between accounts, even if you're in the same iCloud family. This is to stop one person buying currency in a game, for example, and then multiple people being able to spend it.

Can I add my friends to my iCloud Family Sharing list? What are the limitations?
Technically you could, but they would all have to share the same credit card for purchases, and you wouldn't have the option to approve their purchases, as they are adults. Unless you're really close to your friends, it's best to keep separate accounts.

My son has lost his phone! What can I do!?
When Family Sharing is set up, you will have the option to share each person's location with the group. If this was enabled, you can download the Find My iPhone app and use it to see the location of everyone's devices on a map – then play a sound from the lost device!

How can I set up a family photo album that will be shared between me and my family members in iCloud? May Blonde

I'm worried about adding my children in case they download stuff that isn't appropriate. Can I monitor everything?

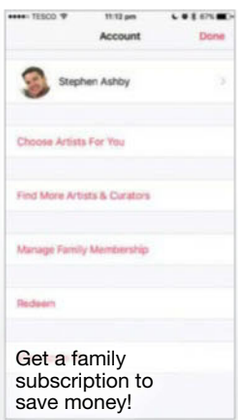
Rebecca Hudson

You can, as long as the member in question is under 18. When someone under 18 is added to your family, an option in iCloud's Family settings page will allow you to enable an option called Ask to Buy. This will ensure that every time they try to buy or download something from the App Store or iTunes, you will get a notification on your device, and can approve or deny the download. If the family member is over 18 this option won't be listed, and they'll appear as an Adult.

Can you share an Apple Music account with family members?

Matt Dowey

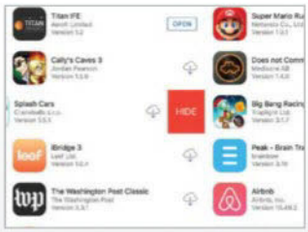
First, you need to set up your family in iCloud. Open Settings>iCloud on your iPhone and tap the Family Sharing option below your account name. A screen will appear – tap Get Started and invite your family members with their Apple IDs. Once they're added, you can get a special Family subscription to Apple Music for £14.99/$14.99 per month, which allows up to five other family members to use the full Apple Music service using their own Apple IDs.



Remember, if any of your family buys an album or a movie, you can download it to your devices from the Purchases tab for free!

How can I hide purchases made through iTunes or the App Store from my iCloud family members, such as apps that aren't suitable for kids? Carrie Smith

1 Find your purchases
First, open the App Store on your iOS device and select the Purchased tab from the bottom bar. On iPhone, this section is found within the Updates tab.



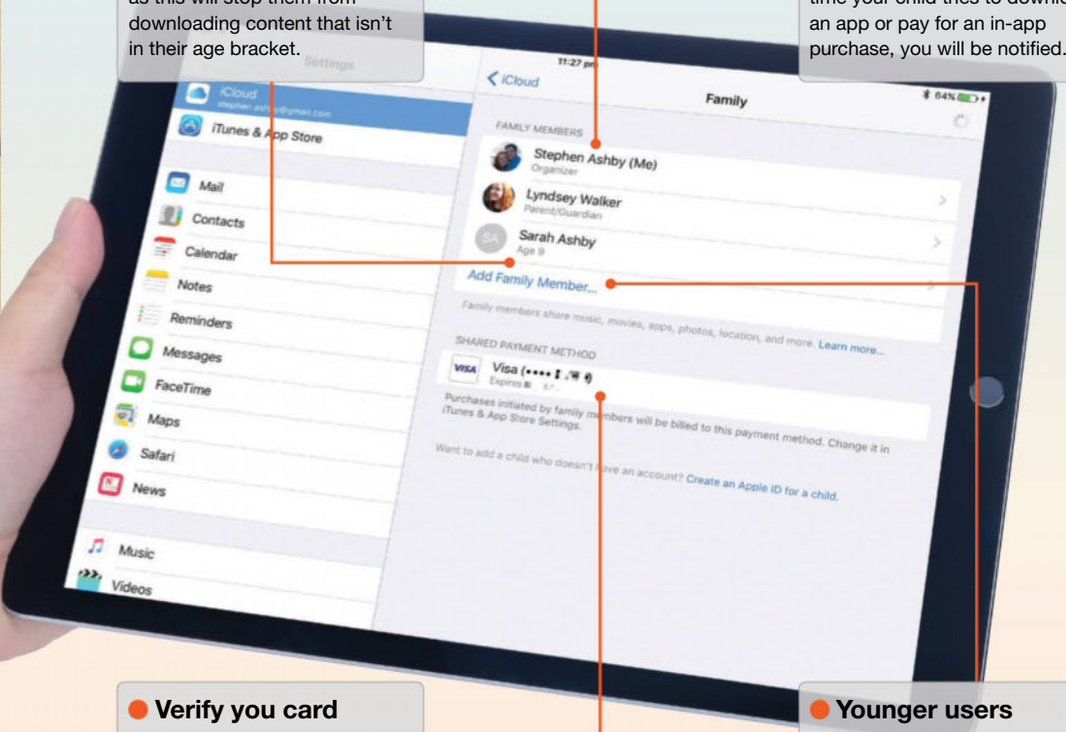
2 Swipe to hide
Find an app that you no longer want to see and swipe it left to reveal a HIDE option. Tap this option to remove the purchase from your list.

3 Movies and more
If you want to hide things like songs and movies bought in the iTunes Store, you'll need to move to Mac and do so in the Account section of iTunes.

My daughter wants apps on her iPad but she's only 12 – can she have an Apple account and be part of our iCloud family? Elaine Blunt

Enter the birthday
Make sure you enter your child's birthday accurately, as this will stop them from downloading content that isn't in their age bracket.

Enable Ask To Buy
Make sure that Ask to Buy is enabled – this means that every time your child tries to download an app or pay for an in-app purchase, you will be notified.



Verify you card
You'll need to verify the card details associated with the iCloud family in order to set up the account for the child in your family.

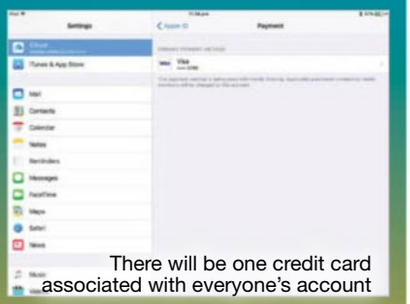
Younger users
As a parent, you can create a special Apple ID for children under 13, so that they can be included in the iCloud family if they own an iOS device.

There's an easy fix when iCloud isn't syncing properly

I have a Family calendar set up in iCloud that syncs with my family's devices. However, my iPad isn't showing the calendar.

Joanne Marsh

If iCloud isn't syncing properly, there's a quick solution that will normally solve your woes. First, go into the Settings or System Preferences app on your device and open the iCloud section. Choose Sign Out, and delete all of the information off your device (it will still be saved in iCloud), entering your password when prompted. Reboot your device and then go back into your iCloud settings and sign in. Wait for your content to sync and you should be up and running.



There will be one credit card associated with everyone's account

Why do my credit card details appear in the Family section of the iCloud settings? It's a little worrying!

Justine Keys

When you set up Family Sharing through iCloud, you can only use one credit card, which is spread between all accounts. This way app, movie and music purchases can be easily shared between users without any confusion about who has paid for what. You will need to specify which card you want to use, and can change it at any time. Make sure your family knows who will be paying for downloads, and remember that for anyone under 18 you can enable an option to get a notification to approve (or deny) any purchases by that family member.

iCloud problems solved

Apple Expert

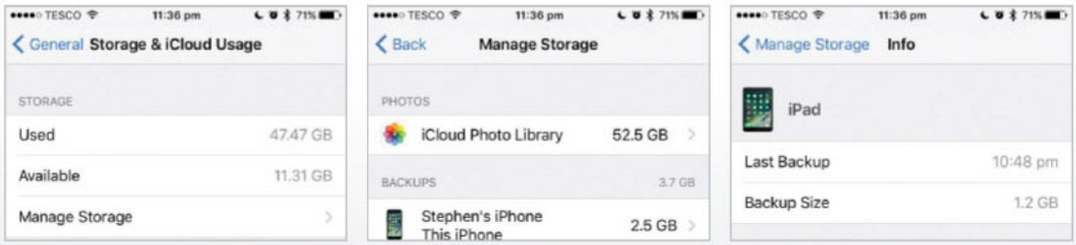
The one-stop column for Genius advice

I set up my iPad as a new device, but now I want to restore it from another device backup. Can I do that?
You can, but you'll lose all of your settings and content. Make sure you transfer anything important to a computer, then choose the Reset All Content and Settings option in the Settings app, before setting up the device again from the backup.

I want my iPad to back up to iCloud automatically but it never seems to do it. What's going on?
In order for iOS devices to back up automatically, they need to be switched on, plugged into a power supply, connected to Wi-Fi and locked. Leave it on and charging at night to ensure it backs up.

I'm about to do a software update on my iOS devices – how do I know if it's backed up to iCloud recently?
You should always do a backup before a software update just in case it causes a problem with your device. Open Settings and choose iCloud, then scroll down and select Backup. You'll see the last backup, and can tap Back Up Now to perform another one.

I've got an old backup from an iPad I don't even own anymore taking up space in iCloud. How can I get rid of it? Nick Bennett



1 Manage your storage

Open the Settings app on your iPhone and choose General>Storage & iCloud Usage. Here you can see how much space is still available in iCloud.

2 See your backups

Tap Manage Storage in the iCloud section and you'll see an overview of your storage, including your device backups. Simply tap the one you want to delete.

3 Delete one

You can now see when the last backup was, and how big it was. Tap Delete to remove it from iCloud storage completely. Remember, though – once it's gone, it's gone!

I keep getting a notification saying I'm running out of iCloud space. What can I do to cut down on my storage? Tony Moss

Manage photos

You can see how much space your photos and videos are taking up in this section. Head into the Photos app and have a purge of anything – especially videos – you no longer need.

View backups

Your device backups will all be listed here too. If you want to delete a backup of a device you don't need, or a backup that's taking up a lot of space, just tap it here and choose Delete Backup.

Remove app data

Apps like iMovie and some games will take up iCloud storage space too. You can tap on any app to see how much data it is using, and then delete any data that you no longer want to be stored.

Get an upgrade

The final option is to upgrade your iCloud storage to the next tier in order to give yourself some breathing room and stop those annoying messages from appearing. See the opposite page for more details.

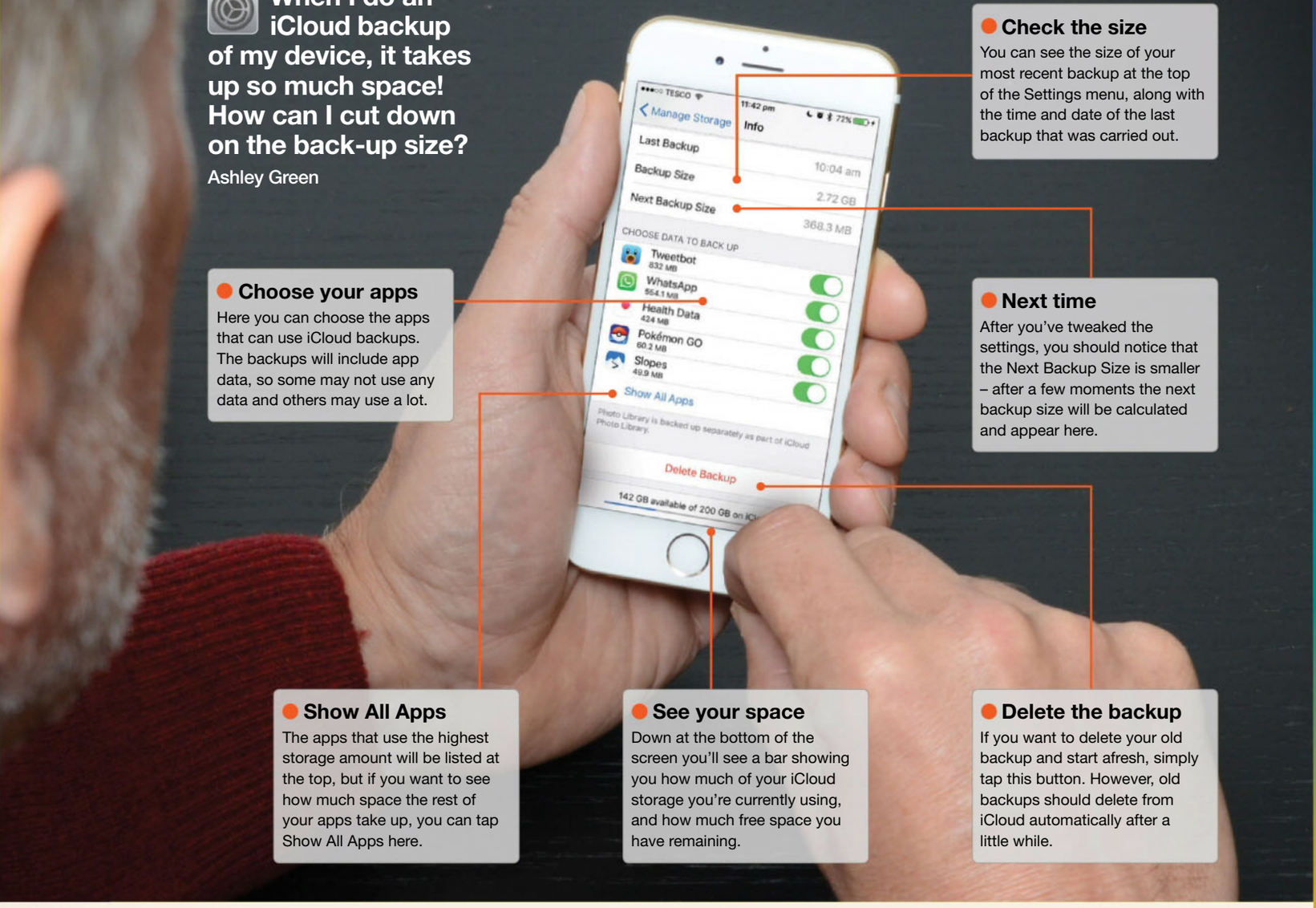
If you want a cheaper back-up option for your photos and files, consider using Amazon or Google's online storage options.

iCloud backups managed

Limit the space taken up by an iCloud backup

When I do an iCloud backup of my device, it takes up so much space! How can I cut down on the back-up size?

Ashley Green



Check the size
You can see the size of your most recent backup at the top of the Settings menu, along with the time and date of the last backup that was carried out.

Choose your apps
Here you can choose the apps that can use iCloud backups. The backups will include app data, so some may not use any data and others may use a lot.

Next time
After you've tweaked the settings, you should notice that the Next Backup Size is smaller – after a few moments the next backup size will be calculated and appear here.

Show All Apps
The apps that use the highest storage amount will be listed at the top, but if you want to see how much space the rest of your apps take up, you can tap Show All Apps here.

See your space
Down at the bottom of the screen you'll see a bar showing you how much of your iCloud storage you're currently using, and how much free space you have remaining.

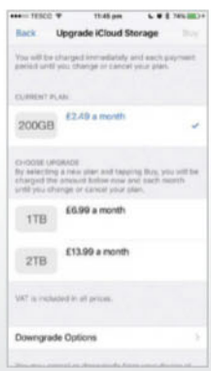
Delete the backup
If you want to delete your old backup and start afresh, simply tap this button. However, old backups should delete from iCloud automatically after a little while.

How can I stop an annoying pop-up appearing that tells me I am out of iCloud storage? Is it easy to upgrade my iCloud package?

Jin Shun

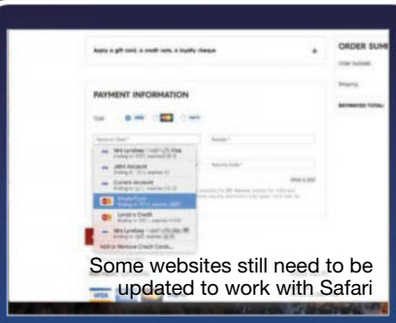
1 Move your stuff
If you want, you can free up space by storing any files elsewhere (such as Dropbox) or saving your photos to a back-up hard drive, then deleting them from iCloud.

2 Buy more storage
An easier, but more costly solution is to upgrade your iCloud storage to the next tier. Open iCloud settings and choose Storage, then tap Change Storage Plan.



3 Pay monthly
There are several tiers available, and each one will charge you monthly for the storage. You can downgrade again at any time if you change your mind.

iCloud problems solved



Some websites still need to be updated to work with Safari

I tried to automatically fill in my card details on a website but the drop-down menu wouldn't appear. What's happening? Charlotte Allen

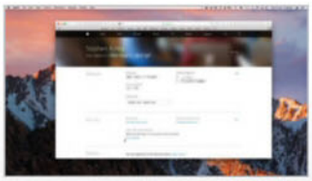
First, you should check that your card details are definitely saved properly by opening Safari Preferences, choosing the AutoFill tab, and clicking Edit by Credit Cards. You will see a list of all your stored cards in this menu. If they are all there, it may just be that the website you were trying to use isn't using a website form that is recognised by Safari. They are few and far between, as most sites have been updated and will work perfectly.

You can securely store passwords in iCloud Keychain

Safari keeps suggesting very complex passwords, but I'm worried I'll forget them. Emily Lewis

Safari has a great feature that suggests a random password made up of letters and numbers that's around 16 characters long, which is very secure. You can choose to have Safari remember the password for you so that next time you need to log in it's filled in already. In order for this simplicity to continue on your other devices, turn on iCloud Keychain through iCloud settings on your other devices and the password will sync automatically to your iPhone and iPad, so that if you forget the long and complex password, you'll still be able to log in.

I hear two-factor authentication is a lot more secure than a simple password. How do I set it up? Jonny Wilkins



1 Open Apple ID options
It's really easy to set up, and makes your account a lot more secure. Get started by heading to **appleid.apple.com** and logging in with your iCloud details.

2 Turn it on
In the Security section you'll see the relevant option. Click Get Started and answer your security questions to confirm that you are really you.

3 Confirm details
Once you confirm your identity, you'll be guided through setup, and you can set up the devices you trust as being safe. Remember to save your Recovery Key!

How do I use iCloud Keychain? I hear it stores all of my passwords and even my credit card information, but is it safe? Richard Harrison

Passwords and more
iCloud Keychain stores your login details and passwords for websites you visit, as well as logins for Wi-Fi networks and credit card details (without the security codes).

Safety first
You will need to sign in with your Apple ID every time you set up a new device on your Keychain, so no extra devices are added by accident.

Safe devices
Only devices that are logged in with your iCloud details and have been approved by you will have access to the Keychain, so don't worry!

Switch it on
You can switch on iCloud Keychain in the iCloud section of the Settings app on your device. You'll need to set it up with a security code the first time you use it.

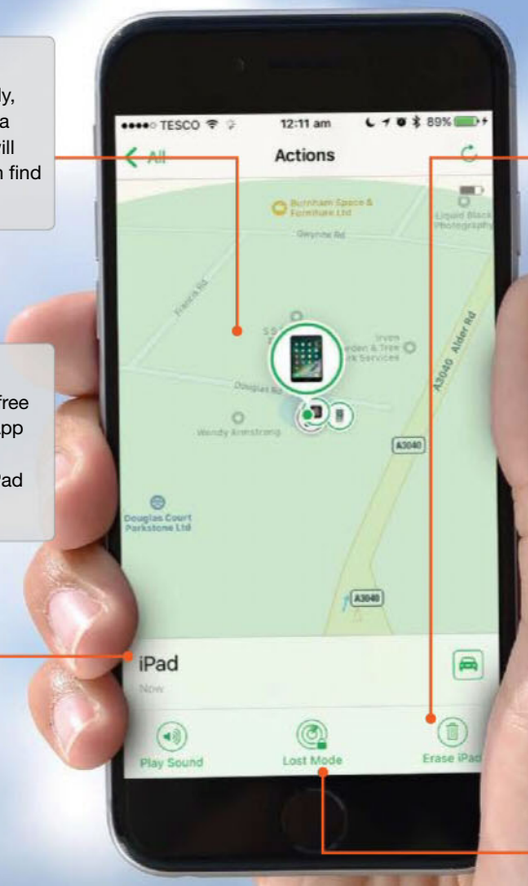
If you're trying to set up a new iCloud device with two-factor authentication but a code isn't coming through, get one manually in iCloud's settings.

My husband lost his phone last week and I'm worried if he gets a new one the same thing will happen. Is there any way to avoid this? Werner Greig

Family devices
If you set up an iCloud family, every device signed in with a family member's Apple ID will appear in the list so you can find it easily.

Lock or erase
If your device is further away, you can put it into Lost Mode, effectively locking it, or erase all of its data if you think it's gone for good and you want to stay secure.

Get the app
The Find My iPhone app is free to download from the iOS App Store. Just search Find My iPhone on your iPhone or iPad and get it.



Ping it
If your device is nearby, you can use the Play Sound option to have it make a loud noise so you can hone in on its location.

How can I control which passwords are shared in iCloud Keychain? I don't want some to be filled in! Drew Burne

You can manage your passwords using Safari on your Mac. Open Safari's Preferences and choose the AutoFill tab. You might have to input your Mac's administrator password, but once you're in you'll see every website with an associated password. Click one to see the full login details for the website – you can then get rid of any that you don't want to sync by clicking Remove in the bottom right. A few minutes later they should be removed from your other devices.

Is it safe to unlock my Mac with my Apple Watch? If so, how do I set it up? Sara Willis

The system uses Bluetooth to work out how far you are from your Mac, and unlocks it if you're within a few metres, so it is pretty secure. To enable it open the General tab of System Preferences and make sure Enable Handoff is checked. Then open the Security & Privacy tab and check the relevant box to allow your Watch to unlock your Mac. Next time you wake your Mac from sleep, it should automatically log in – as long as you're close.

Your Mac will only unlock if your Apple Watch is within a few metres of it

Apple Expert

The one-stop column for Genius advice

I heard that a lot of celebrities had their iCloud accounts hacked. Is my account in danger as well?
Possibly, although the hacking in that case was really just breaking through the celebs' weak passwords. The best defence is a strong, complex password and two-factor authentication to make your account really secure.

Can my wife approve App Store purchases for our kids on her device, or am I the only one who can do it?
She certainly can – you just need to head into the Family section of iCloud's settings and ensure she is listed as a Parent/Guardian, then she'll get approval requests as well as you.

When someone calls me, every device rings! It's a nightmare! How can I stop this from happening?
This is Continuity in action, but we understand the frustration! On your iPad, open the FaceTime section of the Settings app. You can switch off the Calls from iPhone option here to stop it ringing. There's a similar option in FaceTime Preferences on your Mac!

Apply a creative vignette effect

Change a photograph's mood in a variety of creative ways by adding a vignette

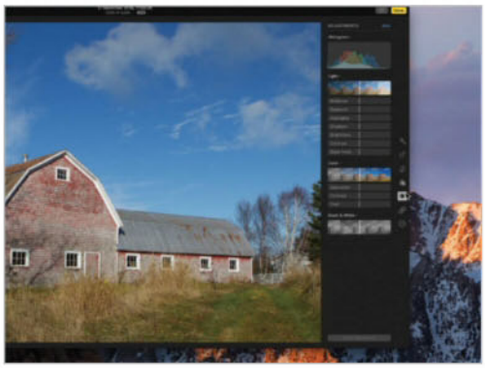
Difficulty

Time needed

10

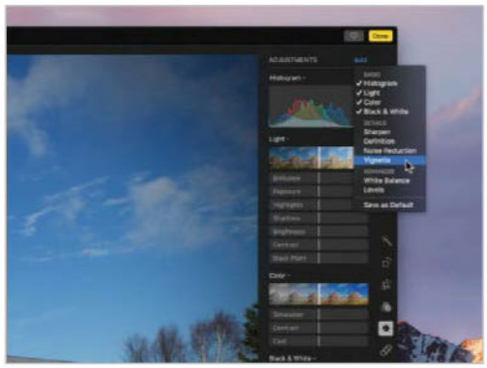
The term vignette refers to a lightening or darkening of the colours and tones around the edges of a photograph. During the early days of photography an uneven amount of light would enter the edge of the lens, causing an inconsistent exposure. This is why we tend to associate vignetted edges with old-fashioned analogue prints. Despite being a lens-related artefact to avoid, vignetting can creatively enhance a photo by evoking a mood. Thanks to Apple's Photos app we can give an image a more retro look by deliberately adding a vignette effect to its edges. We can also add atmosphere to our photographs by darkening edges with a darker, more moody vignette.

Step-by-step Add a retro-look vignette effect



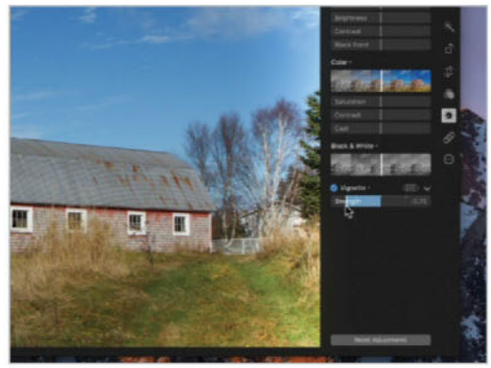
1 Access adjustments

Double-click on a photo that will suit a vintage look and then click the Edit Photo button in the top right of the workspace. Click the Adjust button to access the Adjustments panel.



2 Add vignette tools

Click on the Add button in the top right of the Adjustments panel and choose Vignette from the pop-up menu. The Vignette slider will automatically darken the edges.



3 Lighten the edges

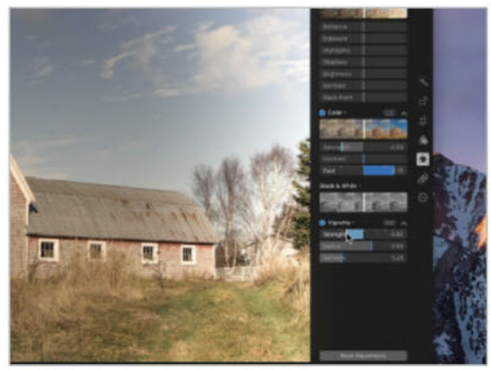
Drag the Vignette slider left to lighten the tones and colours at the edges of the image. A Strength value of -0.70 mimics the uneven exposure caused by a primitive lens.

4 Refine the vignette

Place the cursor on the right of the Vignette adjustment to access extra sliders. A Radius of 0.60 will expand the vignette into the image. Set Softness to 0.25 for a gentler blend.

5 Create retro colours

In the Color section, drop Saturation to -0.50 to produce washed-out colours that have faded over time. Set Cast to Sepia for a warm and friendly retro tint that evokes days gone by.



6 Dial it down

When using the Vignette tool's sliders it's easy to go too far and create an over-the-top retro look. Reduce Strength to a more subtle -0.40 to restore some of the blown-out edge details.

Once you've added a vignette you can toggle the Vignette panel's tick icon on and off to compare the edited image with the original.

Lighten or darken edges

Add creative vignette effects for a retro look

Access vignette tools

In the Adjustments panel, click the Add button and go to the Details section of the pop-up menu. Here you can choose to display the Vignette tool and its associated sliders.

Knowledge base

Peripheral Illumination

Modern lenses can still suffer from a little vignetting. To ensure an even exposure some cameras have a Peripheral Illumination setting in their menu. This electronically processes the image as it is captured to adjust vignetted edges so that they are evenly exposed. Apps such as Lightroom also have a lens profile tool to counteract any lens's vignette effect.

Adjust Strength

This slider lightens or darkens the edges of the frame to mimic traditional lens-induced vignette artefacts. A negative value lightens the edges, while a positive value darkens them.

Copy Adjustments

After tweaking Vignette sliders and adjusting colour, right-click on the image and choose Copy Adjustments. You can then go to another image and choose Paste Adjustments to instantly add your creative vignette effect to it.

Radius

The Radius slider affects the spread of the vignette effect. A higher value draws the vignette towards the centre of the shot. A lower value creates more subtle vignetting near the edges.

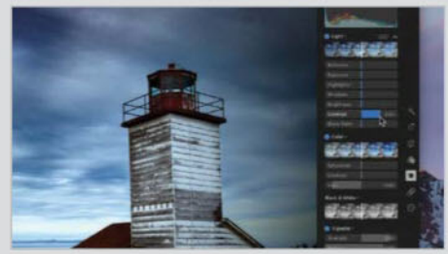
Add a spooky mood

Lightening edges with the Vignette sliders works well for adding retro or romantic vibes to subjects (such as a wedding portrait). Alternatively, by darkening the edges of the frame you can add a more gloomy sense of menace. The darkened edges help evoke encroaching shadows and adds danger and drama. Here's how to combine the Vignette tools with some cooler colour corrections to create a moody landscape.

"By darkening the edges of the frame you can add a more gloomy sense of menace"

1 Darken the edges

Find a subject that will best suit a moody makeover. In Photos, access the Vignette tools and sliders (see our main walkthrough). Set Strength and Radius to 0.80, and set Softness to 0.25.



2 Cool the colours

To complement the darkening edges, cool down the colours for a more nocturnal hue. Go to Color and set Cast to -0.80. Then head to Light and increase Contrast to 0.50 for more striking shadows.

Search your library by objects

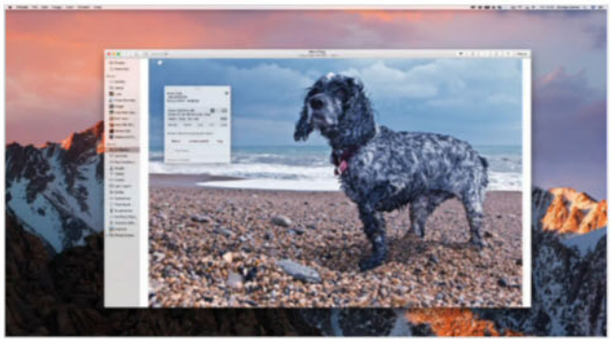
Use Photos' object-analysing search tools to discover specific pictures with ease

Difficulty

Time needed

10

Thanks to our continually growing collection of digital photos it can be a struggle to find particular pictures, even if they are listed as chronological memories. Photos helps make this tedious task less of a chore by analysing your library of images to categorise their contents. The new Faces section enables you to find favourite people with ease, but what's less obvious is that Photos can also recognise certain objects in a shot if they fall into particular categories. So if you need to find photographs of cats or cars then the Photos app can give you a head-start in your search. Here's how to make object-based searches of your Photos library.



Find specific objects

Make a search based on visual analysis of a photo's content

Search field

To find photos that contain a specific subject (such as a car), type the desired subject in the Search field. Photos will search files visually for relevant objects, plus it will look for appropriate keywords in a file's metadata.

Knowledge base

Marvellous metadata

Photos' face and object-recognition tools analyse pictures' pixels to produce search results. Photos can also search an image file for other information, such as the GPS coordinates of where it was shot. Info attached to the file is referred to as metadata. When you add keywords, titles and a description to a photo this info is also stored in its metadata.

Results

As you type in an object-based search term a list of results will appear in this drop-down menu. The number of photos contained in each search result are also displayed here.

Hide failures

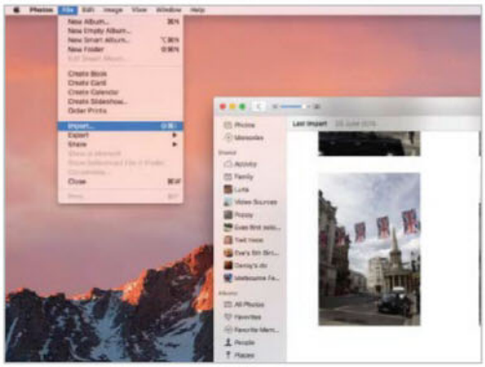
Here Photos can't differentiate between a car and a steam engine cabin as it just sees a man looking out of a vehicle's window. Right-click on a failed result and choose Hide 1 Photo to remove it from the current search results.

Thumbnails

Click on a result in the Search field's drop-down menu to display the object-based results as thumbnails. Double-click on a thumbnail for a closer look at the image.

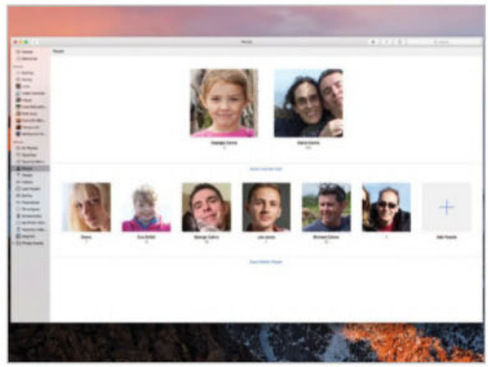
In theory Photos should be able to recognise thousands of objects in your images. You'll find a list of them here: **goo.gl/xkZUDU.**

Step-by-step Find photos using objects



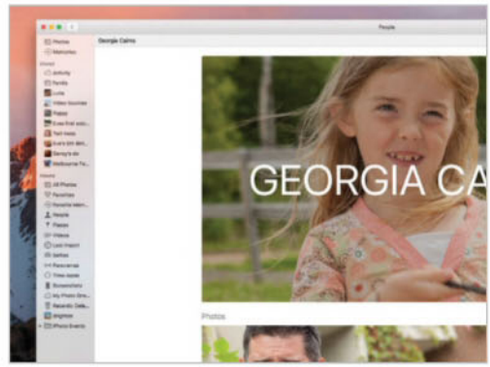
1 Scan the library

For object recognition to work, Photos needs time to scan your library. It will also scan new photos as they are added, so they may not immediately show up in an object search.



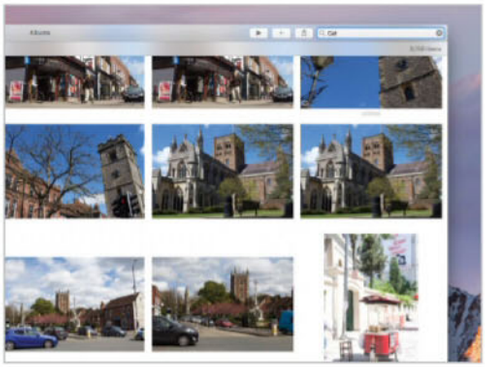
2 Search for people

To check that Photos has been analysing your photos for visual content, click on the People icon. Photos will present you with thumbnails containing shots of any people it can find.



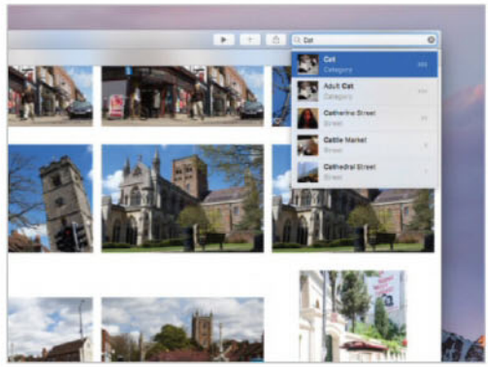
3 Object recognition

As well as recognising individual faces in your collection of images, Photos can also recognise a wide range of objects (though there is no Object panel in the Albums section).



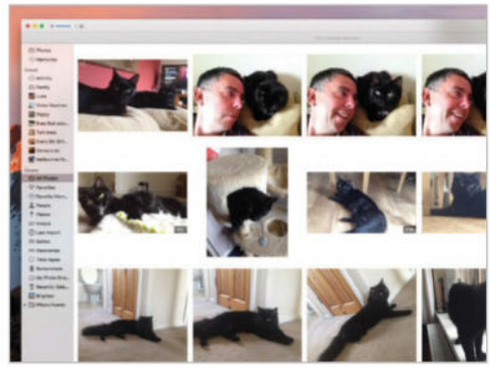
4 Search for objects

To try out an object-based search, go to the Albums section and click on All Photos to display everything in your library. Go to the Search field and type in an object such as 'cat'.



5 Choose a Category

A drop-down list will appear based on the search term. This list includes Categories (such as Cat, Dog, Car). It will also include any files that contain the searched object as a keyword.



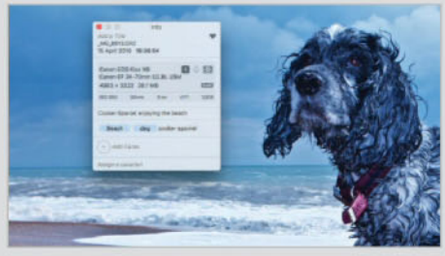
6 View results

Click a Category to display all the files in your library that contain that particular object. Photos can also recognise certain objects (including cats!) in video files too.

