TAKE CONTROL OF

iCLOUD

by JOE KISSELL

$14.99

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Welcome to *Take Control of iCloud, Seventh Edition*, version 7.0, published in August 2020 by alt concepts inc. This book was written by Joe Kissell and edited by Glenn Fleishman.

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

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

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**Updates and More**

You can access extras related to this book 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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What’s New in the Seventh Edition

This massively revised seventh edition covers all the changes Apple made to iCloud and its related apps since the previous edition of the book.

It also changes and expands coverage of Apple’s operating systems:

• **2019 releases:** The book is now up to date for macOS 10.15 Catalina, iOS 13, and iPadOS 13.

• **2020 releases:** As far as I can tell from beta versions available in August 2020, it is also accurate for macOS 11 Big Sur, iOS 14, and iPadOS 14.

• **Previous versions:** This book also fully encompasses 10.14 Mojave and iOS 12. However, I dropped information about earlier operating systems.

The book features many hundreds of changes throughout, but the most notable ones are these:

• Rewrote iCloud Feature Changes to reflect what’s new since the previous edition of the book

• Updated all references to the iCloud pane of System Preferences to reflect the fact that starting in Catalina, most iCloud preferences are managed in the Apple ID pane

• Updated the information on iCloud for Windows, particularly the setup instructions (see Update Your Software and Set Up iCloud for Windows) to cover the new version of iCloud for Windows available from the Microsoft Store

• Revised my description of The All-Purpose iCloud Troubleshooting Procedure with additional details

• Updated the discussion of Family Sharing to include feature and interface changes; see Configure Apps and Services

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- Revised the **Manage Your Photos** chapter to match current reality, which includes the service name “iCloud Photos” replacing “iCloud Photo Library,” the reduced availability of My Photo Stream, and alterations to features in Windows

- Rewrote most of the chapter **Keep Documents and App Data in Sync** to cover significant changes in iCloud Drive (including folder sharing), provide more detail, and answer frequently asked questions

- Updated the topic **Enable and Configure iCloud Keychain** with more information about working with this feature in the case of two-factor authentication being enabled or disabled

- Refreshed the chapter **Use the iCloud Website** with updated instructions related to changes on the site

- Fully revised the **Find My Nouns** chapter, which now covers the Find My app for macOS, iOS, iPadOS

- Updated the chapter **Use iCloud on an Apple TV** to reflect recent changes in tvOS
iCloud, Apple’s collection of online services, offers a simple way to keep all your important data in sync across your devices. iCloud’s mission is to propagate your documents, music, TV shows, movies, photos, contacts, calendars, passwords, and other data to all your devices so immediately and automatically that you never think about where your data resides anymore.

But iCloud goes far beyond the concept of syncing. Many features you use on a Mac, iOS/iPadOS device, Apple TV, or Apple Watch want to involve iCloud in some way. You can use your Apple device without an iCloud account, but many common tasks will be more awkward or even impossible. And, from Apple’s point of view, why would you want to use a device without iCloud? Accounts are free (albeit with optional paid features), and the iCloud infrastructure makes everything work together much more smoothly.

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

And what about privacy? You can sync your photos and videos instantly across all your devices—great! And the data from your iOS devices is automatically backed up to the cloud—great! And you can share anything with a couple of taps or clicks—great! But if someone guesses or finds your iCloud password, or you tap the wrong button by mistake, your private moments, your home address, and tons of other personal details could be plastered all over the internet. That’s no longer a hypothetical worry, and it can be front-page news when it happens (if you’re a celebrity).

And while iCloud is pretty good at keeping your own data in sync, it’s poor at sharing data between users. Features like Shared Albums and Family Sharing point in the right direction, and they’re useful as far as
they go. But you still can’t easily share a whole address book with your spouse, a folder full of mixed documents with a work group, or a keychain containing usernames and passwords with your family. There’s no way to automatically pool family photos into iCloud Photos, either.

There’s also the question of hardware support. Only a handful of iCloud’s features are available in Windows, while a smaller subset can be used (after a fashion) on Linux and Android devices. But Apple is in the business of selling hardware, so it stands to reason that iCloud works best on Apple devices. Recent-vintage Macs, iOS and iPadOS devices (iPhone, iPad, iPod touch), Apple TVs, and Apple Watches offer the best support for iCloud.

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

iCloud is constantly changing. Therefore, I don’t attempt to give you specific instructions for using every last feature—I’m confident that you can figure out how to send an email message or delete a contact, even if the exact steps change tomorrow. But I do try to help you grasp what iCloud is capable of and decide how best to use it.

For the most part, I assume your operating system(s) are recent: namely, macOS 10.14 Mojave or later, iOS 12 or later, Windows 10 or later, and tvOS version 13 or later. I also assume that all your iCloud-connected apps (such as Music, Photos, and Pages) are up to date. Although I occasionally call attention to differences in operating systems, I don’t offer detailed instructions for using iCloud with older software.
Although you can skip around freely in this book to learn about the topics that interest you most, I encourage you to read (or at least skim) two early chapters before moving on to the rest: Get to Know iCloud and Set Up iCloud. Those chapters provide important foundational information, which help make sense of material later in the book. If you already read an earlier edition, start with Catch Up with iCloud Changes and then skip those foundational chapters.

**Get started:**

- Discover what’s new in the last year or so—and do a quick Storage Checkup of your iCloud online data storage needs and costs—in Catch Up with iCloud Changes.

