# Table of Contents

## Read Me First
- Updates and More .................................................. 4
- What’s New in This Book ........................................... 5
- What’s New in Version 1.1 ........................................... 5

## Introduction ................................................................. 6

## Mac Basics Quick Start .................................................. 7

## Meet Your Mac ............................................................ 8
- What’s on the Screen? ............................................... 8
- What’s on the Menu Bar? .......................................... 12
- Where’s the Finder? .................................................. 16
- What’s Your Version of macOS? .................................. 19
- What’s on My Mac? ................................................... 21

## Files and Folders .......................................................... 38
- Changing the View .................................................. 38
- Navigating in Folders .............................................. 40
- Following a Mac Path .............................................. 42
- The Home Folder ................................................... 44
- Managing Files and Folders ...................................... 51
- Finding Files and Facts ............................................ 57

## System Preferences ...................................................... 60
- Opening System Preferences ..................................... 60
- Opening a Preference Pane ....................................... 61
- Navigating in a Pane ............................................... 61
- Using the Panes ...................................................... 62

## Using Apps ................................................................. 87
- Installing and Updating ............................................ 87
- Launching ............................................................. 90
- Finding the Preferences ........................................... 93
- Switching ............................................................ 94
- Saving a File ........................................................ 95

Click here to buy the full 141-page “Take Control of Mac Basics” for only $15!
Welcome to *Take Control of Mac Basics*, version 1.1, published in January 2018 by alt concepts inc. It was written by Tonya Engst and edited by Scholle McFarland.

This book brings together a curated collection of essential Mac facts, concepts, and skills. Although it covers some features that have been around for decades, it isn’t shy about explaining recent innovations. Whether you are truly new to the Mac, wish you felt more comfortable with the Mac, want to brush up on a few skills, or need an easy-to-use basic reference, this book is for you.

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

Copyright © 2018, TidBITS Publishing Inc. All rights reserved.

---

**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:

- Download any available new version of the ebook for free, or buy any subsequent edition at a discount.
- Download various formats, including PDF, EPUB, and Mobipocket. (Learn about reading on mobile devices on our [Device Advice](https://tidbits.com/guides/device-advice) page.)
- Read the ebook’s blog. You may find new tips or information, as well as a link to an author interview.

If you bought this ebook from the Take Control website, it has been added to your account, where you can download it in other formats.
and access any future updates. However, if you bought this ebook elsewhere, you can add it to your account manually; see Ebook Extras.

---

**What’s New in This Book**

*Take Control of Mac Basics* is based on an older book, called *Read Me First: A Take Control Crash Course*, that I wrote back when I was editor in chief of the series. That previous book included a set of core Mac skills that the Take Control crew wanted all our readers to know about. That way, other Take Control titles could focus more tightly on other topics.

As part of the 2017 sale of the Take Control series to Joe Kissell’s alt concepts inc., I agreed to revise this book. That way, alt concepts would have an updated title to sell—and the project would be a sort of goodbye to my time as editor in chief. The book is now about twice as long, with new chapters about System Preferences and Using Apps, and several new topics in More Essential Skills.

---

**What’s New in Version 1.1**

This update adds important information about The Mac Basics Webinar, a webinar aimed at helping you get more out of this book by helping you avoid interface annoyances and demonstrating key topics.

I’ve also added a paragraph at the end of the topic about Desktop & Screen Saver Preferences, explaining how to add a modifier key to a hot corner trigger, so you can, for example, turn on your screen saver by pressing the Shift key while you toss your pointer into the lower-right corner of your screen.
Introduction

I once had a friend—let’s call him Kyle—who had a new Mac, but didn’t know much about using it. His goal as a new Mac user was to write a long paper for a college class. For his first work session, he opened a word processing app, typed a few paragraphs, and then printed his work without saving it. For his next session, he opened his word processor, typed in the text on his printout and drafted more text, and printed the file—but didn’t save it. Kyle didn’t want to re-key his text each session—his technique wasn’t part of some creative process. The problem was that he didn’t realize that his Mac could save documents.

