

LEARNING MADE EASY



# macOS<sup>®</sup> Sonoma<sup>™</sup>

for  
**dummies<sup>®</sup>**  
A Wiley Brand



Learn the ins and outs  
of macOS Sonoma

Discover shortcuts, tips,  
and troubleshooting tricks

Organize your files  
and ensure data security

**Guy Hart-Davis**



# macOS<sup>®</sup> Sonoma<sup>™</sup>

**for  
dummies<sup>®</sup>**  
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**by Guy Hart-Davis**

**for  
dummies<sup>®</sup>**  
A Wiley Brand

## macOS® Sonoma™ For Dummies®

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# Introduction

Looks like you've made three good choices: You have a Mac, macOS Sonoma (aka macOS version 14), and this book. If you're brand-new to the Mac, you're all set to start enjoying computing with the finest operating system on the planet. If you've been using your Mac and macOS for a while, you're ready to start enjoying using them even more. Sure, this book is a computer book, but it's not one of those dull books best suited to serve as a doorstop; it's one that makes discovering the ins and outs of macOS Sonoma easy and even fun!

## About This Book

*macOS Sonoma For Dummies* is the latest revision of the best-selling book by legendary Mac maven Bob “Dr. Mac” LeVitus, technology columnist at the *Houston Chronicle*. The book has been completely updated for macOS Sonoma to cover all the latest features — such as desktop widgets, Safari profiles, and web apps — and everything else that has changed. This edition combines all the old, familiar features of dozens of previous editions with the very latest information on Macs and macOS Sonoma.

Why write a *For Dummies* book about macOS Sonoma? Well, Sonoma is a big, somewhat complicated, personal-computer operating system. So *macOS Sonoma For Dummies*, a not-so-big, not-too-complicated book, shows you what Sonoma is all about without boring you to tears or poking you with sharp objects.

This book is chock-full of information and advice, explaining everything you need to know about macOS Sonoma in easy-to-understand language — along with time-saving tips, tricks, techniques, and step-by-step instructions. I feel confident that you'll find what you need to know about using macOS Sonoma in this book.

Still, a book this size can't explain everything you might want to know about an operating system the size of macOS Sonoma and the apps that run on it. If you're looking for information on topics such as Microsoft Office, Apple's lifestyle and productivity apps (such as iMovie, GarageBand, Numbers, and Pages), or programming, I recommend you look at other books published by Wiley. The Wiley website (<https://www.wiley.com/>) is the best place to start.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these webpages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading it as an ebook, you've got it easy: Just click or tap the web address to be taken directly to the webpage.

## Foolish Assumptions

Although I know what happens when you make assumptions, I've made a few anyway. I assume that you, gentle reader, know nothing about using macOS — beyond knowing what a Mac is, that you want to use macOS, that you want to understand macOS without having to digest an incomprehensible technical manual, and that you made the right choice by selecting this particular book. So I do my best to explain each new concept fully.

## Icons Used in This Book

Little pictures (icons) appear to the side of text throughout this book. Consider these icons to be miniature road signs, telling you a little something extra about the topic at hand. Here's what the icons look like and what they mean.



TIP

Look for Tip icons to find the juiciest morsels: shortcuts, tips, and undocumented secrets about Sonoma. Try them all; impress your friends!



REMEMBER

When you see this icon, it means that this particular morsel is something you may want to memorize (or at least write on your shirt cuff).



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

Put on your propeller-beanie hat and pocket protector; these tidbits include the truly geeky stuff. They're certainly not required reading, but they'll help you grasp the background, get the bigger picture, or both.



WARNING

Read these notes very carefully. Warning icons flag important cautionary information that could save you any amount of grief.



This icon highlights things new and different in macOS Sonoma.

NEW



App icons (such as the Launchpad icon shown here) and interface icons show you key items that you'll be clicking, dragging, and otherwise interacting with.

## Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this book comes with a free access-anywhere cheat sheet that provides handy shortcuts for use with macOS Sonoma, offers recommendations for backing up your Mac to avoid losing data, and more. To get this cheat sheet, simply go to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and type **macOS Sonoma For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box.

## Where to Go from Here

The first few chapters of this book explain the basic things you need to understand to operate your Mac effectively. If you're new to Macs and macOS Sonoma, start there.

Although macOS Sonoma looks slightly different from previous versions, it largely works the same as always. The first part of the book presents concepts so basic that if you've been using a Mac for long, you may think you know it all — and okay, you might know some (or most) of it. But remember that not-so-old-timers need a solid foundation, too. So skim the stuff you already know, and you'll get to the better stuff soon enough.

Enough of the introduction. Turn the page, and let's get started!



# 1

## **Getting Started with macOS**

## IN THIS PART . . .

Master the basics, from starting your Mac to shutting it down.

Get a gentle introduction to Finder and its desktop.

Make the Dock work harder for you.

Find everything you need to know about Sonoma's windows, icons, and menus.

