

How to set up and customize your Mac from scratch

[SERENITY CALDWELL](#)

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Who needs restoring from a backup? If you want to set up your new Mac from scratch, here's what you need to do.

The MacBook Pro I'm writing this article on is my first [laptop](#) in nine months. Last March, my MacBook Air [had an unfortunate drowning incident](#); in the months since, I've been working on an [iPad](#) Pro while out and about.

My only other [computer](#), a 5K Retina iMac, has a terabyte hard drive, and as such, wasn't the best candidate to clone to a 256GB SSD. The situation was clear: I was going to have to do a fresh setup on my new MacBook Pro rather than restore it from a laptop backup.

Thanks to [iCloud](#), the Mac App Store, and other cloud-based [storage](#) providers like [Dropbox](#), this premise isn't nearly as terrifying as it used to be. But there are still quite a few steps you're going to want to make sure you go through when setting up from scratch.

So, as I went through the process myself on the MacBook Pro, I made a list. Hopefully this will help you, dear reader, should you also decide to amble down this path in the near future.

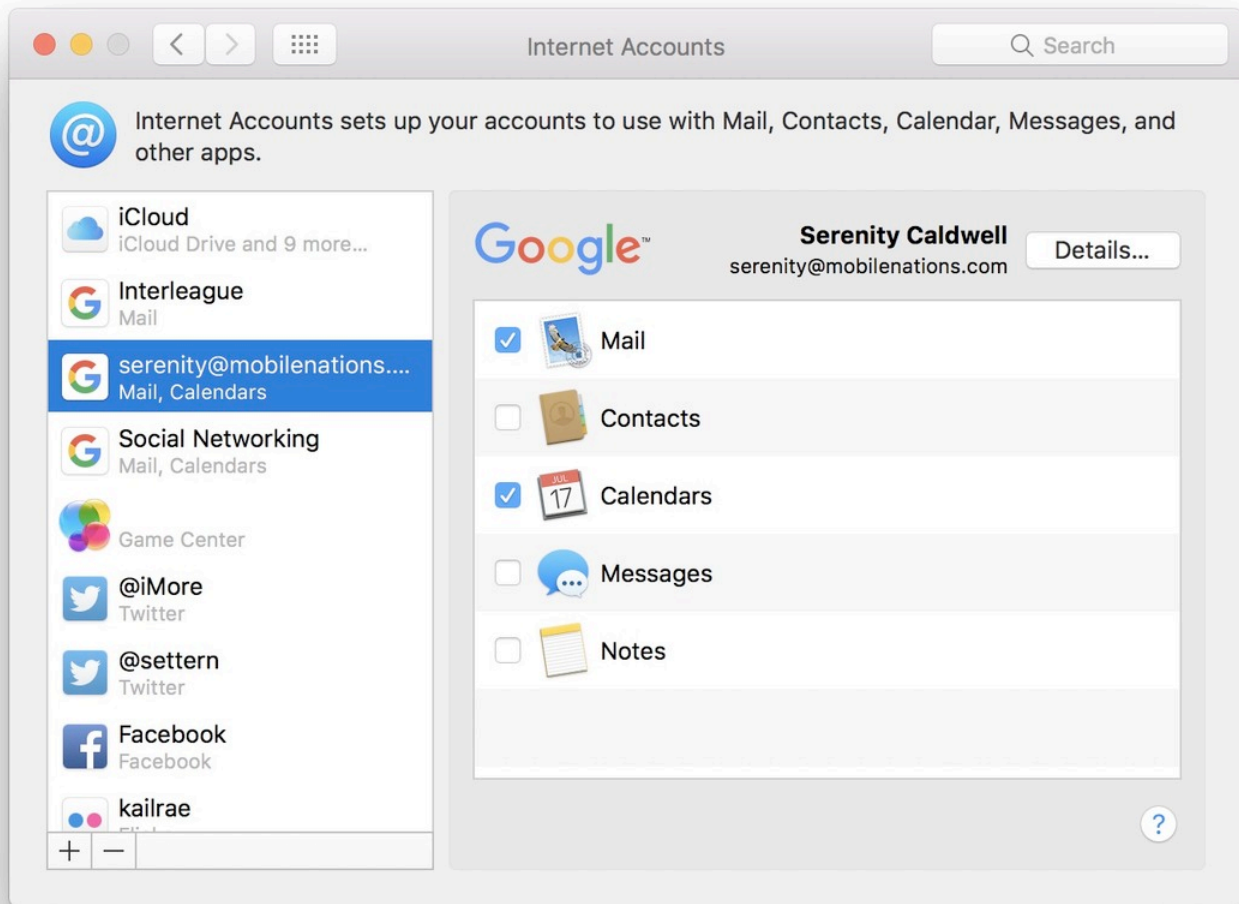
Step 1: Set up your computer



Before you can get to the fun of customizing your Mac, you should probably unpack it and set it up first. Logging into iCloud here will start the process of syncing your keychain, internet accounts, and Desktop & Documents folders (if you have them active), so it's good to do right off the bat.