Get clever with keywords

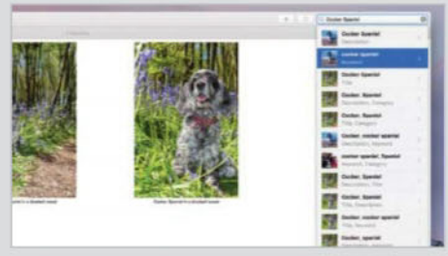
Photos' object recognition skills aren't perfect. When we searched for pictures of dogs many photos of cats also appeared in our list of results. Object recognition is a useful weapon in Photos' arsenal but it can't win the photo-finding battle on its own. To help Photos find specific shots, it's good practice to add keywords to your images. You can then find specific subjects much more easily in the future.

"To help Photos find specific shots, it's good practice to add keywords to your images"



1 Add keywords

Click on a photograph to target it and then press Cmd+I to open the Info panel. Type in a description of the photo. Add as many keywords you need to describe the content. Think 'what', 'who', 'where' and 'when'.



2 Search for keywords

Once you've added keywords and a description to an image's metadata, you can use the Search field to display any photos containing those keywords. This is very useful if an object- or place-based search fails to find your desired shot.

Master iMovie's Precision Editor

Achieve frame-accurate editing to create smooth-flowing sequences

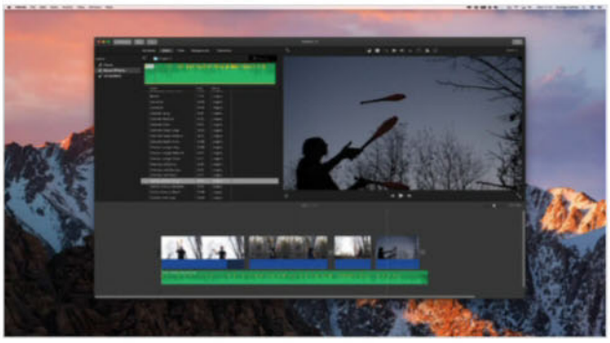
Difficulty

Time needed

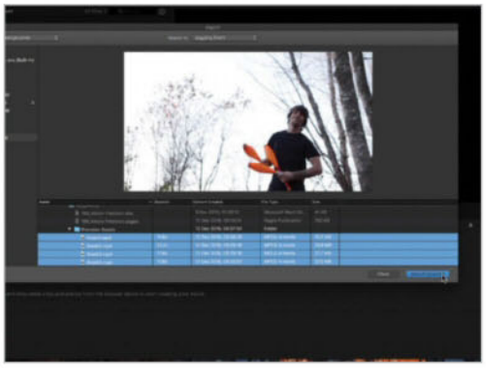
10

Download available

When filming a sporting activity, you can change your camera position to capture a subject using different angles and shot sizes. If the action is repetitive you can cut between different takes to add visual variety to the project. We'll show you how to use iMovie's frame-accurate Precision Editor to cut a series of action clips together, to make the subject's action match perfectly when we cut (or mix) from one clip to the next. This creates a seamless sequence of shots. You can also fine-tune the edit point to cut earlier or later to the next shot. Thanks to the Precision Editor we can make the juggler in our supplied footage look much more proficient by cutting out mistakes.

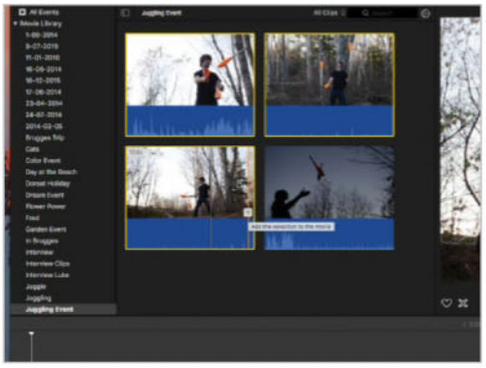


Step-by-step Produce frame-accurate edits



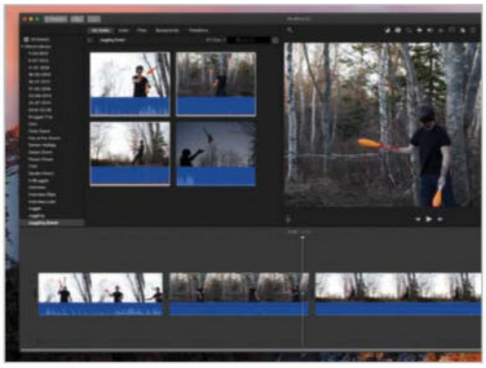
1 Import clips

Go to Projects and click Create New>Movie. Go to File>New Event. Label it 'Juggling Event'. Click Import Media. Browse to our supplied source clips. Click Import Selected.



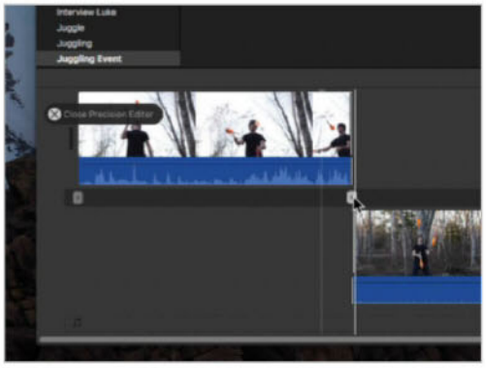
2 Add clips to timeline

Shift-click to select Shot01, Shot02 and Shot03 in the browser. Click Shot03's + icon to add the three selected clips to the timeline. The three shots will appear in consecutive order.



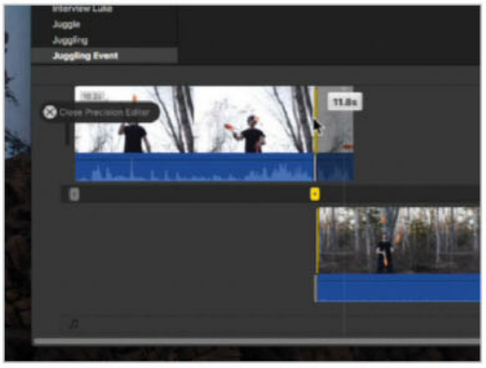
3 View the clips

Play the footage. As the shots are unedited the action doesn't flow as smoothly as it could. At the end of Shot02 the juggler fails to pull off a trick that he performs successfully in Shot03.



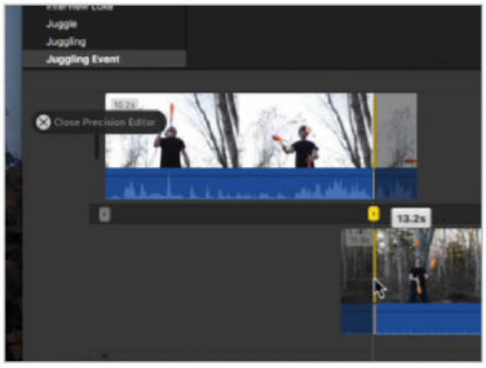
4 Add edit point

Click on Shot01. Choose Window>Show Precision Editor. Click the grey rectangular Add Edit Point icon above Shot02. Shot01 will jump to the top. Shot02 will stay on the bottom.



5 Set Shot01 out-point

Shot01 on the top is the outgoing clip. Shot02 below is the incoming clip. Drag Shot01's grey vertical edit point bar until the red-handled club is about to land in the juggler's right hand.



6 Set Shot02 in-point

On the bottom track drag Shot02's edit point bar to fine-tune where it starts (its in-point). Place the red-handled club so that it matches the position of the same club in Shot01's out-point.

To quickly access the Precision Editor, double-click on the end or beginning of a clip in the timeline.

Master the Precision Editor

Fine-tune an edit point's cuts and transitions

Knowledge base

Split edit

When you cut between two clips the audio will cut too. This can make the cuts appear more abrupt. When using the Precision Editor you can drag a clip's audio edit handle independently of its video edit handle. This enables you to make sound from one clip overlap another, which helps merge the adjacent clips together in a less jarring way.

Refine an out-point

Drag an outgoing clip's edit handle left to specify an earlier out-point for the clip. Drag the edit handle right to create a later out-point. The out-point frame selected by the edit handle will appear in the Viewer.

Add edit point

When you click a grey rectangle above a clip it adds an adjustable edit point to two adjacent clips. The outgoing clip appears in the top track. The incoming clip appears in the bottom track.

Use a transition

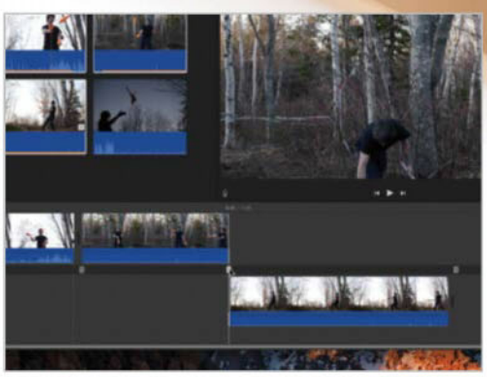
Once you've matched the movement between two cuts you can close it and add a transition between an edit point. You can then pop back into the Precision Editor and fine-tune the position and duration of the transition.

Play back the edit

To see how your cuts are shaping up click in this middle grey bar between the outgoing and incoming clips. Tap the Spacebar to play the sequence and see the cuts made using the edit handle.

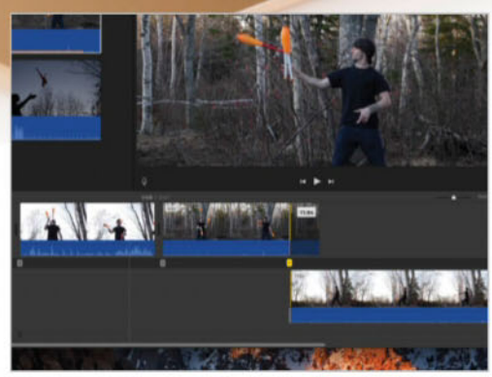
Refine an in-point

You can refine the incoming clip's in-point by dragging its edit handle left or right. Here we can match the action in the outgoing close-up so that the juggler's moves continue smoothly in the incoming wide-shot.



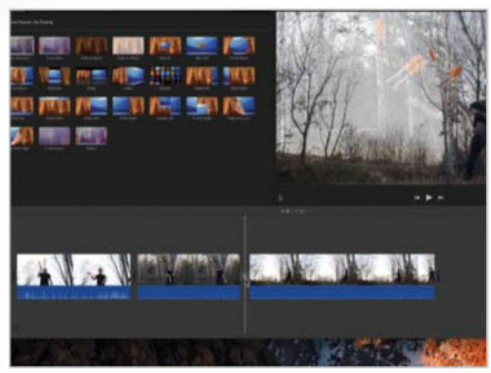
7 Check continuity

Play the sequence and the action will flow smoothly between Shot01's trimmed out-point and Shot02's trimmed in-point. Click the grey rectangular Add Edit Point icon above Shot03.



8 Match the action

In Shot02 the juggler fails a trick. Drag Shot02's edit point until the three clubs have just left the juggler's right hand. Drag Shot03's edit point so the action matches in the wider shot.



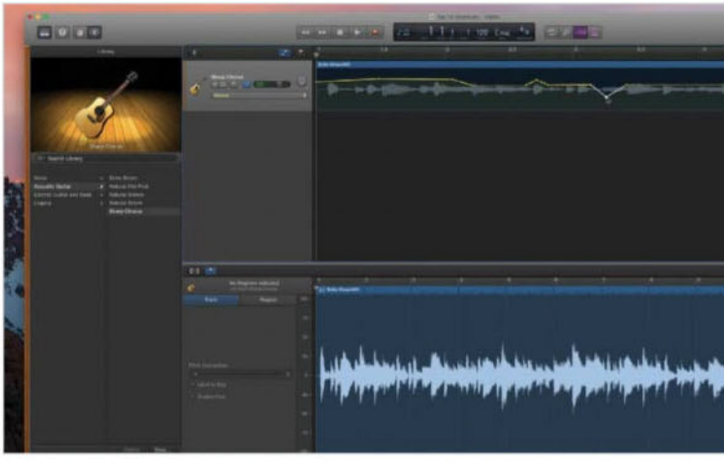
9 Add a dissolve

Click Close Precision Editor. The action will flow smoothly (and without juggling errors). You can drop a Dissolve transition between two cuts for a gentler blend between the matched moves.

Top 10 keyboard shortcuts

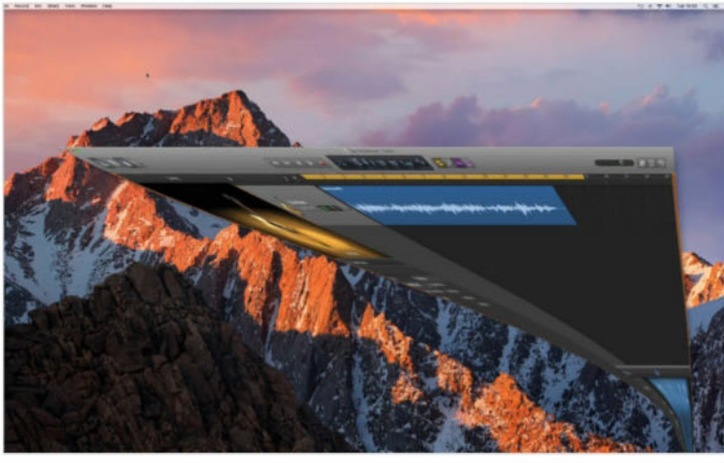
Take GarageBand productivity to the next level with these essential keystroke commands

As with most modern software apps, GarageBand has to vie for our increasingly precious time and attention. Its intuitive music-making features need to do more for us, while still providing enough quick-fire usability and accessibility to streamline operations. Without the benefit of touch controls, GarageBand on the desktop provides keyboard shortcut commands to speed up workflow and keep core features at your fingertips. Power users will doubtlessly know the benefit of navigating the workspace this way, toggling panels open, performing track edits and much more. However, composers of all levels will appreciate the inherent timesaving advantages with learning just a handful of the most essential keystrokes.



Delete automations

Advanced users familiar with editing track automations will know that manipulating points can be fiddly. First, show or hide automations with the A key before using the moderately dexterous Ctrl+Shift+Cmd+Delete to remove all automations on a selected track.

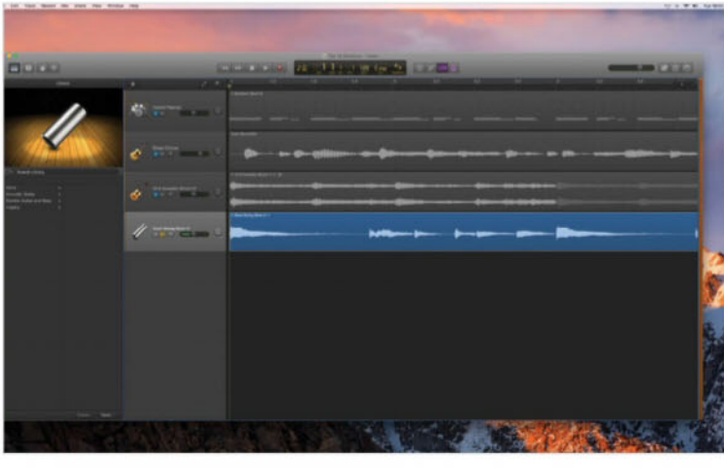


Disappearing acts

Within a busy studio desktop it can be useful to rapidly vanish GarageBand without losing it completely. To minimise the window without the mouse simply press Cmd+M or Cmd+H to hide GarageBand and reach whatever lies behind.

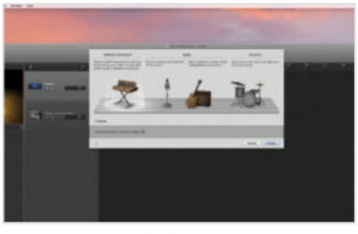
Mute/solo toggling

Muting and soloing multiple tracks via individual header buttons is very time intensive. This can be alleviated by hitting M or S on selected tracks as a basic shortcut. A more advanced one prefixes these with Ctrl+Alt+Cmd to unmute or unsolo all tracks.



Quick recording

To quickly start and indeed stop recording into a track, simply tap the R key. Especially useful when stood with a guitar hanging from your neck, associated keystrokes include C for toggling on/off the cycle region.

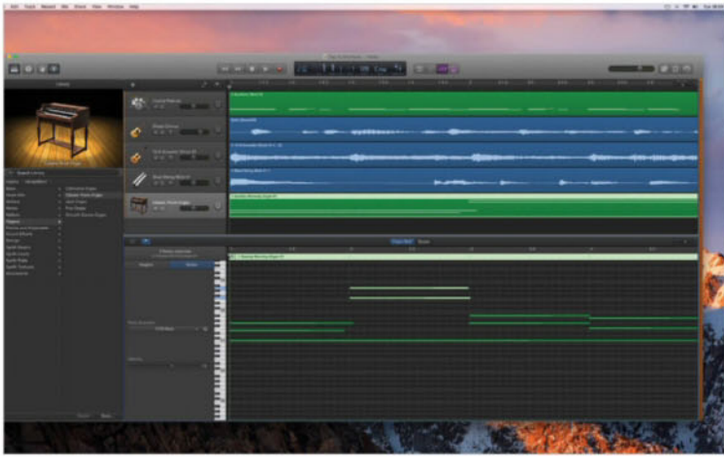


Instant tracks

If you need to add a new track nice and quick, there are three shortcuts worth knowing featuring the Opt/Alt key. With Alt+Cmd+N you can bring up the new track dialogue to choose, or modify with the A or S keys to add new audio or software instrument tracks.

Transpose like pros

Editing notes within MIDI regions can be tricky when shifting them accurately along the piano roll. When transposing selections, press Alt+Up/Down arrows to shift a semitone either way. Shift up and down octaves instead with Alt+Shift+Up/Down.



One of the most memorable GarageBand shortcuts is perhaps the one you'll use the most, with the Spacebar starting and stopping project playback.

Play piano with keys

Use the keyboard to play software instruments in the Musical Typing window

Musical Typing

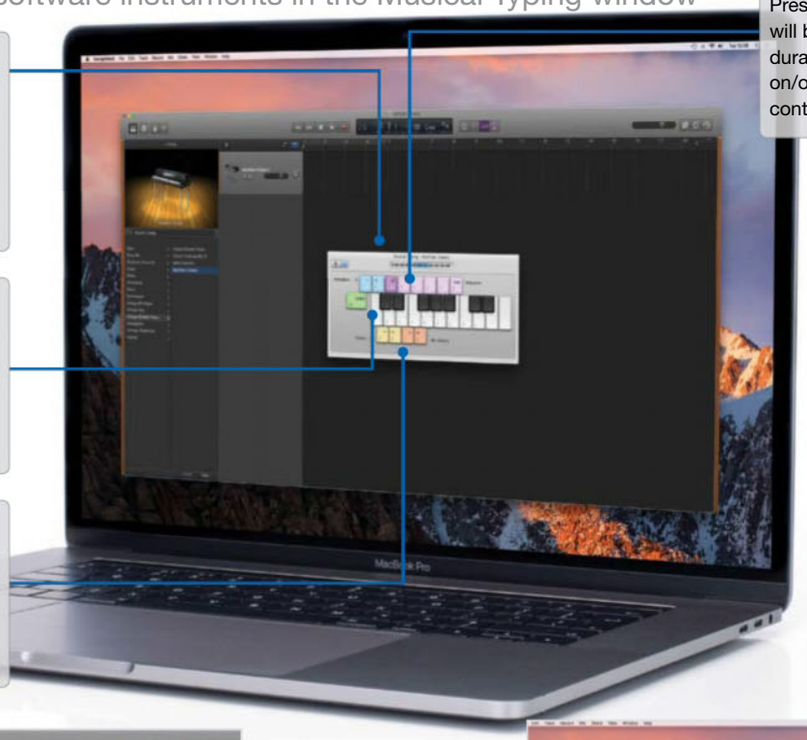
Open the window via Window>Show Musical Typing or with Cmd+K, floating the panel over the workspace. Musical Typing enables piano notes to be played by clicking the on-screen keys or via the keyboard as labelled.

Piano keys

There are 18 piano keys representing the current section of the keyboard shown above. The keys from A-K span an octave of 12 notes, alongside those for controlling additional functions.

Octaves and Velocity

You can quickly cycle up and down the selected keyboard octaves, low to high and left to right, by pressing the Y or X keys. In addition you can lower or raise the key velocity using C or V.



Pitch Bend and Modulation

Pressing the 1 (minus) or 2 (plus) keys will bend a note down or up for the duration held. Modulation is toggled on/off with the 3 key, with keys 4-8 controlling the mod wheel min-max.

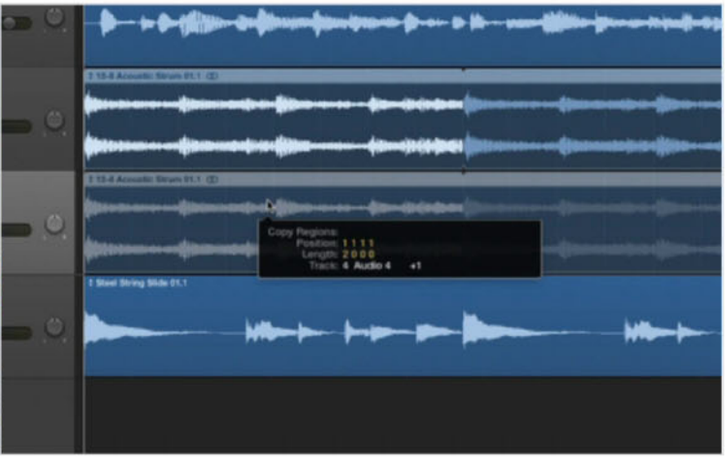
Knowledge base

Force Touch with trackpad

If you have a trackpad connected with Force Touch capability, GarageBand provides additional function access based on force clicking interface elements. These include the ability to create new MIDI regions, add audio files, open new tracks, add Editor notes and insert automation points.

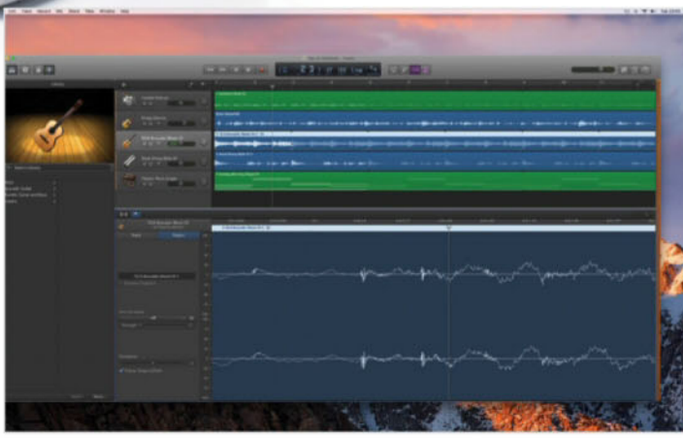
Swifter saving

One of the most important things you can forget when busy and short of time is actually periodically saving your precious project. You can shortcut a quick save of course with the Cmd+S combination, or initiate a Save As to perhaps commit a new version to disk with Shift+Cmd+S.



Double rush

Duplicating tracks is useful for doubling up when arranging. To duplicate a selected track you can use Cmd+D, while Cmd+C and Cmd+V perform basic copy/paste operations. Selecting a region and holding Alt allows a duplicate to be dragged out and dropped.



Show panels

Showing and hiding the myriad of panels within the GarageBand workspace is one of the first basic shortcut sets anyone should learn. This includes showing or hiding Smart Controls with B, the Loop Browser with O, the Library with Y, the Piano Roll with P and the Editor with E.

Zooming marvellous

Getting up close and personal with your music is crucial when it comes to making editing tweaks. For this you need zoom, both within the tracks workspace or Editor panes, which can be achieved very simply via Cmd+Left arrow to zoom out or Cmd+Right arrow to zoom in.

Unlock Logic's Advanced Tools

Discover a world of hidden talents with Logic's Advanced Tools setting

Difficulty

Time needed

20

Logic Pro X is a full-blown music-making powerhouse for professionals, containing all the tools necessary to create top-notch musical masterpieces, so it's easy to understand why it's so popular with famous names like Calvin Harris and Jonas Blue. However, some of the more advanced professional features are hidden away in a bid to make the software less intimidating for new users. Thoughtful though this approach may be, it can inhibit things if you're trying to perform a certain function only to find that it's apparently missing from the app. So the question is, how do you configure the software so that all the high-end stuff you might need is accessible? Read on…

Advance and be recognised

Unlock Logic's treasury of advanced features

Knowledge base

Additional options

You can use these checkboxes to select only the options that make sense for the type of project you're currently working on. For instance, if you're working in stereo, you can uncheck the Surround checkbox to hide away all of the unnecessary surround mixing options that you won't need if you only have two speakers connected to your system.

MIDI

Checking this box enables access to the MIDI Environment, the mystical place that controls the flow of MIDI data within Logic. Pretty advanced stuff!

Destructive audio editing

Enabled by ticking the Audio checkbox, destructive editing is the kind that permanently alters the structure of an audio file on the hard disk.

Disable/Enable

Use the buttons in the bottom left-hand corner of the Advanced Tools control panel to enable or disable all the additional options at once. These can only be selected with Advanced Tools enabled.

Take control

Control surfaces are hardware devices that use physical controllers such as knobs, buttons and faders to control Logic's features. This option allows them to be precisely configured.

Using Advanced Tools doesn't have a significant effect on audio playback, so most users will probably want to leave them on most of the time.

Step-by-step Unlock Advanced Tools and additional editors

1 Default view

When Logic ships, Advanced Tools are usually turned off by default, giving the app a very similar look and feel to GarageBand to make GarageBand users feel at ease.

2 Window of opportunity

To get an idea of what features are initially available in this mode, click on the Window menu. The only editor available from here at this point is the main Arrange window.

3 Access panel

To access the Advanced Tools control panel, just select the Advanced Tools option from the Logic Pro X>Preferences menu. The panel will open up.

4 Big tick

Turn on all the additional features by ticking the Show Advanced Tools checkbox. Logic's main window will close briefly and reopen with the new advanced interface.

5 New look

Click the red button to close the window. The most obvious change is that the fake wooden end cheeks have gone, and Logic now looks like a totally different animal.

6 On the menu

Checking the Window menu now reveals a different story – lots of different editors are now accessible from this list, such as the Score and Audio File editors.

7 Special events

A new Event List Editor button has appeared in the top-right corner in the toolbar. This enables you to view all MIDI data within the selected MIDI region as a chronological list.

8 Tooled up

This extra button on the left of the main toolbar reveals a second toolbar, offering one-click shortcut access to some of the more often-used editing functions.

9 Project management

Project handling becomes more versatile in Advanced mode. You can save alternative versions of projects that can be consolidated and exported as new projects.

Master compositing techniques

Learn how to combine two video layers together and remove compositing artefacts

Difficulty

Time needed

20

Compositing is the creative art of combining two video clips together to produce a more interesting juxtaposition. After filming your subject against a coloured backdrop you can use Final Cut Pro's keying tools to hide the background and replace it with another video clip. However, there are many pitfalls to overcome in order to create a clean composite clip. If your coloured backdrop is unevenly lit then patches of colour may remain visible in the composite footage. Your foreground subject may also suffer from holes that reveal parts of the underlying video clip. Here's how to create a cleaner composite and remove common compositing artefacts.

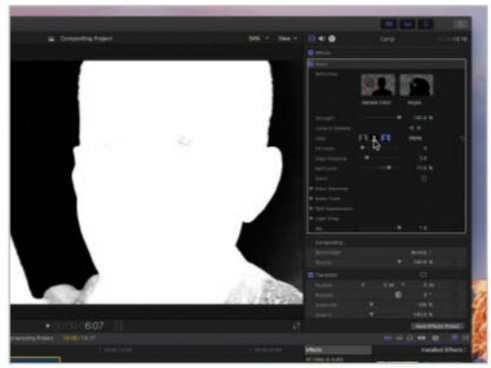
Step-by-step Create a clean composite image

1 Add clips to timeline

Drag your background clip to the timeline, then drag your bluescreen clip to the layer above. Here we don't have enough blue card to fill the frame so there will be a hole in our composite.

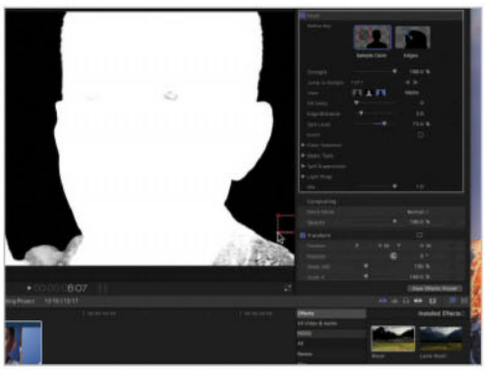
2 Insert key effect

Go to the Keying section of the Effects browser. Drag Keyer onto the top clip. The blue backdrop will vanish. The lack of blue card at the left means some of the background clip is hidden.



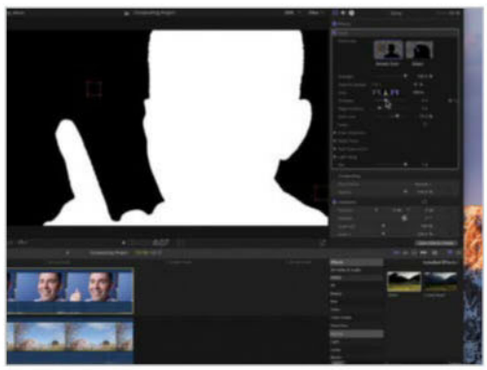
3 Identify problem areas

In the Video Inspector's Keyer section, set View to Matte. White areas will remain 100% solid, black areas will be 100% transparent and grey areas will cause a patchy mix between layers.



4 Refine the key effect

Choose the Sample Color tool. Draw rectangles over patchy grey backdrop areas to refine the key. Sample backdrop colours at different parts of the timeline if the lighting changes.



5 Fill holes

Our example clip still has grey patches within the figure. These will create holes in his head. Drag the Keyer's Fill Holes slider right until the head is a solid white.

6 Soften the edges

In the Keyer's View section click on Composite to see both clip layers. Toggle open Matte Tools. Drag Soften right to reduce sharp edges. Drag Shrink/Expand left to hide colour fringes.

You can buy a large cheap blue or green backdrop card from a stationary shop, perfect for producing talking-head style composite images.

Key out a coloured backdrop

Refine a composite image to cleanly combine two video layers

Knowledge base

Bluescreen on a budget

We shot our bluescreen footage by hanging a blue sheet of card behind our subject. We filmed the subject indoors so that the card remained static (and the levels of blue remained constant throughout the clip's duration). We positioned our subject to avoid casting shadows on the card, as shadows can create patchy holes in the composite image.

Shape Mask

If you don't have enough blue card to fill the subject's background then you can make the problem area transparent by drawing a Shape Mask. Make sure that the subject's hand doesn't stray into this area or it will vanish.

Sample Color

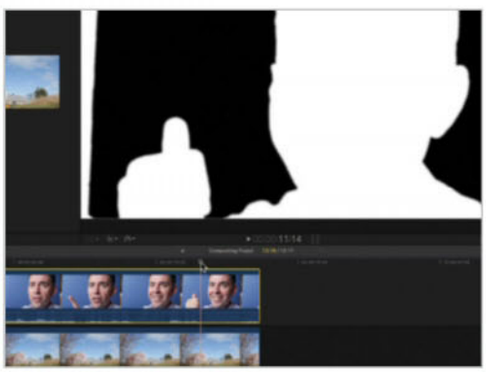
If lighting changes during the clip then the backdrop's keying colour may vary, causing patchy holes to appear. Use the Sample Color tool to select any problem areas so that they become totally transparent.

Matte tools

Once you've keyed out a backdrop colour to reveal a new background clip, you can use the Matte tools to refine the edge around your subject. Here we've softened the subject's sharp edge to make them look less cut-out.

Keyer

By dragging the Effects browser's Keyer onto a clip with a coloured backdrop, you can automatically replace the top layer clip's coloured backdrop with footage from the layer below.



7 Check the matte

Go back to the Matte view and scrub through the footage to check the head remains a solid white while the background is patch free. You'll see the subject's softer edges more clearly too.

8 Zoom out

Go back to Composite view. Set the Viewer to show the footage at 50% so you can see some space around it. In the Effects browser's Mask section, drag Draw Mask onto the top layer.

9 Draw points

Click to place anchor points that draw a selection over the unwanted area. Place the last point on the first. In the Inspector's Draw Mask section, tick the Invert Mask box.

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Filter out spam with SpamSieve

Use SpamSieve to automatically sort the good emails from the bad ones

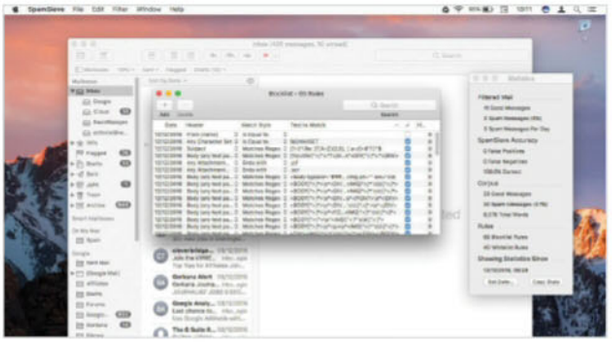
Difficulty

Time needed

10

Junk email messages are an irritating problem for many people and our inboxes fill with spam every day. Deleting them takes time and effort that could be used for something more productive. Some email services provide spam filtering and Apple Mail has a spam filter, but is junk still getting through?

SpamSieve is a powerful plug-in for Mail and other apps that provides more powerful and more accurate spam filtering. It comes with a comprehensive set of rules for detecting spam and once installed, you might never see junk messages again. Download the plug-in from **c-command.com/spamsieve** and follow our guide to set it up and train it to recognise spam.



SpamSieve settings

Get to know SpamSieve and block junk mail for good

Knowledge base

Filter email

Mail has built-in spam filters and also provides a facility for creating rules to deal with incoming emails. You could use these together to filter junk, but it would require a lot of time, effort and some technical knowledge. SpamSieve does it all for you and makes the task easy. Simply install it and let it do its thing. It just works.

The Blocklist

Open the Filter menu and click Show Blocklist to see a list of the rules used to block spam emails. You can delete any rules that actually mistake good emails for bad ones in the window that appears.

Check the status

In the Filter menu is an option to show the Statistics window. Here you can check on SpamSieve's performance and see how many emails it has blocked and let through. It's interesting.

Spam folder

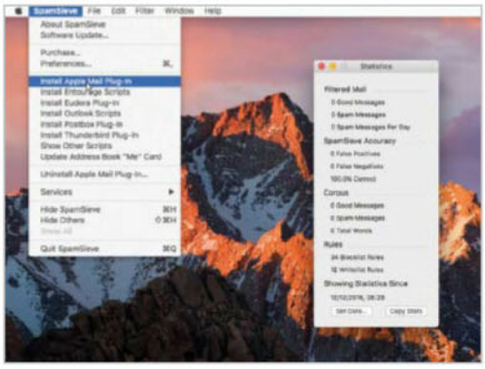
When SpamSieve uses its collection of rules to determine that an email is spam, it moves it from the inbox into the Spam folder. You can then click Spam to see all the emails that have been caught.

Add a rule

SpamSieve's rules are comprehensive and are fine for most people. However, experts can add their own rules to deal with incoming messages. Click this menu and then enter the rule.

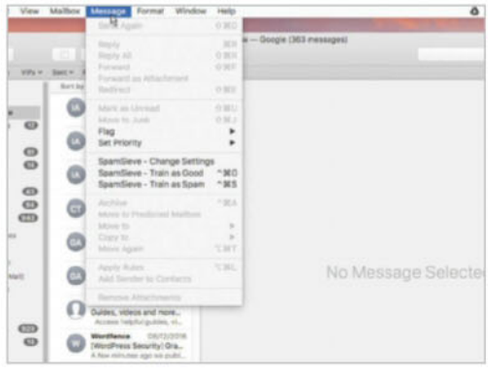
SpamSieve has a good Help menu that has everything you need to know and more. Check it out if you want to go further than the basics.

Step-by-step Eliminate spam with SpamSieve



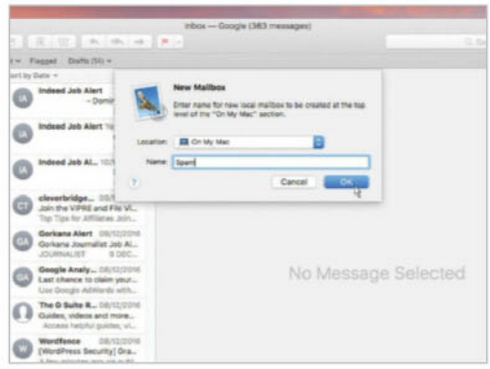
1 Install the plug-in

After downloading SpamSieve and moving the app to the Applications folder, run it. Before doing anything else, go to the SpamSieve menu and click Install Apple Mail Plug-in.