Discover a plethora of Finder tips and tricks to make life with macOS even easier (and more fulfilling).

Wrangle System Settings to make your Mac easier to use.



#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Understanding what an operating system is and is not
- » Turning your Mac on and off
- » Setting up Sonoma
- » Logging in to macOS
- » Meeting the desktop
- » Pointing, clicking, and dragging
- » Putting your Mac to sleep and shutting it down
- » Taking care of your Mac
- » Getting help from your Mac

## Chapter **1**

# macOS Sonoma 101 (Prerequisites: None)

**S**o you're the proud owner of a Mac running macOS Sonoma? Great choice! Your Mac gives you powerful hardware in a sleek package, and Sonoma — macOS version 14, if you're feeling formal — puts an intuitive and easy-to-use interface on Unix, the best industrial-strength operating system in the world.

In this chapter, we'll make sure you're set up to put your Mac and macOS to good use. We'll start by taking a quick look at what macOS actually does, although I bet you already have a fair idea. We'll then move along to getting started by the numbers: turning on your Mac, going through the setup routine if it's a new Mac or a new

install, logging in, and meeting the desktop. We'll review how to use your mouse or trackpad. We'll go through a few essentials of treating your Mac well and avoiding avoidable damage. Last, we'll look at how to get help on Macs, macOS, and apps.

If your Mac is all set up and you're comfortable with start-up, login, navigation, and shutdown, feel free to skip this chapter and move ahead to whichever chapter will most benefit you immediately.

Before we start, a quick word about macOS version numbers and version names . . .



Each version of macOS has both a version number and a version name. This book covers macOS version 14, whose version name is Sonoma. Most people prefer the version names because they're easier to remember.

What about previous versions? Well, macOS version 13 was Ventura, version 12 was Monterey, version 11 was Big Sur, version 10.15 was Catalina, 10.14 was Mojave, 10.13 was High Sierra, and 10.12 was Sierra. Before that, Apple called the operating system “OS X” (with the X pronounced “ten”) rather than “macOS.” OS X version 10.11 was El Capitan, 10.10 was Yosemite, 10.9 was Mavericks, 10.8 was Mountain Lion, 10.7 was Lion, 10.6 was Snow Leopard, 10.5 was Leopard, 10.4 was Tiger, 10.3 was Panther, 10.2 was Jaguar, 10.1 was Puma, and 10.0 was Cheetah.

## Okay, What Does macOS Do?

The operating system (that is, the OS part of *macOS*) is what makes your Mac a Mac. Without it, your Mac is nothing but a pile of silicon and circuits — no smarter than a toaster.

The OS controls the basic and most important functions of your computer. In the case of macOS and your Mac, the operating system

- » Manages memory
- » Controls how windows, icons, and menus work
- » Keeps track of files
- » Manages networking and security
- » Does housekeeping (but only its own — not yours)

Other forms of software, such as word processors and web browsers, rely on the OS to create and maintain the environment in which they work. When you create a memo, for example, the word processor provides the tools for you to type and format the information and save it in a file. In the background, the OS is the muscle for the word processor, performing the following crucial functions:

- » Providing the mechanism for drawing and moving the on-screen window in which you write the memo
- » Keeping track of the file when you save it
- » Helping the word processor create drop-down menus and dialogs for you to interact with
- » Communicating with other programs

There's much, much more — but you get the idea.

## Turning On Your Mac

No great surprises here: You turn on your Mac by pressing the power button — once you find it. Here's where to look:

- » **MacBook:** At the upper-right corner of the keyboard
- » **iMac:** At the back of the screen, lower-left corner or lower-right corner
- » **Mac mini, Mac Studio:** At the back of the enclosure
- » **Mac Pro:** On the front panel



The power button usually looks like the little circle icon you see in the margin — but on some Mac models, the power button doubles as the Touch ID button for authenticating you via your fingerprint and doesn't show the icon.

## What you should see on start-up



When you turn on your Mac, the Mac powers up, checks the hardware, and then loads macOS. While loading macOS, the Mac displays a white Apple logo in the middle of the screen, as shown in the margin here.

If you need to set up macOS Sonoma, the setup routine begins automatically. See the following section, “Setting Up macOS Sonoma.” Otherwise (assuming Sonoma has already been set up), the login screen appears, and you can log in. See the section “Logging In,” later in this chapter.

## What you may see if things go wrong

If something is wrong with your Mac, you may see any of the following on start-up:



» **Blue/black/gray screen of death:** If any of your hardware fails when it’s tested, you may see a blue, black, or gray screen. See Chapter 22 for moves to try to get your Mac well again. Failing those, it may need repairs. If your computer is under warranty, set up a Genius Bar appointment at your nearest Apple Store or dial 1-800-SOS-APPL, and a customer-service person can tell you what to do.

