TAKE CONTROL OF
CALENDAR AND REMINDERS

COVERS
macOS ⌃ iOS ⌃ watchOS

by SCHOLLE McFARLAND
$14.99

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Welcome to *Take Control of Calendar and Reminders, Second Edition*, version 2.1, published in October 2019 by alt concepts inc. This book was written by Scholle Sawyer McFarland and edited by Joe Kissell.

This book teaches you basic techniques and special tips for keeping yourself on time and on track with Apple’s Calendar and Reminders apps.

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

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**Updates and More**

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

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- Download various formats, including PDF, EPUB, and Mobipocket. (Learn about reading on mobile devices on our *Device Advice* page.)

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

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Quite often, Siri is the fastest way to work with Apple’s Calendar and Reminders apps. You’ll see tips about when to use Siri and what to say throughout this book. Here’s a quick look at how to get Siri working:

- **Mac:** Click the Siri icon in the menu bar or Dock. Or, press and hold ⌘-Space. (Careful here: if you hold ⌘ and then tap the Space key, you’ll activate Spotlight instead.) (If ⌘-Space doesn’t work, go to System Preference > Siri and check on the keyboard shortcut.)

  You hear a chime and the Siri window appears in the upper-right corner of your screen. When Siri is listening, a line pulses at the bottom of this window—if you don’t see this line, click the Siri icon at the bottom of the window. Speak your command.

  If that doesn’t work, make sure Siri is enabled by going to Apple > System Preferences > Siri and selecting the Enable Ask Siri check-box. Siri requires an internet connection and is available in macOS 10.12 Sierra and later.

- **iPhone, iPad, iPod touch:** On an iPad, iPhone, or iPod touch, press and hold the Home button or Side button to activate Siri manually. If voice activation has been turned on (go to Settings > Siri & Search and set the “Listen for ‘Hey Siri’” slider to On) just say “Hey Siri” before your request.

- **Apple Watch:** Press and hold the Digital Crown, or raise your wrist and say “Hey Siri.”

- **HomePod:** Press the top of the HomePod until you see the swirling, multicolor lights and make your request or say “Hey Siri” followed by your command. To use Calendar and Reminders on the HomePod, you must first turn on Personal Requests. See [Set Up Personal Requests on a HomePod](#).

**Tip:** To learn more about all the things you can do with Siri, check out my book *Take Control of Siri.*

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What’s New in Version 2.1

Version 2.1 of Take Control of Calendar and Reminders is updated for macOS Catalina, iOS 13, iPadOS 13, and watchOS 6. Revisions include:

• Catalina reorganized most iCloud features into a section of the new Apple ID preference pane, which changes how you connect Calendar to iCloud. For updated instructions, see Connect Calendar to iCloud.

• The new Reminders app requires you to upgrade your iCloud reminders before accessing its new tools, which involves some trade-offs. See Avoid Heartache When Upgrading Your Reminders.

• The new Reminders app adds significant features to iCloud reminders, including tools that let you Group Related Reminder Lists, Customize Your Lists’ Look, Flag a Reminder, Nest Reminders, Get a Reminder When Messaging, Add a URL, Add Images, and use new edit buttons to quickly Set a Time and Date and Pick a Location.

• The new Reminders app includes four built-in Smart Lists (see What Are Smart Lists?) that round up reminders with similar characteristics, regardless of which list they’re in. Smart List take up space in Reminders sidebar, however, which means there’s no longer an option to see a mini calendar there.

• As of iOS 13.2, Siri no longer makes call reminders you can tap to start a call. Hopefully this feature will be added back in an update. You can still make a quick call reminder when you decline a call on your Mac or iPhone. See Remind Yourself to Make a Call.

• The new Reminders app no longer lets you see locally stored reminders lists and iCloud reminders lists at the same time. See How can I get an On My Mac option?
• Family Sharing no longer generates a shared Family Reminders list. If you already have one, it’s converted to a standard shared list that can include people who aren’t in your family group and be deleted.

• Catalina reorganized all iCloud Family Sharing features into a new System Preferences pane. Find your way around with the updated chapter, Use iCloud Family Sharing.

• As of Catalina and iOS 13, you can no longer restore iCloud reminders from an iCloud backup. See What if I accidentally delete my calendars?

What Was New in the Second Edition

The second edition of Take Control of Calendar and Reminders is updated for macOS Mojave as well as the latest version of iOS and watchOS available in May 2019. Along with hundreds of small changes in the book, larger revisions include:

• A workaround that lets you See Calendar Events in a List on your Mac.

• Details about how to Print Your Calendar (to paper or PDF), which is especially useful if you want to hang up a hard copy of the month’s calendar for the family, email a list of events to colleagues, or print blank calendars.

• More Siri tips. I include a video that demonstrates using Siri with Reminders and walk you through what to do When the Wrong Device Answers “Hey Siri”.