And, that’s the problem much of the time. It’s so easy to use your Mac’s most obvious tools that you may be missing out on wonderful techniques that require a teeny-tiny bit of learning.

In this book, you’ll discover what the elements of your Mac screen are called and what you can do with them. I’ll discuss files and folders, so you can organize your work successfully. You’ll learn basic skills for getting in and out of apps easily—and for saving your work! I’ll even walk you through the System Preferences app, explaining how to set up your Mac in a way that works for you. Finally, I’ll describe how to carry out additional essential tasks, including window management and connecting to a Wi-Fi network.

Give this book as little as 30 minutes of your time and you’ll become a more capable Mac user. As Steve Jobs once said, the Mac is a “bicycle for our minds.” After a few chapters, you’ll find yourself metaphorically pedaling faster and higher, as you use your Mac better than ever.

This book is based on macOS 10.13 High Sierra, which Apple released in 2017. If your Mac is running a different version of macOS (see What’s Your Version of macOS?) that’s fine, though if you have a different version, a few things here may not match your Mac.

Here we go!
This book brings together essential Mac facts, concepts, and skills in one place for your edification and enjoyment. You are welcome to read it sequentially from start to finish; I’ve arranged it carefully in a logical order for just that purpose. But you can also chart your own path. To move around non-sequentially, click the blue links in the Table of Contents, in this Quick Start, and throughout the text.

**Orientation:**
- Find answers to fundamental questions, including What’s on the Screen?, What’s on the Menu Bar?, Where’s the Finder?, and What’s Your Version of macOS?
- What’s on My Mac? describes your Mac’s pre-installed apps.

**Basics:**
- Take control of your Finder windows as you learn about Changing the View, Navigating in Folders, and Managing Files and Folders.
- Understand the point of The Home Folder and its subfolders.
- Learn about the three ways to search in Finding Files and Facts.
- Find tips for running System Preferences efficiently and a discussion of what each pane can do for you.
- Run your apps like a pro with the advice in Using Apps.

**Leveling Up:**
- Browse the introduction to More Essential Skills to discover the additional topics in this book.
- Make sure you know the best techniques for Sleeping and Shutting Down, as well as what to do if An App Freezes or Won’t Quit or Your Mac Isn’t Working Right.
- Watch The Mac Basics Webinar for more details and live demonstrations of some of the instructions in this book.
Meet Your Mac

Congratulations! By reading this chapter, you’re making an effort to get to know your Mac. This worthwhile endeavor will make you a more effective Mac user. This chapter covers a few different ways of understanding the complex, amazing, and at times confusing, machine that is your Mac.

What’s on the Screen?

Right after you start up your Mac and sign in, the screen displays several important items, laid over the Desktop image. Let’s do a 5-minute meet-and-greet to cover what these items are called and—basically—what you can do with them (Figure 1).

![Figure 1: When viewing the Mac Desktop, you may see the menu bar at the top, a Finder window, individual file and folder icons, and the Dock.](image-url)
Here’s what you can do with the called-out items in the figure above.

**Menu Bar**

Click any word or symbol in the menu bar to open it. The Apple ⚪ menu is always at the far left, the next item is always the name of the currently active app—Finder in the figure above—and the rightmost icon ☑️ leads to Notification Center. For more about these menu bar options, see What’s on the Menu Bar?, ahead.

**Finder Window**

The Finder launches automatically when you start up the Mac, and it’s the app you use to view and manage the files and folders stored on your drive. Open a Finder window to interact with the stuff that’s stored on your computer—for help, read Opening a Finder Window.

To move a Finder window, drag the top of it (called the *title bar*) and then drop the window where you want it. To resize a Finder window, position the pointer on any edge. The pointer changes to a two-headed arrow ↔, indicating that you can drag inward to make the window smaller or outward to make it larger. (These techniques work for any Mac window, so you can use them on windows in your apps, as well as Finder windows.)