- Learn about iCloud features in Get to Know iCloud.

- Set up all your devices to use iCloud. See Set Up iCloud.

- Get your family set up to share purchases, calendars, location data, and more. See Use iCloud Family Sharing.

**Keep your data in sync across devices:**

- Apple has two cloud-based music services: Apple Music and iTunes Match. Learn how these services work and interact, and find details about iTunes Match in Use iCloud Music Features.

- Use iCloud Photos to sync all your photos among Macs, iOS and iPadOS devices, and the cloud; use My Photo Stream to put your recent photos on all your devices, and use Shared Albums to share photos with other people. See Manage Your Photos.

- Keep your documents and app data current everywhere using iCloud Drive and other forms of in-app syncing. See Keep Documents and App Data in Sync.
• Make sure your major forms of personal data (email, contacts, and calendars) are automatically mirrored across all your devices. See Keep Mail, Contacts, and Calendars in Sync.

• Learn about syncing data from other apps, including Messages, News, Safari, Siri, and more. See Sync Other iCloud Data.

• Keep usernames, passwords, and credit card numbers in sync across devices, generate new random passwords, and edit your saved credentials as you Work with iCloud Keychain.

Use the other iCloud features:

• Cut, copy, and paste from one device to another when you Use Universal Clipboard.

• Access web-based versions of the core iCloud apps on nearly any platform. See Use the iCloud Website.

• Locate a wayward Apple device, or find a friend or family member. See Find My Nouns.

• Learn how iCloud can back up and restore crucial data from your iOS devices in Back Up and Restore iOS/iPadOS Data.

• Apple TV owner? Find out which iCloud features your streaming box can use and how. Read Use iCloud on an Apple TV.

• Update your iCloud account details. See Manage Your Account.

• Keep your account safe and protect your private data. See Manage iCloud Security and Privacy.
Catch Up with iCloud Changes

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

iCloud Feature Changes

Although Apple makes changes to iCloud whenever it suits them, significant changes most commonly appear with new versions of Apple’s operating systems—particularly macOS and iOS/iPadOS. Since the previous version of this book, Apple shipped macOS 10.15 Catalina, iOS 13 and iPadOS 13 (dividing iOS into two separate systems), and tvOS 13, and made the following major changes to iCloud:

- **Find My**: The new Find My app on macOS, iOS, and iPadOS combines the features of Find My Friends with Find My Device, though the two are still separate on icloud.com. See Find My Nouns.

- **System Preferences and Settings changes**: On newer operating systems, Apple replaced the iCloud category in System Preferences and Settings with an Apple ID category, while iCloud settings were demoted to a subcategory of Apple ID. See Set Up iCloud.

- **iCloud Drive folder sharing**: Folder sharing, a long-promised feature that finally appeared in macOS 10.15.4 and iOS 13.4, lets you give other people read-only or read-write access to an entire folder on your iCloud Drive. See Share Files and Folders on a Mac or PC.

- **iCloud website**: Although the features available on icloud.com are mostly the same as they were for the previous edition of this book,
Apple refreshed the user interface in a variety of ways, including moving some controls around. See Use the iCloud Website.

**Note:** Apple made some smaller changes to iCloud, too. For example, *HomeKit Secure Video*, a new feature, uses iCloud Drive storage to save recordings from supported cameras. I don’t discuss that feature further in this book, but *Take Control of Home Security Cameras* by Glenn Fleishman covers it, as will a future update to *Take Control of Apple Home Automation* by Josh Centers.

Apple announced its next series of operating systems in June 2020, which include macOS 11 Big Sur and iOS 14/iPadOS 14. At this point, I expect to see only minor changes to iCloud in these new operating systems (though I’ve been surprised before), but I’ll note what’s on the horizon where appropriate, and will update this book if needed to cover any significant changes.

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**Storage Checkup**

Some iCloud features (especially Desktop and Documents folder syncing) eat into your iCloud storage quota quickly, but the cost of extra storage is low enough that it shouldn’t be a hardship for most users to store as much data as they want. If you’re still trying to make do with the 5 GB Apple offers for free, my professional advice is to *give up*! It’s no longer worth the effort to avoid what could be as little as a 99-cent monthly charge (for 50 GB).

A backup of a single iOS or iPadOS device can easily surpass 5 GB, after all, and by the time you add saved email, files in iCloud Drive, and other smaller bits of information, you’re in for some frustration if you try to whittle the figure down to avoid paying a dollar a month. With upgraded storage, you can freely back up your iOS and iPadOS devices, add files to iCloud Drive, and so on, without worrying that you’ll bump into your limit.

Apple has gradually dropped the price of and increased storage at its higher tiers, and its top offering, 2 TB, is now an affordable $9.99 per
Get to Know iCloud

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

In addition to explaining what you can and cannot do with iCloud, this chapter discusses what you need to know About iCloud System Requirements, About Your Apple ID, and About iCloud Storage.

What Is iCloud?

While iCloud has a few features in common with other online services such as Dropbox, Google Docs, and Microsoft 365, iCloud is designed to achieve different goals, making it more different from these services than alike. In fact, it’s rather hard to put a finger on exactly what iCloud is.

iCloud doesn’t have much...thingness. It’s not a physical object you can touch, and it’s not software you can install. It’s not a website—at least, not entirely. You can’t buy it, although you may pay for extra features. In fact, referring to iCloud as a single entity is misleading. The name iCloud is just an arbitrary label for a collection of features, services, settings, and APIs (application programming interfaces), joined by a thread of relying on communication over the internet between Apple devices (Macs, iOS and iPadOS devices, Apple TVs, HomePods, and Apple Watches) and Apple’s servers in the cloud.