• A tip about typing reminders on your Mac using natural language. See Set a Time and Date.

• A section on how to Sort Reminders, which is especially handy if you categorize your reminders by priority. (See Make a Reminder High Priority.)
• A tip showing you how to create a location-based reminder that alerts you to do something when you get in or out of your Bluetooth- or CarPlay-enabled car. See Your Car Is a Location, Too!

• A discussion of how to Tap into Siri Shortcuts that includes a list of pre-made Calendar and Reminders shortcuts you can use to automate common tasks.

• How to add Calendar and Reminders complications to an Apple Watch face using the Watch app on your iPhone. (See Check on Your Apple Watch.)

• Tips throughout showing how to use Apple’s smart speaker, the HomePod, with Calendar and Reminders. See, in particular, Set Up Personal Requests on a HomePod and Check on the HomePod.

• More iOS tips, including a substantially updated section about using Notifications on Your iPhone and iPad.
Introduction

Tired of a calendar that’s as jumbled as your life feels? Having trouble keeping up with your to-do list? Apple includes two apps, Calendar and Reminders, that can help you stay on time and on track.

In this book, we’ll look at how you can bring order to these apps and figure out which features fit the way you work. You’ll learn the nitty-gritty about which tasks each app excels at, how best to set them up, and the quickest ways to add calendar events and reminders (spoiler alert—it’s often Siri!). You’ll also learn about features you may not have heard of before, for instance that you can use Reminders to jog your memory about something when you reach a certain location or that Calendar can trigger an Automator workflow or open a file at the time and date you choose.

This version of the book was updated for macOS Catalina and all the directions work with it as well as the versions of iOS, iPadOS, and watchOS available in October 2019. If you are using an earlier (or later) version of one of these operating systems, most of this book will work fine for you, but perhaps with minor modifications. I haven’t spelled out those differences, but in general, the older your software, the less likely that you’ll find that everything works as described.

I assume that you have a Mac available and that you’ll use it to do the heavy lifting of setting up the Calendar and Reminders apps, and that you’ll often use it to work with these apps. However, in cases where I feel that working with a portable device provides a superior experience (such as making a reminder from your iPhone or Apple Watch), I provide those directions, too. You can also use these apps on the iCloud website. I don’t discuss how to use them there, but for the most part, they work like their Mac counterparts.

It’s time to get organized!
You can read this book in whatever order suits your fancy, but I’d encourage you to start with Calendar vs. Reminders to get a good idea of what each app does best. The list below shows the book’s main topics. Click any link to jump to that topic.

**Get started with Calendar:**
- Get the lay of the land and learn about day, week, month, and year views in *Meet Calendar*.
- Learn how to connect Calendar to iCloud and other accounts, create and color-code new calendars, and customize everything from how many days show to how time zones are handled in *Set Up Calendar*.

**Set up your schedule:**
- In *Work with Events*, you’ll discover all the ways you can add an event as well as what information it can include. You’ll see how to make events repeat at regular intervals or custom schedules like on the last Monday of the month. We’ll also discuss how to reschedule and delete events.
- You’ll never forget an event again after you delve into the nitty gritty of how to *Set Up Notifications* and how to *Set Up Calendar Alerts*.

**Start sharing:**
- Learn how to *Invite People to Events*, so you can keep track of who’s coming. Make it possible for a group to view and edit a calendar together in *Share & Subscribe to Calendars* as well as how to create or subscribe to a read-only calendar.
**Get started with Reminders:**

- Go past the deceptively simple exterior of this app in Meet Reminders. Learn the basics of creating, managing, and sharing lists in Set Up Reminders.

- In Work with Reminders, we look at how to make and manage reminders (including how to check them off when a deed is done), as well as how to set up alarms at a certain time or a certain place.

**Go beyond the basics:**

- Learn the best ways to Check Events & Reminders on your Mac, iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, and HomePod. See how to solve common Calendar and Reminders conundrums in Troubleshoot Problems. Learn the quickest way to share calendars with family members in Use iCloud Family Sharing. Explore how Siri Shortcuts can help you automate complex tasks with Calendar and Reminders in Tap into Siri Shortcuts.

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Calendar vs. Reminders

Apple offers two apps to help you keep track of your life, Calendar and Reminders, but not everyone is clear about when to use which. The first step to becoming organized, then, is learning which tool is best for the job at hand.

Calendar

The days of the paper organizer (Filofax anyone?) are long gone. Calendar can do everything once done with its paper equivalent more quickly and efficiently. It also offers special features, like the capability to set recurring events, link to an email message with relevant information, or invite others to an event. Best of all, Calendar can remind you about your commitments with alarms.

Use Calendar to:

- See an overview of your day, week, or month (Figure 1).