**Note:** For help with minimizing and zooming windows, as well as with making a window full-screen, see Working with Windows, later.

**File**

These items represent things like word processing or PDF documents, individual graphics or photos, spreadsheets, individual movies or songs, and more.

To open a file in its default app, double-click it. You can now work on the file. Or, if it’s a piece of media, like a book or song that is meant to be read or listened to, you can now read or play it. For help with tasks like copying, moving, and renaming files, read Managing Files and Folders, later.
Files and Folders

This chapter explains how the Finder and its files and folders work together. It’s also full of tips and life hacks for working effectively. I start with a look at the different views in a Finder window, cover the essential skills of Navigating in Folders and Following a Mac Path, and discuss The Home Folder.

The chapter continues with advice on Managing Files and Folders (opening files from the Finder, moving files in the Finder, deleting files from the Finder, and so on) and finishes with how you go about Finding Files and Facts with Siri, Spotlight, and more.

Changing the View

Earlier, in Where’s the Finder?, I looked at how to switch to the Finder and open a window. This window typically shows a folder’s contents, perhaps as a list of filenames or a grid of icons. How do you control whether you see a list or a grid? And what are your viewing choices?

Your viewing choices, along with their keyboard shortcuts, are listed in the Finder’s View menu. Click the window to make sure it’s active, and then choose a view from the menu (Figure 19).

![Figure 19](image)

**Figure 19:** This cutout of the top of the View menu shows the four view options, along with their keyboard shortcuts.

Another way to switch views is to click a view button in the window’s toolbar—from left to right, the buttons are for Icon, List, Column, and Cover Flow view (Figure 20).
Here’s a look at each view:

- **Icon view:** Shown in the figure above, this view displays an image for each item. Icons for folders look like physical file folders, and icons for individual files often look like paper documents.

- **List view:** List view makes it easy to sort your files in different ways. See Sorting by List, ahead, for more.

- **Column view:** Select this view to see how your folders and files are organized on your drive. This view is especially helpful if you want to navigate through a series of nested folders. It also previews the selected file at the right (Figure 21).

**Figure 20:** To switch views, click a view button in the toolbar (circled). Icon view is shown here.

**Figure 21:** In Column view, it’s easy to tell where the selected item is stored (in this case, Jersey example.png is in the Running folder). If you’ve selected a file, a preview of it appears at the right.
System Preferences

Imagine this. You want to change the background image on your Mac’s Desktop. You search in Google for instructions, and you find an article that tells what to do. “Simply open System Preferences,” it says. Fine... but where are they? And, having found them, how do you get around?

Opening System Preferences

An easy way to open System Preferences is to click the Apple 🍎 icon at the upper-left corner of your screen and choose System Preferences from the menu. System Preferences opens and displays its main window (Figure 39). The icons in the window represent the various preference panes. What you see on your Mac may be different than in the figure. Your icons may be arranged by category instead of alphabetically as they are here. You may see panes from non-Apple software (like Hazel in the figure). You may have different panes because of your hardware (like Trackpad and Touch ID in the figure).

Figure 39: The main view of the System Preferences has several rows of icons. Click an icon to open its pane.
Opening a Preference Pane

You can open a pane in a variety of ways:

- Click its icon in the System Preferences window.
- Type its name—or something about it—in the Search field in the corner of the System Preferences window. A highlight appears on the icons for any panes with a setting matching what you typed.
- Choose it from the View menu in System Preferences.

To close a pane and return to the main System Preferences window, click the Show All button on the toolbar or choose View > Show All Preferences.

Navigating in a Pane

Some preference panes have buttons (also called tabs) across the top (Figure 40). Click a button to access a view (also called a sub-pane or screen). So, to follow directions that say “go to System Preferences > Desktop & Screen Saver > Desktop, you open System Preferences, click the Desktop & Screen Saver icon, and then click the Desktop button.