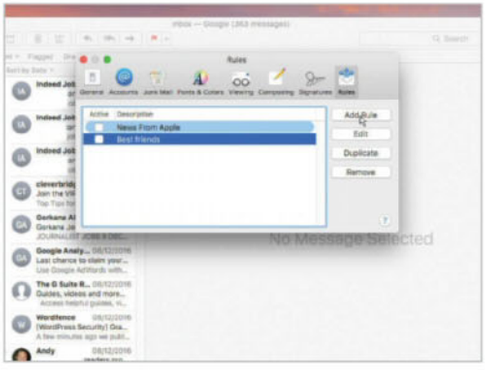
2 Check the install

Has SpamSieve installed correctly? Open the Mail app and then look in the Message menu. There are three new SpamSieve menu options for settings and training.



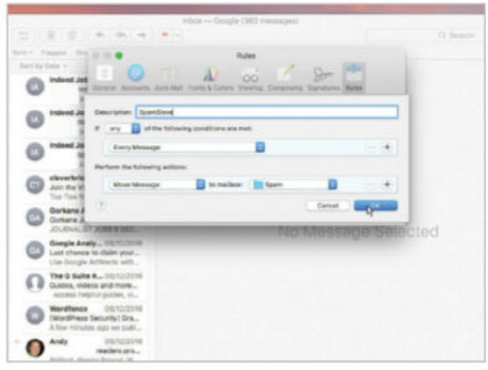
3 Create a mailbox

SpamSieve requires a mailbox called Spam. Open the Mailbox menu and select New Mailbox. Set the location to On My Mac and the name to Spam (with a capital first letter).



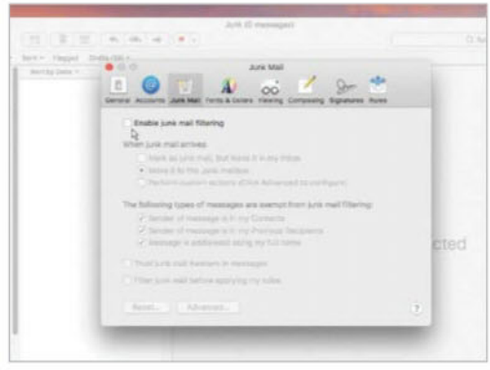
4 View the rules

Go to the Mail menu and click Preferences. Select the Rules tab and the rules for sorting incoming emails are listed. This is how SpamSieve filters emails. Click Add Rule.



5 Create a rule

Name it SpamSieve and select Every Message in the options below. Set the action to Move Message to mailbox Spam. After creating it, drag it to the top of the rules list.



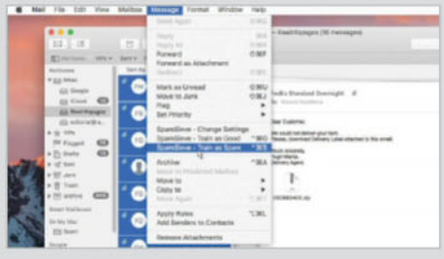
6 Disable Junk Mail

SpamSieve replaces Mail's spam filtering, so select the Junk Mail tab and clear the tick against 'Trust junk mail headers in messages'. Clear 'Enable junk mail filtering' too.

Train SpamSieve

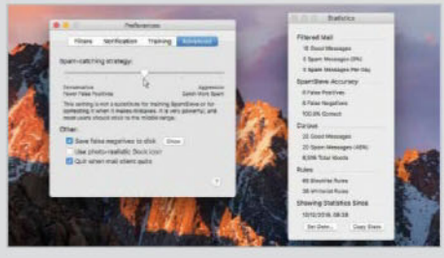
SpamSieve works quite well right from the start, but it is not perfect and it must be trained in order for it to learn which emails you class as spam, and which you do not. You need to spend some time with it at first, showing it what you consider to be good emails and what you consider to be unwanted spam. By doing this, the spam filters in the plug-in learn to recognise the characteristics of messages you want to see and those that you don't. By doing this it will whitelist or blacklist senders, and recognise content that is unwanted.

"The spam filters learn to recognise the characteristics of messages you want to see"



1 Teach it lessons

Select the inbox and then select one or more emails that are spam. The more you choose, the better SpamSieve will learn. Select SpamSieve - Train as Spam in the Message menu. Select good emails and then Train as Good.



2 Tweak the settings

Select Preferences in the SpamSieve menu and choose the Advanced tab. Use the slider to make the spam detection more conservative or aggressive, depending on how much spam is getting through. Combine this with training.

SizzlingKeys

Use keyboard shortcuts with iTunes

With handy app SizzlingKeys you can control iTunes without leaving your current app

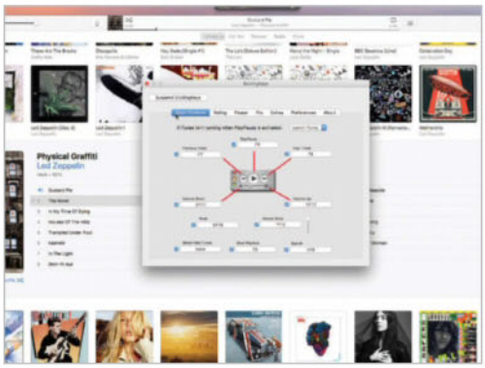
Difficulty

Time needed

10

For many Apple users there's little better than having music booming away while you work. Much of the time this soundtrack will be provided by iTunes, but when multitasking between active applications on macOS it can become a headache keeping control of what's playing. Although most of our keyboards sport function hotkeys for play/pause, skip and volume, more useful commands are natively limited – which is where SizzlingKeys helps out. SizzlingKeys is a lightweight app available via the Mac App Store that utilises keyboard shortcuts without switching from the current foreground application. With it you can effortlessly switch playlists, search your library and much more.

Step-by-step Navigate iTunes with keyboard shortcuts

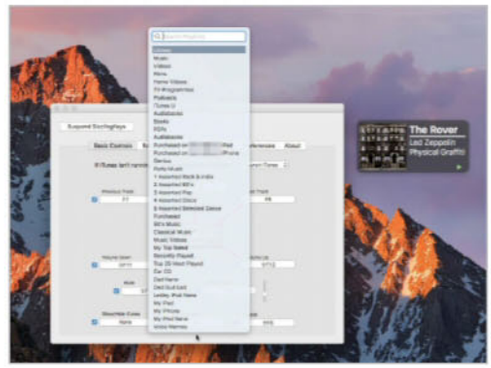


1 Playback defaults

With iTunes and SizzlingKeys launched, the Basic Controls tab defines default playback commands such as play/pause, previous/next, volume, mute and opening iTunes itself.

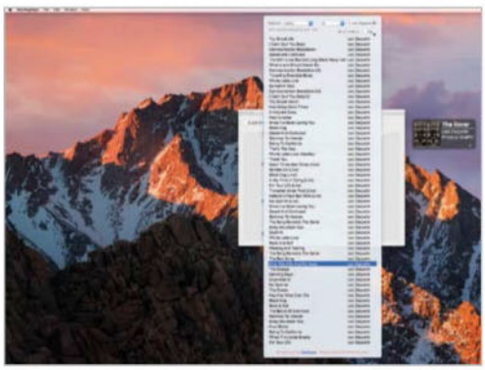
2 Custom shortcuts

Basic Controls start by using the (Fn+)F6-F12 keys with Shift and Ctrl modifiers. Customise these by simply clicking the button and entering alternatives into the prompt.



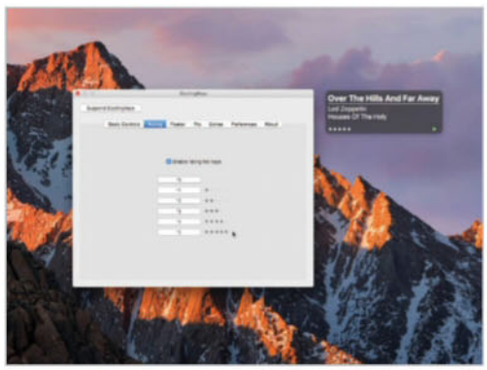
3 Show playlists

A key extra feature is the ability to browse between iTunes playlists. Press the default Fn+F6 shortcut to reveal a pop-up playlist menu that can be searched and selected.



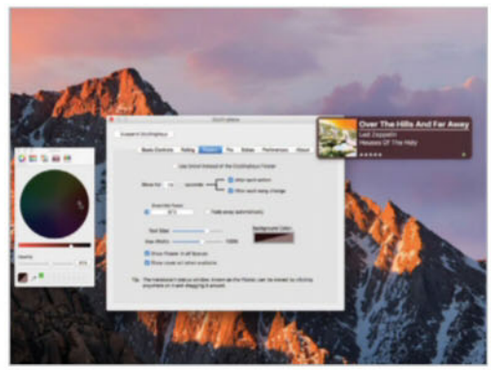
4 Song search

Alternatively, hitting the Shift+Fn+F6 default shortcut opens a search box where a whole iTunes library can be viewed before choosing to play a song or add to your queue.



5 Quick ratings

SizzlingKeys enables shortcuts for rating songs as you listen. The Ratings tab toggles this on and defines them by default as Ctrl+(0-5), denoting the amount of stars.



6 Floater options

The Floater box displays current track selections and actions. Use the Floater tab to define how long and when it should show, along with how it should look on screen.

Modifier keys are used in conjunction with Function to control SizzlingKeys by default, and these include Shift, Ctrl (^), Opt/Alt and Cmd.

Signposting the Sizzle

Journey inside the streamlined SizzlingKeys interface and its core options

SizzlingKeys menu bar

SizzlingKeys places an icon in the dock and features its own menu bar when active in the foreground. From here you can access the main SizzlingKeys window, visit Preferences, check for updates and more.

Knowledge base

Function keys

SizzlingKeys assigns some of its default playback commands such as play/pause, previous/next track and mute to the F7-F12 Function keys. However, on most Mac keyboards these are mapped to audio playback automatically and therefore needn't be overridden. They can still be used but must be prefixed by the Fn (Function) key and then any of the modifier keys as required.

Floating window

Known as the Floater, this small translucent status window appears in the bottom-left corner by default but can be dragged to position as desired. It displays the current track selection with album artwork.

Window tabs

The SizzlingKeys window has a button to suspend the app if required, with a row of seven tab buttons below. Here you can cycle through options for defining shortcuts for Basic Controls, Rating, Floater and Extras.

Customisable shortcuts

Options for the Basic Controls show all the commands for the most common operations around playback, volume, playlists and search. Toggle these off using the checkboxes or click each button to customise by entering a new keystroke.

SizzlingKeys: Free versus Pro

SizzlingKeys can be freely downloaded as a trial version that offers access to many of the most important control features. However, the registered version, available via Mac App Store, adds 'pro' commands you can view within the Pro tab from the main window. These include skipping forwards/backwards by set duration, shuffling, toggling repeat and controlling system volume. Here we'll look at how you can obtain both versions.

"The registered version adds 'pro' commands within the Pro tab from the main window"

1 Download the trial

You can try out SizzlingKeys for free via developer Yellow Mug Software's website. Visit **yellowmug.com/sk4it** and hit the Download Now button, download, double-click and follow the prompt to drag the app icon into your Applications folder.

2 Buy via App Store

The full Pro version of SizzlingKeys can be purchased from within the trial or indeed via the Mac App Store for £3.99/$4.99, with the latest app version compatible with OS X 10.7 or later. You will also need iTunes 12 downloaded.

Secure files on a USB flash drive

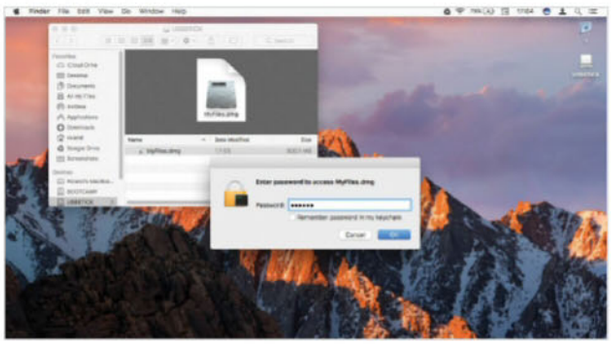
USB sticks are easily lost, so here's how to make sure no one can access the files on it

Difficulty

Time needed

10

FileVault can be used to encrypt the contents of the Mac's internal disk, but what about external disks? Files you back up to external drives and files you carry in your pocket on USB flash drives are at risk. USB sticks are very easily lost and you don't want anyone to be able to access the files on them. You should securely encrypt the contents so no one can access them without a password. There are two ways to encrypt files on an external drive or USB stick and it takes just a few minutes to make them secure. We'll show you how to create encrypted disk image files and then how to encrypt the whole drive. Plug in your USB flash drive and let's get started.



Create encrypted storage

Build a disk image to securely store your files

Knowledge base

Encryption options

Two encryption methods are described here and you can either create an encrypted DMG file or encrypt the whole drive. Which is best? A DMG file can be copied, moved to another disk, backed up, emailed and so on. This makes it more flexible than encrypting the whole disk. However, whole disk encryption is simpler to set up and use.

Where it's saved

Encrypted disk image files can be saved anywhere. Either create it on the USB flash drive or create it on the desktop and copy it to the drive afterwards. No-one can open it without the password.

Set the size

Enter the size of the DMG file. There is no size limit, but you might want to leave some space on the USB flash drive for other files that do not need to be encrypted.

Pick the format

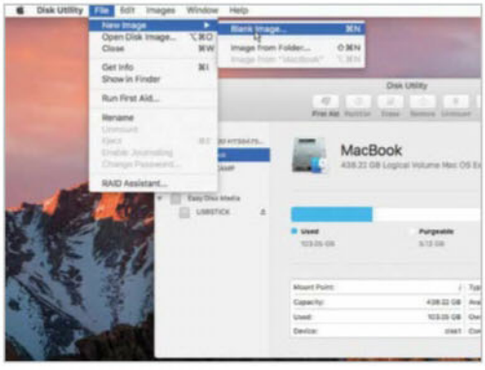
Set the Image Format to read/write disk image. This makes the disk image work like a disk drive and you can use it to save files, read files, delete them and so on.

Select the encryption

A disk image file is not encrypted by default and anyone can open them. Make sure you select one of the encryption options so that your files cannot be accessed by anyone else.

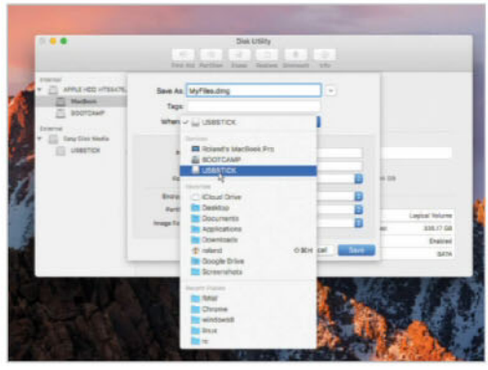
128-bit and 256-bit AES encryption are two widely used encryption methods that are regarded as very secure. Lock your files with them.

Step-by-step Securely store your files



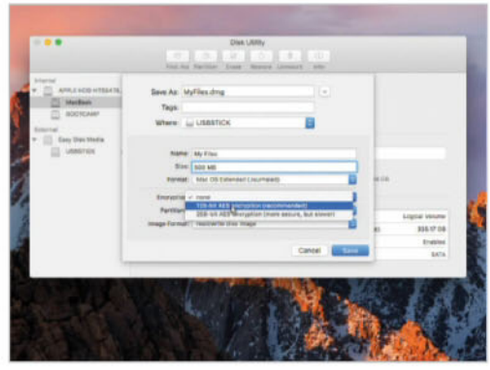
1 Start Disk Utility

Open the Utilities folder and run Disk Utility. Go to the File menu and select New Image>Blank Image. This menu option is used to create a new empty DMG file on the disk.



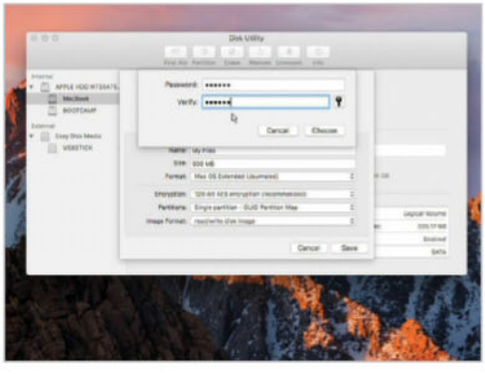
2 Set the location

Enter the filename for the DMG file in the Save As box at the top and then click Where to choose where to save it. Select the USB flash drive in the list of devices.



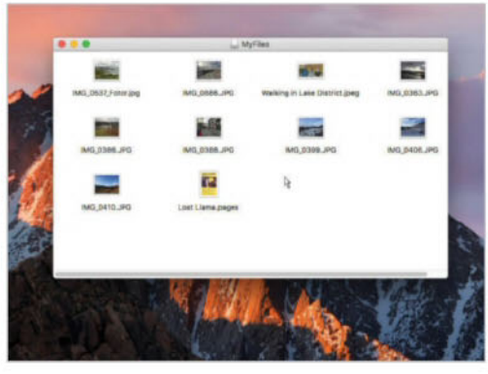
3 Select the encryption

Enter a name and size for the DMG and then click Encryption. There are two options; 128-bit AES is recommended because it is faster than 256-bit and is secure enough.



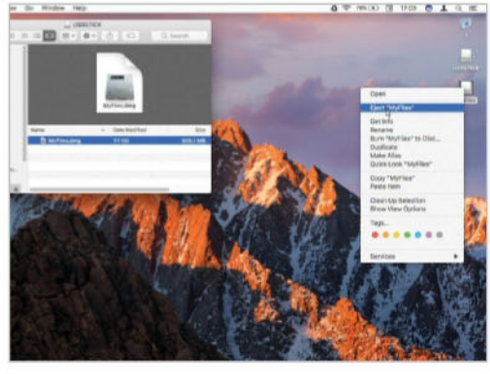
4 Pick a password

After selecting the encryption type you must then enter a password, twice in case of typing slips. Do not forget this because it is the only way to access your files.



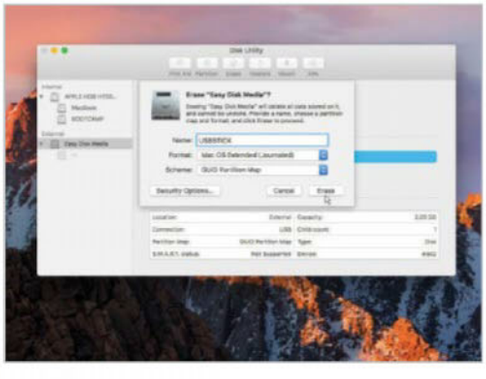
5 Save your files

Click the Save button to create the encrypted DMG file on the USB flash drive. A Finder window is automatically opened afterwards. Use it like a disk drive to store files.



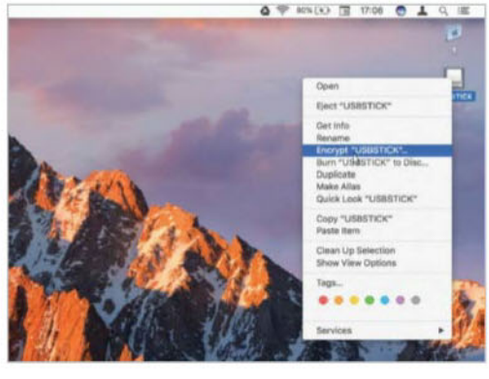
6 Lock your files

After copying files to the DMG file, Ctrl+click it and select Eject or drag the icon to the Trash to securely lock it. Double-click it and enter the password to reopen it.



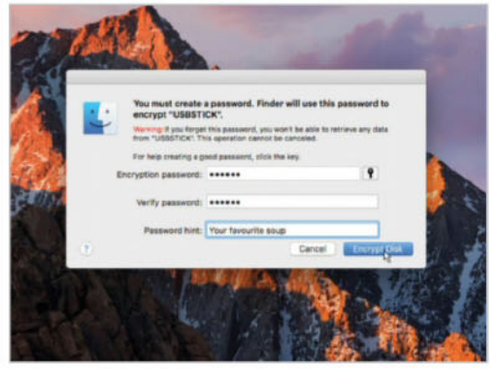
7 Erase the drive

It is also possible to encrypt the whole USB flash drive. Select it in Disk Utility and click Erase. Set the format to Mac OS Extended and the scheme to GUID Partition Map.



8 Encrypt it

After formatting the USB flash drive, Ctrl+click the icon on the desktop and select the Encrypt option. Only disks that have been correctly formatted can be encrypted.



9 Set the password

Enter the password twice. You will need to enter it whenever the USB flash drive is plugged into the Mac, so don't forget it. Enter a password hint and click Encrypt Disk.

Sync files between devices for free

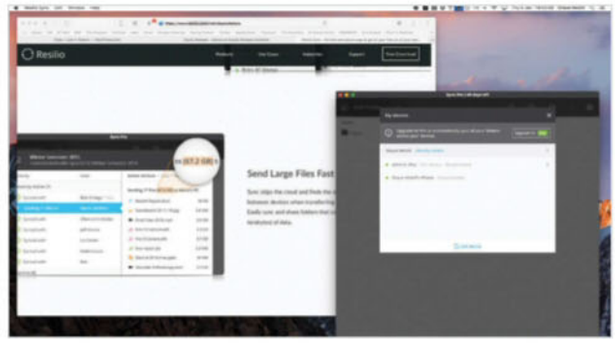
You can now sync files between multiple devices without having to pay a monthly charge

Difficulty

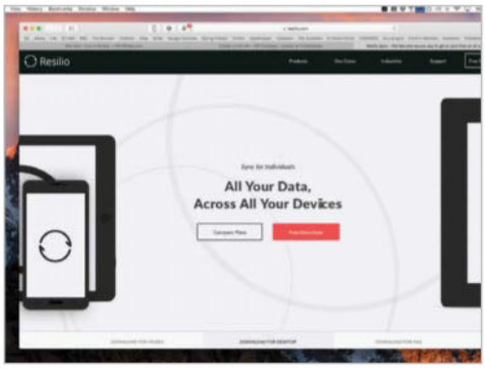
Time needed

10

There are many services available that enable you to synchronise files between your devices so that you can access them anywhere, but most either come with restrictions on the number of files you can store or with a monthly subscription charge. This is great if you have a need to synchronise files every day, but for occasional use and the peace of mind that always having access to your important files brings, you may want to look at Resilio Sync. There are two plans available ranging from free to a one-time fee of $39.99, and a business plan that can be used by multiple users with premium support as an added incentive.

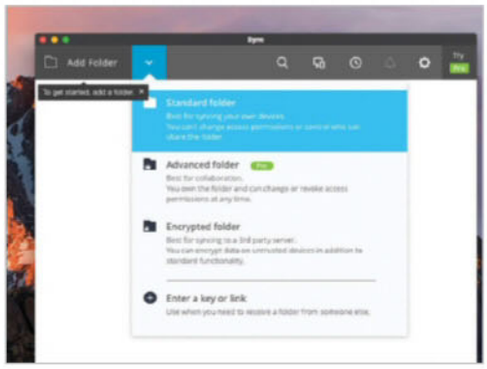


Step-by-step Sync your files everywhere



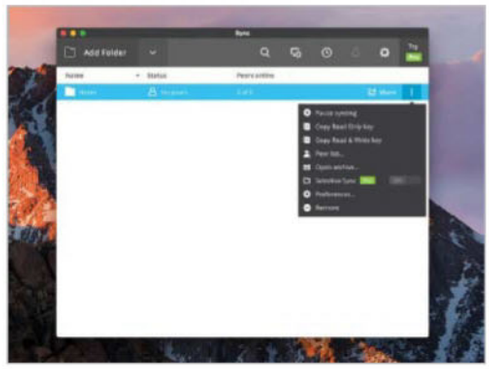
1 Download the application

Go to **resilio.com** and download and install the macOS app. You can also head over to the iOS App Store and download the iPhone version. Both apps recognise who you are.



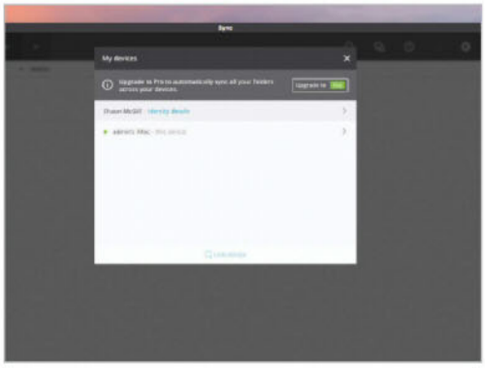
2 Add a folder

Once you have completed the minimal setup, you should click the Add Folder option at the top. Select Standard Folder and then navigate to the one you need to sync.



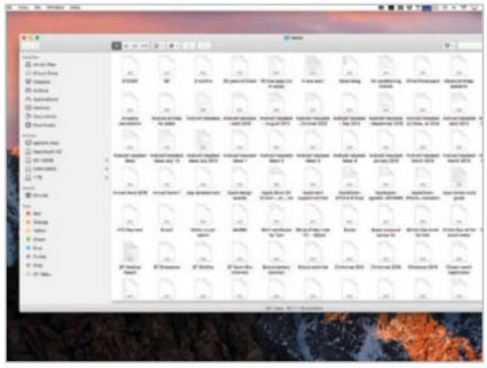
3 Let it sync

After the folder has been added, click the three dots on the right to check the status. Let the synchronisation complete before you go any further. It is worth the wait.



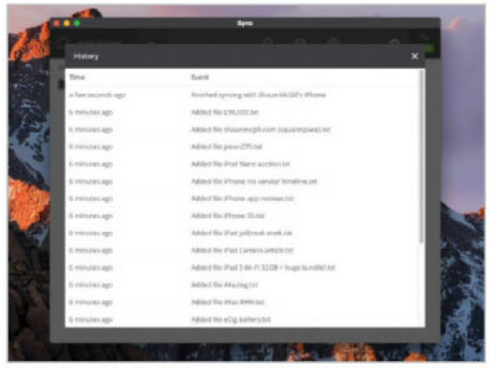
4 Add a device

Click the My devices icon at the top and then click Link device at the bottom to add your iPhone or iPad. You can scan a QR code with your iPhone camera to link them.



5 Device syncing

If you have a Pro account and have followed the previous step, you will now be able to access the files on both devices at any time. It's close to being fully automatic.



6 Check the history

The small clock icon at the top can be clicked to check the history of your syncing. The app is fully secure, but this is useful as an extra check if you want to be sure.

The Pro version lets you control bandwidth usage to ensure that your other web-connected devices work as they should while syncing lots of files.

Familiar syncing

Find your way around the minimalist Resilio Sync interface

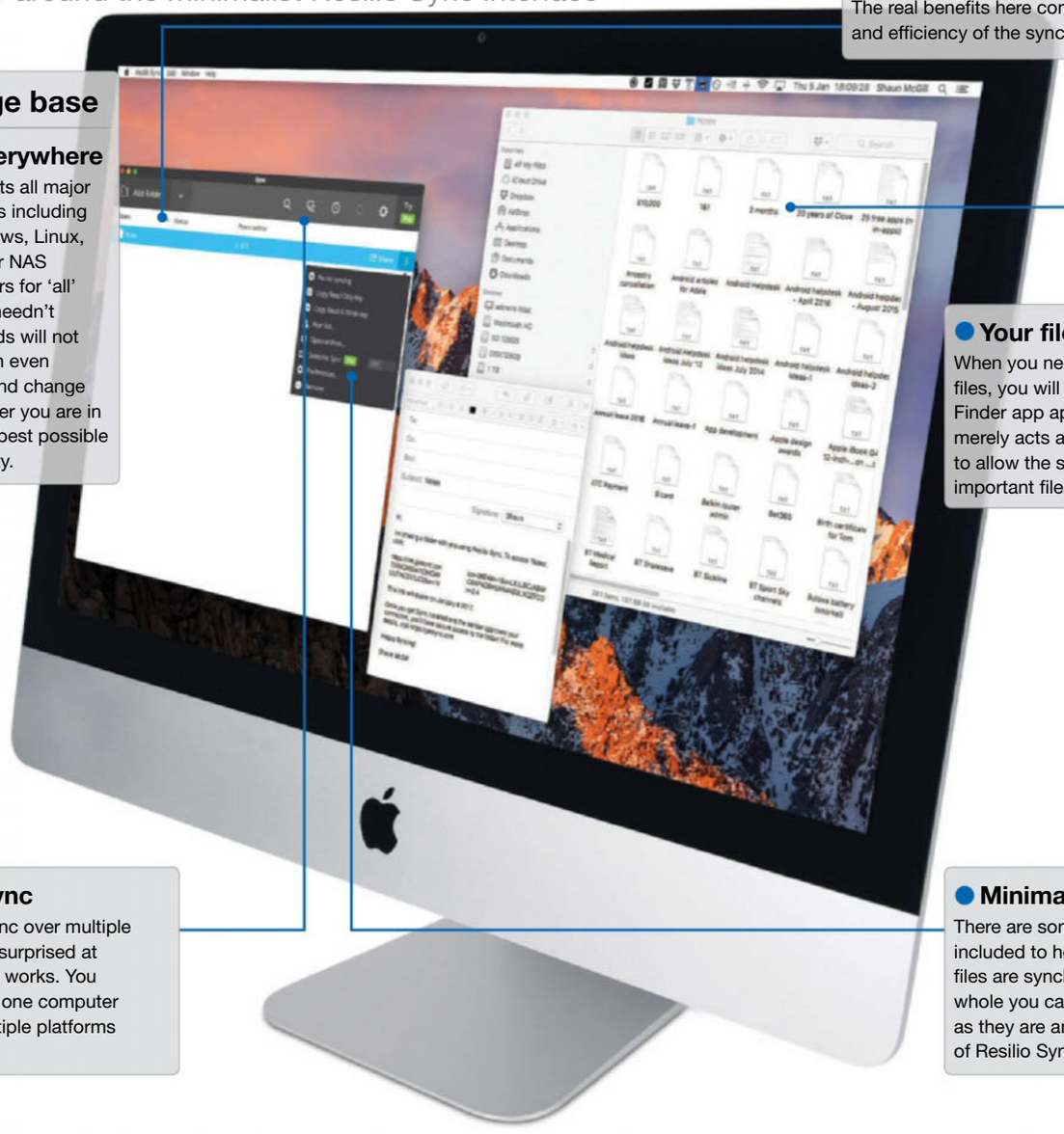
Don't overdo it

It is wise to only sync the files you need to, and to not attempt to include massive folders. The real benefits here come with the speed and efficiency of the syncing features.

Knowledge base

Everything everywhere

Resilio Sync supports all major computing platforms including macOS, iOS, Windows, Linux, Android and popular NAS devices. It also caters for 'all' file formats so you needn't worry that your needs will not be met, and you can even revoke file access and change permissions wherever you are in order to ensure the best possible personalised security.



Your files

When you need to access your files, you will still see the familiar Finder app appear. Resilio Sync merely acts as a secure conduit to allow the syncing of your most important files.

Real-time sync

If you use Resilio Sync over multiple devices, you will be surprised at just how efficiently it works. You can effectively carry one computer anywhere using multiple platforms and devices.

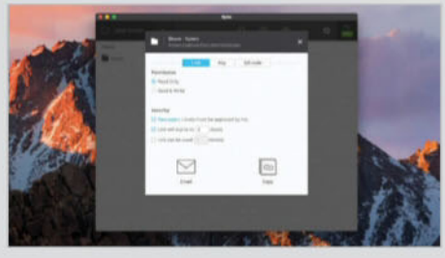
Minimal preferences

There are some useful preferences included to help you manage how files are synchronised, but on the whole you can leave most options as they are and enjoy the benefits of Resilio Sync.

Share files with others

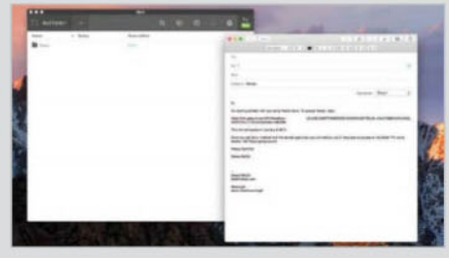
It is easy to share folders and files and to give access to other people if you completely trust them. They will also need to install the app for you to authorise them, but this potentially gives you the ability to share files in the future with a couple of clicks. This means that you can both remain secure and be able to collaborate on projects using just Resilio Sync, and as such save a lot of time and money.

"You can both remain secure and be able to collaborate on projects using just Resilio Sync"



1 Choose your method

When you click the Share icon next to a folder, you will be offered the ability to send an email share, copy a link or even send a QR code. The available choices will be useful in a variety of situations.



2 An email share

The recipient will receive an email detailing what they need to do to view your shared files. The entire process is designed for efficiency and there is sense of security, careful thinking and reserved design throughout.

Mountain

Mount, unmount and eject drives

Simplify mounting and unmounting drives with Mountain for macOS

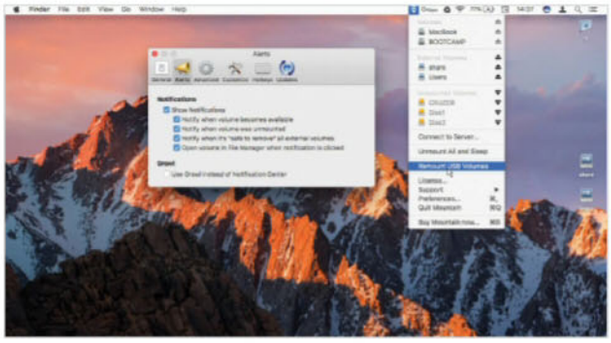
Difficulty

Time needed

10

Plug in an external drive or open a disk image and Finder mounts it as a volume. It can then be used to load and save files. When you have finished with a drive or disk image, it can be dragged to the Trash to unmount it. Mountain is a great app that does this and more, and it makes the process of mounting and unmounting disks far easier and quicker.

Download the free trial from **appgineers.de/mountain**. Unzip it and drag the app to the Applications folder. Run it and you can use it to mount and unmount volumes more easily than with Finder. Everything is on a simple menu bar icon and even whole groups of volumes can be mounted and unmounted.



Mountain's best features

The simple controls enable you to easily manage volumes

Knowledge base

Volumes, disks and drives

What is a volume, a disk and a drive? A disk and a drive are the same thing. It is the physical unit of storage and it can be a mechanical disk or a solid state drive. A disk's storage space can be divided into one, two, three or more parts called partitions. These are Mac volumes.

Unmount groups

Each volume has its own button to unmount it, but volumes are organised into groups. Click the group button to unmount all of the volumes in the group. It's quick and easy.

Unmounting errors

You might see a message like this when a volume is unmounted. If one or more apps are using a volume it cannot be unmounted and there is an option to quit the app.

Mount the unmounted

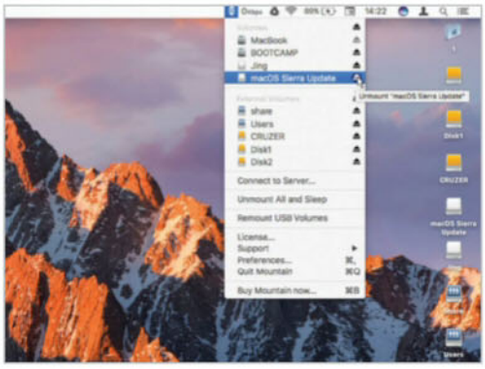
Unmounted volumes disappear from the desktop, but Mountain keeps track of them and they are listed in this section of the menu. Click the button to mount the volume again.

Unmount all

This menu option, Unmount All and Sleep, will unmount all of the volumes it can (although some might be protected, like the Mac's internal disk), and then put your machine to sleep.

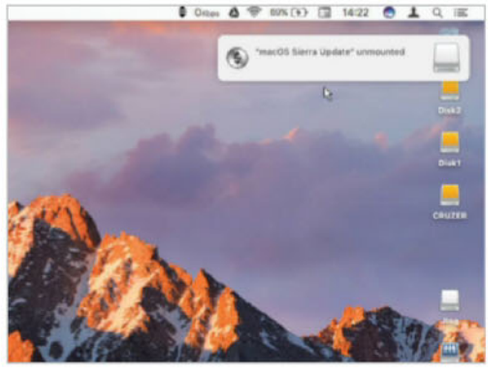
Before a disk can be used, it must be mounted. This means reading the type, format and partitions, adding them to the list of volumes in Finder.