Perhaps a more interesting question to begin with is “What is iCloud for?” I have a few answers to that one:

- **iCloud lets iOS and iPadOS devices stand alone.** Originally, the only way to move certain kinds of data on and off your iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch was to connect it to a Mac or PC—at first, with a USB cable, and later, via Wi-Fi. The computer was required to activate the device; to back up or restore its data; to sync photos,
music, movies, books, and apps; to transfer documents to and from certain apps; and to install operating system updates.

With iCloud, your iOS or iPadOS device can operate as a completely standalone product. If you don’t have a Mac or PC to connect to, there must be some other repository for your data, and some other mechanism to get it to and from your device. iCloud serves those purposes, letting you transfer data to and from Apple’s servers using either a Wi-Fi or cellular connection.

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

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

  Most cloud services work the opposite way around: data is centrally stored and only pushed to devices as needed, rather than intentionally stored there most or all of the time.

- **iCloud replaces (some) local storage with streaming.**
  Related to the last point, iCloud reduces the need to keep all your important media on all your devices. As long as you have a good wireless internet connection, your Mac and iOS/iPadOS devices can now do what the Apple TV has done for many years: fetch the content you want from the cloud in near real time. This makes it practical to get by with less storage space. You also no longer have to decide which content to put on which device; in a sense, everything can be everywhere, automatically. Yet you can still store local copies of crucial data for times when an internet connection is unavailable.
Set Up iCloud

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

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

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

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

Update Your Software

If you want to access all the latest iCloud features, make sure the Apple software that uses iCloud is up to date on each platform you use. Here’s what you need to do:

- **iOS/iPadOS:** For any iOS or iPadOS device you haven’t already upgraded to iOS 12 or later, tap Settings > General > Software Update and follow the prompts to install the latest update.

- **Mac:** Choose Apple  > App Store and click Updates. If newer versions of macOS, Photos, iTunes, or the iWork apps (Pages, Numbers, and Keynote) are found, follow the prompts to install them. In particular, be sure to install 10.15 Catalina—a free upgrade—if you have not already done so and your Mac supports it. (If you are
contemplating a major upgrade from an earlier version of macOS, look for steps in my book *Take Control of Upgrading to Catalina.*

**Warning!** Catalina doesn’t support older Mac apps that were never updated with the 64-bit code that Apple made mandatory in this macOS release. Ensure you aren’t losing access to some older apps you need first by consulting this *Macworld* article.

- **Windows:** First, download and install the latest version of *iTunes*; if you have a previous version installed, you can use Start > Apple Software Update. Then download and install *iCloud for Windows* from the Microsoft Store.

**Note:** Unfortunately, Apple Software Update may *not* update versions of iCloud for Windows previously distributed by Apple to this new version. In my case, Apple Software Update only installed version 7.19, while the latest as of July 2020 is 11.2. So, even if you had an earlier version installed and use Apple Software Update, be sure to install the version from the Microsoft Store.

- **Apple TV:** For information on updating the Apple TV software, see Apple’s article *Update the software on your Apple TV.*

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### Set Up iCloud on a Mac

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

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

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

Family Sharing requires Yosemite or later, or iOS 8 or later, so I recommend using it only if all your family’s devices meet these requirements. Assuming your family fits that profile, here’s what you’ll get for up to six family members (including you):

- All family members’ purchases of media from Apple are charged to the credit card of the person designated as the family organizer. (Family members who have enough credit in their own Apple ID accounts can use that credit to buy something without using the shared card.)

- Kids can request media purchases from a parent, who must approve each one individually. (You can register special Apple IDs for kids, even if they’re under 13.)

- All family members can access each others’ media, although you can hide particular items of your own that you don’t want to share.

- A shared family photo album, calendar, and reminder list are created.

- Family members can more easily share their locations and locate their devices (with Find My).

- A family can join Apple Music as a group for $14.99 per month instead of paying $9.99 per person per month.

- If the family organizer is paying for 200 GB or 2 TB of iCloud Drive space, that storage quota can be applied to the family instead of just

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the organizer. Each family member’s data remains private to them, even though the total available storage is pooled.

- Parents can limit their kids’ screen time (on devices running iOS 12 or later, or iPadOS); see Tonya Engst’s article Parents Rejoice! iOS 12 Provides More Helpful Parental Controls at Simply Mac.

I won’t pretend Family Sharing is perfect—for example, can’t add someone with a billing address in another country, and Family Sharing offers no way to share data like contacts, bookmarks, and passwords within a family—but it’s definitely helpful for what it does. (One encouraging sign: starting in macOS 11, iOS 14, and iPadOS 14, it will finally be possible for in-app purchases to be shared within a family, assuming app developers enable this feature.)

Enable Family Sharing

You can enable Family Sharing on either a Mac or an iOS/iPadOS device. Once it’s enabled on one of your devices, it’s enabled on all of them. I’ll explain the steps on a Mac here; if you use an iOS or iPadOS device, the process is similar except you go to Settings > Your Name > Family Sharing to start. Do this:

1. On a Mac running Catalina or later, go to System Preferences > Family Sharing; in Mojave or earlier, go to System Preferences > iCloud and click Set Up Family.