![Figure 40: Click a button—Desktop or Screen Saver—to display its view.](image)
Using Apps

With all the preamble about the Finder and System Preferences out of the way, this book can now roll up its metaphorical sleeves and discuss how to get in and out of your apps, and some of the mechanics of working within them. This chapter first looks at how to install and update apps (since you can’t launch them if they aren’t installed). It then looks at Launching an app and Finding the Preferences. Switching covers how to move the focus between launched apps.

After that, I offer directions for core features that you might use within an app, including Saving a File, Versioning, Sharing, and Printing. The chapter closes with Quitting.

Note: For help with a specific Apple app, try attending an Apple Store training session. Some non-Apple computer stores also offer excellent training for Mac apps. Also note that if bought your Mac from Apple within the last 90 days, you can schedule a Personal Setup.

Installing and Updating

If the software on your Mac, described in What’s on My Mac?, doesn’t have all the features that you need, you can install more apps.

To figure out what software to install, I suggest that you start with your most Mac-savvy friends or colleagues—people who know you personally. These people can make suggestions for what would suit you best, and may be able to help you with the software if they also use it. (If you don’t have any such friends or colleagues, consider attending a Mac User Group meeting; you can locate one using this Find a Group page.)

Online software reviews can also be helpful. For example, TidBITS occasionally publishes software roundups that incorporate reader ratings (see Your Favorite Mac Word Processors, Your Favorite Mac Personal Information Managers, and Your Favorite Mac Personal Finance Apps).
Let’s consider a few ways to acquire software.

**Mac App Store**

Apple’s App Store has an enormous collection of software. You can search for an app by typing keywords in the Search field at the right side of the toolbar (like *photo editor* or *password*), or you can browse by clicking buttons on the toolbar (like Featured or Categories). To install an app, click the price button in its listing and follow the prompts. After it downloads and installs, you’ll find it in the Applications folder and Launchpad.

An advantage of the App Store is that the store streamlines the process of installing updates (see App Store Preferences).

**Tip:** Free downloads from the App Store include Apple’s GarageBand and iMovie, as well as the iWork apps: Keynote, Pages, and Numbers.

**Setapp**

This elegant subscription service provides a select collection of always-updated apps for $9.99 per month. For a look at Setapp, read the TidBITS article Setapp At 5 Months: 10,000 Users and Better App Discovery.

**Developer Web Site**

Many top Mac developers sell their apps, or allow you to subscribe to their apps, exclusively from their own sites, or they sell their apps both in the Mac App Store and on their sites. Just a few of these companies are Adobe, Bare Bones Software, BusyMac, Microsoft, Literature and Latte, Objective Development, Rogue Amoeba, and Smile.

**Warning!** Do not download software that claims it will remove viruses or spyware from your Mac if it seems at all dodgy. If you’re seeing multiple pop-up ads, feel that you are being oversold, or know nothing about the reputation of the seller—do not buy the app. It’s all too likely that the app itself is malware!
More Essential Skills

This book has already examined dozens of important skills, including Previewing a File, Working in the User Library, Switching between apps, Sharing data from an app, and Printing. But some essential skills didn’t fit neatly in any previous chapter. Rather than leave them out, I’ve rounded them up in this chapter.

I’ll first cover skills that you can use in most apps: using keyboard shortcuts; Copy, Cut, and Paste; Opening Contextual Menus; and Working with Windows.

Next are a few techniques that I personally enjoy using (Sorting by List, Connecting with Wi-Fi, and Using AirPlay) or that seem especially relevant to the needs of a typical Take Control reader (Making a Backup Plan and Using Terminal).

Sleeping and Shutting Down is nearly last, because it’s what you do when you want to take a break from your Mac, and Solving Problems is last, because it’s almost an appendix.