Step-by-step Manage disk volumes using Mountain



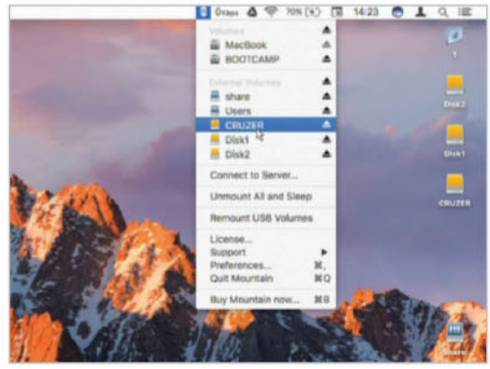
1 Show the menu

Mountain adds a menu bar icon and when clicked, it shows a list of all the volumes – drives and disk images. Click the Up arrow to unmount a volume you have finished with.



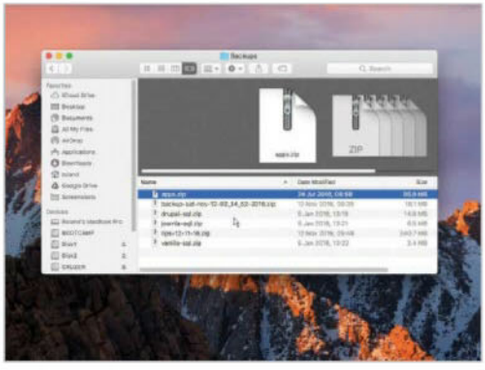
2 Remove a volume

When the volume is unmounted, the icon is removed from the desktop and a notification is displayed. The volume remains on the Mountain menu so it can be mounted again.



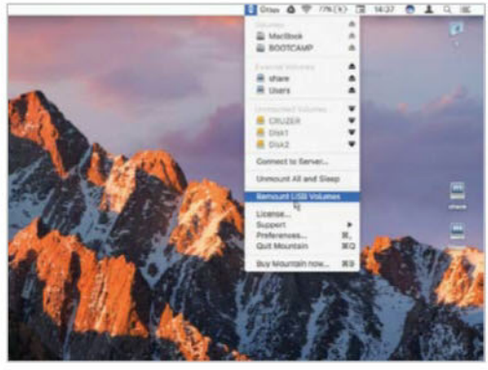
3 Open a volume

Disk icons do not have to appear on the desktop and they can be hidden in Finder Preferences. If you don't have icons, click a volume on the Mountain menu to access it.



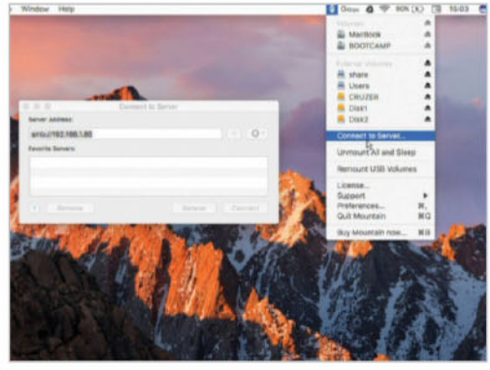
4 Browse the files

Opening a volume from the Mountain menu opens a Finder window just as if you had clicked the desktop icon. Although unmounted volumes appear on the menu, they won't open.



5 Mount them all

If you have unmounted all the USB volumes, normally you would need to unplug them and plug them back in. Instead, go to the Mountain menu and click Remount USB Volumes.



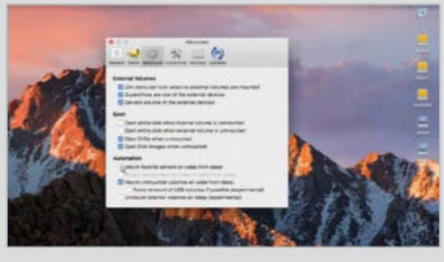
6 Connect to server

Mountain can also be used to connect to servers on the network, such as NAS drives. Click the Mountain button, select Connect to Server and enter the server address or name.

Configure Mountain

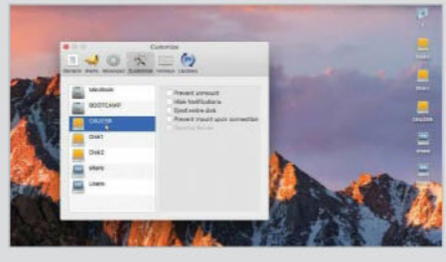
Mountain has a variety of options that enable you to customise the way it works, and after getting to know its main features you should go to Preferences in the menu. There are six tabs and some of them are packed with options. We will look at two of the tabs here, but we recommend you look at them all. In the General tab you can choose whether Mountain starts automatically when you log in to the Mac.

"Mountain has a variety of options that enable you to customise the way it works"



1 Advanced settings

Select Preferences in the Mountain menu and then select the Advanced tab. Among the settings are options to eject the entire disk when a volume is unmounted. A disk might contain several volumes, so it's your choice.



2 Customise volumes

Select the Customize tab and you can choose what happens with each volume. For example, you might want to protect a volume and prevent it from being unmounted. Select a volume and tick the options you want.

SIRI MASTERCLASS

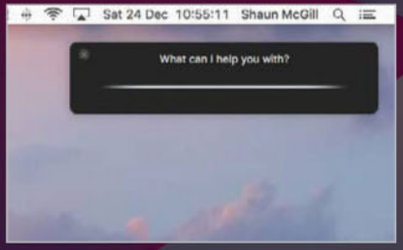
Everything you didn't know you could ask

Siri is extremely popular on mobile devices and the reasons for this are obvious. It can be used when you are doing other things that require the use of your hands, and in many cases it can undertake certain tasks more efficiently than by using apps or a web browser. With the addition of Siri in macOS Sierra, the same functionality is now available on the desktop and Apple has taken time to ensure that the main Siri function is just as invisible as it is on an iPhone until you need to use it. Potentially, Siri can be utilised as part of a workflow when you are working on long projects and if you take the time to explore what it can be used for, you will likely find yourself using it multiple times a day. The fact that it takes up a small amount of pixelated real estate on larger-screened devices should not be a concern, because it is designed to work alongside apps rather than completely replace the Mac experience, and much detail is still presented in the results. Whether you are using an iPhone, an iPad or an iMac, Siri will be there ready to offer the exact same experience and to interact with many of the main functions built into each device. It can actually control system settings, deal with native app functions and then take things further by searching the web, setting reminders, checking the weather and helping with almost anything else you need to do.

Ask Siri a question on your Mac

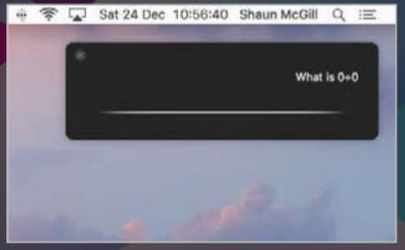
State your enquiry and Siri will find the appropriate answer

The beauty of Siri on a Mac is that it can be brought to the foreground at any time by a simple keyboard shortcut. You can then ask a question and the answer will be presented within the Siri window in seconds.



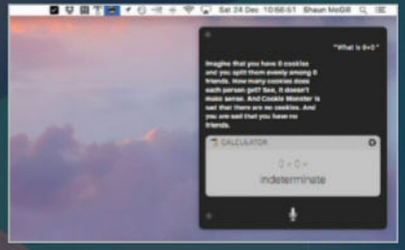
1 Open Siri

Use a keyboard shortcut or click the Siri icon to bring up a small panel on the main screen. Siri will appear on screen no matter what you are doing at the current time, but doesn't get in the way.



2 Ask the question

You can now ask any question you like and the answer will be presented within the Siri window for you to either copy or simply remember as needed. At no point will Siri dominate the entire screen.



3 Accuracy and humour

The answer will be spoken aloud and also presented as text or images, but sometimes Siri may throw in some humour to add a little extra personality to the experience. It's an absorbing feature to use each day.

Sometimes Siri will struggle to offer an exact answer and so will instead say “I found this on the web for...” which usually works well.

Amazing ways to use Siri in Sierra

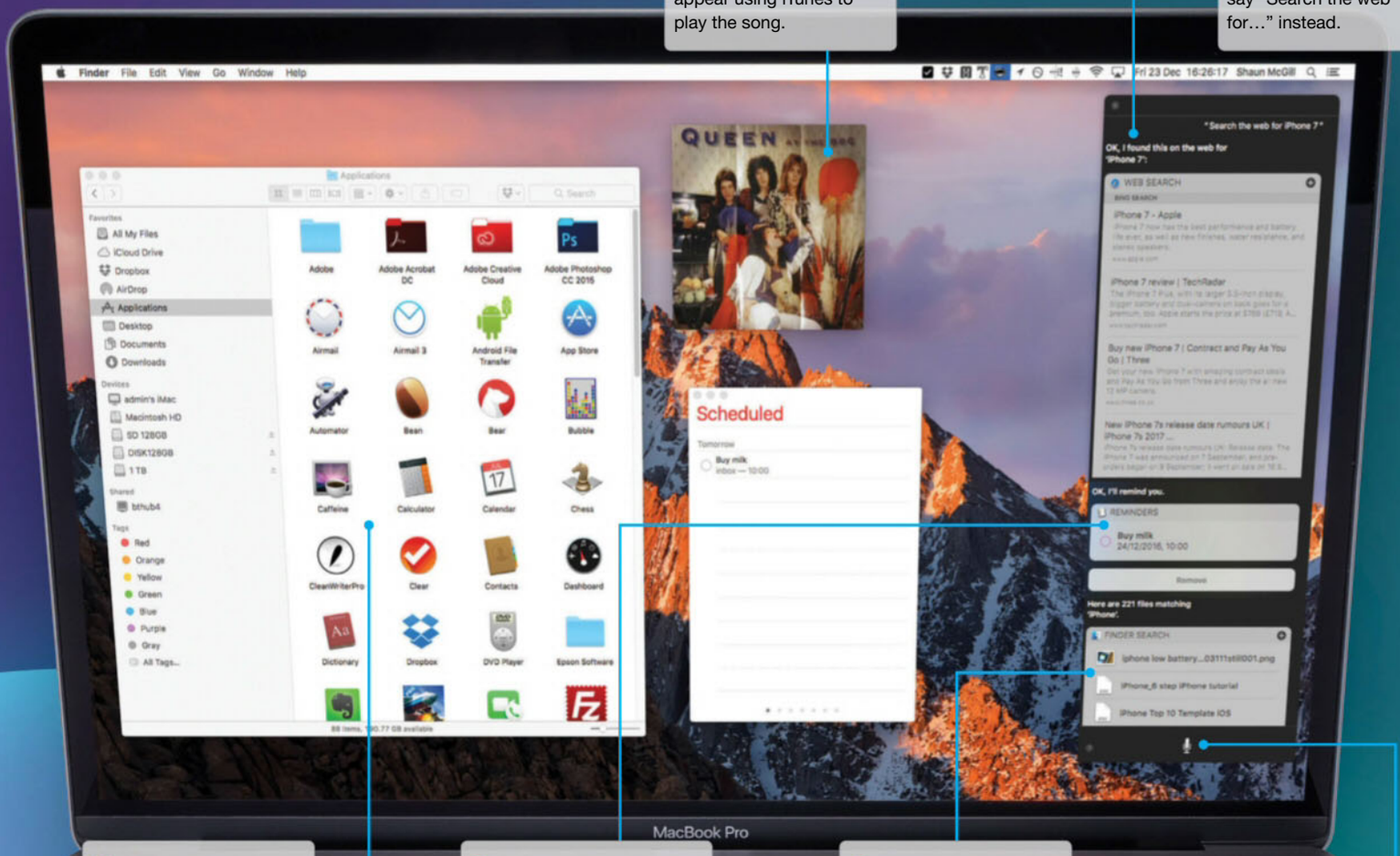
Your desktop assistant can help in a multitude of tasks

Play music

If you have the tracks installed on your Mac, say “Play…” followed by a song title or artist and a small window will appear using iTunes to play the song.

Search the web

You could open up Safari, click in the top bar and start typing to find something on the web, or you could simply say “Search the web for…” instead.



Open apps

You can immediately open any app that is installed on your Mac using Siri, which should save some messing about finding icons or navigating to the Dock.

Add new reminders

Siri on Sierra works well with many native apps, and this includes the ability to set reminders in an instant by simply speaking naturally and saying “Remind me to...”

Find local files

Siri has been designed to work with the core Sierra system and is able to find any file by keyword or other reference in seconds. The results are naturally displayed.

Click the mic

Select the microphone and Siri is ready to respond. It never gets in the way and allows you to get on with other things. Use Siri when you need it.

Set it up

To set up Siri on a Mac, go to System Preferences>Siri and tick the Enable Siri option. Here you can also set up a specific keyboard shortcut and select the voice gender you want to use.

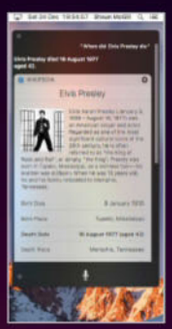
Pin searches to Notification Centre

Search with Siri and save the results for later

Siri on a Mac is not just about searching for something or opening a hardware feature. It can also be useful for gathering data for research purposes or for referring to later. With just one click you can add Siri results to the Notification Centre in an instant.

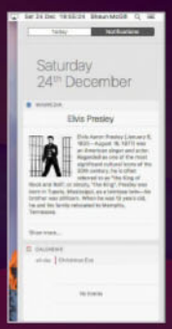
1 Ask the question

Open Siri and ask a question as normal. Depending on what you are asking for, you should see a panel appear with a small + icon within it. Some info is included.



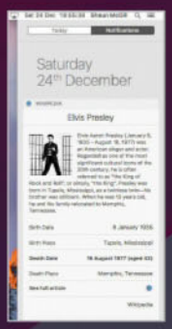
2 Pin result

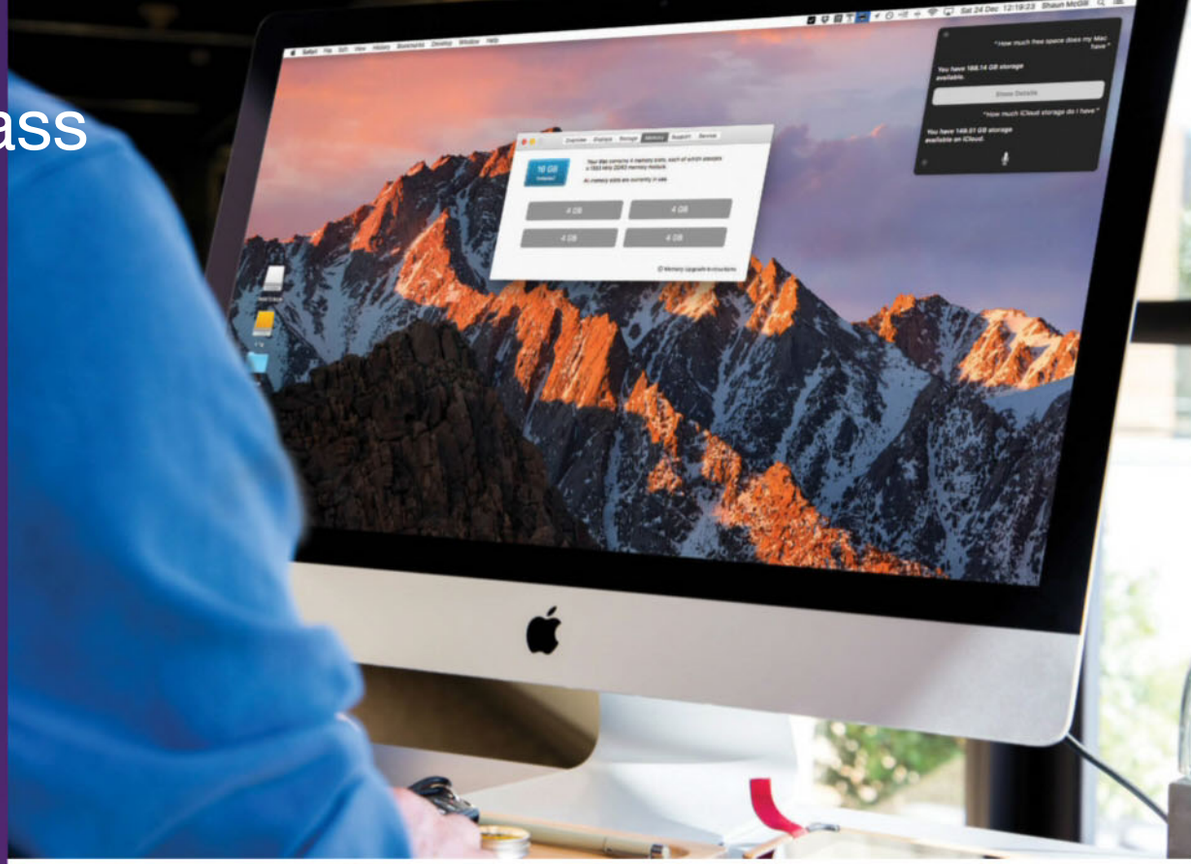
Click the + icon and it will automatically be added to the Notification Centre. You will see the answer at the top above any other content that usually resides within it.



3 See more detail

Click Show more if you want to see more information within the Notification Centre panel. You can also click See full article to jump straight to a web view in Safari.

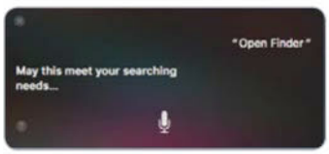




Control your Mac

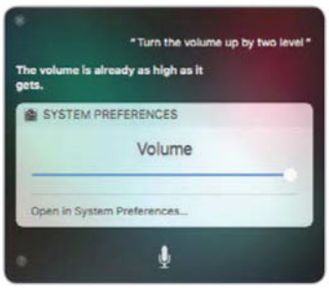
Tweak key system settings by voice command

Siri on your desktop offers more than searching for information and getting answers to questions. It has been designed to also work with specific settings on the Mac, which means that you can control certain aspects of the hardware instead of having to go to System Preferences. We will show you some of the more obvious things that you can do, but experimenting with Siri may pop up some surprising system-based functionality.



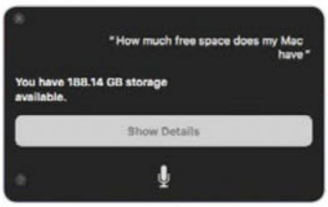
1 Open apps

It's easy to open apps with Siri and all you need to do is say **"Open..."** followed by the app name. You will need to be specific with the name for it to work as it should.



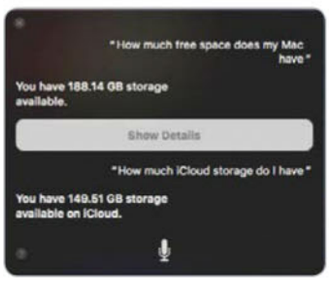
2 Change the volume

You can alter the volume by saying **"Turn the volume..."** and **"up"** or **"down"** plus the number of levels you want to tweak. Perfect if your keyboard has no volume shortcuts.



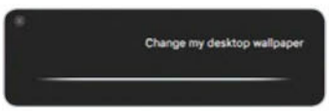
3 Check free space

If you ask Siri how much free space you have, it will be displayed along with an option to Show Details. One more click will open the About This Mac screen.



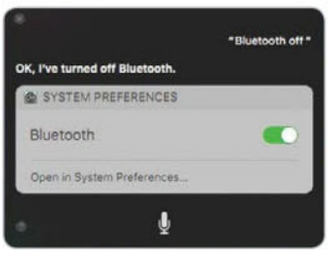
4 Free iCloud space?

You can also ask Siri how much iCloud space you have free and it will offer a similar dialogue to what you see when checking Mac space. It is a very handy additional feature.



5 Change your wallpaper

Almost every part of your macOS System Preferences can be directly accessed using Siri. Simply present a natural instruction to Siri and the relevant panel will immediately be opened for you.



6 Manage connections

Siri can also turn wireless connections on and off, such as Bluetooth. Remember that when some of these are off, certain accessories may stop working.

Clicking the microphone at the bottom of the Siri panel enables you to undertake a new search while the original one is still presented.

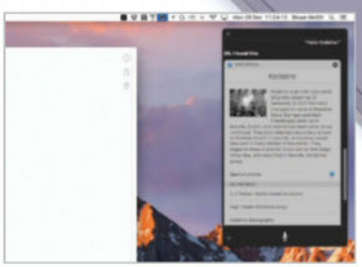
Search and drag Siri results

Drag and drop Siri search results instantly

One of the major benefits of Siri is its ability to work with other apps and to present information in a format that is compatible with various document types. This means that you can search for articles, links and images, and then simply pick them up and drag them into a document that you are already working on. The process is simple in the extreme and feels perfectly natural when in use, so you should have no issues understanding how it works. This is the kind of feature that you will likely benefit from multiple times a day.

Slight delays

Siri, like any other web service, may experience delays from now and then, so if you are waiting too long for Siri to respond, simply start it up again. This often resolves the problem.



1 Search as normal

When you search for something in Siri, it will present the results in a format that is suitable for your needs. You can also specify if you want to see image or text results.

2 Drag the result

When you see a result presented in Siri, pick it up with the mouse or trackpad and simply drag it to the document that you are currently working on. It works very reliably.

3 Image results

You can also ask Siri to search for images about a particular subject and they will be presented in thumbnail form. Pick one up and drag it to see it in a larger size.

4 Unusual formatting

Some results, such as web lists of searches that are applicable to your question, will be presented as an image when dragged, but this can be useful for research purposes.

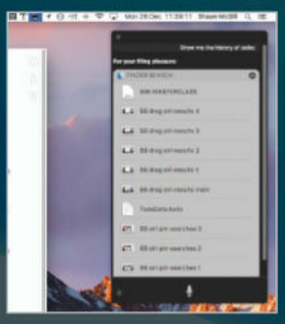
Edit your request

You can change your question after it has been asked

Siri is all about vocal commands and questions, but on a Mac you can easily change what was asked and start again. This is useful if you coughed while speaking or did not pronounce something correctly in the original question, and it only takes a few seconds to amend what you originally asked. There is a lot of flexibility included.

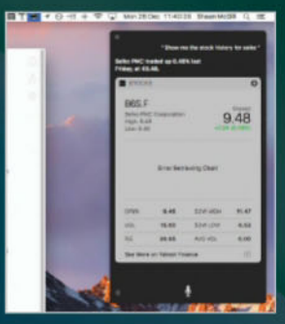
1 The wrong question

When you have asked the wrong question, click within the text at the top of the Siri panel and start typing to correct what was originally asked. When you hit enter Siri will search again for a new result.



2 The right result

A new result will be given by Siri as if you had never asked the original question incorrectly. This facility is extremely useful because Siri is not always 100 per cent capable of hearing everything you say.



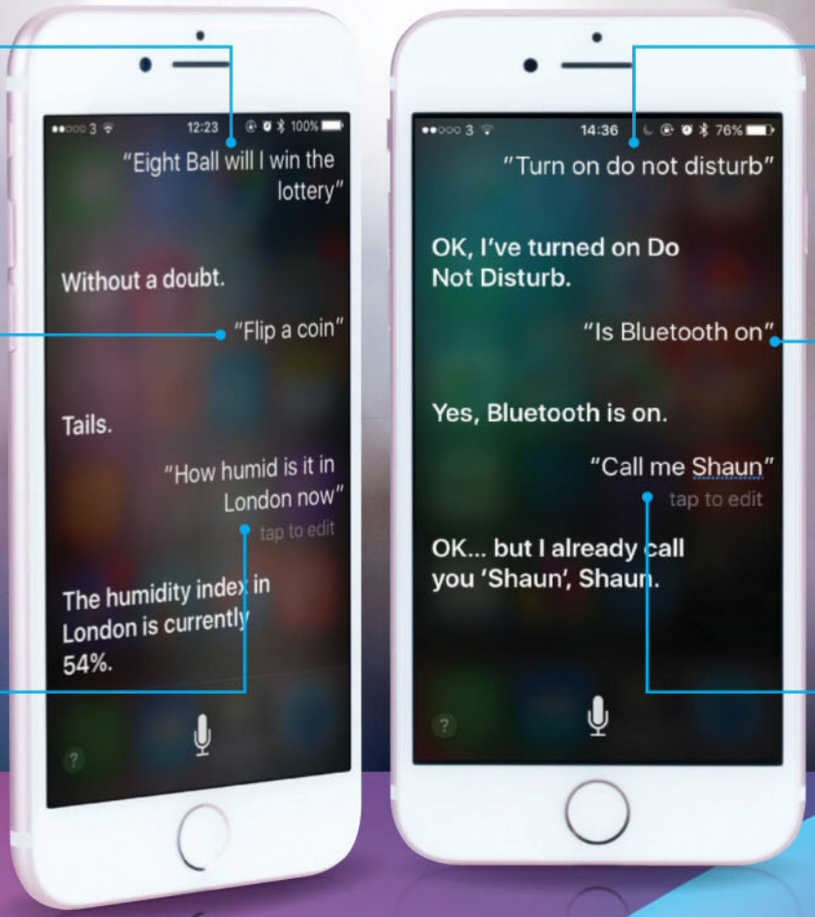
Secret ways to use Siri in iOS

There are many tricks to using Siri successfully

Predict the future
You can ask Siri to use an Eight Ball to guess if something will happen. In this case it looks as though we will win the lottery, which is useful!

Make decisions
Siri will gladly flip a coin for you if you are undecided on something. Simply say "Flip a coin" and the randomly generated result will appear in no time.

Check humidity
Siri is capable of obtaining a wide raft of information, including the humidity for a specific location. Just ask and the current conditions will be presented.



Stop the interruptions
Ask Siri to "Turn on Do Not Disturb" and all of the interruptions will stop immediately. This is useful if you are busy with a complex work project.

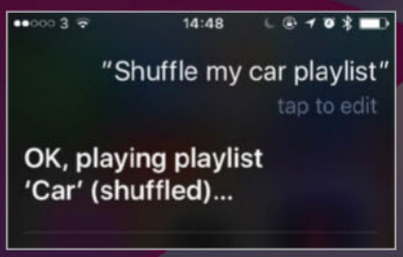
Check connections
At any time you can check to see if certain wireless features, such as Bluetooth, are on or off. You can also change their statuses using Siri.

Call me genius
You can ask Siri to address you using any term you like. Whether it be superstar, genius, sexy or simply your name, it's a nice personalisation touch.

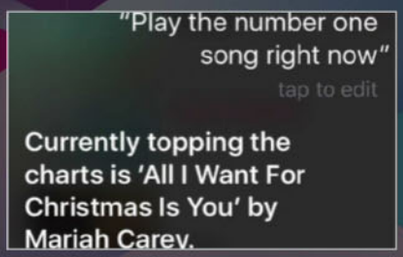
Get the best out of Apple Music

Siri and Apple Music are a very powerful combination

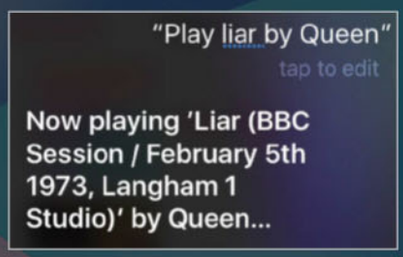
Many people use Apple Music because Siri is able to utilise the library of millions of tracks and instantly play any song you want to hear. However, Siri can also do many other things with the Apple Music library and the tracks and playlists you have loaded on your phone or tablet, making it an extremely useful music controller.



1 Deal with playlists
You can ask Siri to shuffle a playlist by naming it within your request. This helps add a bit of variety to your morning commute and it is something you can do before every trip.



2 Play the charts
If you have an Apple Music subscription, you can ask Siri to play the number one song or the top ten. You can in theory choose many different phrases and Siri will respond to your commands.



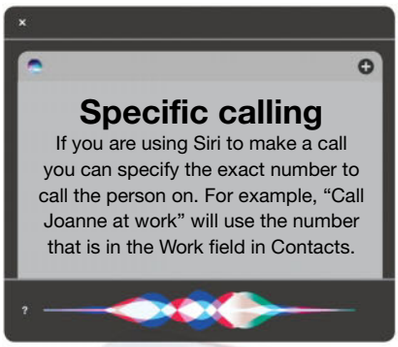
3 Choose a song
You can be even more specific and ask Siri to play any song by any artist. If it is available in Apple Music it will start streaming right away, which gives you millions of tracks to play wherever you are.

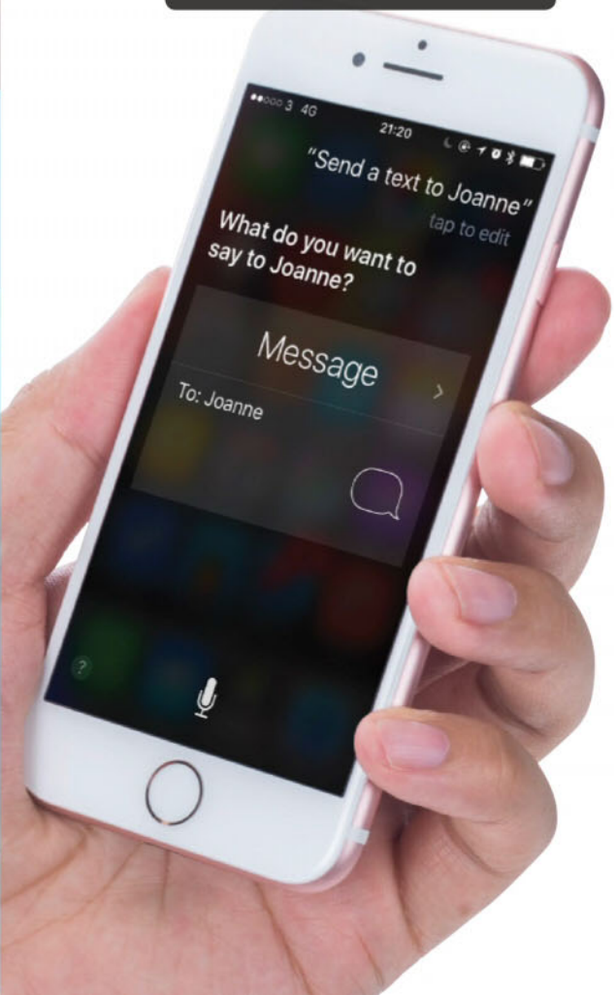
Remember that the more you use Siri, the better it becomes at recognising what you say. Practice makes perfect with Siri.

Stay in touch with friends, family and co-workers

Siri is perfect for keeping in touch with important people

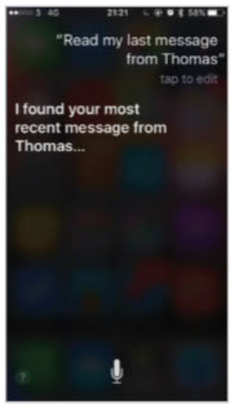
The way that Siri is integrated with the Contacts app and social networks makes it ideal for keeping in touch with friends, family and co-workers. If you have taken the time to have a complete contact list on your iPhone, iPad or Mac, you will be able to send messages to people without ever touching a screen or a keyboard. The same applies to social networks, which means that you can add a Twitter or Facebook post in seconds and include as much detail as you want to. This is one of the must useful areas for Siri.





1 A complete text

If you ask Siri to send a text to someone and include the entire message, it will be displayed on screen ready to send immediately. It takes seconds to send a text.



2 Most recent messages

Ask Siri to find your most recent messages from an individual and you will be presented with a list. This helps add context to new messages you may be sending.

3 Find new emails

Locating emails in a busy inbox is not easy, but you can instead ask Siri if there are any new messages from anyone in your contact list. It will save you a huge amount of time.

4 Siri and Twitter

Siri can also help you quickly post tweets if you simply say "Tweet..." followed by the phrase you want to post, and you can also see what is trending by asking the question.

"Send messages to people without ever touching a screen or a keyboard"

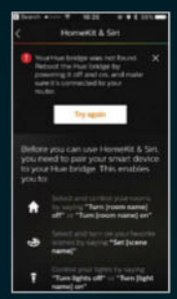
Control your smart home

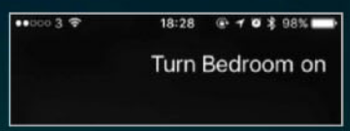
You can ask Siri to control your smart home accessories

The trick for using Siri to control your home has nothing to do with Siri at all. If you have your accessories set up and connected to your Wi-Fi correctly, Siri can be utilised to turn lights on and off and do many other things around your home just by speaking.

1 Use Home

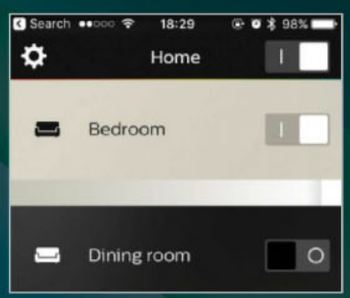
The Apple Home app will almost certainly be needed to control your smart home devices using Siri voice commands, so make sure that everything is paired and connected properly before you begin.





2 Time to speak

You should now be able to ask Siri to interact with each accessory using the description or location you have set for them. This lets you deal with each room as you need to.



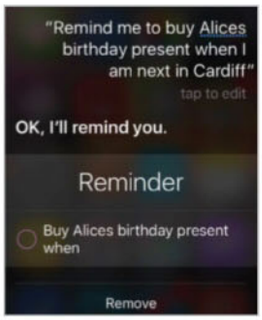
3 It works!

It may take time to get the names of each accessory right, but it won't take long for Siri to be able to help you control every aspect of your smart home throughout the day.

Organise your daily life with Siri

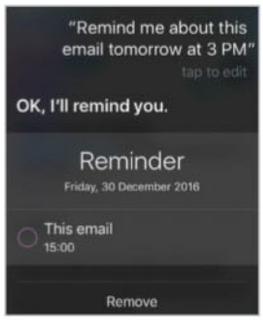
Keep your life on track with Siri by your side

The idea of Siri being a personal assistant becomes the most obvious when it is used to help you organise your daily schedule. You can of course use Siri for communication and many other interactions, but the ability to set reminders, create calendar events and have alerts appear when you are in exact locations means that you will never miss anything important again. Even more importantly, it takes almost no time to keep yourself organised with Siri, which will give you more free time throughout the day.



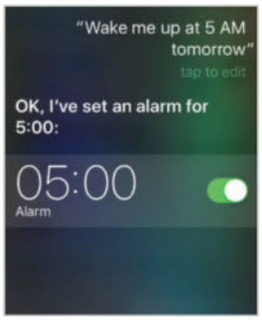
1 Location-based reminders

You can cleverly instruct Siri to set a new reminder the moment you reach a particular location. This is ideal for location-specific tasks such as meetings and even for buying gifts.



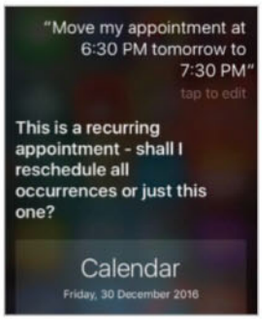
2 Remind me about this

Even more clever is the ability for Siri to know what you are doing and remind you about it later. So if you are reading an email, for example, you can set a reminder for it to pop up at a certain time.



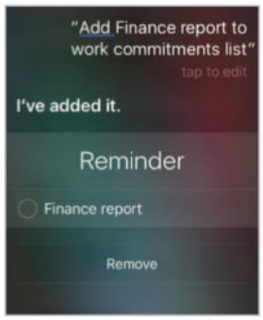
3 Wake me up

You can ask Siri to wake you up at a specific time and the alarm will automatically be set for you. You can also ask for alarms to be set on multiple days and at specific intervals. A simple but useful time saver.



4 Move appointments

Siri is capable of understanding what appointments and reminders you already have set, so you can ask for the start times to be changed over and over again just by speaking.



5 Work with lists

You can also ask Siri to create lists in Apple Notes and then add new items at any time. This is the perfect way to keep track of projects and tasks that need to be done.

6 Set up meetings

Siri can set up meetings with specific people using just one phrase. All Siri needs is the time, date and the individual for everything to be taken care of. The ideal personal assistant.

The best third-party compatible apps

Use Siri to interact with and control your apps

Map My Run - GPS Running & Workout Tracker

Freemium

You have your route planned, your all-weather gear is on and you are ready to run. Now all you have to do is ask Siri to start tracking and you are all set to get fitter.

PayPal Free

Provided you have the PayPal app set up correctly on your iPhone or iPad, you can use Siri to quickly send money to anyone who is listed in your contacts. Make sure to double check the amount and contact first though.