2. Click through several informational screens, confirming that the Apple ID shown is the one you want to use as the family organizer, that you want to share your purchases (or not), that you agree to the terms and conditions, and that you understand purchases will be charged to the credit card associated with your Apple ID.

3. Choose whether you want to share your location with family members, and click Continue.
Apple has two different services—iTunes Match and Apple Music—that enable you to sync music to the cloud and share it across your devices, among other capabilities.

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

In this chapter I help you understand the differences between the two services and decide whether either works for you. I also walk you through setting up and using iTunes Match—but not Apple Music, because Apple Music isn’t part of iCloud.

**Note:** Only iTunes Match is technically an iCloud feature, though in Mojave and earlier, and iOS 12 and earlier, Apple used the term iCloud Music Library for the cloud storage both services use. Starting in Catalina and iOS 13/iPadOS 13, Apple simply calls the storage space your library, and uses the term Sync Library for the feature used to sync that library among devices.

**Understand Apple’s Music Services**

iTunes Match and Apple Music are optional add-on services. With either service, you pay a fee to subscribe, and then activate the service on each of your devices. After you subscribe, there’s one additional setup step:

- On a Mac, turn on the feature (in Catalina or later, open Music, go to Music > Preferences > General and select Sync Library; in Mojave, open iTunes, go to iTunes > Preferences > General and select iCloud Music Library).
• On an iOS or iPadOS device, go to Settings > Music and turn on Sync Library (iOS 13 or later, or iPadOS) or iCloud Music Library (iOS 12).

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

• Music (or iTunes) scans the music library on your computer and compares what you have to Apple’s vast iTunes Store selection—with tens of millions of tracks. This process should take just a few minutes unless you have a huge music library.

• Whenever Music (or iTunes) finds a track in your library that wasn’t purchased from the iTunes Store but matches a track in Apple’s library, it makes Apple’s version available for download or streaming on all your devices (including your Apple TV and HomePod). The files aren’t downloaded automatically.

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

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

• When Music (or iTunes) encounters a track it can’t match—for example, a rare version of a song, or a track you recorded yourself, or music by an artist who’s not in the iTunes Store—it uploads that track to iCloud, after which it’s available to all your other devices for download or streaming. (This may take a while, depending on the quantity of music and the speed of your internet connection.) Unmatched tracks are uploaded at their existing quality, even if that’s less than 256 Kbps AAC.
Manage Your Photos

As we’ve seen, iCloud’s main modus operandi is “just put all my data everywhere,” and you’ll undoubtedly want to include your photos and videos among that data. iCloud includes three different features for handling photos and videos.

The first two—iCloud Photos and My Photo Stream—are for syncing photos. iCloud Photos keeps your entire photo library in sync automatically across your devices via the cloud, but counts synced photos (and videos) against your iCloud data storage quota. My Photo Stream, on the other hand, doesn’t affect your storage quota, but makes only your most recent photos available on all your iCloud-compatible devices. (The two sync methods have other differences, too, as I explain ahead.)

The third feature, Shared Albums (previously called iCloud Photo Sharing), lets you share photo streams with other people—although shared photo streams follow different rules than My Photo Stream.

These three features can be confusing individually and in how they overlap. In this chapter I untangle them for you, explaining which features offer which options, and which of the three you should use in particular situations.

Note: I also compare the Dropbox Camera Upload feature to iCloud’s various offerings in the sidebar at the end of this chapter, iCloud Photos vs. Dropbox Camera Uploads.

Compare iCloud Photo Options

iCloud Photos and the older My Photo Stream both sync photos across your devices via the cloud, but they differ in almost every other detail. You can use either or both, though most people will probably find that iCloud Photos alone is all that’s needed, as it essentially makes My
Photo Stream superfluous—at least for those who have paid for enough iCloud storage to hold all their photos and videos.

**iCloud Photos**

I say more about iCloud Photos ahead in Use *iCloud Photos*, but for now, here are its main characteristics:

- Gives you a single library across your Macs, PCs, and iOS/iPadOS devices, and the [iCloud website](https://www.icloud.com) (using the Photos app on each platform), as well as on the Apple TV HD (or later)
- Supports both photos and videos
- Counts against your iCloud storage quota
- Can store as many photos as you like, for as long as you keep paying
- Works over Wi-Fi, Ethernet, and cellular connections
- Replaces Camera Roll (and the My Photo Stream album) in iOS and iPadOS
- Disables copying photos directly from a Mac or PC via the Finder or iTunes
- Uploads original, full-resolution photos but can instead optionally store smaller, optimized copies on each device to reduce space consumed

**My Photo Stream**

My Photo Stream has been around since the beginning of iCloud, although it has changed a bit over the years. You can learn all about it in Use *My Photo Stream*. For now, notice how, in contrast to the iCloud Photos features listed above, My Photo Stream gives you more in some ways, but less in others:

- Supports still photos only—no videos or Live Photos
- Doesn’t count against your iCloud storage quota
- Stores only your 1,000 most recent photos (across all devices) on each device
iCloud Drive is iCloud’s online file storage component, which includes mechanisms to sync files and folders among your various devices and apps.

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

Use iCloud Drive

iCloud Drive is cloud-based storage you can access on any of your devices. That includes in the Finder on a Mac, in the Files app on an iOS or iPadOS device, on the iCloud website, or from within apps that support it.