![March 7, 2020 Calendar]

**Figure 1:** Get an overview of your day with Calendar.

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• Track your daily schedule.
• Invite others to meetings.
• Accept or decline invitations to meetings.
• Share a calendar with colleagues or family members.
• Subscribe to others’ calendars, for example, your school district or favorite sports team’s schedule.
• Link to URLs, files, or a relevant email to make it easier to prepare for a meeting.
• Enter event locations so you can get directions when you need them from Maps.
• Set alarms to ensure you’re not late.

**Reminders**

Apple’s Reminders app fits a different niche than the Calendar app. It comes in handy for:

• **Lists and to-dos:** Reminders offers basic task management that’s not possible in Calendar. Use it to assemble and check off items in lists, as well as to share lists with others. For instance, you and your roommate can add items to a shared Groceries List whenever you think of something you need. Whoever makes it to the store first checks off what they bought. Do the same for tasks in a project or your honey-do list.

• **Remembering random tasks and cutting calendar clutter:** Use Apple’s Reminders to remember the random tasks that come your way, from calling back the pharmacy to picking up cat food (**Figure 2**). You can also use it to remind yourself of chores you don’t want cluttering your calendar, like your weekly commitment to take out the recycling.
Meet Calendar

Softball games, project deadlines, parties, and pickup times—Calendar is the place where you can keep track of it all. By default, the macOS Catalina version includes two built-in calendars—Home and Work. The calendars appear in the Calendars list on the left (Figure 3). If the list isn’t visible, click the Calendars button on the toolbar to reveal it or choose View > Show Calendar List. (To hide it, choose View > Hide Calendar List or click the Calendars button again.)

Figure 3: By default, the app includes two calendars, ready for you to fill up with events. If you can’t see the left-hand calendars list, click the Calendars button (boxed).

You can use Calendar to view, edit, and share calendars from iCloud, Google, Exchange, and more. These appear under their own categories in the Calendars list. In fact, if you’re signed in to iCloud, you’re likely to see the Home and Work calendars under an iCloud header.

If you’re using Apple’s Family Sharing service, you also see a Family calendar (see Use iCloud Family Sharing, later).
You can also add a few special calendars, which I describe in Tap into Special Calendars and Add a Lunar Calendar.

**Day View**

Need to get a closer look at a day’s commitments without distractions? Switch to Day view:

- Click the Day button at the top of the Calendar window.
- Choose View > By Day (or press ⌘-1).
- When you’re in Week or Month view, double-click the date you want to zoom into. (Make sure to click the number itself to avoid accidentally creating a new event.)

When you’re in Day view, it’s easier to see event names without them being cut off (Figure 4).

![March 7, 2020](image)

**Figure 4:** Get a close up look at your commitments in Day view.

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Set Up Calendar

If you want Calendar to work the way you do, set it up right from the start. Add cloud accounts, such as iCloud or Google, so you can see a calendar from work or share calendars across all your devices.

You can also Create More Calendars, Tap into Special Calendars (such as birthdays and holidays), and Color-Code Your Calendars to make it easier to see what’s coming up.

Finally, learn about the many ways you can Customize Calendar, including when a week begins and how many days are in a week.

Connect Calendar to iCloud

When you use iCloud with Calendar, your events appear on all your other devices—your iPhone, iPad, Mac, or Apple Watch—that use the same iCloud account. Make a change on one device and it appears automatically on all the others. Set an alarm on one, and it chimes on the others when the time comes. This can be extremely convenient when you’re on the go. Another perk of connecting to iCloud is that you can share calendars with others who also use iCloud.

Here’s how you get set up:

1. Go to Apple > System Preferences. If you aren’t already signed in with your Apple ID, do so by clicking the Sign In button and then typing your Apple ID username and password at the prompts. Click Sign In. Additionally, you must enter a passcode from one of your trusted devices—for instance, your iPhone.

2. Still in System Preferences, go to Apple ID > iCloud.

3. Make sure Calendars is selected in the list (Figure 11) and close the System Preferences window.
Connect Calendar to Other Accounts

In addition to the iCloud account that I just discussed, Calendar can also use calendars from other accounts, including Exchange, Google, Yahoo, and AOL. Here’s how to add one:

1. Choose Calendar > Add Account, select the account type, and then click Continue.

2. Sign into your account, following the prompts on screen. (You may be required to do some of the sign-in process in Safari.)

3. Choose which services—Calendars, for one—you want to use with this account (Figure 12).
Work with Events

Whether you’re looking forward to the seeing the next episode of The Good Place with friends or scheduling your kickball team’s practices, the heart of the Calendar experience is scheduling and working with events.

In addition to covering the basics of adding an event, which is often easily handled with Siri, I walk you through how to Include More Information. I also cover how to Add a Suggested Event from the special Siri Found in Apps calendar, and look at how to Reschedule an Event and Delete an Event.