**Prohibitory sign or flashing question mark in a folder:** These icons mean that your Mac can’t find a start-up disk, hard drive, USB thumb drive, or network server containing a valid Mac operating system. See Chapter 22 for ways to ease your Mac’s ills.

» **Kernel panic:** You may occasionally see a block of text in several languages, including English, as shown in Figure 1-1. This means that your Mac has experienced a *kernel panic*, the most severe type of system crash. Restart your Mac (there’s no other choice). If either of these messages recurs, see Chapter 22 for advice.

**FIGURE 1-1:**  
If you’re seeing something like this, consult Chapter 22 for suggestions.



Okay, assuming you’re not seeing any of the above nasties, let’s return to our scheduled programming: first, setup (if your Mac needs it), and then login.

# Setting Up macOS Sonoma

If your Mac is new, or if you've just installed Sonoma from scratch rather than upgrading to it from an earlier version of macOS, you'll need to run through a setup routine. The following list explains the main steps:



TIP

- » **Specify your country or region.** On the Select Your Country or Region screen, click your country, and then click the Continue button.
- » **Choose Accessibility features.** On the Accessibility screen, set up any accessibility features you need by clicking the Vision button, the Motor button, the Hearing button, or the Cognitive button, and then working through the resulting screens. You can set up most accessibility features at this point if you know that you or other users of the Mac will need them. However, you may find it better to set up only those features that you need now to help you complete the setup routine, and then configure other accessibility features after setup. If you don't need to set up any accessibility features now, click the Not Now button to move right along.
- » **Connect to a Wi-Fi network.** On the Select Your Wi-Fi Network screen, click the network you want your Mac to use, and then type the network password in the Password box. Once the connection is established, click the Continue button.

If your Mac has an Ethernet port that is connected to your wired network via a cable, you won't need to connect to a Wi-Fi network.
- » **Read about data and privacy.** On the Data & Privacy screen, read the information, and click the Learn More link if you want to learn more. Click the Continue button when you're ready to move along.
- » **Choose whether to transfer your data to this Mac.** On the Migration Assistant screen, select the From a Mac, Time Machine Backup or Startup Disk option button if you want to transfer data from one of these Mac-based sources; or select the From a Windows PC option button if you want to transfer data from a PC; and then click the Continue button and follow the prompts to specify the data. If you don't want to transfer data at all, or you want to transfer it later, click the Not Now button.
- » **Sign in using your Apple ID.** On the Sign In with Your Apple ID screen, type the email address associated with your Apple ID. Enter the password, and then click the Continue button.
- » **Accept the Terms and Conditions.** On the Terms and Conditions screen, read the terms and conditions. If you want to proceed, click the Agree button, and then click the Agree button again in the confirmation dialog.



TIP

- » **Read the Find My information.** On the Find My screen, read how the Find My feature helps you retrieve your Mac when it goes missing and protects your Mac with Activation Lock. Click the Continue button to proceed.
- » **Choose whether to enable Location Services.** On the Enable Location Services screen, select the Enable Location Services on This Mac check box if you want to turn on Location Services, which tell apps like Maps and services like Spotlight Suggestions where your Mac is located. Once more, click the Continue button to proceed.
- » **Choose whether to share your Analytics information.** On the Analytics screen, choose whether to share your analytics data with Apple and with app developers. This is a public-spirited action that helps Apple and the developers improve their software, and Apple anonymizes the data so that it cannot come back to haunt you. Click the Continue button to move along.
- » **Choose whether to enable Screen Time.** On the Screen Time screen, read the details of the Screen Time feature, which enables you to set usage limits for the Mac for yourself and other users. Click the Continue button if you want to enable Screen Time now; if not, click the Set Up Later button.

The setup routine presents Screen Time with the implication it's something you should want to use. Screen Time can certainly be useful, especially if you need a commitment device to limit your Mac usage in certain ways (such as setting time limits on social media) or you need to manage family members' usage. But if your Mac is yours alone and you don't need or want Screen Time, don't set it up. Screen Time is not a notorious resource hog, but it certainly doesn't make your Mac run faster.
- » **Choose whether to enable Ask Siri.** On the Siri screen, select or clear the Enable Ask Siri check box, as needed, and then click the Continue button. If you enable Ask Siri, choose a voice on the Select a Siri Voice screen. Click the Continue button to keep moving along.
- » **Choose whether to set up Touch ID.** If your MacBook or your Mac's keyboard includes a Touch ID fingerprint reader, set up Touch ID fingerprint recognition by clicking the Continue button on the Touch ID screen, and then following the prompts. If you prefer to set up Touch ID later, click the Set Up Touch ID Later link.
- » **Choose Light Mode, Dark Mode, or Auto Mode.** On the Choose Your Look screen, click the Light button, the Dark button, or the Auto button, as needed. Auto Mode switches between light and dark to match the time of day in your current location. Click the Continue button one final time.

The setup routine finishes, and your desktop appears. Move on to the section “Meeting the macOS Desktop,” later in this chapter.