With iCloud Drive, master copies of your documents are stored in the cloud. Your Mac normally maintains a local copy of these documents, too, and any changes you make to the contents of your iCloud Drive on one device immediately sync to the others via Apple’s servers. (Your Mac might delete the local copies of some files if you’ve enabled Optimize Mac Storage and your disk starts running low on free space. Also see the sidebar Evicting Files, ahead, for ways of getting more control over syncing of individual items.)

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

**Activate iCloud Drive**

For most users, iCloud Drive was already activated at some point within the past few years, typically while upgrading to a new version of macOS, iOS, or iPadOS. If you deliberately skipped enabling iCloud Drive for some reason, you can activate it whenever you’re ready by turning on iCloud Drive in System Preferences > Apple ID > iCloud (Mac, Catalina or later), System Preferences > iCloud (Mac, Mojave), or Settings > Your Name > iCloud (iOS/iPadOS).

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

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

- **Mac**: Go to System Preferences > Internet Accounts > iCloud (Big Sur or later), System Preferences > Apple ID > iCloud (Catalina), or System Preferences > iCloud (Mojave) and click Options next to iCloud Drive. Then uncheck any app’s name and click Done. This hides that app’s folder in iCloud Drive on this Mac, but does not affect the data already saved to iCloud Drive, or its appearance on other devices. This setting doesn’t prevent you from manually selecting iCloud Drive as a destination for unchecked apps.

  Note that one of the items you can select or deselect is Desktop & Documents Folders, but that requires its own discussion; see [Sync Your Desktop and Documents Folders (or Don’t)](sync-your-desktop-and-documents-folders-or-dont), ahead.

**Note:** You may notice that System Preferences is included among the apps whose data iCloud Drive can sync. My tests have not shown any difference in behavior between when this is checked and unchecked, so I’m unsure what data that checkbox is intended to affect, nor have I been able to find any documentation from Apple on that point.

Click here to buy the full 213-page “Take Control of iCloud” for only $14.99!
Keep Mail, Contacts, and Calendars in Sync

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

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

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

Work with iCloud Mail

Your iCloud account includes an email address in the icloud.com domain. Among other things, you also get 5 GB of free storage (shared with other iCloud services) and a lovely web interface for checking your email (see The Mail Web App).

Note: Apple also lets you still use account@me.com if your Apple ID account dates back to MobileMe; and account@mac.com if it dates back even further. These addresses are all interchangeable.

In most respects, iCloud Mail is a conventional IMAP account. (For more on what that means, read my article FlippedBITS: IMAP Misconceptions.) Your email host’s mail server stores all the messages in your
inbox, messages you’ve filed in folders, and your sent mail. The server also tracks which messages you’ve read, replied to, or forwarded. Because mail is stored remotely, you can access your email on any device (even with a third-party email client) or in a web browser, and see exactly the same messages, in the same locations, with the same status.

**Note:** You can choose to move any messages out of the server’s folders in any macOS mail client and some iOS/iPadOS ones to store them just on a single device, removing them from the server.

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

- Setting up an iCloud Mail account on any Apple device is as easy as it gets: all you have to do is make sure Mail is turned on after entering your iCloud username and password.

- When used with iOS and iPadOS devices, you can choose *push* updates, which send messages to your device the instant they come in, rather than having to wait for the next scheduled check.

- iCloud Mail has a good webmail interface that supports searching message contents, setting up auto-responses, forwarding email to another account, uploading attachments with Mail Drop (see [Use Mail Drop](#)), and creating rules that automatically sort messages.

- Apple’s mail servers provide basic spam and malware filtering. *However*, when iCloud Mail encounters an incoming message that matches certain criteria that Apple doesn’t disclose, it doesn’t merely label the message as Junk or move it to a Spam mailbox; instead, the iCloud server summarily deletes it without any notice to the sender or recipient. (You can read about this in [Silent email filtering makes iCloud an unreliable option](#), at Macworld.) I disagree with this approach because all spam filters make mistakes.
Sync Other iCloud Data

In much the same way that iCloud delivers immediate push updates to your email, contacts, and calendars, it syncing several other types of information, including browser bookmarks; your Safari tabs and Reading List; data from the iPhone’s Health app; Siri data; Reminders (a.k.a. tasks or to-do items); Notes; iMessage conversations; and data from the News, Stocks, Home, and Voice Memos apps. (I discuss yet another type of data syncing in the next chapter, Work with iCloud Keychain.)

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

Work with Browser Bookmarks, Tabs, and Reading List

The list of iCloud services on your Mac, PC, or iOS/iPadOS device includes either Safari (Mac, iOS, and iPadOS) or Bookmarks (Windows). Either way, this item, when enabled, syncs these items:

- **Bookmarks:** When this setting is on, iCloud syncing Safari bookmarks among your Apple devices; in Windows, it syncing Internet Explorer, Firefox, or Google Chrome bookmarks. (iCloud no longer syncing bookmarks with the Windows version of Safari; conversely, it won’t syncing Firefox or Google Chrome bookmarks on a Mac.)

- **Safari’s Reading List:** For Macs and iOS/iPadOS devices, this feature also syncing Safari’s Reading List, which comprises webpages that you’ve saved to read later by choosing Bookmarks > Add to Reading List (Mac) or by tapping the Share icon and then Add to Reading List (iOS/iPadOS).
• **Safari’s open tabs**: iCloud syncs a list of Safari’s open tabs, showing you which tabs are open on other devices. However, it doesn’t automatically open the same tabs on each device.