Add an Event

When you’re itching to add an event, you have a lot of choices. You can add an event using the Create Quick Event button (this button is convenient, but you may have to key in the date and time) or by clicking right in the calendar (the date and time is implied from where you click first). Or, you may find that Siri is the perfect method for adding an event.

I talk about how to add details like alarms and notes to your event ahead a page or so in Include More Information.

Tip: After Activating Siri, say something like “Set up a meeting with Buzz at 9” or “New appointment with Marita Cheng tomorrow at noon.” Siri prompts you if it needs more information. You can use this method on your Mac, iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, or HomePod (if you’ve Set Up Personal Requests on a HomePod).

Using the Create Quick Event Button

Click the Create Quick Event button in the top-left corner and use natural language to describe your event (The Day the Earth Stood Still...).
with Dave Saturday at 3). The menu that appears includes past and future events that might be related. Selecting one of these adds a copy of it to your calendar and can save you the trouble of entering an event’s time or location details.

**Tip:** Typically, when you add an event using the Quick Event button it’s added to your default calendar. Change that by clicking and holding the Quick Event button to reveal a list of all calendars. Select the one you want and proceed.

**A Short Guide to Calendar’s Shorthand**
Here’s how Calendar interprets what you type using natural language:

- **Breakfast** or **morning**, as in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s on Saturday*, equals 9 A.M.
- **Brunch**, as in *Brunch with Beth*, equals 11 A.M.
- **Lunch** or **noon**, as in *Pick up Mary for lunch*, equals 12 P.M.
- **Night**, as in *Games with Jon Friday night*, equals 7 P.M.
- **Dinner**, as in *Dinner at The Fat Snook*, equals 7 P.M.

**Clicking in a Calendar**
If the day you want to add an event to is visible on the calendar, there’s no need to type everything in, just try one of the following techniques:

- Double-click a day (and even at a time) in Day or Week view and then enter a title in the New Event field. If the event is all day, double-click in the all-day section at the top of the calendar in Day or Week view.

- To make an all-day event that spans more than one day, click and drag across the days you want in Month view or across the all-day section at the top of Week view.

- Control-click (right-click) a day and choose New Event from the contextual menu.
Invite People to Events

Want to make sure all the necessary folks show up to a meeting? Use Calendar to invite them to your event and keep an eye on who’s coming. This chapter looks at how to send an invitation, has tips on how to Get in Touch with Invitees, and covers how to Accept and Decline Invitations that others send you.

Send the Invitation

You can send an invitation either when you create an event or when you view an event’s Info pane later. (Invites are sent as .ics files, which most popular calendar programs support.) Click the Add Invitees field and then type in a person’s name or email address. As you type, Calendar looks for matches in Contacts, Mail, and connected calendar servers. If the person’s contact information is already in your Contacts app, for instance, it can make a match just from the name. Press Return or Tab to go down a line and add another.

To avoid errors, before trying to send an invitation, make sure you’ve added your own contact info—with an email address—to the Contacts app. In Contacts, check to see if you have one by choosing Card > Go To My Card. If you don’t have one, create one, and then choose Card > Make This My Card to make it official.

Calendar keeps track of who you usually invite to meetings and makes suggestions based on this when you invite more than two people.

Tip: Another way to add invitees is say something like: “Add Jason to my 2 p.m. meeting with Kelly” after Activating Siri on one of your devices.

When you’re done, click Send. Invitees receive an email with details about the event and can click to accept, decline, or waffle with a maybe (Figure 32).
Figure 32: Invitees to an event receive an email message and can send a response with one click.

See Who’s Free
Calendar can check invitees’ schedules to see if they’re free at your potential meeting time if the selected calendar and the invitees use a calendar service that provides availability information, such as Exchange, Fruux, macOS Server, or KerioConnect. Availability in Calendar is not supported by iCloud, Yahoo, Communigate, or Beehive. (If you’re not sure what I’m talking about, see What’s a Calendar Server?)

If your service does have this feature, choose Window > Availability Panel and click Next Available Time to find a time when all invitees are available.

Check an Invitation’s Status
Calendar lets you check the status of your invitations in a number of ways after invitations are sent:

- By invitee: Symbols appear next to invitee names in the Info pane.

  Here’s a rundown of what a symbol tells you about an invitee:
  
  - ☑ Hasn’t responded, but isn’t busy at that time
  - ❌ Hasn’t responded, but is busy at that time
  - ❓ Hasn’t responded, and this calendar doesn’t track availability
Set Up Calendar Alerts

The best thing about entering an event in your electronic calendar is that it doesn’t stop at that. Unlike the old paper version that we had to remember to check, the calendar on your Mac (and iPhone and iPad) can *remind* you about events, too.

If you need more assistance, set multiple alerts. For instance, you might set one to the night before, when you need to lay out your clothes, and another for when it’s time to leave. You can even set up an alert to send you email or open a file. Once you’ve figured out an alert system for yourself, you’ll never get caught off guard by a forgotten commitment again.