Keyboard Shortcuts

You’ve probably read about the virtues of keyboard shortcuts—instead of choosing an item from a menu, you just press a few keys. Which keys? Look at the right side of nearly any Mac menu to see the symbols for the keyboard shortcuts that go with its commands.

As a typical example, consider the shortcut Command-Comma, which generally opens an app’s Preferences window. Notice in Figure 62 how ⌘, appears to the right of Preferences in the menu. This means that to open the Preferences window from the keyboard, you would press the Command key and keep it down while you press Comma, then release both keys.
Figure 62: Keyboard shortcuts, such as ⌘, (circled here), are listed on the menu bar menus.

Some of the symbols can be cryptic, so Table 1 matches the symbols to their names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>⌘</td>
<td>Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>^</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⌥</td>
<td>Delete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⌘Enter</td>
<td>Enter/Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⌘Option</td>
<td>Option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⌘Shift</td>
<td>Shift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⌘Tab</td>
<td>Tab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tip: A triangle ➤ in a menu signals a submenu. Hover over it to view the submenu.
The Mac Basics Webinar

Because watching someone work on their Mac can be more valuable than reading about it, this book has a companion webinar. I’ll be giving the same webinar twice, so you can pick the date that works best for you. Or, you can watch the recordings later.

The dates and times are:

• **Thursday, February 8, 2018**: 10 A.M. PT (1 P.M. ET/6 P.M. GMT)
• **Saturday, February 10, 2018**: 10 A.M. PT (1 P.M. ET/6 P.M. GMT)

To view a webinar, click its link in the list above. If you click slightly before or during the scheduled time, you’ll see the live broadcast—and you’ll be able to participate in the chat forum—otherwise, you’ll see the recorded version.

The webinars will be streamed on YouTube Live, which means you should be able to view them on nearly any recent computer, smartphone, or tablet (and possibly your TV). Even so, the webinars aren’t public; only people who have the links above can view them.

The outline for the webinar looks like this:

• Bad Apple: Interface Inconsistencies and Other Failings
• Filing Your Files Using Sidebar Favorites
• The Story of the Hidden Show/Hide Item
• The Story of Why You Should Always Click the Triangle
• Amazing Mac Window Tricks
• How to Stop Being Frustrated with System Preferences
• What You Need to Know about Notification Center
• Answers to Reader Questions

Click here to buy the full 141-page “Take Control of Mac Basics” for only $15!
Thank you for purchasing this Take Control book. We hope you find it both useful and enjoyable to read. We welcome your comments.

Ebook Extras

You can access extras related to this ebook on the web. Once you’re on the ebook’s Take Control Extras page, you can:

- Download any available new version of the ebook for free, or buy a subsequent edition at a discount.
- Download various formats, including PDF, EPUB, and Mobipocket. (Learn about reading on mobile devices on our Device Advice page.)
- Read postings to the ebook’s blog. These may include new information and tips, as well as links to author interviews. At the top of the blog, you can also see any update plans for the ebook.

If you bought this ebook from the Take Control website, it has been automatically added to your account, where you can download it in other formats and access any future updates. However, if you bought this ebook elsewhere, you can add it to your account manually:

- If you already have a Take Control account, log in to your account, and then click the “access extras...” link above.
- If you don’t have a Take Control account, first make one by following the directions that appear when you click the “access extras...” link above. Then, once you are logged in to your new account, add your ebook by clicking the “access extras...” link a second time.

Note: If you try these directions and find that your device is incompatible with the Take Control website, contact us.
Tonya Engst is best known for co-founding the TidBITS online publication in 1990 with her husband Adam Engst. She and Adam also co-founded the Take Control ebook series in 2003, and she was editor in chief of that series from 2003–2017. When she’s not working at her Mac or hanging out with family and friends, she is probably out running. She and Adam live near Ithaca, a small city in upstate New York.