If you click the Show All Tabs button to the right of the Smart Search field in Safari on a Mac, the Tabs view appears with thumbnails of open tabs on the Mac as well as lists of the open Safari tabs on all the other devices signed in to the same iCloud account (Figure 20). Click a tab or tab name to open it.

![Figure 20: See open Safari tabs on your other devices in this view.](image)

**Tip**: If you hover over the name of a tab from another device, an X icon appears. Click this icon to close the tab on the other device (after a brief delay).

In Safari for iOS and iPadOS, tap the Tabs icon and swipe up (past the thumbnails of any open pages on the current device) to see a list of the tabs that are open in Safari on your other devices, grouped by device (Figure 21).
Work with iCloud Keychain

iCloud Keychain, a feature available in macOS, iOS, and iPadOS—sorry, Windows users—allows you to sync a keychain containing passwords, credit card numbers, and other sensitive data across your Apple devices securely via the cloud.

One big benefit of iCloud Keychain is that Safari and other apps on your iOS or iPadOS device can autofill usernames and passwords that you stored in a keychain on your Mac—and vice versa. Another benefit is that once you enter a Wi-Fi password on one device, it syncs to all your other devices, so you don’t have to reenter it numerous times.

iCloud Keychain includes several other capabilities:

• A strong password generator built into Safari

• The capability to store and enter credit card information (except the CVV number) in web forms

• Support for multiple sets of credentials per site

• A way to view and remove passwords within Safari for macOS, and the Settings app for iOS/iPadOS

In addition, if iCloud Keychain is turned on, your iMessage and SMS data can sync among all your devices (see Sync Messages), and the following items sync automatically amongst your other Macs (but not, alas, iOS or iPadOS devices):

• Settings for the accounts listed in the Internet Accounts system preference pane, such as email accounts

• Signatures you scanned or wrote in Preview (see Take Control of Preview, by Josh Centers and Adam Engst), or using the Markup feature of Mail

iCloud Keychain is a useful tool in particular for people who use Apple devices exclusively, and who use only Safari on macOS. Some third-
party password managers, including my favorite, 1Password, offer additional features such as greater flexibility in password creation, support for web browsers other than Safari as well as non-Apple operating systems, auto entry of CVV numbers, shared vaults, and storage of other types of information (for example, software licenses). But even if you use a third-party password manager, you may still find iCloud Keychain useful for things like Wi-Fi passwords and certain other applications.

**Note:** If you’re interested in using 1Password instead of, or in addition to, iCloud Keychain, start with Use iCloud Keychain with Another Password Manager, at the end of this chapter. To look more deeply at 1Password, you might enjoy reading my book Take Control of 1Password. For a thorough introduction to password security, read Take Control of Your Passwords.

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**Enable and Configure iCloud Keychain**

iCloud Keychain isn’t very useful if you set it up on only one device; since syncing passwords is the main point of the features, you’ll want to enable it on each of your Macs and iOS/iPadOS devices.

**Set Up iCloud Keychain if Two-Factor Authentication Is On**

If you have already turned on two-factor authentication for your Apple ID (see Use Two-Factor Authentication)—as most people likely have, by this point—setting up iCloud Keychain is simple. You simply enable it on each device.

**Tip:** If you haven’t turned on two-factor authentication, now is a great time to do so. It’ll increase your security and save you many steps in setting up iCloud Keychain!

On a Mac running Catalina or later, go to System Preferences > Apple ID > iCloud; in Mojave, go to System Preferences > iCloud. Select
Use the iCloud Website

iCloud is mostly about keeping data in sync across all your devices, but several key types of data can also be viewed and edited on the iCloud website in robust web apps—Mail, Contacts, Calendar, Photos, iCloud Drive, Find My Friends, the increasingly inaccurately named Find My iPhone (which works for other devices too), Notes, Reminders, Pages, Numbers, and Keynote. (If you’ve enabled it, there’s also a News Publisher web app, which appears only on the iCloud website, with no Mac or iOS/iPadOS version.)

**Note:** On the home screen and in the app switcher on the iCloud website, Find My Friends and Find My iPhone are abbreviated to Find Friends and Find iPhone, respectively. But when you open one of those apps, the full name appears at the top.

You may consider the web apps irrelevant, because you find the native apps running on the Mac and in iOS/iPadOS more powerful and convenient. But, if you use Windows, Linux, Android, or other operating systems where these apps aren’t available natively, the iCloud site can make crucial features available to you. And, even if you almost always use your own Mac or iOS/iPadOS device, you may occasionally use someone else’s computer (or a public computer), and in such cases, find that the iCloud website is the best way to access your iCloud data.

Apple has also made a few features in Settings (notably, the option to Restore Deleted Data) available only via the web—they’re not found in any native app. Finally, if you lose your iPhone or other devices or they’re stolen, you may have to use Find My iPhone on the iCloud website—on someone else’s mobile device or computer, even—to report it lost, trigger a sound, or erase it.

The iCloud website’s features and user interface have been updated numerous times, and I expect that trend to continue. As a result, I make no attempt to provide detailed instructions for each of the ever-changing iCloud web apps. Instead, I provide a general overview of
what’s on the site (as of August 2020) and how to navigate it. I then offer a few tips for getting the most out of the web apps and locating obscure features.

Navigate the iCloud Website

When you visit the iCloud website, you see a field for entering your Apple ID; once you fill that in and press Return, a password field also appears. There’s also an optional “Keep me signed in” checkbox, and a few informational links.