Understand Alert Basics

To create a basic alert, open an event’s Info pane and then click the event’s time. More options appear, including an Alert pop-up menu. Click this and choose a time—At Time of the Event, 5 Minutes Before, and so on. (I talk about custom alerts later in this chapter.)

To set another alert, click the Plus icon beside the Alert pop-up menu. I often set an alert for when I need to prepare for an event, as well as one right before it begins.

If you have second thoughts and want to remove your alert, choose None from the Alert pop-up menu.

Because your alert is not a custom alert, it takes the form that’s set up in Apple > System Preferences > Notifications > Calendar. (To learn how to change these default settings, see Set Up Notifications.) For most people, this means an alert-style notification appears in the upper-right corner of the screen (Figure 36).
Figure 36: The basic Calendar alert throws up a notification that requires you to dismiss it.

To make the alert go away, click Close. To make it go away temporarily, click Snooze and you’ll get another notification in 15 minutes. Click and hold the Snooze button to pick from a range of times from 1 minute to 1 week.

Tip: If the event is part of a cloud-based calendar (for instance, iCloud) that’s also set up on your iPhone, iPad, and Apple Watch, alerts appear on those devices, too.

Custom Alerts

It’s easy to miss the fact that Calendar lets you remind yourself in ways other than what’s set up in Apple > System Preferences > Notifications for the Calendar app. Choose Custom at the bottom of the Alert pop-up menu to see the possibilities:

- **Message with Sound:** As this alert-style notification like the one shown in Figure 36 displays, a sound plays. In previous versions of macOS, you could choose a custom alert sound for the event from a pop-up menu here, but that option appears to be gone as of macOS Mojave. To change the alert sound, you must now go to Apple > System Preferences > Sound, click Sound Effects, and then choose a one from the list. This sound will be used for all your Mac’s alerts.

Tip: Although you can no longer set a custom sound for calendar event alerts on your Mac, it’s still possible on your iPhone and iPad device. See iPhone and iPad Calendar Notifications.
Share & Subscribe to Calendars

A conference room schedule, a time-off calendar, the lineup of family events—many calendars are meant to be shared. When coworkers and family members can all see what’s coming up, add events, and set alarms for themselves as needed, you avoid a host of hassles.

Calendar offers many ways to do this. You can use iCloud to share with other iCloud users. You can share a calendar with others who use the same CalDAV or Exchange calendar service. You can publish or subscribe to read-only calendars, too.

Because a shared calendar is accessed on the server where it’s hosted (iCloud, for instance), not on your Mac, it doesn’t matter if your Mac is off. Your shared calendars are always good to go.

Tip: If you Use iCloud Family Sharing, a Family calendar—which everyone in your family group can view and edit—appears automatically in your Calendars list under the iCloud header.

Share an iCloud Calendar

Once you Connect Calendar to iCloud, you can use Calendar to share an iCloud calendar with others using two different methods:

- **Share with other iCloud users:** With this technique, you invite people specifically by email address. Each invitee can edit the calendar, unless you turn off that privilege.

- **Share a public calendar:** In this case, you get a URL that you can share with anyone. Anyone with the URL can view the calendar in any calendar app that can subscribe to it, but all they can do is view it—editing is not possible. Examples of apps that can subscribe...
to this sort of URL are Apple’s Calendar, Google Calendar, and Microsoft Outlook for Mac or Windows.

To share an iCloud calendar, follow these steps:

1. Working in the Calendars list, hover your pointer over the calendar’s name to see and click a Share Calendar icon.

2. To share with other iCloud users, click the Share With field, type the email address of a person who you want to invite, and then press Tab or Return. Make sure to use the email address associated with their iCloud account. To invite another person, click below the last name and then click in the new Shared With field that appears. If invitees’ info is in your Contacts app, you can type their names instead of their email addresses (Figure 44).

![Figure 44](image)

**Figure 44:** Click in the Share With field and type the email address (or name, if it’s listed in Contacts) of someone you want to invite to share the calendar.

**Tip:** If you’ve created a group in Contacts—say, for a team or your coworkers—you can type the group name to invite all its members at once. (To learn how to create a group, read Apple’s [Create groups of contacts in Contacts on Mac](#).)
Meet Reminders

Whether you’re the type of person who loves the satisfaction of checking off items on your to-do list or you need a kind of backup brain to remind you of the tasks that have come your way, the Reminders app can quickly become an important part of your daily routine.

This is especially the case if you take advantage of Reminders’ iCloud features. Walking the dog when you remember you’re out of coffee beans? Reminders has got your back: add a reminder using your iPhone or Apple Watch, and it is available automatically on all the devices you’ve connected to the same iCloud account—pretty good assurance that you won’t forget.