OpenTable - Restaurant Reservations Free

You can use Siri in the OpenTable app to check for available reservations, book a table immediately and to double check when your next reservation is booked for. It's flexible and fast.

Zenly - Locate your friends in realtime Free

Zenly helps you track friends and family in a fun way, but you can also send quick messages if you are meeting up. Here Siri will speed up that process so that you do not miss each other.

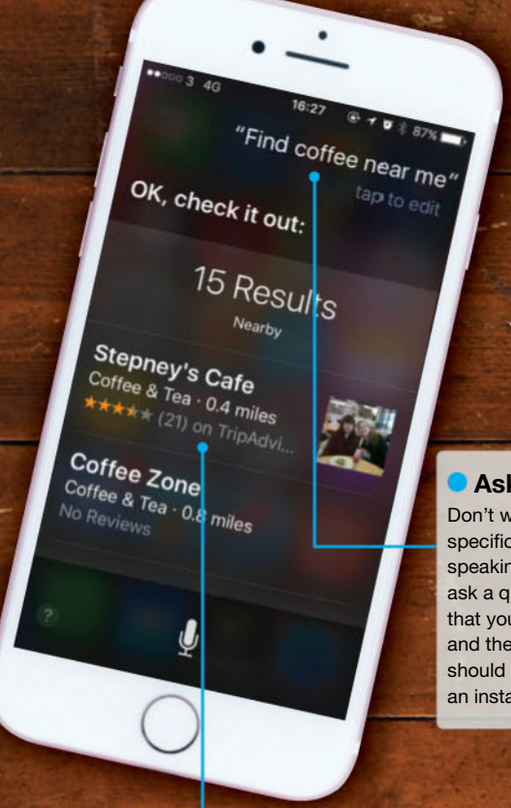
Canva - Graphic Design & Photo Editing Freemium

Canva is a superb app for editing photos and creating unusual designs, but you can also search your image collections using Siri. It's a simple integration, but it works very well.

Another useful feature is the ability to instantly download an app using Siri. Just say "Download…" and the app name to start installing it.

Use Siri when you're out and about

Siri can be the best travelling assistant in the world

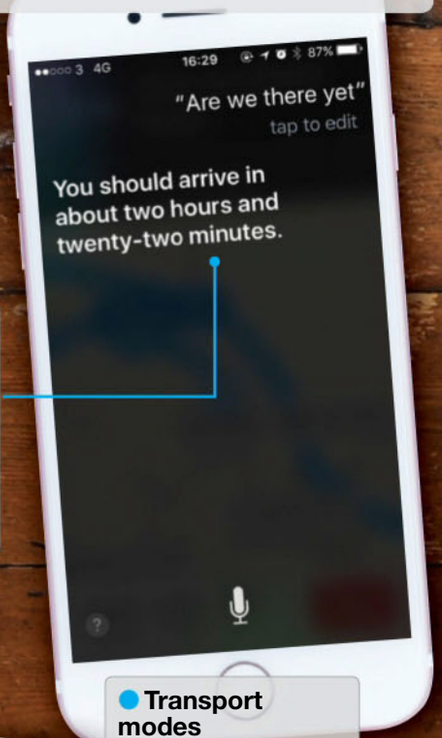


Ask for anything

Don't worry about using specific phrases when speaking to Siri. Simply ask a question or tell Siri that you need something and the right answer should come back in an instant.

Become a child

Siri is capable of understanding human questions and so "Are we there yet?" works just as well as "How much longer is left of my current journey?".

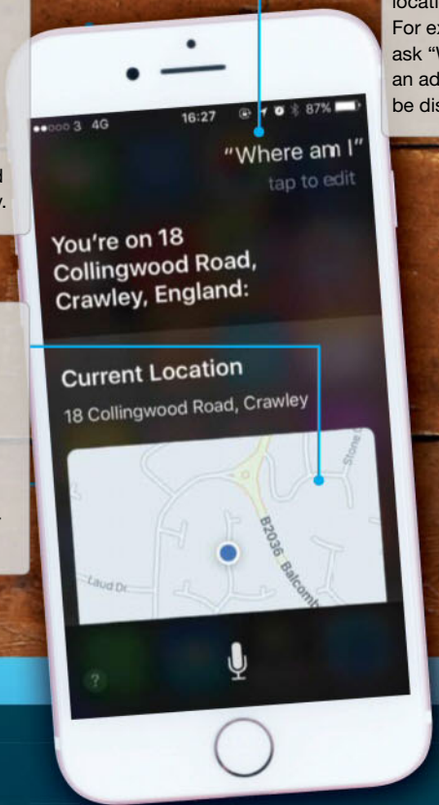


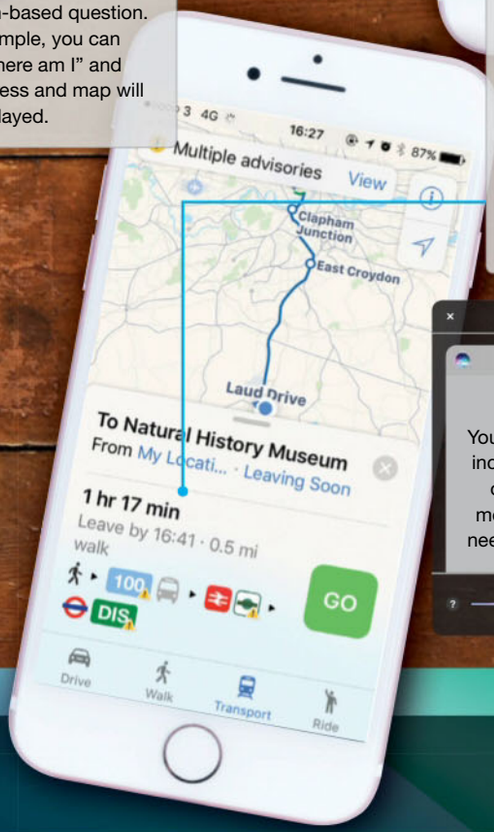
Complete results

Many location-based results will be returned with reviews from other users, distance measurements and everything else you need to go there straight away.

Never get lost

Siri works with Apple Maps to let you ask any location-based question. For example, you can ask "Where am I" and an address and map will be displayed.



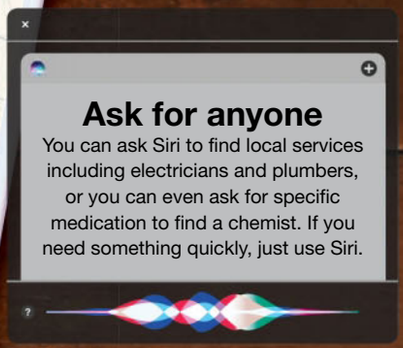


Transport modes

When asking for directions, you can specify if you are walking, driving or using public transport. The answer will be detailed and Maps will then take you to your destination.

Working together

Siri is designed to work with a variety of apps, particularly those built by Apple, so you can leverage a huge number of features by using your voice alone.



Seven - 7 Minute Workout Training Challenge Freemium

Setting up for a workout takes time, so it makes sense that you can simply ask Siri to begin tracking you in the Seven app. An effective time saver perfect for your daily exercise routine.

WhatsApp Messenger Free

Siri can now work directly with WhatsApp to ensure that you get the message over when your hands are busy. It potentially makes the app even easier to use than the traditional tapping screen method.

Skype for iPhone Freemium

Skype is an excellent communications tool that works well in a hands-free environment, and with Siri alongside to help you can now make calls without ever touching your phone.

Vogue Runway Free

The Siri integration in Vogue Runway is designed to help you use the main features of the app and to discover the latest fashion trends at any time. It's not necessary, but it highlights just how useful Siri really is.

Uber Free

The Uber app is designed to let you catch a ride in the quickest possible time and with Siri also on hand to help, you will be able to make a booking in seconds. Everything works exactly as it should here.

Use Firefox Focus as your new browser

Make your web browsing that little bit safer by checking out the privacy-friendly Firefox Focus

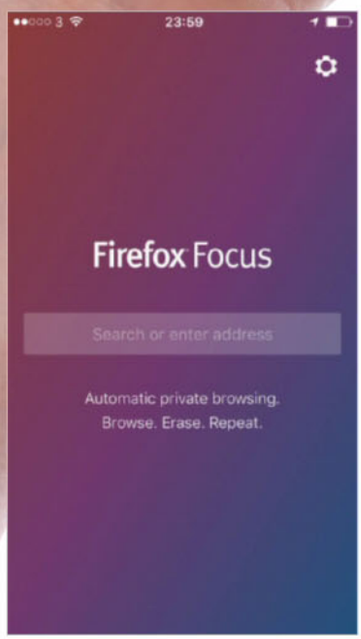
Difficulty

Time needed

20

Safari has long been considered the browser of choice for many iOS users, but there are some real alternatives that are free to download from the App Store. One of these is Firefox Focus, a relatively new browser on the scene that looks to help provide a secure place for you to browse the web in peace. Mozilla Firefox has been a highly successful desktop browser, and Focus carries on the tradition well. It's kitted out with an array of privacy features, many of which can help you remain completely anonymous online and prevent any sort of site tracking. Even better, your browsing history can be wiped in seconds – and we mean seconds – so you can have the peace of mind that you're staying safe when browsing the web. Here we'll demonstrate some of the beneficial features of Firefox Focus, including a few of its privacy and security settings and tools, to help ensure a safe browsing experience.

Step-by-step Browse the web with Firefox Focus

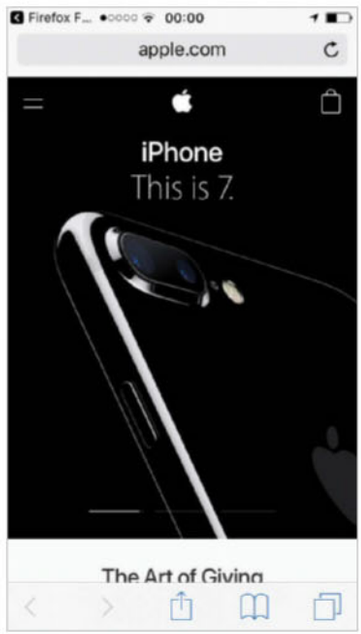


1 Opening confirmation

When opening up Focus for the first time, you'll be prompted to confirm the details of your privacy settings, after which the app will load onto the homepage.

2 Load a site

Use the central toolbar to open a site in Focus. Users can choose to enter a web address, or you can instead perform a private search using Firefox's native search engine if needed.



3 Open in Safari

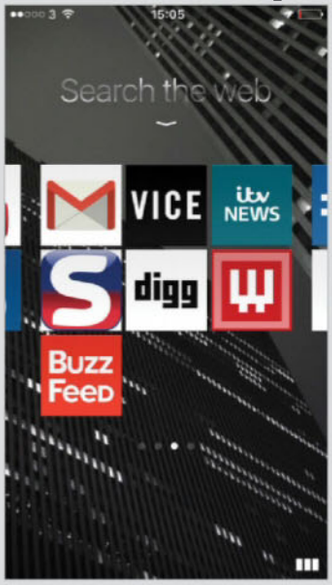
On certain sites you may prefer using Safari. If this is you, press the bottom-right share icon to load the page directly into Safari. This is useful for confirming payment of items, for example.

4 Find Settings

Go ahead and start typing out a new web address. However, from here you'll want to select the cog icon that sits just above the keyboard, which opens the Settings section.

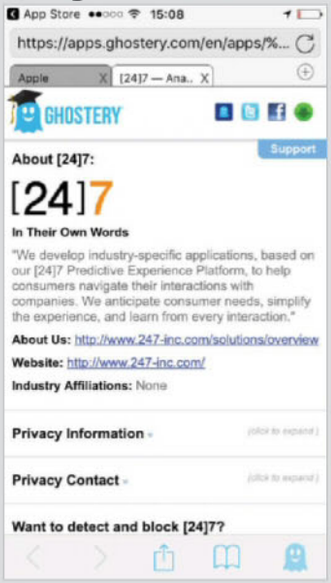
To help improve the performance of Focus, you may want to disable web fonts. You can do this through the Settings section of the Focus app.

More iOS privacy browsers



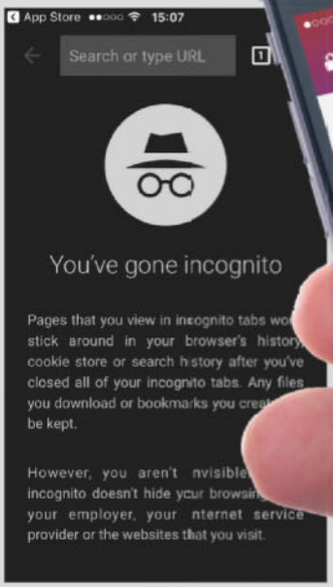
1 Opera Coast

Opera Coast can boast to be one of the more user-friendly browsers out there, but it's also got some nifty privacy features. Managing history, user data and tracking data can all be done through a single menu.



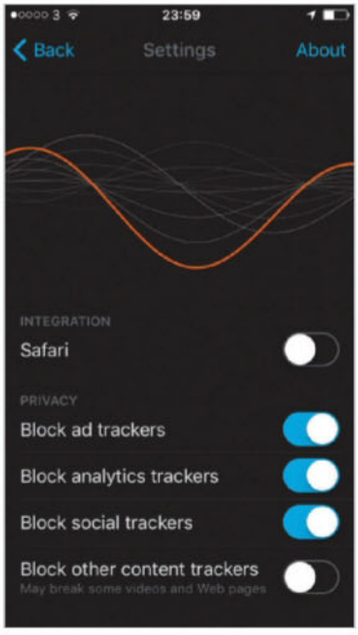
2 Ghostery

There are no signups, no user data and no cookies – instead this is a browser claiming complete anonymity. Its best feature is its Ad Tracker, which will send you a warning when it believes a site is tracking you.



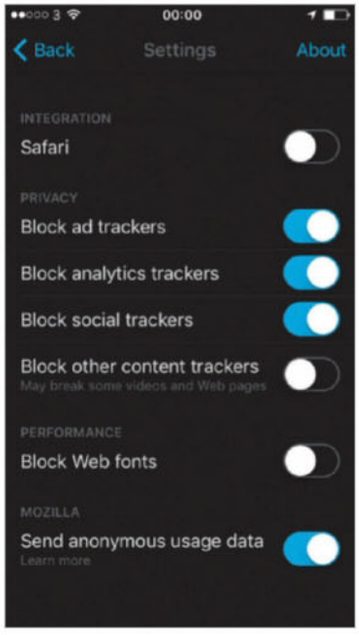
3 Chrome

Chrome has a built-in Incognito mode, which is ideal for browsing privately on your iOS device. It prevents automatic tracking of your web usage, and can even be used to potentially block out malicious sites.



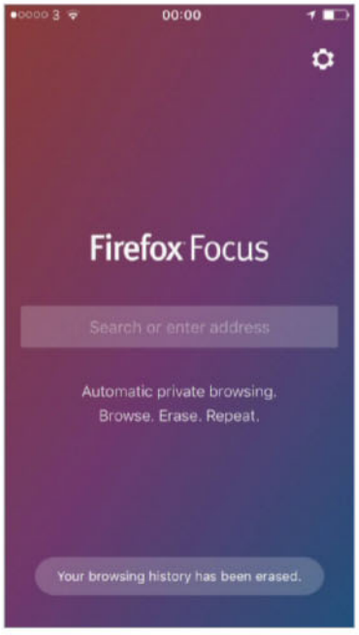
5 Manage integration

At the top of this menu, you'll have the choice to integrate Safari into the app. For users, this will mean importing payment info, certain bookmarks and other details across to Focus.



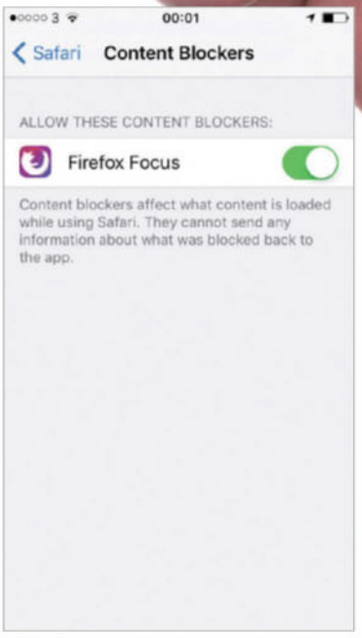
6 Toggle privacy

Underneath that you'll find a host of privacy options. Make sure to enable all of these options, as they prevent an array of trackers from being able to monitor your browser usage.



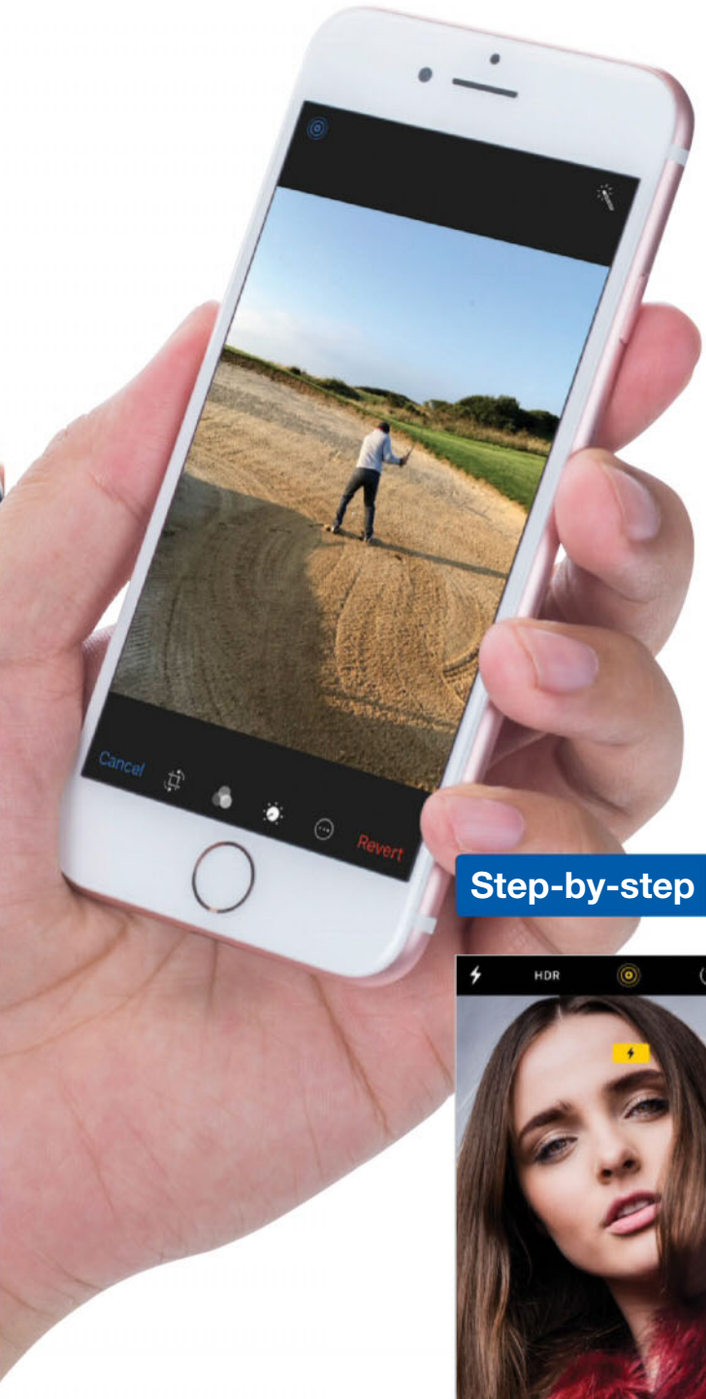
7 Erase your history

Back out of the Settings section and proceed to search for a site. Once you've viewed the site, press the erase option to delete your history of it. This will prompt a notification at the bottom.



8 Content blocking

You'll also want to enable Focus as a content blocker in Safari, again to help with privacy. Open the Content Blockers tab within Safari's settings and enable Focus as an option.



Crop, filter & adjust Live Photos in iOS 10

Get your Live Photos ready for sharing with these essential editing tips and tricks

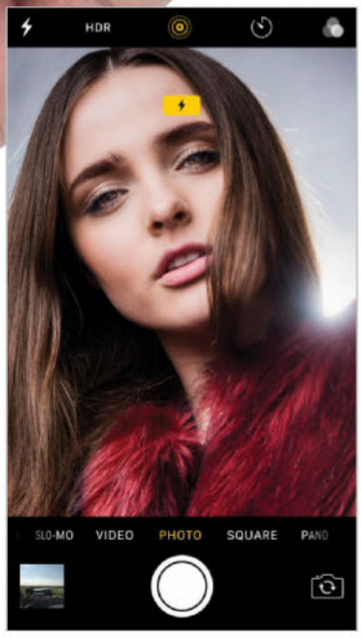
Difficulty

Time needed

10

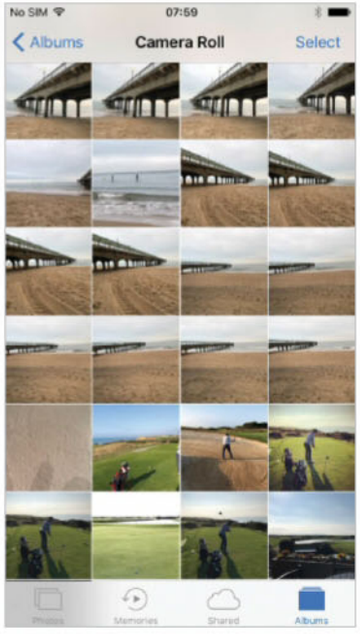
Live Photos is a feature Apple brought to the iPhone 6s and 6s Plus in 2015 with the introduction of 3D Touch and a much-improved camera sensor. Live Photos captures a second and a half of audio and video before and after you take the photo. We'll show you how to activate this underused feature, view your library of Live Photos and then take them to the next level with a few straightforward editing tweaks. With a few taps you can do everything from boosting the colours to cropping, and make them perfect for sharing. Editing capabilities are only available in iOS 10, so make sure you're running the latest software, and to take a Live Photo you need an iPhone with 3D Touch capabilities. So that's everything that comes after the 6s and 6s Plus, and you can use either the front or rear-facing camera. Pick up your iPhone and let's get snapping.

Step-by-step Edit your Live Photos



1 Activate

Live Photos may or may not be activated by default on your iPhone. In the main Camera viewfinder, tap the three circle icon above the flash icon to enable Live Photos.



2 Select a Live Photo

Live Photos live in your Camera Roll like any other photo. You won't notice any difference until you tap on one and it gives you a little video preview of the action before the shot was taken.

3 Find editing menu

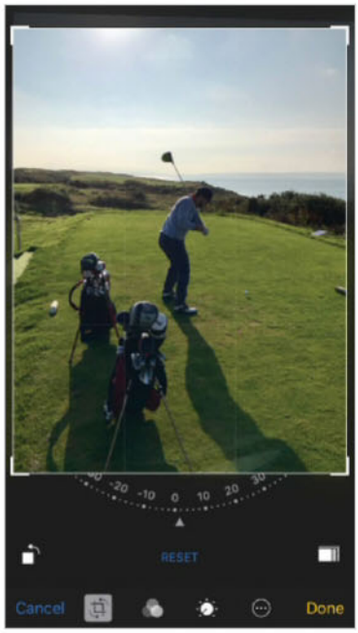
Making edits to a Live Photo is essentially the same as any another image you've taken. Tap on one and then hit the editing icon at the bottom to load up Photos' familiar editing panel.

"With a few taps you can do everything from boosting the colours to cropping, and make them perfect for sharing"

It's probably best not to have Live Photos activated all the time, especially if you've only got a 16GB iPhone. It'll take up quite a bit of space.

4 The magic wand

The first port of call should almost always be the magic wand tool. This one-click solution automatically brightens up the colour in your image, boosting saturation to make it pop more.

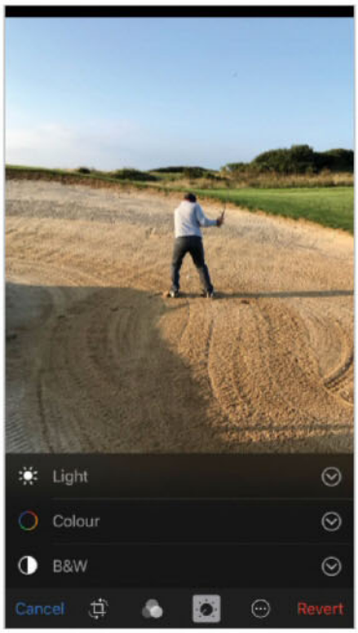


5 Crop the image

Tap the Crop tool to line your shot up better. The tool will automatically perform an edit for you, but feel free to drag the image around (using the grids as guidelines) until you're happy.

6 Change format

You can even change the format of your image in the Crop tool. Tap the three boxes icon to load up the adjustment options. Posting to Instagram? Tap on the Square option to change the format.



7 Adjust light

You can make finer adjustments to the light and colour of your Live Photo too, just by tapping the clock icon at the bottom and navigating the menus. There's even a Black & White option.

8 Add a filter

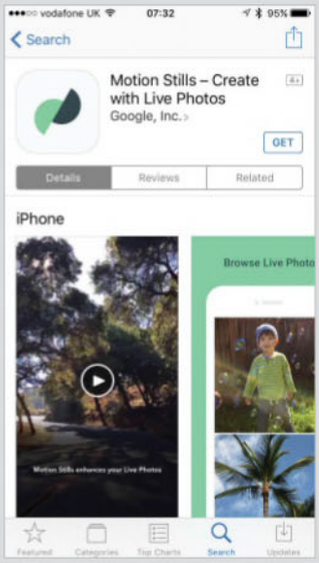
No modern iPhone image is the same without a filter placed on top of it, so tap the Filter icon at the bottom and select from the nine available options. When you're finished editing, simply tap Done.

9 Revert to original

Because editing a Live Photo is identical to any normal photo, all the editing you perform is non-destructive. This means you can tap Revert in the bottom right at any time to go back to the original.

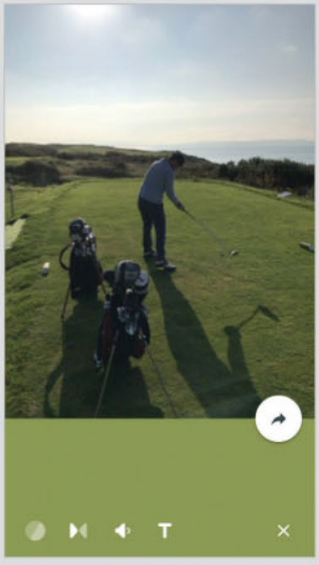
Transform into GIFs

Got yourself a great Live Photo and want to turn it into a GIF for social media? Google's free Motion Stills app gives you the tools to do so.



1 Find the app

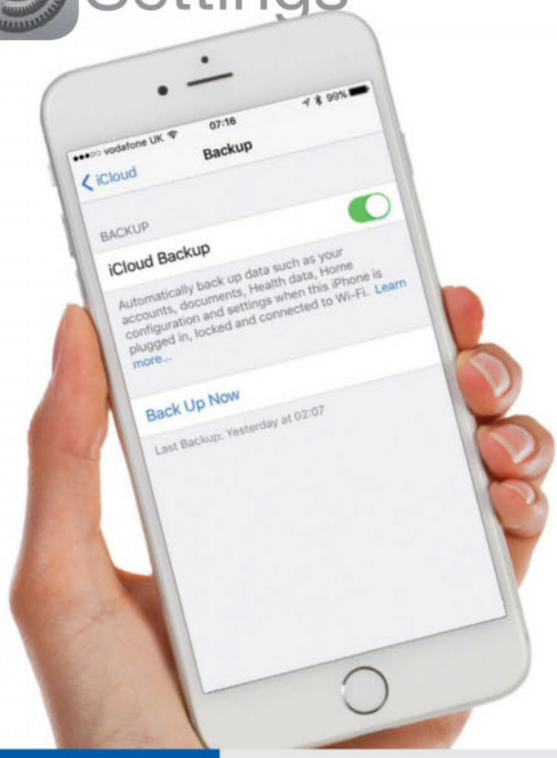
Grab Motion Stills from the App Store and allow access to your Photos library. The app searches for Live Photos in your Camera Roll. Tap the one you wish to use.



2 Create a GIF

Once it's downloaded, tap the photo again to turn it into a GIF. A menu appears enabling you to loop endlessly, mute audio and add text. Tap the share icon when ready.

Settings



Wipe your iPhone clean ready to sell

Discover the best way to remove personal information from your iPhone

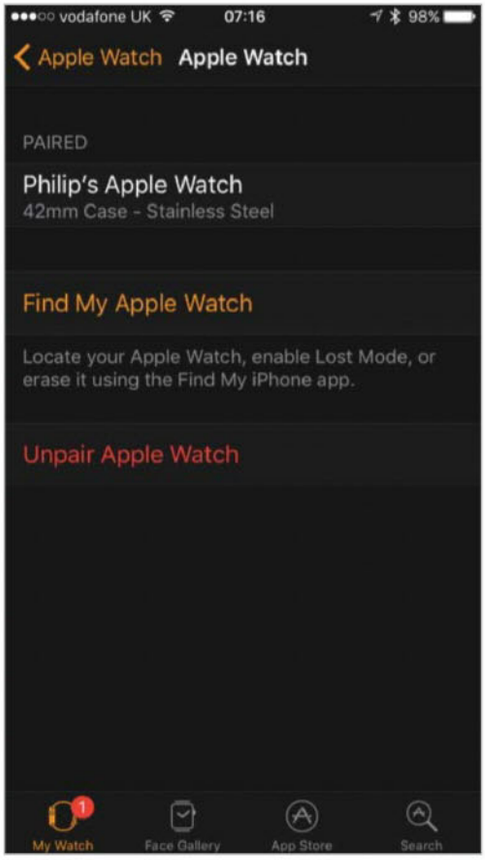
Difficulty

Time needed

10

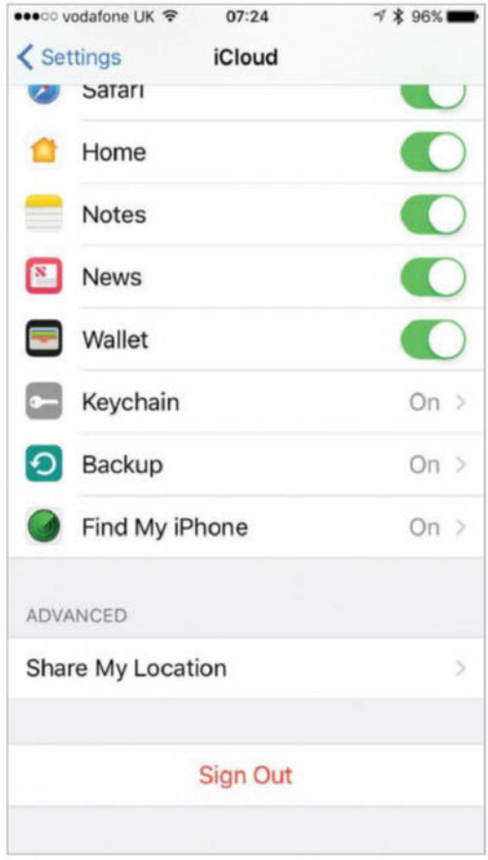
One of the beauties of Apple products is that they hold their value remarkably well. Even a three-year-old iPhone is worth a fair amount towards your summer holiday fund. It obviously needs to be in good condition, whether you're selling it to a company you've seen advertising on the TV, an online auction site like eBay or a local community site like Gumtree. Over time you will have stored a lot of personal data on that device, and wiping it clean of your iPhone history isn't as simple as erasing all the content. You need to sign out of iCloud properly, for example, otherwise the buyer is going to have a world of problems setting it up as their iPhone.

Step-by-step Erase all personal content



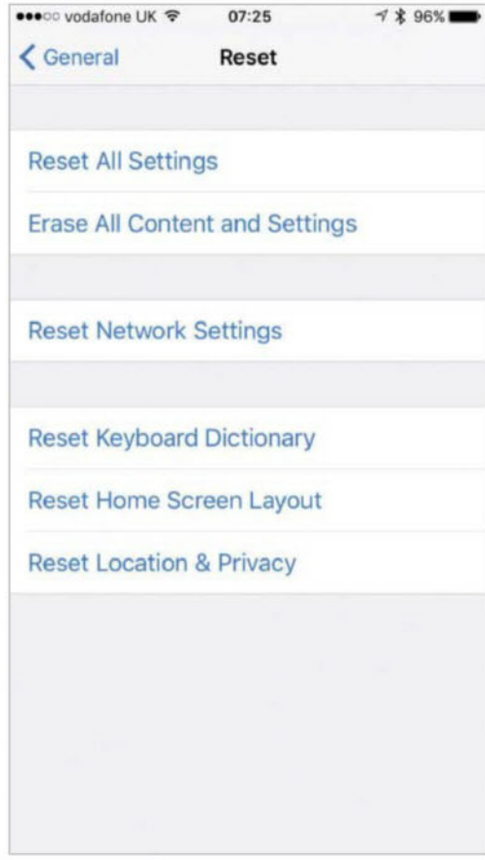
1 Back up and unpair

Whenever you play around with crucial system information, make sure you perform a backup of your iPhone, either in iCloud or iTunes. If you have an Apple Watch, now is the time to unpair.



2 Sign out of iCloud

Go to Settings and find iCloud. On its main screen, scroll down and tap Sign Out. Tap Sign Out again, then Delete from My iPhone. Now enter your iCloud password to confirm.



3 Remove all content

Make sure you sign out from your iTunes and App Store accounts too. Now go to General> Reset>Erase All Contents and Settings and enter your Apple ID to wipe your iPhone.

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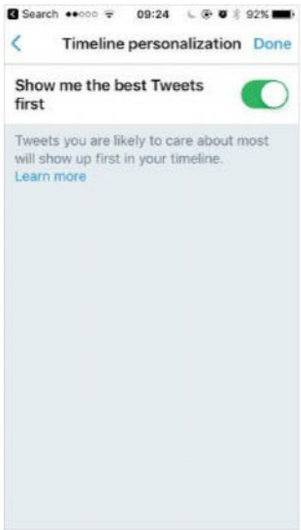
10 amazing Twitter secrets

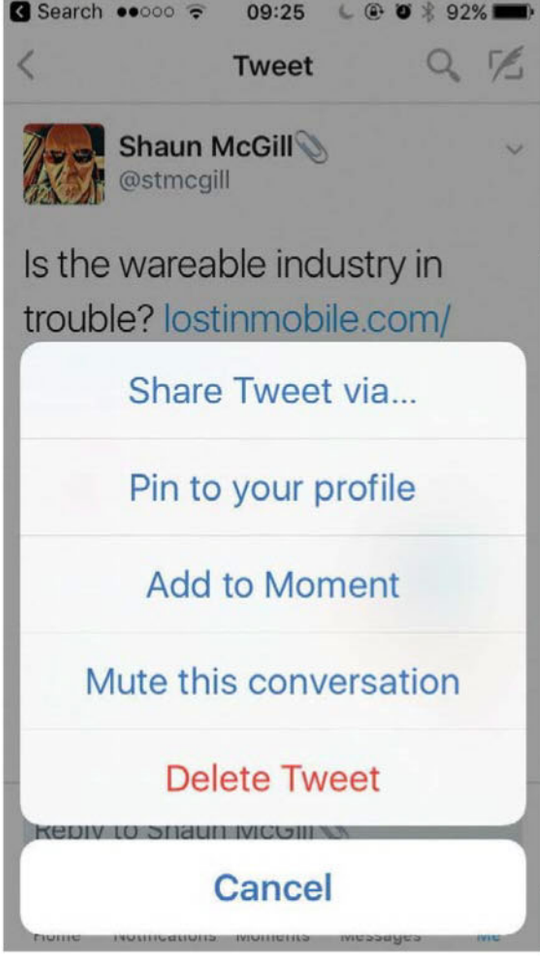
Get to know more of the ins and outs of the Twitter app with these ten hidden Twitter secrets

Twitter has undergone a variety of improvements over time, but in order to keep the interface usable and a pleasure to work within, many of its features are somewhat hidden and are not always obviously placed, so you may benefit from knowing some of the secrets. Twitter, like all of the best social networks, can be anything you want it to be and this means that you can decide exactly who appears in your timeline and how their tweets are displayed. You can then work with multiple accounts to give yourself a personal and work presence on Twitter. Twitter on mobile is more useful than ever, but it pays to understand some of the secrets to ensure you get the full benefits from it.