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

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

• **Opening apps:** On the home screen that appears after you sign in (Figure 29), click an app’s icon to go to that app.

![Figure 29](image)

**Figure 29:** It doesn’t get much simpler than this: click an icon on the home page to go to the corresponding web app.

• **Switching or closing apps:** Click the current app’s name in the upper-left corner (or press Shift-Esc) and then click the name of another app (Figure 30).
First there was Find My iPhone, a feature that allowed you to, you know, *find your iPhone* if it was lost or stolen. Even though Apple later extended the capability to the iPod touch, the iPad, Macs, the Apple Watch, and even AirPods, for a long time the “Find My iPhone” name was still used generically to describe this feature.

Separately, Apple has long offered a Find My Friends feature, which locates iOS or iPadOS devices (or cellular-enabled Apple Watches) and thus, by extension, the people carrying them—and shares that location with anyone to whom the owner has granted permission.

Apple finally realized that it makes sense to have just one place to go to find all your nouns (devices and people), so in Catalina and iOS 13/iPadOS 13, they rolled out a new app called Find My that combines all those features. However, behind the scenes, the two sets of capabilities remain distinct, and on the iCloud.com website, there are still (at least as of mid-2020) two separate web apps. So in this chapter I talk about finding your own devices first, and then (in *Find Your Friends*) turn my attention to finding people.

**Note:** Starting later in 2020, Apple plans to make it possible to use Find My to find objects made by third-party developers, too. Glenn Fleishman covers this topic in his TidBITS article [Apple Opens Find My Crowdsourcing to Third-Party Accessories](https://tidbits.com/2020/01/14/apple-opens-find-my-crowdsourcing-to-third-party-accessories/). Once such objects are actually available for sale, I hope to update this chapter to cover that new capability.

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**Understand What Find My (Device) Can and Can’t Do**

You can use the iCloud website, Apple’s Find My app on any iOS or iPadOS device, or Siri to locate a lost or stolen Mac, iPad, iPhone, iPod touch, Apple Watch, or AirPod.
You can also play a sound, lock a Mac or iOS/iPadOS device (optionally adding or changing its passcode in the process), or erase all its data (to keep its contents away from prying eyes in case you’re unable to retrieve the device). You can even see your wayward device’s battery level.

Find My Device also lets you activate a distinct Lost Mode on an iOS or iPadOS device or Apple Watch, which displays the phone number and message of your choice on the missing device’s screen, in the hope that whoever has your device will call you to arrange for its return. (Hint: Offer a reward!)

The tracking service works more reliably on devices with cellular capabilities, such as the iPhone, certain iPads, and certain Series 3 or later Apple Watch models. These devices are more likely to have an always-on network connection—cellular access is pretty ubiquitous, whereas Wi-Fi is spotty, and may require a login and even payment.

**Note:** Series 2 and later Apple Watch models, iOS devices, and iPadOS devices with cellular support also have GPS chips, so their reported location is more precise than for Macs and for iOS or iPadOS devices that lack satellite positioning circuitry.

In addition, the iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch maintain their mobile connections even when “sleeping,” as can Macs that use solid-state storage (and thus support Power Nap—see Apple’s article [How Power Nap works on your Mac](https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT201572)). And newer devices can even use a clever technique to transmit their location via Bluetooth if they have no internet connection.

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**Activate Find My (Device)**

Find My Device be used to track an iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch running iOS 5 or later or iPadOS, an Apple Watch, AirPods, or a Mac running 10.7.2 Lion or later. But the service only works if Location Services is enabled and then Find My Device is also turned on.

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Back Up and Restore iOS/iPadOS Data

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

Understand How iCloud Backup Works

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

But backing up an iOS or iPadOS device is a lot different from backing up a Mac or PC. Conventional backups methods won’t work, because each app is sandboxed—prevented from interacting with other apps’ data—and because iOS/iPadOS devices have no browsable file system (the Files app shows just a small portion). It’s possible to back up your iOS or iPadOS device by connecting it to your Mac or PC via Wi-Fi or with a USB cable and clicking Back Up Now in the Finder or iTunes. But with iCloud, you can back up over Wi-Fi directly to Apple’s servers. This means:

- You can back up your data while traveling or otherwise away from your computer—or even if you have no Mac or PC at all.

- You can restore an iOS or iPadOS device—such as one whose data was corrupted, or that had its data wiped as part of a repair—or set up a new device to use your existing data without a computer.

- As with Finder or iTunes backups, when you back up via iCloud, only the first backup copies all your personal data. Subsequent
backups upload only information that’s new or different since last
time, making iCloud backups faster on subsequent backup runs.

For all these reasons, I generally recommend using iCloud Backup.
But, as I said in About iCloud Storage, backups can consume lots of
space. To solve this problem, you can buy more storage, limit which
types of data are backed up (as I describe ahead), or delete old back-
ups. But if you’re short on space and unwilling to buy more, you might
stick with Finder or iTunes-based backups.

Note: For the privacy implications of iCloud Backup, flip ahead to
Protect Your Privacy.

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

• The photos and videos you’ve taken on your iOS or iPadOS device—
  but only if you haven’t enabled iCloud Photos

• Photo albums you’ve created on the iOS or iPadOS device (but not
  those created on and synced from your computer)

• Documents and app settings, including Health (on an iPhone)

• All account data and iOS/iPadOS settings, which includes those
  configured in the Settings app, HomeKit configuration, and your
  Home screen and folder organization

• Conversations in the Messages app (iMessage, SMS, and MMS)—
  but only if Messages in iCloud is not enabled

• Your call history, ringtones, and Visual Voicemail password

• Apple Watch backups

• Your purchase history from Apple

Note: This list changes from time to time, and some items require
qualifications. For the latest details, see What does iCloud back up?