Reminders is built for simplicity. On a Mac, a sidebar appears on the left, stocked with your individual lists divided into categories. (Choose View > Show Sidebar, or press ⌘-Option-S, if you don’t see it.) Select a list in the sidebar and its reminders appear on the right, ready to be checked off (Figure 48).

![Figure 48: The grand tour of the Reminders app on a Mac doesn’t take long.](image)

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On an iPhone, your lists appear on one screen. Tap a list’s name to see its reminders (Figure 49).

![Figure 49: On an iPhone, your lists appear on one screen (left). Tap a list’s name to see its reminders (right).](image)

Out of the box, Reminders includes one list, Reminders. If you set up a Family Sharing group (see Use iCloud Family Sharing) using an earlier version of macOS, you also see a Family list.

The macOS 10.15 Catalina, iOS 13, and iPadOS 13 versions of Reminders also include new Smart Lists for quick access to reminders that fit certain categories—for example, all reminders that are due today or all flagged reminders (see What Are Smart Lists?).
Set Up Reminders

Setting up the Reminders app involves specifying where your lists are stored and creating any additional lists that you need, plus telling Reminders which list to add items to by default.

**Note:** If you want your Mac or Apple mobile device to alert you about certain reminders with an indication like a chime or onscreen message, you should set that up in System Preferences or the iOS/iPadOS Settings app. I explain how in Set Up Notifications, later.

Specify Where Your Lists Will Live

You can store reminders locally (just on your Mac) or connect them to an account on a cloud service—say, iCloud. If you keep reminders on your Mac, they remain private, but you can access them only there. Use a cloud service, on the other hand, and you can access reminders from any iPhone, iPad, Mac, HomePod, or Apple Watch that uses that account. (If you’re using iCloud, you can also see your reminders at iCloud.com.) Edits and notifications show up everywhere, so you’re always in the know.

One thing worth considering: Local reminders and those that use internet accounts other than iCloud can’t take advantage of all of the new Reminders app’s features. For example, you can’t flag local or Yahoo! reminders or include a clickable URL or image in one.

To use a cloud service for Reminders on your Mac:

1. Go to Apple  > System Preferences > Internet Accounts.
2. Select the account type—choices with a Reminders checkbox include AOL, Exchange, Yahoo, and, of course, iCloud. The checkbox does not appear if you choose Google or Other CalDAV account.
3. Click Continue and then sign in to the account at the prompts.
4. Select the Reminders checkbox (**Figure 51**). If you don’t see a Reminders box for a service, that provider doesn’t offer reminders.

**Figure 51**: Select a service in the list and then check the Reminders box to include reminders from that service. (I’ve redacted email addresses.)

To stop using an account for reminders on your Mac, choose Apple  > System Preferences > Internet Accounts, select the service in the list, and uncheck the Reminders box.

**Note**: As of Catalina, you can no longer view reminder lists stored locally on your Mac and lists stored in iCloud at the same time. You have to choose one or the other. See How can I get an On My Mac option?
A Reminders list won’t do you much good unless you capture the thoughts you need to remember. In this chapter, we’ll look at the quickest ways to add a reminder—no matter what you’re doing—as soon as you think of it. We’ll also cover the basics of rearranging, copying, and deleting them, so you can Manage Reminders like a pro.

Those who need an extra push can learn to Sound the Alarm at a certain time or place, or even when you’re messaging a particular person; and to Set Other Options, like adding a note, URL, phone number, image, or sketch. Finally, because it’s the most satisfying part, you’ll learn how to Check Off Completed Reminders and how to show and hide them.

## Add a Reminder

Adding a reminder is a cinch, because Apple gives you so many shortcuts. Your job is to find the one that works best for you.

### Talk to Siri

If you’ve always wondered if Siri had any, well, useful uses, you’ve found one. Creating reminders with Siri is so quick and natural that you may never do it any other way. After Activating Siri on your Mac, iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, or HomePod—whatever you have at hand—say something like:

- “Add cookies to my Groceries list.”
- “Remind me to call Bob at 2 P.M. tomorrow.”
- “Remind me to take out the garbage tonight.”

The advantage of this is that you can do it whenever an idea strikes. In other words, before you forget!
Tip: For a video demonstration, see [How to Use Siri with Reminders](#).

Unless you specify otherwise, the reminder is added to your default list, which can be different, say, on your Mac or your iPhone depending on how you’ve set things up (see [Change Your Default Reminders List](#)). (Your Apple Watch and HomePod mirror the preferences of the iPhone they were set up with.)

Tip: To use Siri with reminders on your HomePod, you must first turn on Personal Requests. See [Set Up Personal Requests on a HomePod](#).

### Remind Yourself to Make a Call

When you don’t have time to take a call on your iPhone or Mac, tap Remind Me, or click the arrow next to Decline, to see options for making a quick reminder (Figure 58).