Customise your timeline

Twitter likes to present your tweets in an order that it feels is best for you. If, however, you want them in chronological order, go to Me, tap the cog icon, Settings and Timeline to disable the 'best Tweets' feature. Try each version and choose your preferred one.





Highlight your work

Tap the Me icon and choose any tweet that you have posted recently. Now tap the small chevron top right and choose 'Pin to your profile' to have it displayed whenever anyone looks at what you have been posting. It will appear at the top of your tweets at all times.

A busy experience

Many of Twitter's best features are less obvious

Tap to connect

Tap this icon to connect to new people instantly. Twitter has put a lot of work into ensuring that you are only offered new people who you will be interested in following.

Deal with media

This tiny chevron is used to offer the ability to mute individuals and conversations, block people and even create a new Moment based on the content.

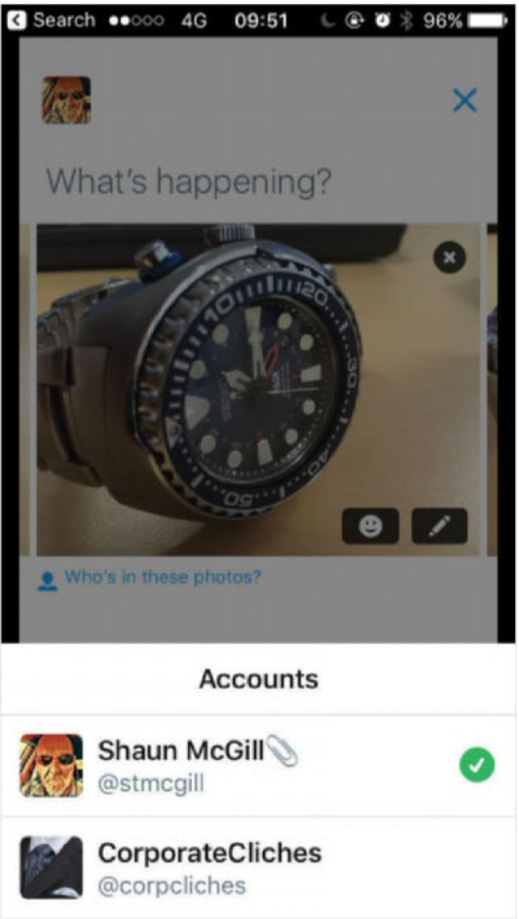
Customise

Under the Me tab, and more specifically the cog icon within the resulting screen, you will be able to tailor the Twitter experience to your exact needs and preferences.

Night mode

The new night mode feature is useful in all sorts of circumstances. To set it up, tap the cog icon while in the Me screen and then select 'Turn on night mode'. The screen will turn dark – as a result your feed will be much more viewable in low light, and also less likely to disturb others.

Don't forget that you can access stickers while tweeting a photo by tapping the smiley face icon. The range available is remarkably varied.



Swap and send

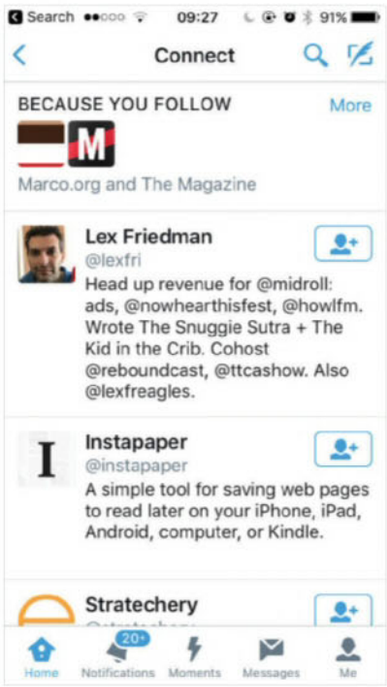
If you are in the middle of creating a tweet and decide that you want to send it using a different account, tap your avatar top left, and all of the available accounts will be presented for you to use. You can now select a different one and compose the exact same tweet.

Mute a conversation

One of the best Twitter features is the ability to track a conversation between people you follow, but what happens if it dominates your timeline? Go to a tweet within it, tap the chevron and then 'Mute this conversation'. It will not affect any of your Twitter settings.

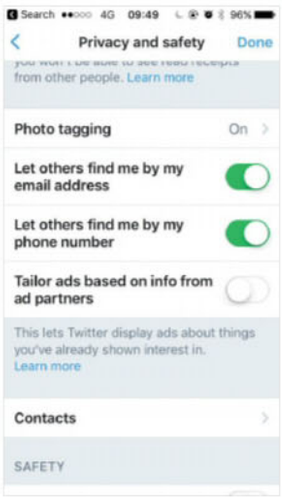
Connect with others

While in the Home view, tap the top-left icon and you will see a new Connect screen appear. Twitter will display a large selection of users who may interest you based on who you currently follow. The trick will be ensuring that you do not follow too many people.



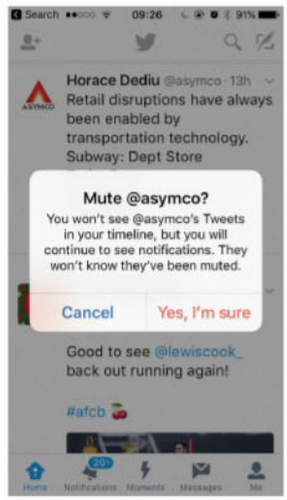
Manage the web

When a link is embedded in a tweet, you can tap it to see it displayed in a new window within Twitter. To see it in Safari, tap the sharing icon and then Open in Safari, or tap More to share the page with others using different services. It is extremely flexible.



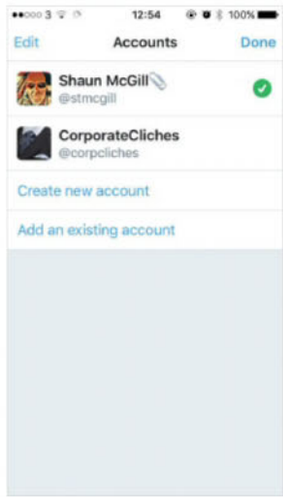
Think about privacy

In Settings>Privacy and safety, you can take a minute to ensure that you are as safe as possible while using Twitter. For example, you can stop others from finding you by your phone number or email address, which could be useful in some very specific circumstances.



Mute a person

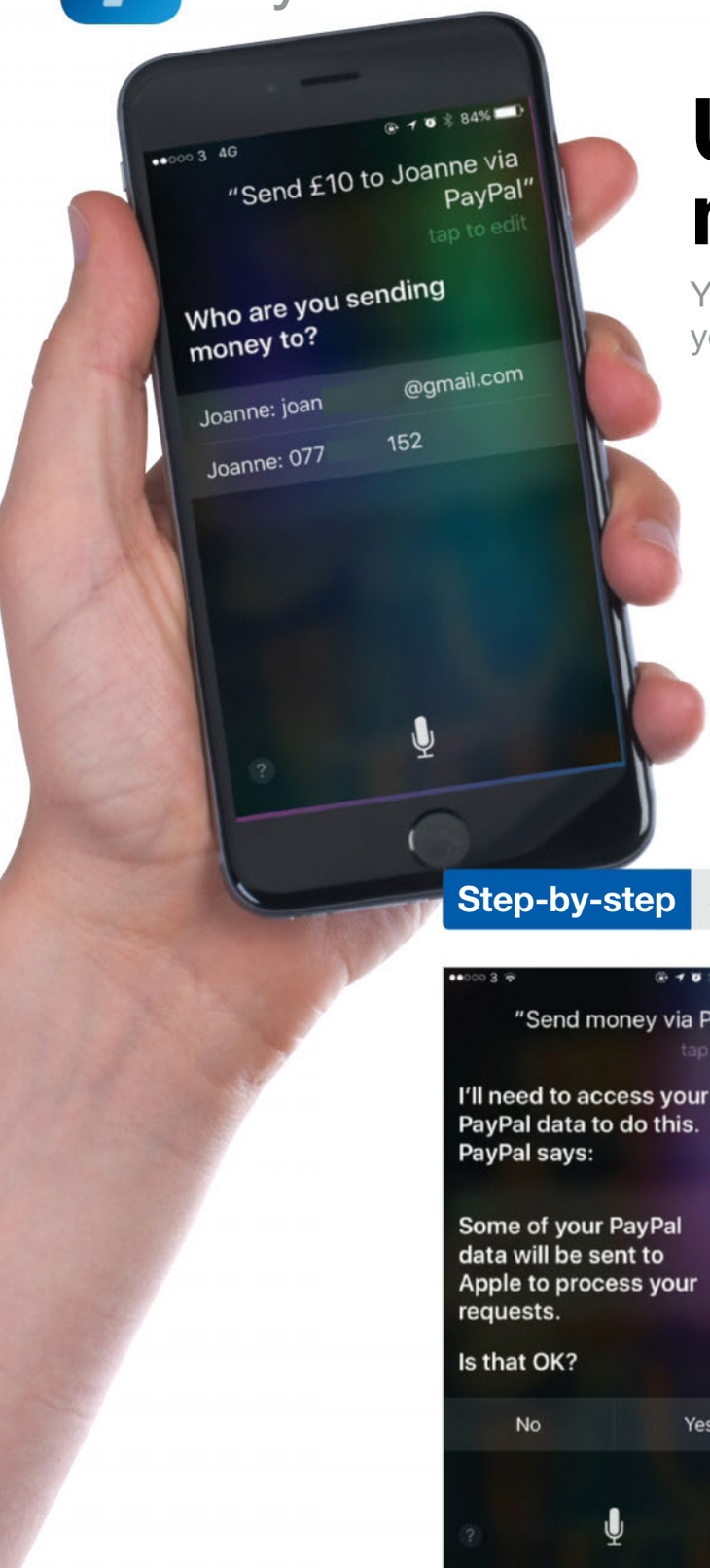
There will be people that you know, be it friends or colleagues, who become completely different people on Twitter. To avoid upsetting them by unfollowing, you can tap any tweet that they have posted, tap the chevron and then select Mute @name to hide their tweets.



Use multiple accounts

To use more than one Twitter account in the mobile app, go to Me and tap the icon with two people in it at the top. Tap More options and then either 'Create new account' or 'Add an existing account' to use multiple accounts in the future. You can swap between them.

PayPal



Use Siri to send money via PayPal

You can now send money without ever touching your screen – simply speak and send the funds

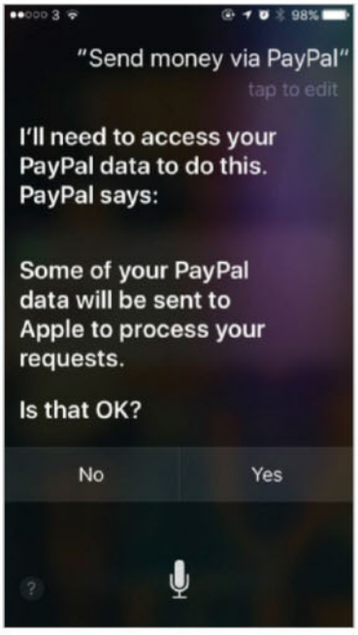
Difficulty

Time needed
10

You will likely be aware of just how easy it is to send money via a phone now, but it is only recently that Apple has allowed Siri to be taken advantage of when doing so. This means that to send money in a flash, all you need to do is say that you want to send a certain amount of money, and then who to and by what method – which in this case will be PayPal.

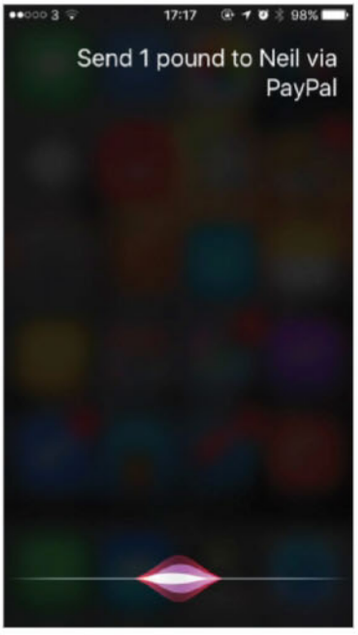
It is incredibly easy to do, almost disconcertingly so when you consider that you are sending real money, but there are checks in place to ensure that you are the owner of the PayPal account and that the money will go to the right person. We will show you how to send money and also how to set up PayPal and Siri to work together. This process is easier than you would expect it to be and will be sure to save you a lot of fiddling around. Let's send some money.

Step-by-step Send money in an instant



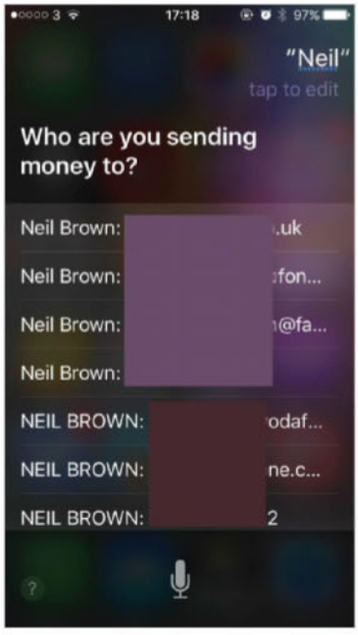
1 Set it up

The quickest way to set up the link is to open Siri and say "Send money via PayPal". You will need to accept the displayed warning by tapping Yes and you are good to go.



2 The right phrase

You can now say how much you want to send, including the right currency and the correct recipient, and of course you need to mention PayPal for the process to work as it should.

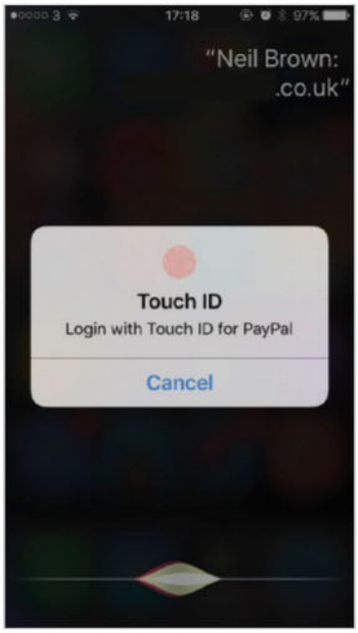


3 A handy list

A list of potential contacts may appear if you are using a common name or if that person has multiple email addresses and phone numbers included in their contact card.

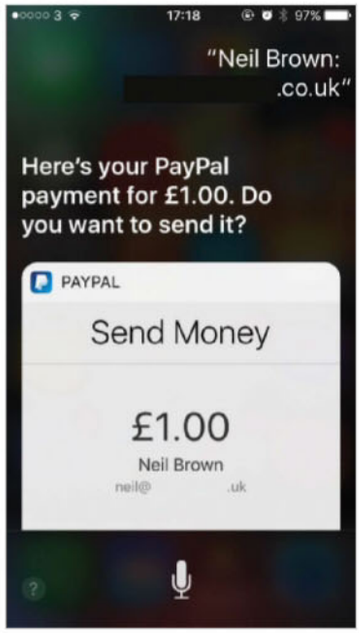
"There are checks in place to ensure that you are the owner of the account and that the money will go to the right person"

You will need iOS 10 installed to send PayPal money using Siri, but the recipient does not even need to be using iOS.



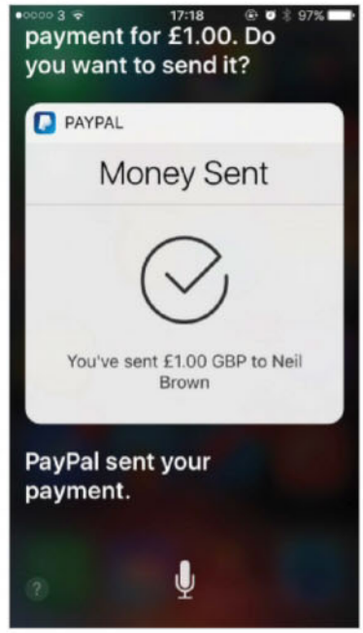
4 The security

Once you have chosen the exact contact details you need, you will be prompted to use Touch ID or to enter your PayPal password in order to prove who you are. It's very secure.



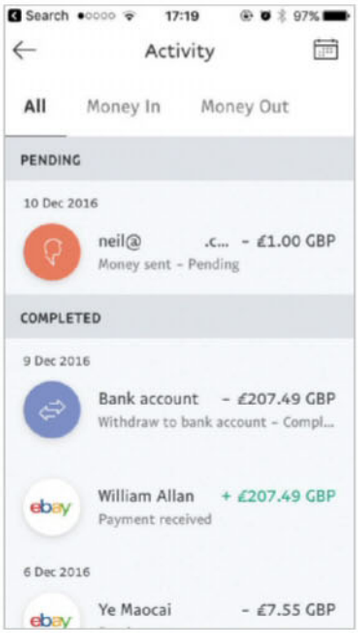
5 A confirmation card

A card will appear on the Siri screen showing exactly where the payment will be going and also the amount for you to double check. Tap at the bottom to send the money.



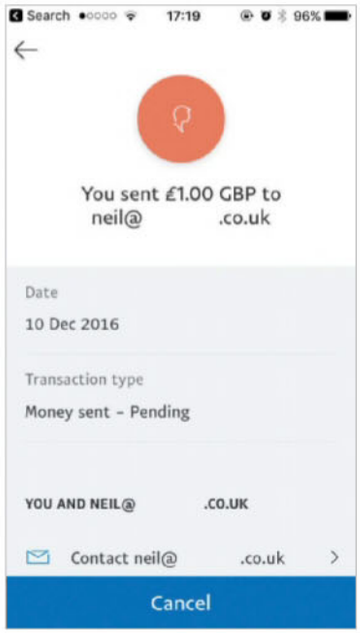
6 It is done

A confirmation card will now appear to confirm that the money has been sent without you ever needing to open the PayPal app. You can now continue using Siri as normal.



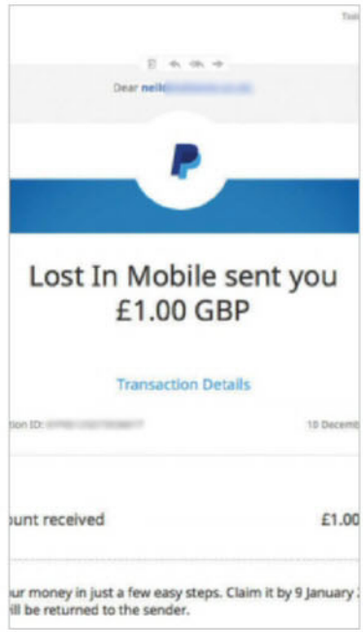
7 Double check

You may want to open the PayPal app the first few times in order to make sure that the money has been sent correctly, but there is no reason why any part should be incorrect.



8 Cancel the payment

If you tap the actual payment in the PayPal app, you will have the opportunity to cancel it if its current status is pending, so there are useful safeguards built in if the need arises.

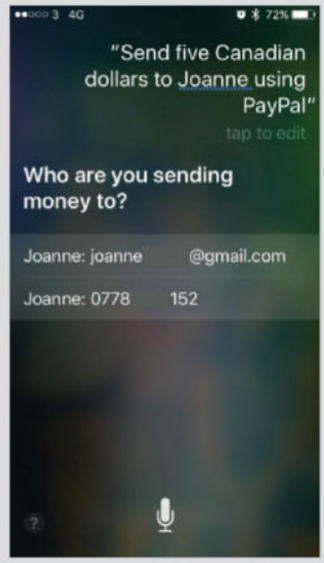


9 It's the same

The recipient of the funds will be completely unaware that Siri has been used to help send the money. All Siri does is make the initial process much quicker than before.

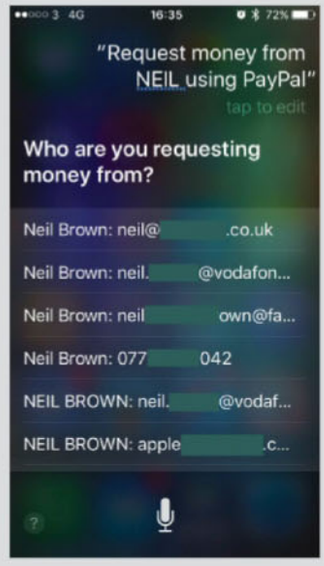
Further features

The PayPal app offers many money-related facilities and Siri can be used to access some of them. Here are two simple examples.



1 Choose a currency

When requesting money, simply say the currency you want to use and PayPal will do the rest for you. This is ideal for dealing with friends and work colleagues abroad.



2 Request money

You can also ask Siri to request money from a contact who is using PayPal by saying the name and the amount. Again, Siri will go away and do the hard work for you.

Add complications to Apple Watch faces

Customise your Watch face so that it displays the information that is most beneficial to you

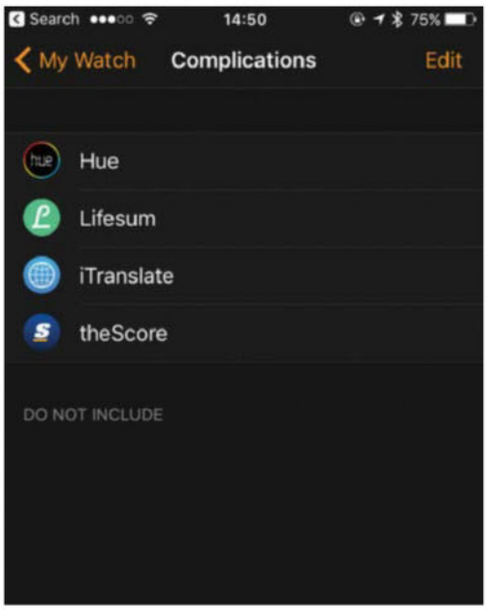
Difficulty

Time needed
10

Complications are those tiny slices of information you see on many Apple Watch faces. They can tell you the weather, give you a health status update, show you when messages or emails are available to read or even let you go direct to your music. But you don't have to stick with the complications that are shown by default. As well as being able to use lots of first-party complications created by Apple, you can also add many highly useful complications that have been produced by third-party developers.

Many apps downloaded from the App Store come with the bonus of a complication. These can take you straight to your Hue lights setup, enable you to make instant language translations or show you the latest football scores, for instance. Indeed, complications can add so much to your overall use of an Apple Watch, so you really owe it to yourself to explore all of the options available. Here we look at how they can be added to your Watch face.

Step-by-step Add complications on the Watch



1 Find complications

Some third-party apps installed on your Watch support complications. They automatically appear in the Watch app on your iPhone, so look under My Watch>Complications.

2 Choose a face

Grab hold of your Watch and press down on the Watch face. You can swipe left and right to select the face you wish to add complications too. When you're done, tap Customise.

3 Locate the menu

In the customisation mode, swipe left to the final screen. You'll see the complications you can alter, highlighted by boxes. Tap the one to change and it will be ringed green.

Check out some suggestions for apps that offer Watch complications by going to the Face Gallery on the iPhone Watch app.

Edit your third-party complications

Remove complications by other apps to streamline your options

Knowledge base

Can't find a complication?

Some complications will only work with certain Watch faces and in certain spots, so if you can't see your choice this is likely to be the reason why. Note too that you can't customise the Solar or Astronomy faces, but if you wish to maximise the number of complications you can have on the screen at once, go for the Modular option.

Delete complications

Complications can be removed from the list by tapping the red button next to a listing. They don't disappear from the screen; they just move to the section Do Not Include.

Edit mode

This top right-hand corner usually shows the word Edit. Clicking it opens up the options on this page and when you're finished editing, you just tap Done.

Add a complication

Complications auto-appear when you download a supporting app, but you can add any you've previously removed by tapping the green button.

Reorder and customise

Tap and hold on one of these buttons and you are able to move complications up and down the screen, reordering them to suit your wants and desires.

4 Rotate Digital Crown

By rotating the Digital Crown, you'll see the various available complications. They will include those by Apple and those introduced by third-party apps such as Lifesum.

5 Select the complication

When you have chosen a complication, you can move on to another slot and do the same. How any complications you have depends on the number of compatible installed apps.

6 Finish off

Once you are happy with the added complications, you can press the Digital Crown to go back to the main face-selection menu. Tap the face you've created and you're done.

Scribble text replies in Messages

Use your own handwriting to get around the restrictions of inputting on the small Watch screen

Difficulty

Time needed

2

Back in the day, people would use personal digital assistants such as a Palm or Apple's Newton – devices that used handwriting recognition software and made it easier for users to input their words. Today, tech is far more advanced and yet this functionality has made a comeback on the Apple Watch. It feels like technology is going full circle, except it makes perfect sense. When you have a screen as tiny as the Watch, there's no way Apple can fit a full keyboard onto it. Handwriting your messages is therefore intuitive, easy and fast.

The option was introduced with watchOS 3 and it is simply a matter of activating Scribble and jotting down your pearls of wisdom or instructions. Here we take a look at how to do just that, together with little tricks you can use to make scribbling even more useful. With suggested words and simple ways to add some punctuation, it's bound to become your preferred method of writing.

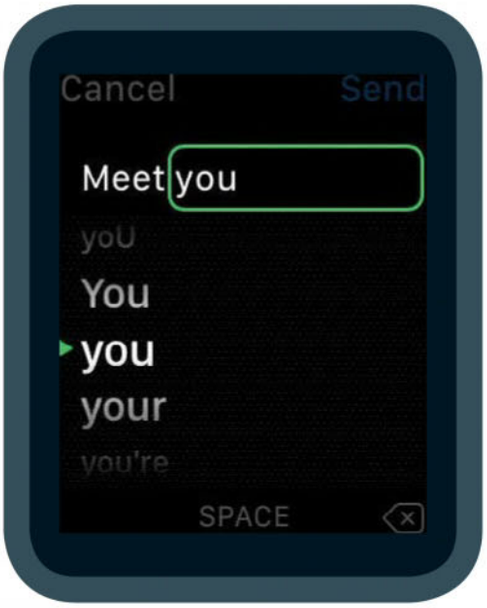
Step-by-step Handwrite messages on your Watch

1 Find Scribble option

To reply to a message, tap the Scribble option at the end of a message thread. Or Scribble a new message by force holding the screen and tapping New Message>Create Message.

2 Use your finger

Simply draw letters of the alphabet and numbers on the screen. As you do this, the characters appear at the top of the screen, allowing you to check them as you go along.



3 Choose right words

By turning the Digital Crown, you are able to speed up the writing process even further by calling up a series of recommended words. Tap the one that best fits your text.

You can use the Scribble feature when you're replying to a Message notification and also in third-party apps such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

Understand the Scribble interface

Apple has created a very simple and intuitive interface for fast replies

Knowledge base

How accurate is Scribble?

You'd be surprised. Scribble is very adept at recognising what you are typing. You may need to be rather quick with some of the characters – if you don't form a hashtag quickly enough, there's a chance it will think you're writing the word 'it', for instance – but you'll soon get the hang of it without needing to adapt your handwriting to any great degree.

Cancel a message

As you'd expect, if you decide you don't want to reply at that time or if you make a mess of the message, you can just hit Cancel in the top left to go back to the message threads.

Tap a word

You can also tap any of the words in your sentence to see recommended words, and you can move back and forth through a message using your finger.

Draw special characters

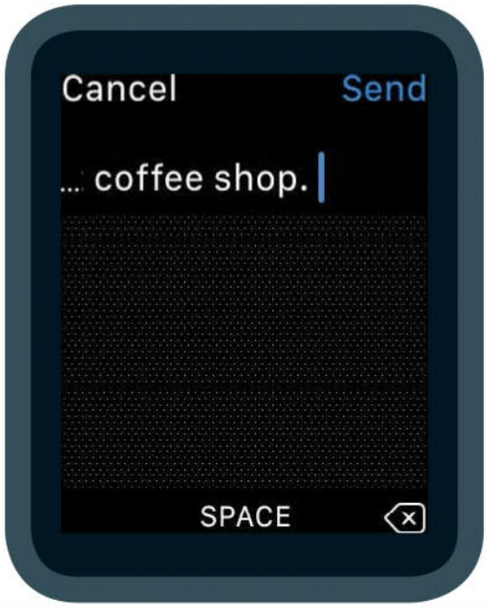
You can draw exclamation marks, hashtags, @ symbols, dashes and more. The interface will fully recognise what you're trying to write and add them to the text entry bar.

Delete incorrect text

If you make a mistake, don't worry. You can simply tap the delete button found here to go back one space at a time in order to correct it.

4 Write even faster

You don't need to wait until one character disappears off the screen before you scribble another. You can even fit more than one letter or number on the screen at once.



5 Add the punctuation

Although you can draw punctuation such as exclamation marks, you can also press the word Space to put a gap between your words. Double pressing Space will add a full stop.

6 Send a message

Once you have completed your message, you just need to press the Send button. Your words will appear in the familiar Messages button as a normal entry within the thread.

iBooks StoryTime

Read interactive books on your TV

With iBooks StoryTime, you can bring classic and modern children's favourites to life

Difficulty

Time needed

10

Children love a good story, especially when they are being read in a very entertaining way. Apple's iBooks StoryTime app taps into this desire, with dozens of books aimed at children under six. Each story has read-along narration and, in the majority of cases, highlighted words to follow too.

It means children can see and hear stories unfold before their eyes, helped along by some lovely illustrations. And even though you have to purchase the vast majority of the books, the prices are generally low, with try-before-you-buy options available. Just make sure you have a fourth-generation Apple TV with the latest version of tvOS before you get started.

Find a good book

Build your collection with confidence by checking out books beforehand

Knowledge base

Manage your books

You are not restricted to buying your read-aloud books via iBooks StoryTime. You can also find and purchase them using your Apple ID from within the iBooks Store or iTunes Store using your iOS device, Mac or PC. You have to use these devices to manage your books too, as there are no management options available within the Apple TV app.

Read the title

Many of the books will be read by a celebrity, which can either be the authors themselves, as seen here with David Walliams, or by the likes of comedian Lenny Henry.

Number of pages

Each book will give you an indication of the number of pages it has and it will also show you the size of the download, which is great when space is at a premium.

Preview option

The best way to figure whether or not a book will be suitable for your child is to take a sneak peek beforehand. The Preview option downloads a few pages from the book, complete with voiceover.

And there's more

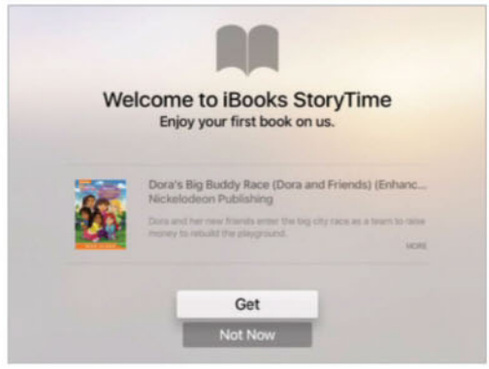
Click on the word More and you will be able to read a full synopsis of the book and a short biography of the author, helping you with your buying decision.

You can flip between full and non-full screen viewing by going to the Settings app and selecting Apps>iBooks StoryTime>Full Screen.

Step-by-step Read and navigate children's books

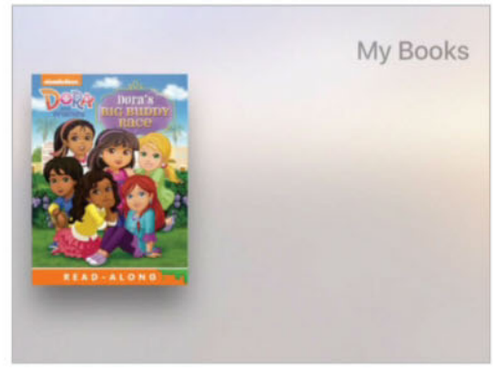
1 Download the app

To use the interactive books with read-aloud narration, you must have the Apple TV app iBooks StoryTime installed. Grab it for free from the App Store and click to open it.



2 Install a book

You'll be asked if you want to download the book Dora's Big Buddy Race for free. It's a good way to familiarise yourself with how the books work, so try it by clicking Get.

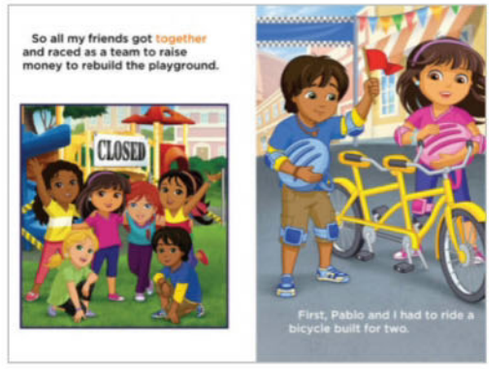


3 View your library

Each book that you download will be clearly stored in the app's library within a section handily called My Books. To start reading your first book, simply click on it.

4 Start reading along

The books take good advantage of your TV screen and they have lovely, colourful illustrations. The narrator will begin reading the story out loud, so ensure your volume is up.



5 Pause a book

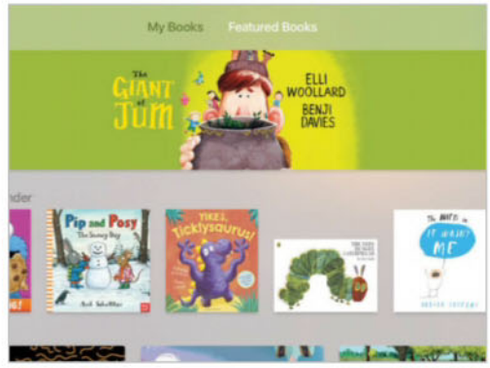
Most books highlight the words as they are being spoken. If you want to pause the book at any point, just tap the Play/Pause button on your Apple TV remote, and again to resume.

6 Turn over pages

Swipe on the touchpad of the remote to turn the pages back and forth. The books will automatically flip when they reach the end of a spread though, making reading seamless.

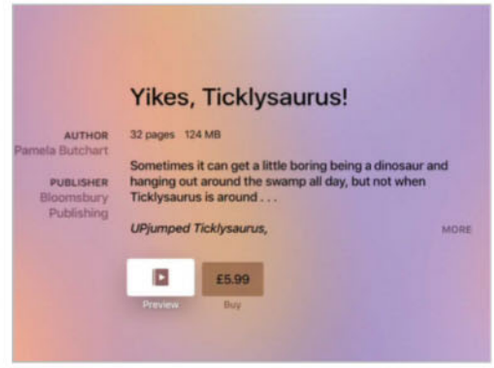
7 Stop reading aloud

If you would prefer the book not to read aloud, you can turn this function off. Simply pause the book and swipe down. Then select the Off button to silence the app.



8 Get more books

To expand your library, go back to My Books and press the Menu button on your remote. Swipe over to the section marked Featured Books and you can see other available stories.



9 Select a story

Click on a book you like the look of and you can select to buy it (a few are free). The book will then be added to the section My Books, so click the one you want to read.

Add multiple Apple IDs to Apple TV

Share your Apple TV with others by letting them use their own account

Difficulty

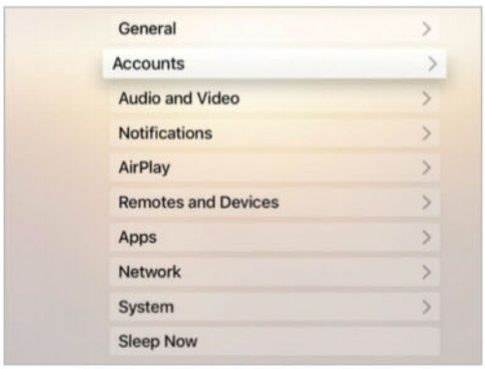
Time needed

10

Since Apple TV is very much a family device, it tends to be used by various people in your household. For that reason, Apple enables you to add multiple IDs, which means more than one iTunes account can be used to buy apps, games, films and TV shows. It also means you can switch between IDs for a more personal experience, although it is not possible to log in to more than one account at the same time.

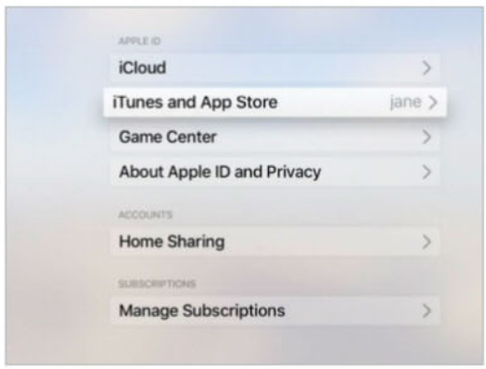
You can, however, use Family Sharing, hooking up multiple accounts so that your family's purchases are available for all. You can see your shared content by selecting Movies, TV Shows or App Store and choosing Purchased>Family Sharing.