This list doesn’t include anything that’s already stored in the cloud
thanks to some other aspect of iCloud—purchased music, TV shows,
Use iCloud on an Apple TV

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

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

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Set Up iCloud on an Apple TV

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

**Set Up iCloud Account Features**

To configure an Apple TV to work with iCloud Photos, Family Sharing, and the AirPods paired with your iPhone (if you have them), navigate to Settings > Users and Accounts > *Your Name* > iCloud. If your Apple ID isn’t already listed, select Sign In. If you’ve already entered your Apple ID for the iTunes Store, you may be asked if you want to use that same Apple ID for these other features. If you do, select Yes (and enter your password); if not, select No, Use a Different Apple ID (and enter both the Apple ID and password for a different iCloud account).
On the Users and Accounts screen, you should see the following iCloud options:

- iCloud Photos or My Photo Stream (shows whether iCloud Photos is turned on, but you can only change this on a Mac or iOS/iPadOS device; if it’s off, you can enable My Photo Stream)

- Shared Albums (also dependent on the setting from your other devices)

- One Home Screen (when enabled, your Home screen will be the same on every Apple TV signed in to your iCloud account)

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

**Set Up iTunes Store and iTunes Match**

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

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

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

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

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

Change iCloud Website Settings

A few settings related to your use of the iCloud website as a whole—your photo, language, and time zone—are all set in the same place. To adjust them, log in to the iCloud website, click your name at the top, and choose Account Settings from the menu. You can then change settings in any of several categories. Any changes you make take effect immediately.

Change Personal Information

The top portion of the window, which is unlabeled, lets you adjust certain pieces of personal information:

- **Picture:** Your iCloud account can have a photo or other picture associated with it, which other iCloud members will see in certain contexts (such as in email messages). To add or change a picture, hover over the picture region with your pointer and click Edit. Now you have two choices: either drag in a picture or click Choose Photo; in the latter case, then select a photo on your disk and click Choose. With a photo selected, you can drag the slider to adjust the zoom level or drag the photo around to reposition it, if desired. When satisfied, click Done.

  To delete your picture, hover over it and click the Delete icon.

Click here to buy the full 213-page “Take Control of iCloud” for only $14.99!
• **Manage your Apple ID:** To make changes to your Apple ID settings (such as choosing a new password or changing the security settings), click the Manage link under Apple ID.

• **Language:** To change the language of the iCloud website user interface, choose a language from the Language pop-up menu.

• **Time Zone & Formats:** To change your time zone (as shown in the Calendar web app) or change your unit/currency formats, click the current zone name under Time Zone. In that map that appears on the left, click an area on the map to set your time zone. Then, if the city name shown at the bottom isn’t correct, click the city name and choose another city from the pop-up menu.

  iCloud also lets you set two related parameters. A country is selected by default from your registration, and that affects settings in iWork apps, iCloud Drive, Photos, and Notes. You can opt to choose a different country from the Formats pop-up menu.

  You can also optionally change the language shown from the second pop-up menu, which determines how measures (like distance), dates, numbers, and similar values appear in some iCloud apps; or, select “Make formats match language” to use the formats associated with the language you selected on the main Settings page.

  Click Done to dismiss the Time Zone & Formats dialog.

**View Storage Details**

A multicolored graph under the Storage heading shows how your iCloud storage is being used. Hover over a colored slice to see a popover with details. Apple provides more information when you view your storage details from a desktop computer or iOS/iPadOS device, and I talk about that in Manage Your Storage, later in this chapter.

**View or Remove Devices**

Look under My Devices to see all your Macs (running Yosemite or later), iOS and iPadOS devices (running iOS 8 or later), Apple Watches, Apple TVs, and HomePods. Click a device to see the last several
Manage iCloud Security and Privacy

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

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

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

Start by enhancing your security with a good password and two-factor authentication, discussed just ahead. If you plan to buy a used iOS or iPadOS device, read Check Activation Lock first to make sure you aren’t buying a locked device—potentially one that was stolen. And you can take additional steps to Protect Your Privacy, such as turning off syncing for sensitive data and using a passcode on your iOS and iPadOS devices.
Choose a Good Password

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

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

- **Make your iCloud password unique.** Don’t use your iCloud password for any other site or service, because if your password for one site is compromised through a database breach or other leak, every account that uses the same password is at risk.

- **Choose a long, random password.** Your iCloud password should be at least 12 characters long. It should include uppercase and lowercase letters, at least one digit, and at least one punctuation character. And it should be random—any sort of pattern weakens your password. (If you don’t already have a random password generator, a quick web search should turn up many options.)

- **Use a password manager.** Apps such as 1Password, Dashlane, and LastPass can create random passwords for you, store them,
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Joe Kissell is the author of more than 60 books and hundreds of articles about technology. In 2017, he also became the publisher of Take Control Books, when alt concepts inc.—the company he runs along with his wife, Morgen Jahnke—acquired the Take Control series from TidBITS Publishing Inc.’s owners, Adam and Tonya Engst. Before he began writing full-time in 2003, Joe managed software development for a living. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Philosophy and a master’s degree in Linguistics.

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