![Remind Me Later options](#)

**Figure 58:** Can’t talk? Click or tap Decline and choose one of the “Remind Me Later” options to create a call reminder. (iPhone shown here.)

When the notification arrives on a Mac, click or tap it to open the Reminders app. Then, click the FaceTime icon next to the reminder to start the call. On an iPhone, just tap the notification to start the call.

In previous versions of iOS, you could also ask Siri to remind you to call someone listed in your Contacts app and it created a reminder complete with a phone icon. If you tapped this, your iPhone dialed the number. As of iOS 13.1.3, this no longer works—a plain reminder is created. Hopefully, Apple will restore this feature in an update.
Check Events & Reminders

There are two kinds of people. Those of us who check our calendars and reminders rarely—instead, relying on alerts to remind us what to do when—and those of us who obsessively check 20 times a day. If you’re in the first category, Set Up Calendar Alerts was your chapter, and you read Sound the Alarm for help with your reminders. If you’re in the second category, this chapter is for you.

You’ll learn how to check in these ways:

- Check on Your Mac
- Ask Siri
- Check on Your iPhone or iPad
- Check on Your Apple Watch
- Check on the HomePod

Check on Your Mac

There is more than one way to check a calendar or view your reminders on your Mac. See if one of these tips fits the way you work.

Open the App Quickly

There’s no need to navigate to your Application folder and root around for Calendar or Reminders when you want to open it. Instead:

- Press ⇧-Space to activate Spotlight, and then begin typing the apps’s name. (For example, type calendar and within a few characters, Calendar is your top hit.) Press Return and the app launches.
- If you put an app’s icon in the Dock, you can launch it with one click from there. Drag the Calendar icon or the Reminders icon from...
your Applications folder to anywhere on the left of (or top of) the Dock’s thin divider line.

- After Activating Siri, say, for instance, “Launch Reminders.”

**Put the App in its Own Space**

Don’t overlook the Spaces feature. You can use it with any app, but it’s well suited to Calendar in particular because it puts Calendar full screen on its own virtual desktop where fewer event titles are cut off due to you squashing the window to make room for something else (Figure 75). This method makes the most sense when you want to be able to edit events directly in Day view or see Month or Week view.

![Figure 75: Keep your Calendar full screen and you won’t have to worry about cut off event titles.](image)

Click the green button in the top-left corner of the Calendar window to expand it to full screen. Move back and forth between your regular desktop and the full-screen Calendar using one of these shortcuts:

- Press Control← or Control→.

- Swipe from one side of your trackpad to the other using three or four fingers, or with two fingers on a Magic Mouse.

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Troubleshoot Problems

Even the most well-informed user of Apple’s Calendar and Reminders can sometimes run into trouble, whether it’s iCloud data that doesn’t sync or disappearing reminders. Here’s how to solve some common conundrums.

How do I prevent Calendar spam?

It started in November 2016. Suddenly, Mac users were inundated with calendar spam—bogus event invitations (see Invite People to Events) from counterfeit companies hawking cut-rate Ray Bans, Ugg boots, and other supposed bargains, often in Chinese. Calendar spammers take advantage of the feature that scans Mail messages for calendar invitations and then sends you a notification. What’s worse, if you click Accept, Decline, or Maybe, you notify the spammer that your account is real and ready for more.

To report spam events, go to your calendar on iCloud.com, open the event, and click Report Junk (this option appears under the sender’s name if they’re not in your contacts). Then click OK.

To prevent calendar spam, log in to iCloud.com, click Calendar, click the Settings icon, and choose Preferences > Advanced. Then, change the Receive Event Invitations radio button to Email To email address. Now, instead of appearing as notifications, calendar invitations run through your email account, which undoubtably checks for spam. You can also safely delete messages there without alerting the spammer.

How do I get rid of duplicate events?

If you find your calendar littered with duplicate events, try this:

1. Choose View > Refresh Calendars (or press ⌘-R).

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Tip: On your iPhone or iPad, open Calendar and then tap Calendars to see your list of calendars. Swipe down to refresh.

2. If that doesn’t work, check whether you have an On My Mac calendar that is identical to one of your iCloud calendars. Hide it by deselecting it in the Calendars list and see if duplicates disappear. If they do, you can either keep this calendar hidden or delete the calendar altogether by Control-clicking (right-clicking) its name in the Calendars list and choosing Delete.

How do I remove duplicate birthdays?

If the special Birthdays calendar, discussed in Tap into Special Calendars, shows a birthday more than once, you can remove the extras.

First, choose Calendar > Preferences > General. Deselect the Show Birthdays Calendar checkbox and select it again. If that doesn’t work, duplicate contacts are probably to blame. Open the Contacts app and choose Card > Look for Duplicates. If the app finds them, choose Merge (Figure 89). You may need to repeat this step.