Step-by-step Add extra accounts to Apple TV



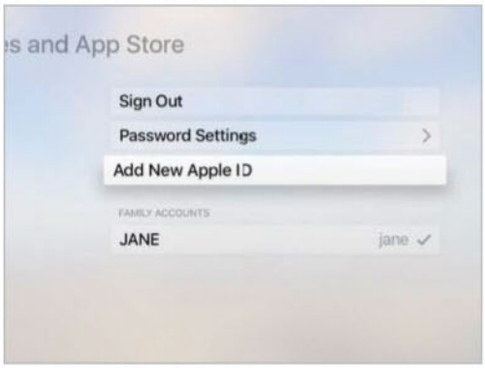
1 Open Settings app

Extra accounts need to be added within Settings, so open up the Settings app on your Apple TV before highlighting and selecting the second option down, marked Accounts.



2 Select iTunes

On the next page, you need to select iTunes and App Store. You will see that it is already set up with an account. The one we create is going to be in addition to that one.



3 Add new ID

Now choose Add New Apple ID. On the next page, you will see all of the previously used Apple IDs with an option to clear them all. We want to Add New, so select this option.

4 Sign in

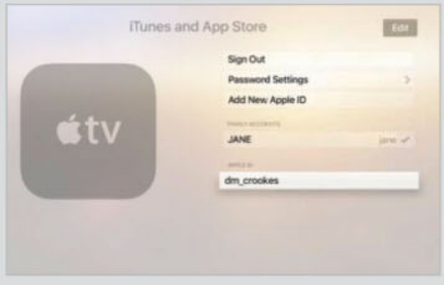
Now you can sign in using a different Apple ID. Use the on-screen keyboard to input your username and then input the password for that account. Click Sign In to add the ID.

Use another account

After you have set up other IDs, you need to know how you can switch to them. It's rather straightforward, using only a few button presses.

1 Find the account

Open the Settings app and click on Accounts. As you did when setting up your multiple accounts, you will need to select iTunes and App Store from the list of available options.



2 Select it

You will see the extra account you have created, so select it to switch over. You can have many accounts here by going back over the steps in the main tutorial for other IDs.

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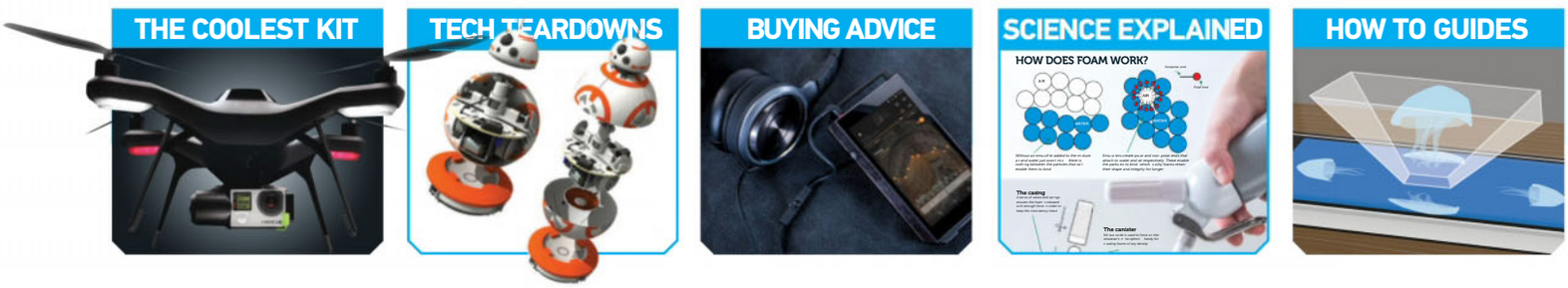

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Glossary

The place to come for key terms made easy to understand

Touch Bar
A new input on MacBook Pros that features a thin touchscreen Retina display in place of a keyboard's function keys.

Pentalobe
A proprietary screw type used by Apple, often to secure the bottom casing of its laptops.

Extensions
Third-party add-ons that work within Safari to provide additional functionality when browsing the web.

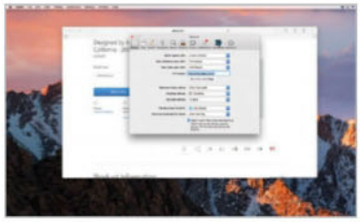
Keynote
Apple's presentation creation software, similar to Microsoft's PowerPoint, available on macOS/iOS.

Screenshot
A photo of whatever your device's screen is currently showing, captured using the device itself.

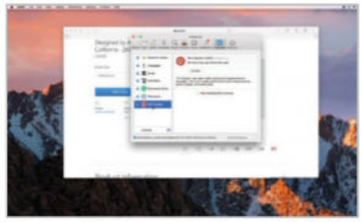
Grade
Colour correction given to scenes in a film to make them look consistent.

Some extensions have the option to turn off their share buttons

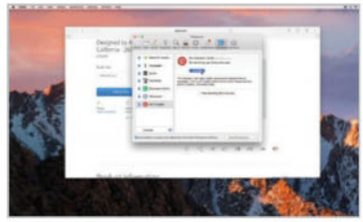
I have a Safari extension that places an annoying 'share' button over every image online. How do I get rid of it? Ellen Poole



1 It's your preference
To remove annoying extensions completely, fire up Safari and open its preferences by hitting Cmd+, or heading to Safari>Preferences in the menu.



2 Find the extension
Click on the Extensions tab at the top of the Preferences window, then select the offending extension from the list of them on the left.

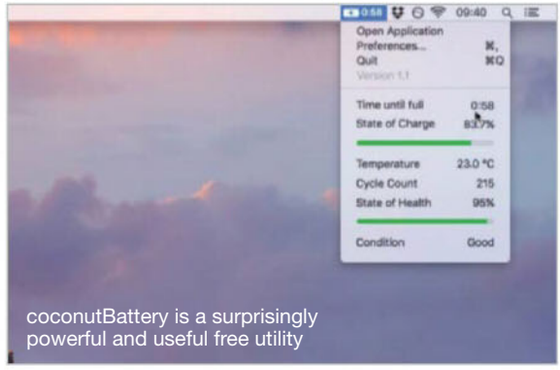


3 Uninstall it
Check the extension's preferences for an option to turn off share buttons, or click Uninstall to remove it completely. Restart Safari to finish.

If you're leaving a Keynote presentation running on your Mac, ensure you set it up on a new account so visitors can't access your private information.

I've updated to macOS Sierra 10.12.2 and now it won't tell me how long until my battery dies! What can I do? Kyle Mason

We feel your pain, Kyle! This feels a little silly of Apple. Fortunately, there's a free, third-party app that can provide this information. Download coconutBattery (coconut-flavour.com/coconutbattery), fire it up and you'll find all the information you're missing and more. Head into its Preferences (Cmd+,) and you can choose to have it as a menu bar item and display the time remaining on your battery's charge. It'll even give you info like battery health, too.



coconutBattery is a surprisingly powerful and useful free utility

I have a habit of accidentally recording over finished tracks in GarageBand, can I do anything to prevent this? Freya Priest

1 Show Track Lock

Right-click a track's header, then click Track Header Components> Show Track Lock to reveal the padlock icon next to your tracks.

2 Lock the tracks

Click on the padlock icon next to any track you'd like to stop from being accidentally recorded over. Now you'll never lose a great take!

3 Unlock it again

If you need to make any edits to a track later on, you'll need to ensure it's unlocked. Simply click on the padlock icon once more to do this.

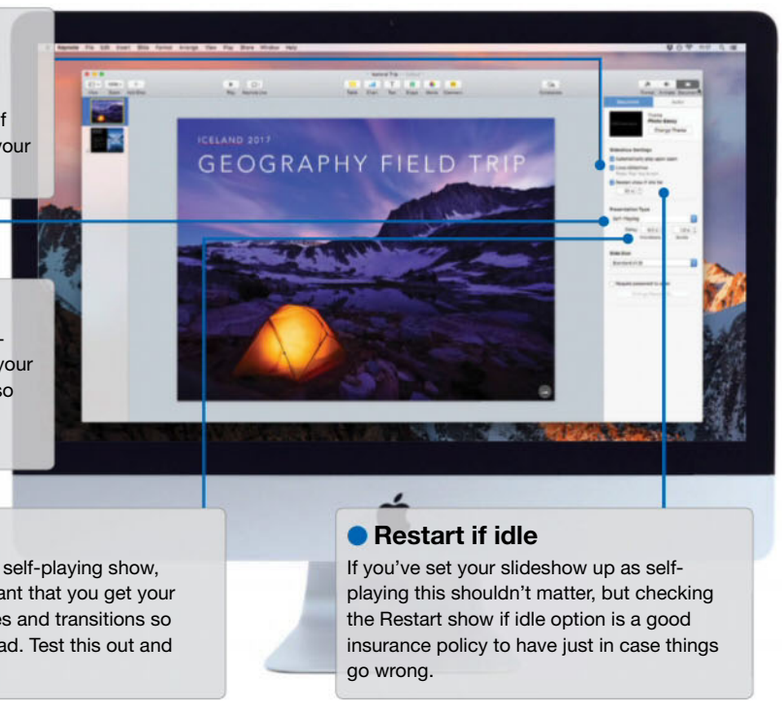
How can I set up my Keynote presentation to play automatically for visitors to my school's information evening? Bill Collins

Loop it round

Presuming you want your slideshow to run all evening, you'll want to check the Loop slideshow button so it restarts itself automatically once it gets to the end of your deck of slides.

Self-playing show

Click on the Document button in the top-right corner of Keynote and ensure that your Presentation Type is set to Self-Playing so visitors don't have to click through your slides manually.



Time it right

If you're setting up a self-playing show, it's extremely important that you get your timings right for slides and transitions so everything can be read. Test this out and tweak as necessary!

Restart if idle

If you've set your slideshow up as self-playing this shouldn't matter, but checking the Restart show if idle option is a good insurance policy to have just in case things go wrong.

Apple Expert

The one-stop column for Genius advice

Why do I have to type my password just to stop my Mac's screensaver from running? It slows me down so much at work. This should be easily fixed by unchecking a setting. Head to System Preferences>Security & Privacy>General and uncheck the Require password setting, or at least increase the time it takes before the setting kicks in when your screensaver starts.

How do I get my Finder windows to always open with the same size and position? It's annoying when they change! Okay, open up a single Finder window (ensure all others are closed), resize it as you like, close that window, Alt/Opt+click on Finder's icon, then click Relaunch. Now you should have a window size that's consistent every time it opens.

I'm struggling to search for anything successfully in Mail. Messages I know should be there just aren't showing up for me. Often this issue is pretty easily solved by rebuilding your Mailbox. To do this, head to Mailbox>Rebuild in Mail and let the process run through. This should fix the issue.

Apple Expert

The one-stop column for Genius advice

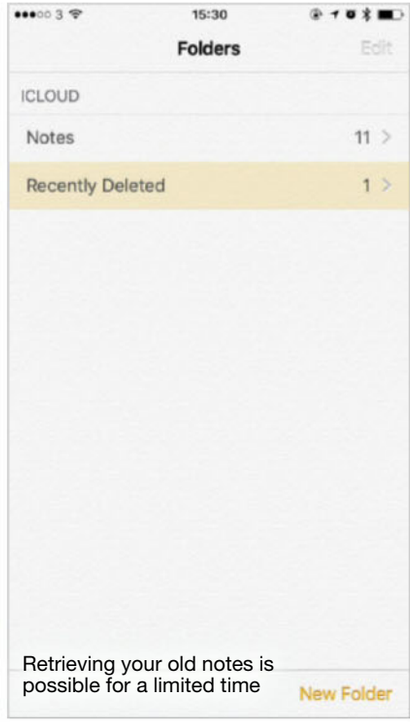
Where's the new iOS 10.2 SOS feature that was supposed to be released? I thought it was such a great idea!
We agree, tapping your power button five times to start an SOS call is a great idea. Unfortunately, it's only available in India right now, but we're sure this feature will roll out elsewhere in the world in the coming months.

I love the handwriting feature in Messages, but how do you delete old handwritten messages from the bottom?
Open up a new Message and rotate your phone into landscape mode to bring up the handwriting window. From here, tap and hold on any of the saved messages in the bottom row, then tap on the X that appears next to them to delete them.

Any advice for avoiding a mucky screen when I'm reading recipes from Safari on my iPad while cooking in the kitchen?
How about having Siri speak those recipes out loud? To do this, you'll need to enable the Speak Screen setting under Settings>General>Accessibility>Speech. Now, navigate to any webpage and ask Siri to "speak screen" to hear the recipe while you cook.

My iPad is brand new but is draining really quick. Any idea what's wrong here? Could it be a rogue app at play? Ali Cairns

I'm a bit of an Instagram fiend. Is there a way to set my iPhone's camera to always be in Square mode for photos? Tania Lomas
If you've updated to iOS 10.2, Tania, you're in luck! Open up the Settings app and navigate to Photos & Camera. Tap on Preserve Settings and then ensure that the Camera Mode option is enabled by tapping on its switch. Now, if you open up the Camera and set the mode as Square, it'll stay that way until you change it again, no matter how many times you close and reopen the app. It works for other modes as well, so setting your camera to Video will also stick, for example.

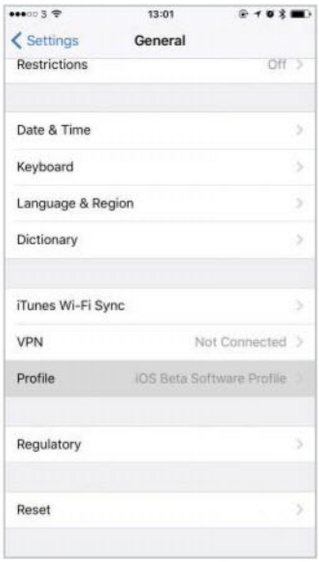


Retrieving your old notes is possible for a limited time

Help! I deleted a note on my iPhone with all of my lecture notes in by accident. Can I do anything to get it back? Tracey Phillips
Don't worry, Tracey! All is not lost, providing you didn't delete that note more than 30 days ago. Open up Notes and tap on the < in the top-left corner to go to the overview of Notes folders on your device. There you should see a Recently Deleted folder. Tap on that to find and restore those lecture notes. Be quick to do this, though. Notes that are more than 30 days old are deleted from there forever and can't be retrieved.

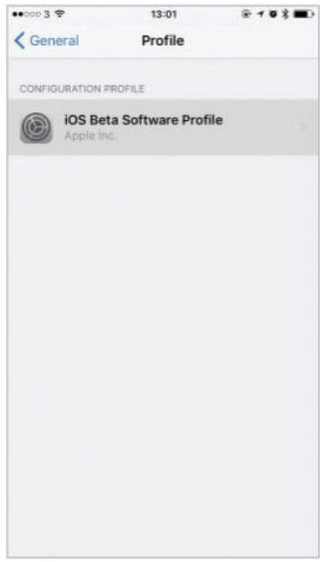
You can add your iOS device back onto the beta program again at any time by heading to **beta.apple.com** in Safari and downloading the profile again.

I signed up for iOS betas but I want normal updates now. How do I get them back in Software Update? India Warren



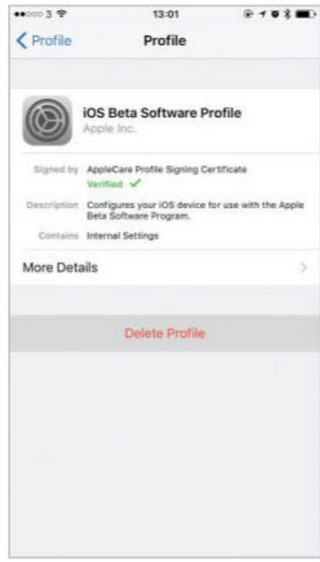
1 Find the setting

Open up your Settings app and head to General>Profile. Here you'll find the iOS Beta profile that tells Apple to send you all the beta updates.



2 Select the profile

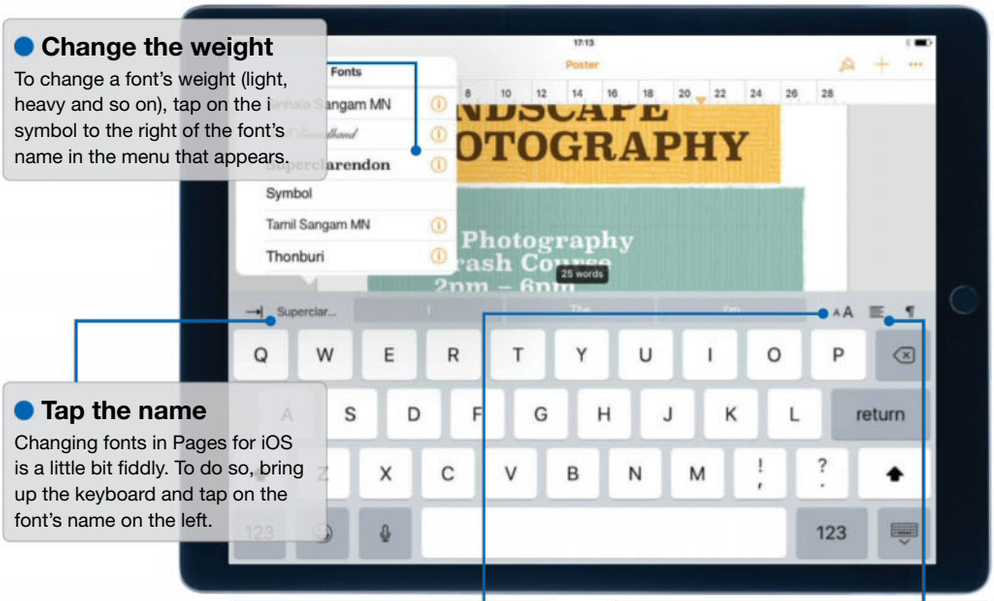
Depending on your iPhone's setup (especially if you're beta testing other apps), you may see a few profiles. Select the iOS Beta Software one.

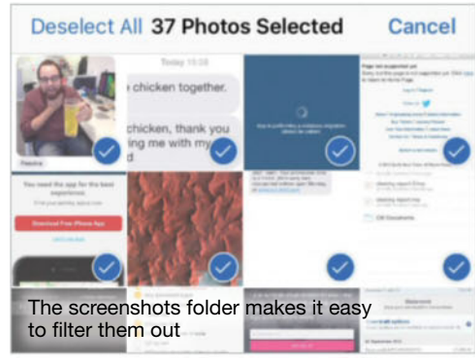


3 Delete and restart

Open up the iOS Beta profile, hit Delete, enter your password to confirm, then restart your device. Now you should receive regular updates again.

Can I get any control over the fonts I use in Pages on my iPad? Or is it too lightweight an app for that? Justin Voakes

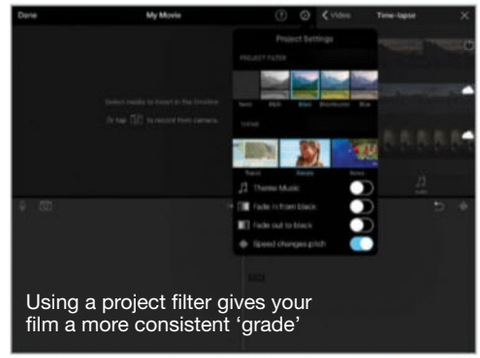




The screenshots folder makes it easy to filter them out

What's the easiest way to round up and delete all the accidental screenshots I've taken while I've been unlocking my phone? Eric Palmer

Good thinking, Eric. All those accidental screenshots will most certainly start to add up and take up room on your device. To find them all fast, simply open up Photos, tap on the Albums tab and scroll down until you find the Screenshots album. From there, tap Select in the top right, Select All in the top left, then tap on the trash can to delete them all for good. You might need to confirm this deletion, especially if there's a lot of screenshots to go. They should now be gone!


Using a project filter gives your film a more consistent 'grade'

How can I make the clips in my iMovie project look more consistent? They're all lit differently and shot on different days. Rob Hawes

Applying a project filter in iMovie is a great way to give the resulting film a more consistent look and feel. Better still, you can still apply filters to individual clips below this. To add a project filter, tap on the cog icon near the preview window, tap on the project filter you'd like to use then tap out of the settings window. Applying a project filter is non-destructive, so you can always jump in and change it, if you'd like. For clips that still look wildly different, you can apply individual filters to try and bring them a bit closer together.

Apple Expert

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I can't adjust the volume on my Mac, the controls are disabled and It shows a circle with a line through it.
If you've recently had headphones or speakers plugged in, try plugging them in and removing them again. Sometimes this issue is caused by your Mac not recognising that a device has been unplugged from the audio jack socket.

My iPhone shuts off as soon as battery hits around 20 per cent. Sometimes it switches back on and other times it needs charging.
It sounds like your battery needs to be replaced. Take your iPhone to an Apple Store for a Genius Bar appointment. They can run a test to see if this is the case and help replace it if that's what needs to be done.

My MacBook Pro's screen is really dusty and has fingerprints all over it. What should I be using to clean it?
Apple recommends sticking to using nothing more than a soft, lint-free cloth to clean your devices. There are also Mac-specific cleaning sprays out there. If you go down that route, use them sparingly and never spray directly onto your device.

My 2014 Mac mini's fan sounds pretty tired! Is it easy to clean or replace myself? Kim Sky

If your Mac mini is sitting in a particularly dusty environment, there's a chance your fan might be a little clogged up. If you've got a spudger and a T6 Torx screwdriver handy, you can have a go at opening it up and cleaning it out yourself. It's a relatively easy process, but can get a little fiddly, so take it slow and be extra careful. If you're not feeling confident in carrying out the job yourself, take it down to your nearest Genius Bar for guidance. If you're up for having a look yourself though, read on to find out how it's done. Our friends at **iFixit.com** provided the photos, and they'll sell you the tools if you need them.

1 Pry the cover

Use your spudger to carefully pry off the bottom cover. Be careful to avoid damaging the screw posts at the bottom and upper sides of the case.

2 Antenna up

Remove the six T6 Torx screws securing the antenna plate in place (note their different lengths and locations) and slowly lift it to one side.

3 Unscrew and disconnect

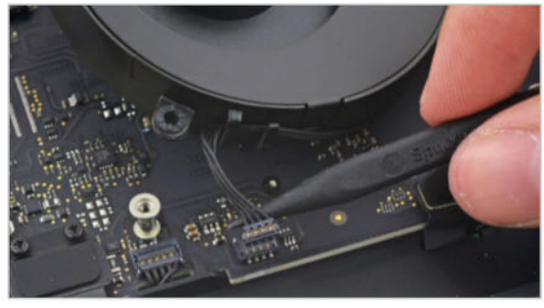
Remove the T6 Torx screw securing the antenna connector to the AirPort card then use your spudger to lift away the connector altogether.

4 Remove the screws

Remove the top two Torx screws (marked in red) and loosen up the bottom captive screw (marked in orange) on your Mac mini's fan.

5 A careful lift

Lift the fan unit up slightly to free the captive screw and slightly down towards the bottom of the base so you can access its connector.



6 Disconnect it

For the final step, use your spudger to disconnect the fan's connector. Give it a clean and follow these instructions in reverse to replace.

Picking up a new fan for a 2014 Mac mini is relatively cheap. Our friends at **iFixit.com** sell new replacements for approx £45/$55.

I'm buying a top-spec MacBook Pro with Touch Bar, but how repairable is it? Is anything easy to repair myself? Rich Coombes

Apple's portables are becoming less and less repairable, especially now that most models have RAM and SSD chips soldered directly onto their Logic Boards. If you're looking for a device that's easy to upgrade, you're out of luck. In that sense, your decision to get a top-of-the-range model is the right one. Buy the best now and you're less likely to end up shelling out for another model at a later date when you're in need of more RAM or storage. That said, when it comes to repairing parts or replacing them outright, the new MacBook Pros do have a little surprise. Our friends at iFixit tore one down and did the hard work here. In return, we'll point out where your new MacBook Pro can be easily repaired.

Tools needed

Missing any of these? You can order any parts or tools you might need from www.ifixit.com/store.

- **Pentalobe screwdriver**
- **Suction cup**
- **T5 Torx screwdriver**

USB-C replacements

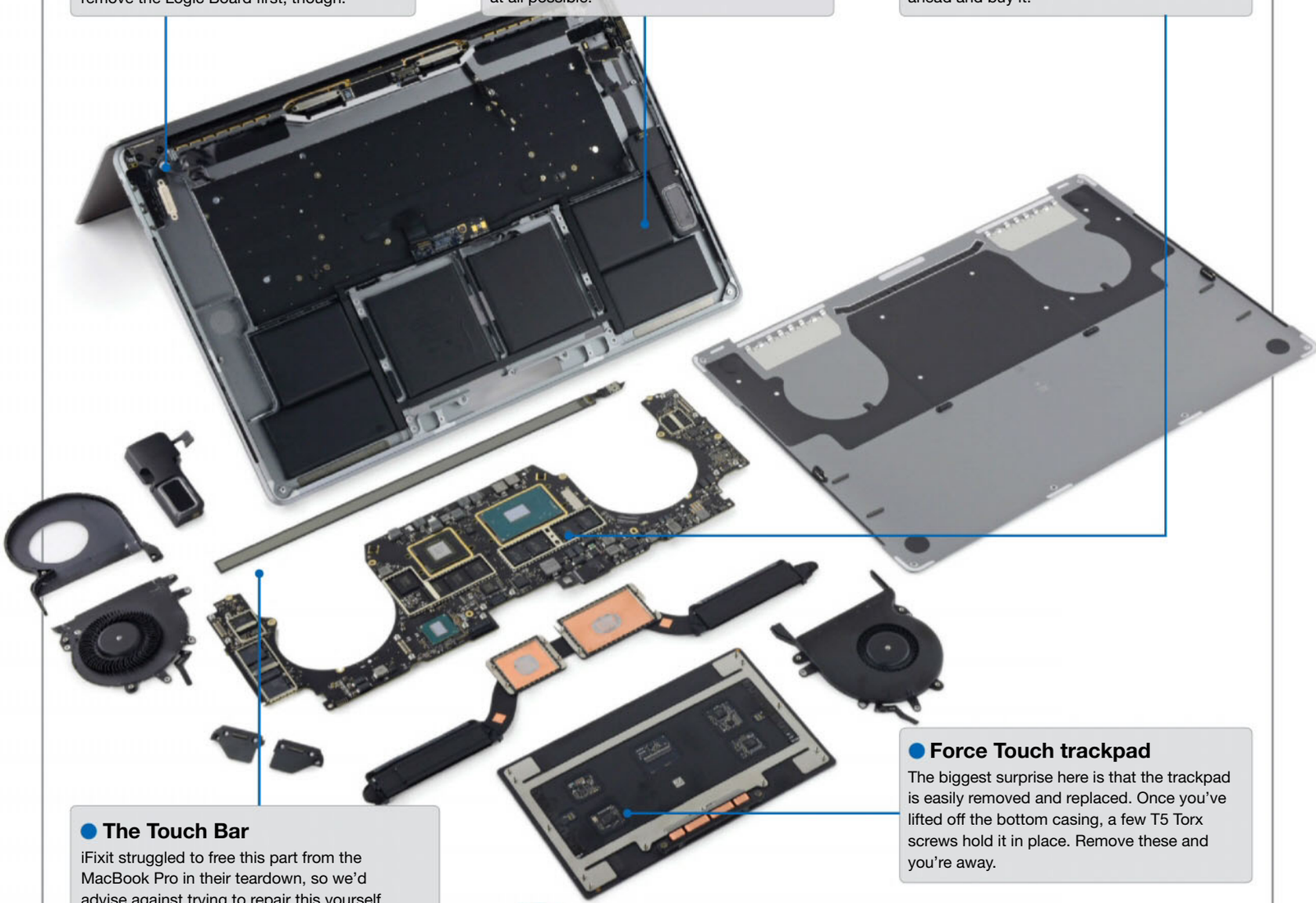
Although USB-C has now replaced Apple's legendary MagSafe connector for charging, you can luckily replace the ports (should a power cable get stuck in one). You'll have to remove the Logic Board first, though.

A stuck battery

Unfortunately, iFixit's teardown revealed that the batteries in the new MacBook Pros are very much stuck to the casing with strong adhesive, so replacing them won't be easy, if at all possible.

Soldered-on RAM

It probably comes as no surprise, but the RAM on the new MacBook Pro is soldered to the Logic Board, so be sure to spec up your machine appropriately before you go ahead and buy it.



The Touch Bar

iFixit struggled to free this part from the MacBook Pro in their teardown, so we'd advise against trying to repair this yourself. It's best left to those clever folk at Apple's Genius Bar to look at.

Force Touch trackpad

The biggest surprise here is that the trackpad is easily removed and replaced. Once you've lifted off the bottom casing, a few T5 Torx screws hold it in place. Remove these and you're away.

IFIXIT

If you would like more help with upgrading your Mac, visit the gadget surgeons at iFixit.com, who kindly contributed these photos.

Best iPhone 7 docks

iPhone Lightning Dock

£49/$49

www.apple.com

If you want a dock to perfectly match the colour of your iPhone, Apple's official Lightning Dock is the obvious choice. Available in five metallic finishes, it's a simple way to charge and sync any Lightning-compatible iPhone. It certainly looks the part, but the problems only surface when you connect your iPhone. The dock is so light that even the slightest touch, let alone trying to tap the Home button, makes you fear it will topple over. Even the non-slip base is easily shifted. This is one of the rare times when we'll advise you to go for a third-party option.

★★½☆☆

iCreate Group Test Winner ★★★★★

iCreate Best Value

Wiplabs iDockAll

£29.99/$36.99

www.mobilefun.co.uk

The iDockAll enables you to easily use your iPhone one-handed, a feature not to turn your nose up at given the competition. There's some real weight to the dock, and means it's sturdy enough to support the weight of an iPad too. The extra weight also stops the dock moving around. The dock itself has a nice curved design, and a handy backrest adds even more support. Our brushed silver review unit looked like a premium product. You need your own Lightning cable, but it attaches securely in place and the cable is nicely tidied as a result.

★★★★☆

Fuse Chicken Bobine Dock

£29.99/$36.99

www.mobilefun.co.uk

We've seen some interesting products in our time, but this flexible, levitating dock from Fuse Chicken might just be the strangest. There's certainly nothing wrong with trying to stand out from the crowd – this is after all the only dock in the test that doesn't conform to traditional design protocols – but it would help if the dock actually worked. Connecting the USB port to your Mac is a nuisance, but the real pain lies in getting the right twists and kinks in the wire to support your iPhone. It does charge your phone, but this isn't something we'd recommend.

★★☆☆☆

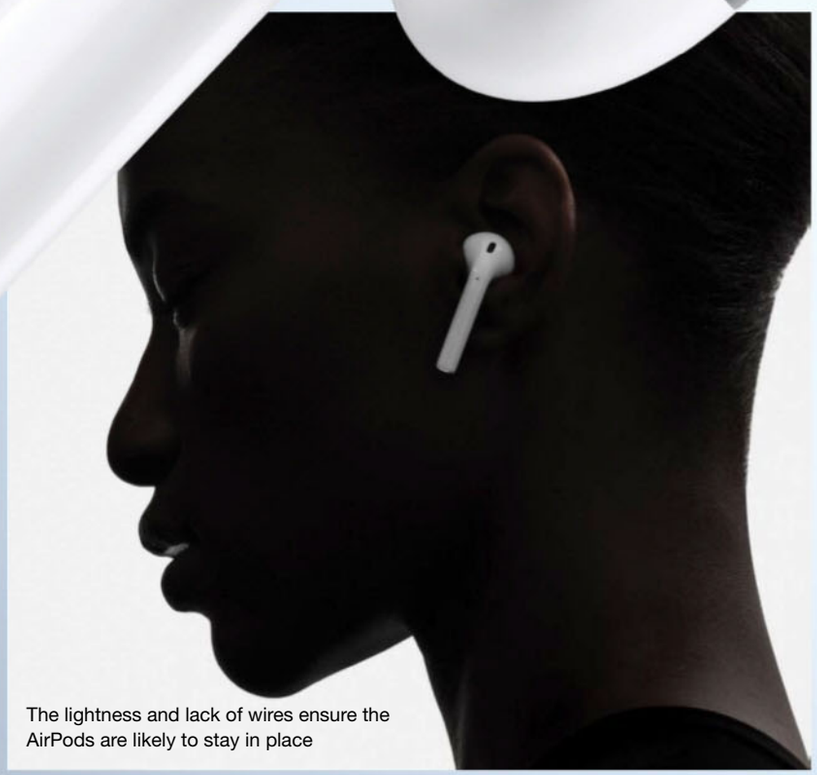
Belkin Charge + Sync Dock

£39.99/$48.99

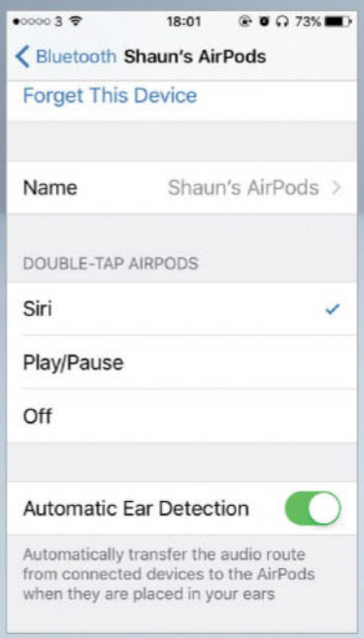
www.mobilefun.co.uk

Belkin's Charge + Sync Dock takes design cues from Apple and is very pleasing on the eye as a result. The elegant aluminium finish complements any iPhone, and looks nice next to an iMac and Magic Trackpad. Thankfully there's a bit more weight to this dock, while the cradle backing gives reassuring support when you're using your phone. You'll find your index finger happily rests behind the cradle for extra support. The base feels much more non-slippy compared to Apple's, and there's a Lightning cable in situ.

★★★½☆



The lightness and lack of wires ensure the AirPods are likely to stay in place



A quick double-tap can launch Siri or play/pause the currently playing music

Your only concern will be to ensure that you do not lose them. They are tiny!

AirPods

£159/$159

Key features

Excellent sound quality • Long battery life • Practical charging mechanism • Comfortable and stable • Superb software features • Great build quality

Learn more
www.apple.com

Available from
www.apple.com

iCreate Editor's Choice ★★★★★

The wireless headphone category has grown ever so slowly over the past few years, with the general perception being one of paying more for lesser sound quality just to remove the wire running from the music device to your ears. Apple sought to change that with the AirPods, but the company didn't settle for simply improving the quality, instead throwing in a raft of innovative features that make the AirPods feel completely natural in use. From the moment you flip the lid of the charging case and see them paired to your iPhone automatically, to then realising that they have also paired with every device signed in to your Apple ID, the experience is magical from the start.

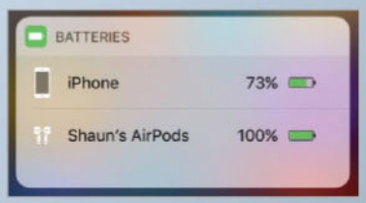
It does not stop there, however, because the small software touches continue to amaze with simple interactions making you want every product to work this way. Flip the lid of the case again and the battery levels for the case and each AirPod are displayed on your home screen. Put one AirPod in your ear and it starts playing paused music or podcasts, put the second AirPod in and you have excellent-quality stereo sound instantly. When you remove an AirPod the track is paused, only to play again when placed back in your ear. The use of accelerometers here is well considered and crucially the system works every time, to the point that it soon feels clunky when using headphones that do not do this. They also recognise when you are speaking and can filter out background noise; this makes the AirPods perfect for voice calling and the end result is arguably as good as you get with standard Apple EarPods, with just a hint of crackling now and again when you speak. Hopefully this minor downside can be adjusted in software, but be assured that the AirPods still offer the ability to make and receive calls in a manner that you will find more than acceptable.

So, the AirPods shine in terms of practicality, but crucial to this is the ability to keep them charged. Apple has cleverly solved this potential problem by offering five hours of power per AirPod alongside a huge 24 hours in the charging case. As the case is so small, it means that you will always have more than enough power with you, and even if you run into trouble you can gain three hours of battery life from a quick 15-minute charge.

It really is a case of Apple ticking all of the boxes in terms of battery life, sound quality and software finesse, but there remains an area that is tricky for any headphones that have one set form – how they fit your ears. For some people the EarPods are not a great fit and tend to slip out when moved a lot, but things are different with the AirPods. In our tests, it appears that the lightness and the fact that no wires are dragging on the speakers eases much of the tension, and we have yet to find anyone who is really struggling to keep them in place. Indeed, for most people the main sensation is to completely forget that they are in after a minute or so because they are so comfortable, but the omission of any hardware buttons does feel strange at first. A double-tap on an AirPod can launch Siri or play/pause the current track, but it does take some getting used to talking to Siri to skip a track. You can of course still manage tracks using the screen on your device.