Shameless Plug

TidBITS is a website and weekly email newsletter that keeps readers in the loop about Apple-related topics. Whether you bookmark TidBITS in your browser or join our mailing list, we’d be delighted to have you as a reader! To support TidBITS financially and enjoy a few perks, please check out our membership program. We appreciate the support of our members enormously—we couldn’t publish TidBITS without it!

If you’ve enjoyed the writing in this book and would like to publish similar topics on your blog or in a company newsletter, consider joining the TidBITS Content Network (TCN), which offers syndicated content about Apple products.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Scholle for patiently editing this title and to Joe for his help with bringing it to life. And thank you to Adam for wine and cheese, rolling and Netflix, and so much more!
About the Publisher

alt concepts inc., publisher of Take Control Books, is operated by Joe Kissell and Morgen Jahnke, who acquired the ebook series from TidBITS Publishing Inc.’s owners, Adam and Tonya Engst, in May 2017. Joe brings his decades of experience as author of more than 60 books on tech topics (including many popular Take Control titles) to his role as Publisher. Morgen’s professional background is in development work for nonprofit organizations, and she employs those skills as Director of Marketing and Publicity.

Credits

- Publisher: Joe Kissell
- Editor: Scholle McFarland
- Cover design: Sam Schick, Neversink
- Logo design: Geoff Allen, FUN is OK

More Take Control Books

This is but one of many Take Control titles! Most of our books focus on the Mac, but we also publish titles that cover iOS, along with general technology topics.

You can buy Take Control books from the Take Control online catalog as well as from venues such as Amazon and the iBooks Store. But it’s a better user experience and our authors earn more when you buy directly from us. Just saying...

Our ebooks are available in three popular formats: PDF, EPUB, and the Kindle’s Mobipocket. All are DRM-free.
Copyright and Fine Print

Take Control of Mac Basics
ISBN: 978-1-947282-12-4
Copyright © 2018, TidBITS Publishing Inc. All rights reserved.
alt concepts inc. 4142 Adams Ave. #103-619, San Diego CA 92116, USA

Why Take Control? We designed Take Control electronic books to help readers regain a measure of control in an oftentimes out-of-control universe. With Take Control, we also work to streamline the publication process so that information about quickly changing technical topics can be published while it’s still relevant and accurate.

Our books are DRM-free: This ebook doesn’t use digital rights management in any way because DRM makes life harder for everyone. So we ask a favor of our readers. If you want to share your copy of this ebook with a friend, please do so as you would a physical book, meaning that if your friend uses it regularly, he or she should buy a copy. Your support makes it possible for future Take Control ebooks to hit the internet long before you’d find the same information in a printed book. Plus, if you buy the ebook, you’re entitled to any free updates that become available.

Remember the trees! You have our permission to make a single print copy of this ebook for personal use, if you must. Please reference this page if a print service refuses to print the ebook for copyright reasons.

Caveat lector: Although the author and alt concepts inc. have made a reasonable effort to ensure the accuracy of the information herein, they assume no responsibility for errors or omissions. The information in this book is distributed “As Is,” without warranty of any kind. Neither alt concepts inc. nor the author shall be liable to any person or entity for any special, indirect, incidental, or consequential damages, including without limitation lost revenues or lost profits, that may result (or that are alleged to result) from the use of these materials. In other words, use this information at your own risk.

It’s just a name: Many of the designations in this ebook used to distinguish products and services are claimed as trademarks or service marks. Any trademarks, service marks, product names, or named features that appear in this title are assumed to be the property of their respective owners. All product names and services are used in an editorial fashion only, with no intention of infringement. No such use, or the use of any trade name, is meant to convey endorsement or other affiliation with this title.

We aren’t Apple: This title is an independent publication and has not been authorized, sponsored, or otherwise approved by Apple Inc. Because of the nature of this title, it uses terms that are registered trademarks or service marks of Apple Inc. If you’re into that sort of thing, you can view a complete list of Apple Inc.’s registered trademarks and service marks.

Click here to buy the full 141-page “Take Control of Mac Basics” for only $15!