![Figure 89: Yes, please.](image)

If some duplicate birthdays still appear in Calendar, go into Contacts and manually delete the stubborn duplicates that the app is unable to detect. Your duplicate birthdays should disappear.
Use iCloud Family Sharing

*Family Sharing*, an iCloud feature, makes it easy for up to six family members to share App Store, Books, and iTunes Store purchases, as well as an Apple Music subscription, without having to share an Apple ID. Family purchases route through the family organizer, which means you can require kids to get permission before spending money (if you choose). As a bonus, when you use Family Sharing, a shared calendar and reminders list are generated automatically, which makes coordinating the family schedule and to-do list extra convenient. You can also share an iCloud Storage plan and find each others’ locations easily with Find My.

## Set Up Family Sharing

You can set up Family Sharing on your Mac, iPhone, or iPad. After you do, it’s enabled on all devices that share the same iCloud account. Here are the steps to follow on your Mac:

1. Go to Apple > System Preferences > Family Sharing and click the Next button.

2. Make sure that your Apple ID is listed if you want to be the family organizer (*Figure 97*). That job’s responsibilities include providing a credit card for purchases, managing kid accounts, and approving requests from kids—though, you can designate another adult to help with that. If you’re up for it, click Next.
3. Family members will be able to view and download your music, movie, book, and app purchases. If that’s OK, select “Share your purchases” and click Next. (If you want to use a different Apple ID account as the family organizer, click Use a Different Account” instead.)

4. By default, purchases will be charged to the credit card you’ve associated with your Apple ID. If your Apple ID isn’t already associated with a credit card, click Add to set up a family payment method.

5. On the next screen, confirm your payment method. Click Next.

6. If you want to share your location with family members, select “Share your location.” This is handy if you’re wondering if a spouse has left work yet or you’re trying to pick up a teen at the mall. As of Catalina, family members can also help find your devices using Siri or Find My. If you don’t want to share your location, select “Not now.” Click Done.

**Tip:** It’s possible to stop sharing your location temporarily—say, when you’re picking up the surprise family pony. See **Make Adjustments to Family Sharing** next.
Set Up Notifications

What a Calendar or Reminders notification looks like on your Mac, iPhone, iPad, or Apple Watch depends on each device’s Notifications settings. In addition, whether a notification appears in Notification Center depends on the settings. Let’s take a quick look at how you can make your Notifications settings work best for you.

Notifications on Your Mac

What your notifications ultimately look like—and sound like—depends on the settings in Apple > System Preferences > Notifications. After you open this pane, select Calendar or Reminders in the list on the left to view your options on the right. Figure 106 shows the Calendar options, but your choices are identical if you’ve selected Reminders.

Figure 106: To change Calendar’s default alerts, go to System Preferences > Notifications and select Calendar in the list.

By default, both Calendar and Reminders notifications are alert style; in other words, they require that you dismiss them, making it difficult to overlook one. You can, however, change that so a banner appears and then disappears—you catch it or you don’t.
Tip: You can override default Calendar alert settings anytime by choosing a custom alarm for an event as described in Custom Alerts.

Other settings here include:

- **Show notifications on lock screen**: Select this to see the app’s notifications on the Lock screen before you log in to your Mac.

- **Show notification preview**: From this pop-up menu, choose “always” if you don’t mind anyone seeing your event or reminder previews. Alternatively, choose “when unlocked” to show these only when you’ve logged into your Mac.

- **Show in Notification Center**: Make sure this is selected if you want to see recent notifications from the app in Check Notification Center on a Mac.

- **Badge app icon**: Select this to see how many notifications are pending by looking for a red badge on the app’s icon in the Dock.

- **Play sound for notifications**: Select this to make your notification include a sound. Typically it’s Basso, but you can change that in Apple > System Preferences > Sound > Sound Effects. If you’d prefer that your Mac be quiet, make sure this box is deselected.

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**Notifications on Your iPhone and iPad**

Your iPhone or iPad has its own settings that affect how notifications display on it. For any notification trigger, such as a calendar event giving you a 5-minute warning or a scheduled reminder coming due, you can generally get as many as three alerts, as follows:

- **Sound**: A sound plays when the notification is triggered.

- **Banner**: Banners can appear on your device’s Lock Screen, in Notification Center, or at the top of your screen.

- **Badges**: Turn this on and a red badge containing a number appears on the Calendar icon in the Home screen; it shows how many notifications you have.
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About the Author

Scholle Sawyer McFarland has been covering the Mac since 1996 as an editor at *MacUser* magazine and then *Macworld*. She’s dedicated her career to helping people learn to use technology and (hopefully) have fun in the process.

To contact Scholle about this book, send her an email message at scholle@sawmac.com and include *Take Control of Calendar and Reminders* in the subject line to ensure that it outwits the spam filters.

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Shameless Plug

Scholle is also the author of *Take Control of Catalina* and *Take Control of Siri*.

About the Publisher

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