It is often too easy to get excited about a new Apple product, but in the case of the AirPods the praise is fully deserved. We have genuinely struggled to find any downsides with this product and have been surprised time after time by how cleverly and efficiently they work. Even the price, which appears high at first glance, is well within range in this area of the market. With almost all good-quality wireless headphones coming in at a higher price and with the majority also not including the W1 chip, the AirPods do represent good value. The look when in your ears may cause surprise from others initially, but just like the first mobile phones the AirPods really do feel like the start of something big. We are sure that the competition will be falling over themselves to produce competing products but, at this time, Apple is clearly winning.

Open the AirPods case and your iPhone and associated devices will be paired automatically



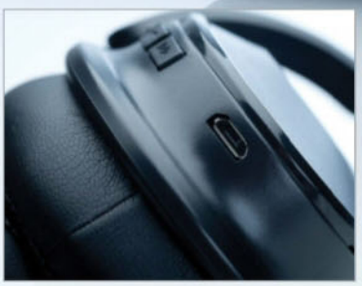
Real-time battery statistics are available for each AirPod and the charging case at all times

You can manage every interaction with the AirPods to suit your exacting preferences

Verdict

A highly innovative and emotionally pleasing product that ticks every box in style. You will love the AirPods from the very first second.

★★★★★



The Immerse headphones come with a USB charge cable, 3.5mm double jack in-flight adapter and 3.5mm aux-in cable

The side buttons are useful for stopping the music, but can also rewind to the last song or fast-forward to the next

The ear cups are comfortable, light and cancel out any exterior sound without them feeling too tight around your head

KitSound Immerse headphones

£60/$72

Key features
Built-in rechargeable battery • Bluetooth connectivity • 12 hours of playtime

Learn more
kitsound.co.uk

Available from
kitsound.co.uk

With so many headphones on the market these days, it's easy to assume that the more money you have to pay for a pair, the better quality you're going to get. Unlike when earphones first became available with early iPods, headphones are now seen as an investment; if you buy a good pair now, they'll be built to last far longer than your current phone.

The KitSound Immerse noise-cancelling headphones have the feel of a high-end set coupled with an affordable price. With their simple matte black finish and red mesh on the inside of each cup, they're not the slickest or most attractive set on the market, but first impressions are still good. The comfort that the Immerse Headphones offer is superb; the foam isn't too firm, it fits over the ear nicely and it doesn't feel too snug on the head. Though the headphones are noise-cancelling, they don't feel strapped to your head too tightly, like other models can often feel.

The sound quality is pleasantly surprising. The bass is strong and the sound is extremely clear, with every instrument feeling like it has its own space within the mix. It isn't the crispest quality that money can buy, but for the price it's extremely good. The headphones can be connected via an AUX cord, Bluetooth or jack, and are charged via USB cable.

There are buttons on the side of the ear cup to either stop, start or skip songs; these buttons are usually located on the wire of most headphone brands, and they perhaps make more sense here, as you can't actually see what button you're pressing when wearing the Immerse headphones.

The headphones fold up nicely with no fuss though. While similar-looking headphones may be ideal for studio use, the Immerse headphones are perfect for on-the-go listening. They cancel noise well, feel fantastic, and for the price you're paying the sound quality is amazing.

Verdict

Although not the flashiest headphones around, the KitSound Immerse headphones are reliable, compact and incredibly comfortable, with impressive sound quality to match.

★★★★☆

YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T BE TRUSTED.

ONE IN FOUR PEOPLE BREAK THEIR NEW PHONE WITHIN A MONTH.

IF YOU TRUST ANYONE WITH YOUR IPHONE 7, TRUST TECH21

tech21™

TECH21.COM

The lens system comes with five gel inserts that will enable you to securely attach the bracket to your iPhone

The lens bracket features a cold-shoe mount for attaching lighting and audio recording accessories

The ExoLens features the patented ZEISS T* anti-reflective coating to ensure your results are bright and impressive

ZEISS ExoLens Pro wide-angle kit

£199.95/$199.95

Key features
Integrated cold-shoe mount • Robust aluminium lens hood • Sturdy aluminium lens mount

Learn more
exolens.com

Available from
apple.com/uk

This wide-angle ExoLens from ZEISS is the perfect tool for harnessing the power of the already impressive iPhone 7 camera – it will also work on the iPhone 6 and 6s as well as the iPhone 6 Plus and 6s Plus. Some smartphone lenses can feel a little gimmicky and don't always appear to be of the highest quality, however, this lens system has a very high-end finish and fits securely to the iPhone.

The tightly fitting gel insert for the iPhone 7 comes already installed in the lens bracket – the other inserts are included in the set and are labelled accordingly. The instructions are incredibly simple, which means that you can set everything up very quickly. It can be a little difficult to attach the bracket onto the iPhone on the first use as you have to be quite firm, but once the attachment is in place there were no concerns that the lens was at risk of falling off. Ensuring that the lens is centred over the iPhone's camera can be a bit tricky though, and if it is even the tiniest bit off-centre you will have some issues with your imagery.

The wide-angle lens provides an angle of view equivalent to an 18mm lens, which gives you a wider angle of view than the iPhone 7 will usually provide and will enable you to capture more of your surroundings. In general the results with the lens were really impressive, with not much noticeable distortion and good contrast and colours. However, in our testing there was vignetting in the right-hand corners while using the camera in landscape mode, which was disappointing for a lens priced so high.

It is by no means perfect, but with its high-quality build and impressive results in general it is clear that this lens is ideal for those who are serious about taking their smartphone photography to the next level. However, at just short of £200, it is perhaps not suited for those with an existing camera kit.

Verdict

The ExoLens will certainly help users improve their smartphone photography, but this comes at a high price with a few flaws that we aren't sure we can forgive.

★★★☆☆

Libratone Q Adapt On-Ear headphones

£219/$249

Key features
Gesture volume control • Noise cancelling • Bluetooth • Wireless and wired option

Learn more
libratone.com

Available from
libratone.com

Danish designers Libratone produced an incredible wireless speaker in the Zipp, so it'd be normal to feel some trepidation with its headphone products. Thankfully these Q Adapt On-Ears are efficient and easy to use, as we've come to expect from Libratone.

Adorned in either monochrome black or white, the Q Adapt On-Ears retain some of the familiarity with the Zipp's Italian wool cover in the textured feel of the headband material. They're easy to use and set up; just turn them on along with the Bluetooth on your iOS device and you can start listening wirelessly to anything you stream from the device. Volume can be controlled with touch controls on the left earpad, which were unfortunately unresponsive at times.

There are different modes for noise cancelling too, with 20 hours' worth of battery use: an applaudable amount of battery power. The quality of noise cancelling was generally okay, but we found that total noise block was a bit lacking compared to one of the best active noise-cancelling headphones that we tested in 2016, the Sony MDR-1000X at £360. But with consideration of the £100-cheaper price, the Q Adapt On-Ears are still worth using.

The bass is generally impressive, with layer precision in Starboy by The Weekend, yet average, unremarkable mids in Unfinished Sympathy by Massive Attack. Joy Division's Atmosphere also had noticeably deficient strings which dulled the quality of the intro.

The main caveat for us though, was comfortability. The earpads were quite small, sitting on the ear awkwardly but not in a snug fit. The metal attachment between the earpads and the headband meant that it was also quite tight in the wrong places, with lots of fiddling to get to the right position.

It's slightly disappointing for headphones with a pricepoint at over £200, though it's worth a look in for anyone wanting cheaper noise cancellers.

Verdict

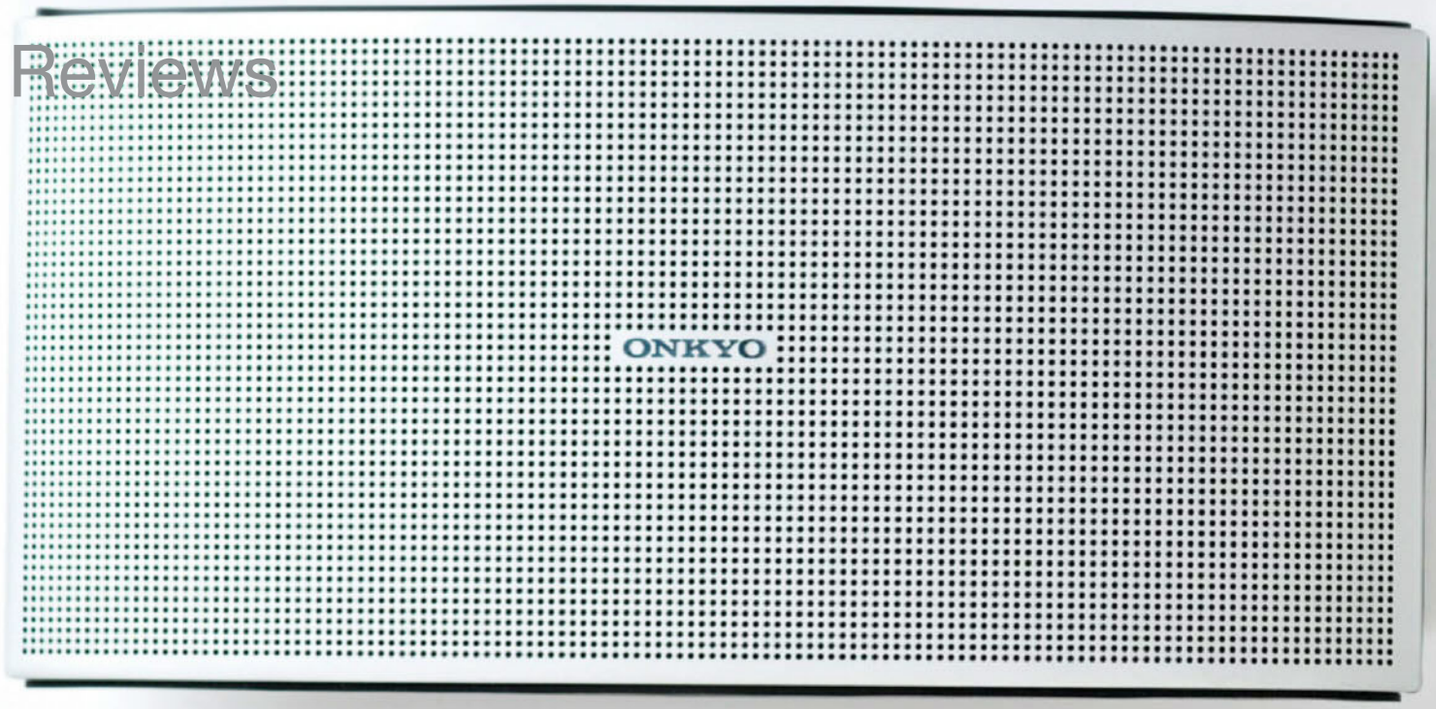
Slightly subpar headphones from Libratone, though the noise cancelling was good for the price. The Q Adapt On-Ears need a lot of improvement in future iterations.

★★★☆☆

There are four modes for cancelling noise, dependant on how much background noise you want to be veiled

You can swipe in a circular motion to turn the volume up and down on the left earpad

The battery lasts for 20 hours even with the noise-cancelling feature. Charge time then takes three hours



Accessories

Element Case Aura Luxe Collection

£24.95/$39.95

www.elementcase.com

For those of you who crave real protection for your iPhone, that invariably means covering it in a bulky, heavy-duty case. The Aura case from Element is a nice compromise, offering some sleek design and military-grade drop-test protection. The case comes in three parts, which click reassuringly into place; just make sure it all lines up properly otherwise the volume buttons won't work. The elastomeric lining cushions your iPhone in the event of a fall, while the soft-touch satin and high-gloss ends keep your iPhone looking the part. All in all, probably the best rugged case we've ever come across.

★★★★★

Onkyo X9

£249.99/$TBA

www.onkyo-speakers.com

Onkyo is aiming specifically at the top of the audiophile market with its new High Res Audio-accredited X9 speaker. It's being marketed as the first portable speaker to achieve that rating, and this is because you can connect the speaker to your Mac via a wired connection and play high-res 24-bit, 96kHz files. Although the X9 acts as a more consumer-friendly speaker too, the preferred wired connection leaves us a bit confused as to the speaker's purpose. That said, the difference between standard streaming quality and FLAC is really noticeable. The X9 is very powerful, but never at the detriment of the detail.

★★★★☆

iStorage datAshur Personal2 8GB

£39/$TBA

istorage-uk.com

We've shown you how to lock down files on a USB flash drive over on page 42, but iStorage offers an ingenious solution thanks to integrating a PIN number board onto the drive itself. Once you've entered a new PIN (it needs to be between 7 and 15 digits), only that password can unlock the drive and allow access to its contents. A seriously clever idea for anyone who is worried about the security of data kept on a USB drive. Setup is relatively simple (you do need to read the quick start guide), and our only concern is the cost.

★★★★☆

iCreate Editor's Choice ★★★★★

Cygnett ChargeUp Digital

£29.95/$49.99

www.cygnett.com

On our list of wishes for 2017, better battery life would rank high. But that isn't going to happen. In the meantime, a power bank is your best bet if you're a power user. This offering from Cygnett is one of the best we've seen – it's super-thin, packs a lot of juice and is cross-device compatible. The dual USB ports enable you to charge two devices at once, and some clever tech means you aren't splitting the power between the two. The 6,000mAh capacity gives you nearly three full charges of your iPhone, and the digital display lets you know exactly what's left in the tank.

★★★★★

Audio-Technica AT-LP60BT

£189/$179

www.audio-technica.com

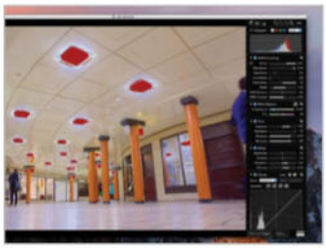
The resurgence in vinyl shows no signs of abating, so it might be time to jump onboard the bandwagon. And if you want traditional vinyl sound quality, but quite like the modern wireless world, Audio-Technica might just have the device for you. That's because this vinyl player can stream music to your living room's wireless speaker system thanks to its built-in Bluetooth. Sound quality is surprisingly good too; there's a warm and fun reproduction that makes a mockery of its price point. You do lose some detail, and the plastic design is by no means premium, but this is a fantastic vinyl player.

★★★★

3 Key Features

Photos integration
You can easily access RAW Power as an extension from within the Photos app

Cool curves
Like Photoshop, RAW Power can target and adjust specific tones by adjusting the shape of curves



Clipping warnings
Clipping warning patches help you identify blown-out highlights and underexposed shadows

"Target missing details more effectively than when using Photos' more basic tools"

RAW Power

£7.99/$9.99

Requirements
macOS 10.12 or later • 64-bit processor

Learn more
gentlemencoders.com

Available from
Mac App Store

To get your photographs looking their best you need to shoot using your camera's RAW format setting. Unlike the compressed JPEG format, a RAW file contains much more information about your subject's colours and tones. This enables you to recover more tonal detail than you could when working with a JPEG. The RAW Power app harnesses the same RAW macOS processing engine used by Apple's Photos app, but it gives you access to more sophisticated and powerful image-editing tools – and all for an affordable one-off fee.

As with the RAW editing tools in the Photos app, you can selectively target specific tones in RAW Power and reveal missing shadow or highlight detail. However, to help you identify which areas are over or underexposed, RAW Power goes further by providing you with clipping warnings. These colourful patches enable you to target and reveal missing details more effectively than you can when using Photos' more basic image-editing tools. You can also spot clipped areas by holding down the Command key as you drag tone-tweaking sliders.

When shooting in low light your camera will use a high ISO value to capture the scene, but this adds nasty noise to the shot. Photos enables you to reduce luminance noise, but you'll need RAW Power to banish additional rainbow-like specks of colour noise. You can also adjust a shot's colour temperature using a slider that works in the degrees Kelvin scale and eliminate green or magenta tints to create true colours.

When working with RAW files, the Photos app will do a good job of revealing missing tonal detail and correcting colours, but RAW Power will give you the edge if you need to produce the best-looking shots possible.

Verdict

An ideal image-editing app if you need to squeeze more detail from your RAW files while keeping artefacts such as colour noise to a minimum.

★★★★☆

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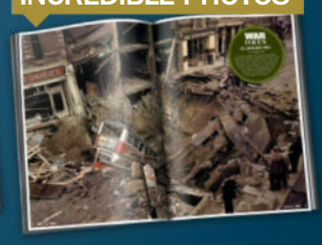

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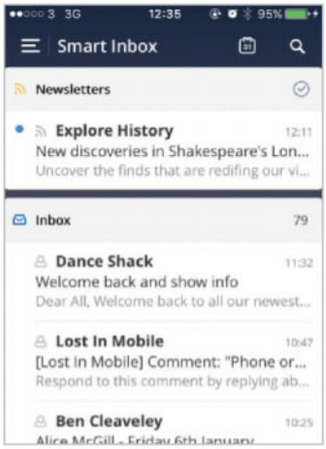
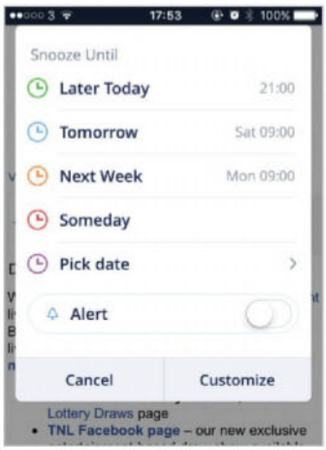
3 Key Features



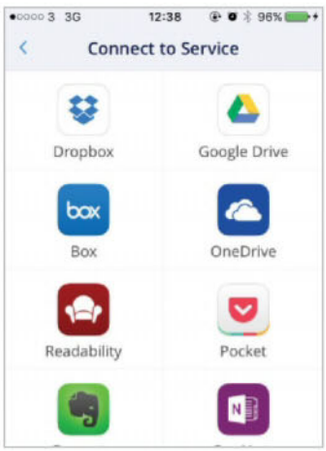
The important mail

The most recent and important emails are presented in bubbles at the top of the screen



Snooze your communications

Emails can be snoozed to reappear at set times or later in the week



An integrated workflow

Connect Spark to a variety of popular services in order to use it for any task

Spark - Love your email again

Free

Requirements
iOS 9.3 or later • Compatible with iPhone, iPad, Watch

Learn more
sparkmailapp.com

Available from
iOS App Store

iCreate Editor's Choice ★★★★★

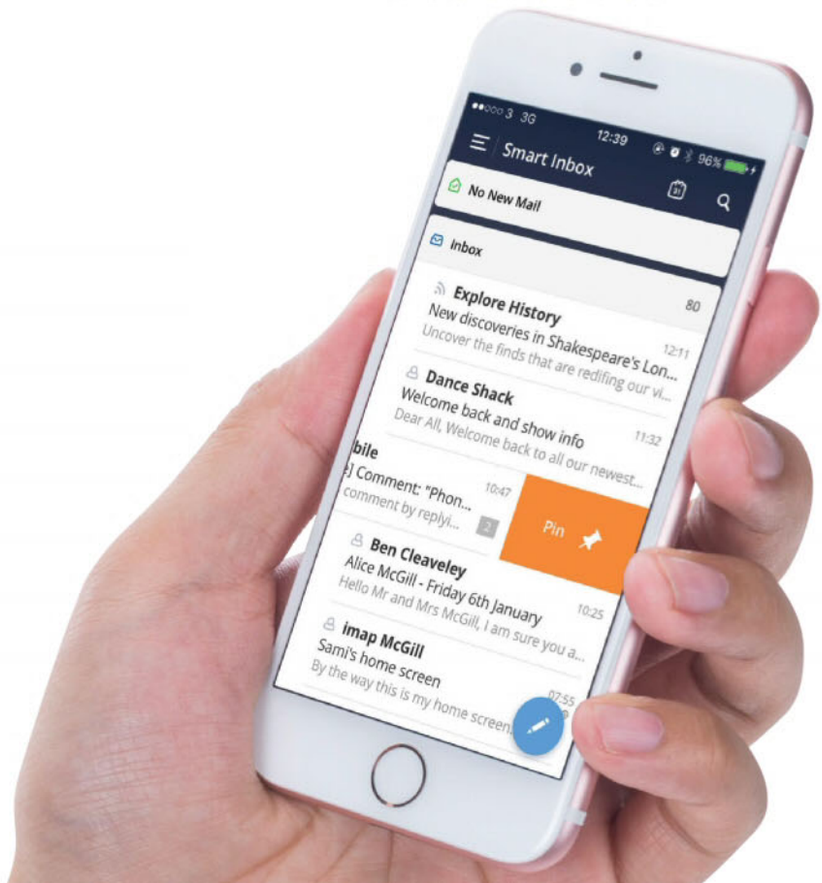
Email apps are hardly uncommon, but solutions that offer an experience comparable to the standard iOS Mail client are. Even rarer are apps that actually make the iOS Mail client look quite simple while maintaining minimalist usability, but Spark succeeds very well in these areas. The presentation of your incoming mail is as clear as you could wish for, and the inclusion of bubbles at the top ensures that you will never miss communications that you absolutely must read in good time. Quick replies let you handle emails in a similar way to text messages and with the ability to create your own, you will benefit from extra speed and an added personal touch each time you send a new email. The smart categorisation is designed to split busy inboxes into manageable chunks and natural language searching ensures that you can find what you need no matter how busy you are.

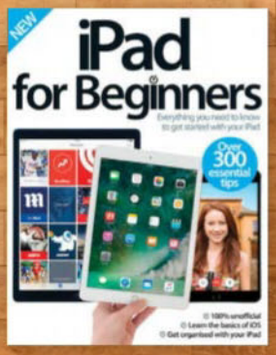
Ultimately, however, it is the way all of the above has been polished and gently squeezed into an interface that works perfectly on an iPhone, iPad and even an Apple Watch that is most impressive. It takes a huge amount of hard work to make an email client that feels at home on a small screen, and in the case of Spark you are looking at one of the very best email clients ever created on any platform. The app manages to offer the familiarity of emailing while simultaneously making your daily communications feel fresh, and in a way that creates a sense of using a completely new form of communication. Whether the end result has come by luck, focused judgement or a huge amount of work, Spark is an email solution that you should try for a long period to see if it works for you. It is quite possible that you will have found a client that could dominate your daily emailing for years to come. We think we have.

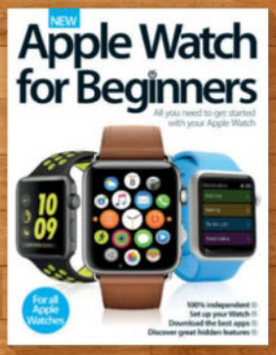
Verdict

Spark shines thanks to its beautifully considered interface and the way it presents complex features in the most natural of ways. A brilliant email solution.

★★★★★







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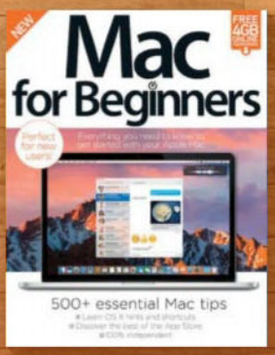

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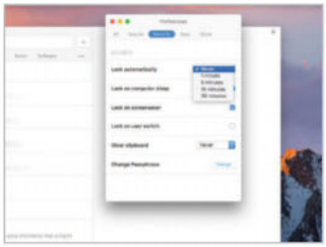
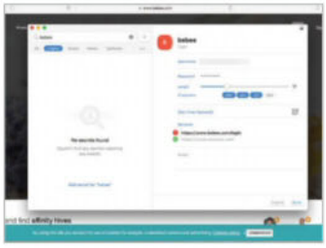
3 Key Features



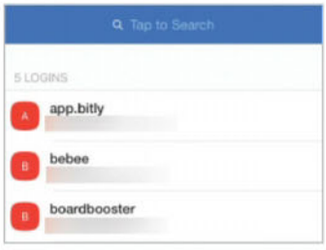
Auto-lock Secrets

Choose when to automatically lock the Secrets app depending on your activities, set timers and more



Create passwords

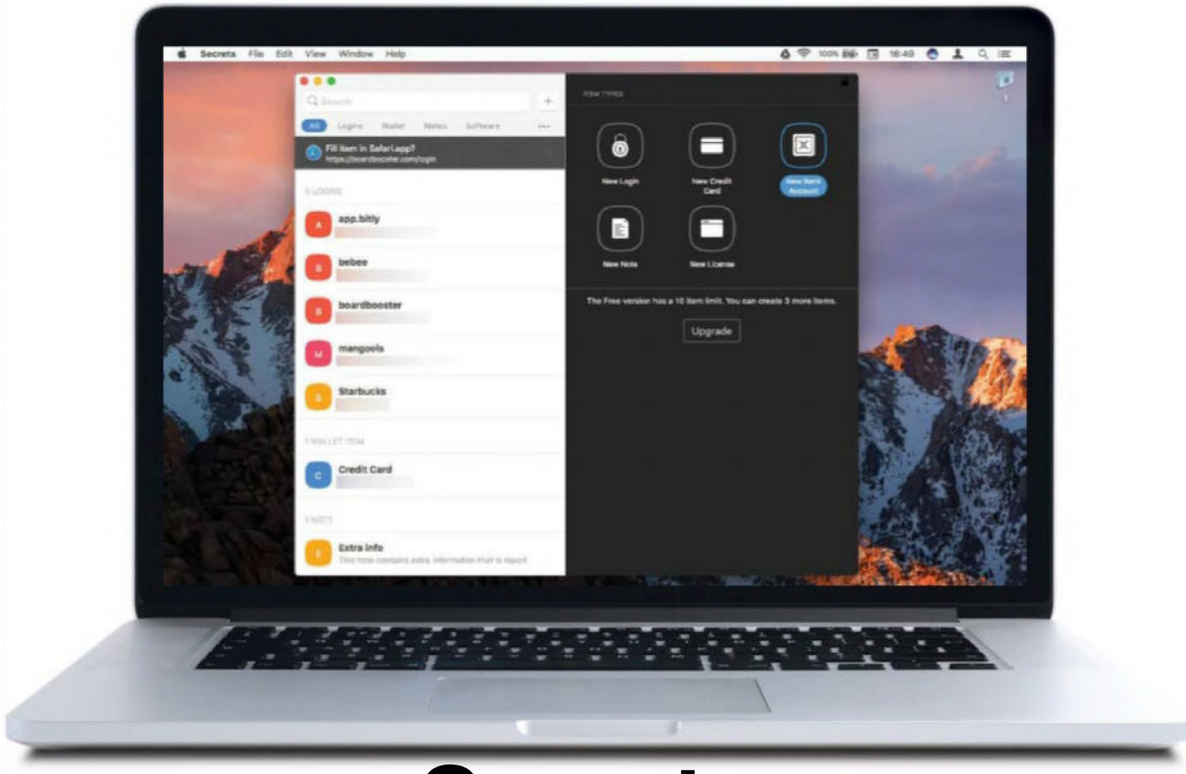
When adding a login, use the password generator for a secure password that cannot be guessed



Use iOS apps

Put Secrets Touch on the iPhone or iPad and sign in. It automatically fetches all of your passwords

"Information is encrypted and is synced across Mac, iPhone and iPad apps using iCloud"



Secrets

£14.99/$19.99 (premium version)

Requirements
OS X 10.10 or later • 64-bit processor

Learn more
outercorner.com/secrets-mac

Available from
Mac App Store

Passwords are a pain, partly because good ones are impossible to remember and also because these days we need so many of them. It is hard to do anything on the internet or on your Mac without a password. There are several great apps available to help store your passwords, like Dashlane, 1Password and LastPass, but there is always room for another and Secrets is an alternative worth considering.

Secrets runs on the Mac, iPhone and iPad (where it is called Secrets Touch), and its main purpose is for storing login details for websites. You can create login entries by adding a friendly name, username, password, URL and notes. Unlike some password managers that automatically create entries when you log in to sites for the first time, Secrets doesn't. You must open the app and create the item. It seems to pick up some details and it suggests the name for example, but the app isn't as integrated as some other password managers.

When creating an account at a site, Secrets can create passwords for you. They can be from 4 to 50 characters and you can choose whether to use uppercase, lowercase, numbers and symbols. Making very secure passwords is easy – once a login has been created, you can go to a site with a single mouse click, fill in the login details with another, and you're in.

Secrets stores more than login details; credit cards can be added, software licenses can be saved and everything else can be stored in notes. Information in Secrets is encrypted with OpenPGP and AES and is synced across Mac, iPhone and iPad apps using iCloud. Ten items are stored for free, and unlimited items for £14.99/$19.99.

The app is cheaper than some password managers and the import feature makes it easy to switch from rivals. Dashlane, 1Password and LastPass are better, but some people might prefer Secrets' simplicity.

Verdict

Secrets is a simple tool for storing passwords and other information securely. Its main benefit is that it stores data in iCloud and syncs across devices.

★★★☆☆

Quartz

Free

Requirements
iOS 9.0 or later • Compatible with iPhone, iPad, iPod and Watch

Learn more
qz.com

Available from
iOS App Store

iCreate Editor's Choice

In the age of information, where a whole myriad of intimidating apps bombard users with up-to-date analyses, clickbait articles and notifications of breaking bulletins, it's refreshing to see Quartz's minimal and engaging take on news consumption.

Quartz provides bite-sized news stories in the format of a conversation. The concept is not too dissimilar to the original iteration of the Circa News app, summarising core facts of the story in digestible snippets. However, as the news 'conversations' are written by Quartz's own team, there's a distinct style and tone of voice that complements the content.

Two to three messages are typically displayed per story alongside imagery. They appear one after another in one scrollable screen, with a button to lead you to the next story of the day or a button for you to read a bit more on the current story. What's enjoyable about the app are the extraneous features. The use of photography, GIFs and emojis add flair to each news article. There are also notifications you can set to alert you of 'really, really big news', a regular alert once or twice a day, but it's the inclusion of the entertaining 'market haikus', or tiny poems of 17 syllables, detailing the big economy story of the day that really adds another level of amusement. Even if you've run out of stories to read, there are quick-fire quiz questions to keep you interested in current affairs.

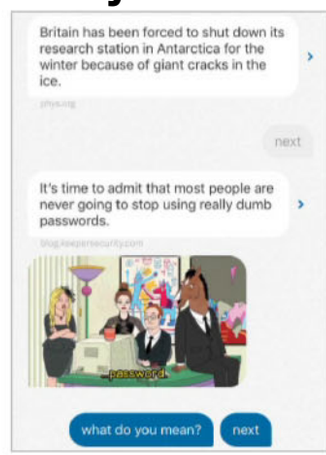
If you want to read outside of the app, Quartz provides the original source of its written stories that you can tap on for more information on a third-party site. It should be noted that you can't choose any sources for Quartz to collect its stories as the content is written in advance, unlike other apps such as News, nor can you choose your own topics. But for anyone after fast, to-the-point summaries of the biggest stories of the day, Quartz is a perfect fit.

Verdict

A straightforward way to ingest news offered in tiny chunks with plenty of personality. Those after quick injections of current affairs need look no further.

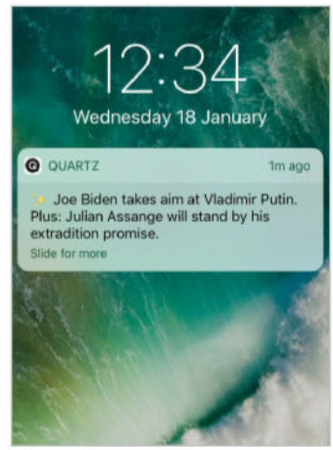
★★★★★

3 Key Features



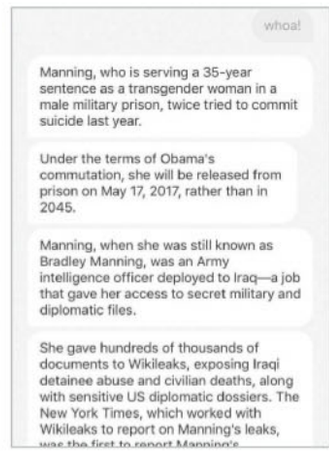
GIFs galore

Some news articles are accompanied by GIFs and emojis to add a touch of personality to stories



Breaking news

Notifications of breaking news will appear from time to time, as will a daily haiku on market shares



Short and sweet

News articles are repurposed from other sources by Quartz, and written in small paragraphs like a message

Super Mario Run

£7.99/$9.99

Requirements
iPhone, iPad or iPod touch • iOS 8.0 or later
We used
iPhone 6 • iPad mini 2 • iOS 10.2
Available from
iOS App Store

Super Mario Run was met with much anticipation upon announcement at Apple's September keynote, with Nintendo legend Shigeru Miyamoto producing the project. Launched to iOS three months later, fans worldwide have downloaded in droves to get to grips with how it plays. The good news is, Super Mario Run tweaks a classic run-and-jump formula pretty cleverly to deliver an addictive touchscreen experience.

The portly plumber now sprints through levels automatically, harmlessly vaulting over enemy Koopa troopers, Goombas and the like with zero fuss. He jumps by varying distances and heights based on your taps, most effectively with your thumb tip on any part of the screen. Master this to bound across gaps, stomp foes, bump blocks, flip switches and scale heights in traditional style to collect coins. Coins are everything in Super Mario Run and not purely to post higher level scores than your friends, but also when it comes to replayability. The main Tour mode features six Worlds of three stages, so 24 levels in total once you pay the in-app price to unlock the full game. This challenge follows the typical quest to free Princess Peach from Bowser's clutches, but average players will breeze through it in one sitting. It's then about gathering five pink, purple and eventually black coins scattered throughout, with each type progressively more tricky to obtain. Progress here yields Toad Rally tickets for testing your skills against ghost players, a sort of race mode for accumulating fans that join and level up your Kingdom. Here you can buy buildings with all those collected coins, unlock new playable characters and even access exclusive bonus courses.

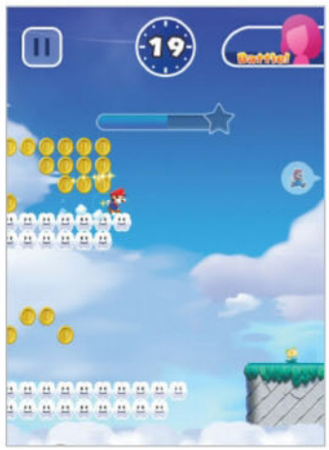
Everything is done with trademark Nintendo polish, looking and sounding true to the series while adding ingenious nuance to deceptively simple gameplay. Whether it justifies the entrance fee is cause for much debate, but as an authentic slice of Nintendo's most enduring franchise it simply cannot be matched.

Verdict

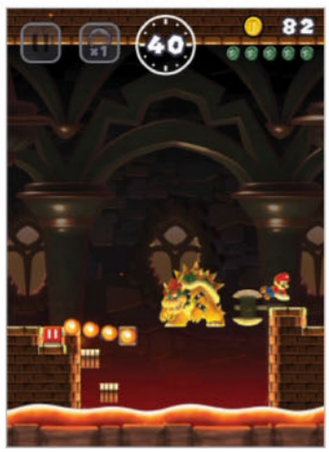
As coin collecting goes Nintendo has successfully delivered a fast-paced platformer that while short, finds Mario the sweetest of new homes on iOS.

★★★★☆

With just three levels available initially, the World Tour mode unlocks on purchase to open up 24 stages in total



The Toad Rally pits your skills against rival ghost player runs and is decided on how many toad fans you inspire



Iconic villain Bowser is back again and he's no better at guarding that massive trapdoor switch… Roasted dinosaur-turtle-man anyone?

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Hi-Fi Choice EDITOR'S CHOICE

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★★★★★ What HiFi

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CHORDAUDIO

CHORDELECTRONICS.CO.UK

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Apple Cinema Display

Release date
September 1, 1999

• 22-inch matte, LCD display • 1600 x 1024
• 25:16 aspect ratio • 86.35 ppi • DVI video input

Original price
£2,999/$3,999

Price now
£150/$200

Introduced to the world in 1999 to complement the Power Mac G4, the Apple Cinema Display was a line of flat panel monitors that eventually replaced the existing Studio Display. At the time, Apple described the Cinema Display as “twice as bright, twice as sharp, and has three times the contrast of CRT displays”. The original model, which you can see here, offered a 22-inch active, matrix display that ran at an optimum 1600 x 1024 resolution and featured a distinctive, polycarbonate plastic backing. It had an integrated two-port USB hub and DVI video connector.

Next issue…

iCreate 170, on sale 2 March 2017

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