[How to set up your new Mac](#)

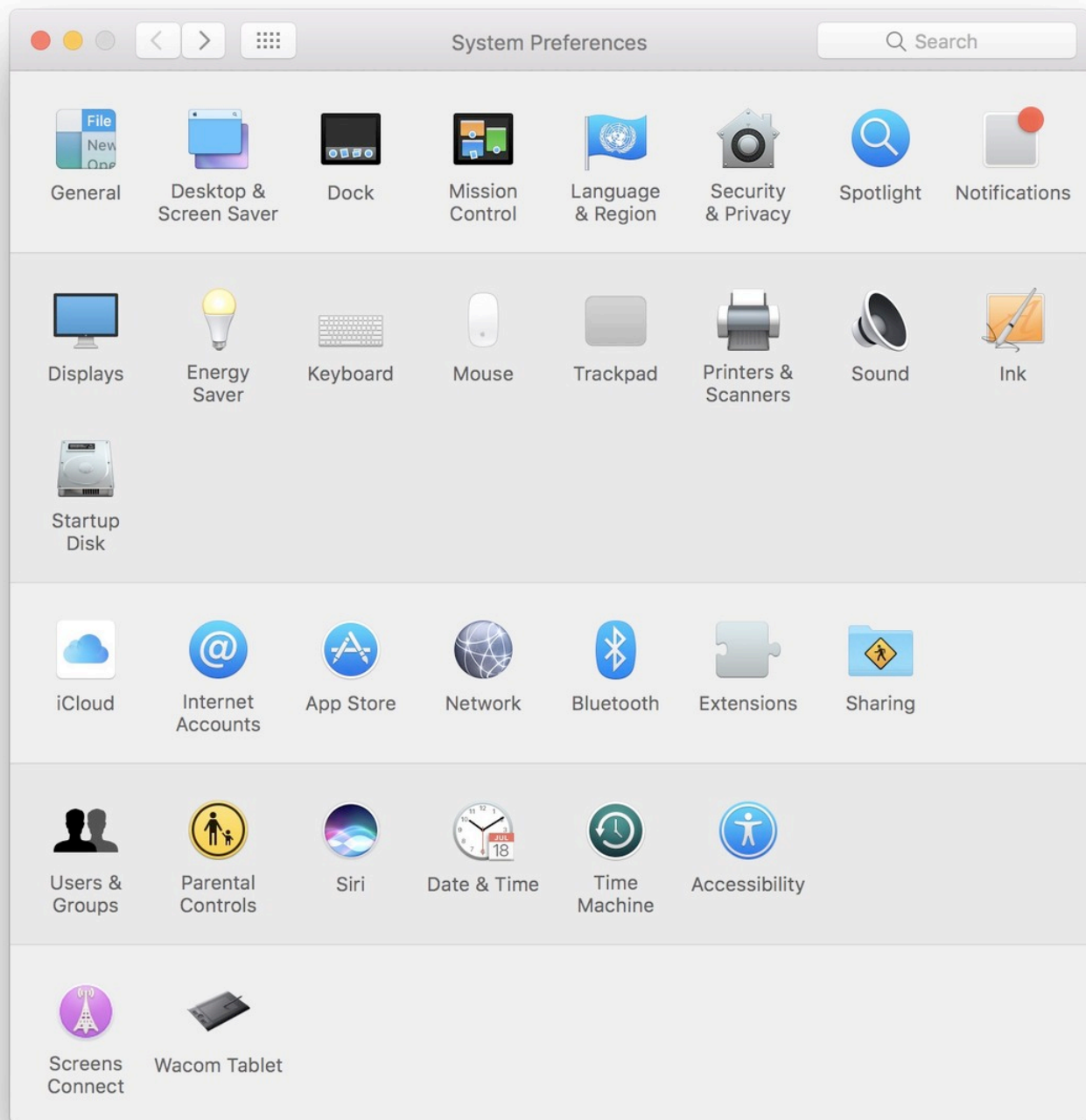
Step 2: Reauthorize your internet accounts



iCloud will sync all your internet accounts from another Mac, but any non-Apple account will have to be reauthorized (read: password re-entered) before you can use them again. As such, I like to do this as my very first step when setting up a new machine.

- 1 Open System Preferences.
- 2 Select the Accounts icon.
- 3 Click on the Account you wish to activate and check the appropriate boxes (Mail, Messages, Notes, and the like). Repeat for each account you wish to reauthorize.

Step 3: Customize your System Preferences

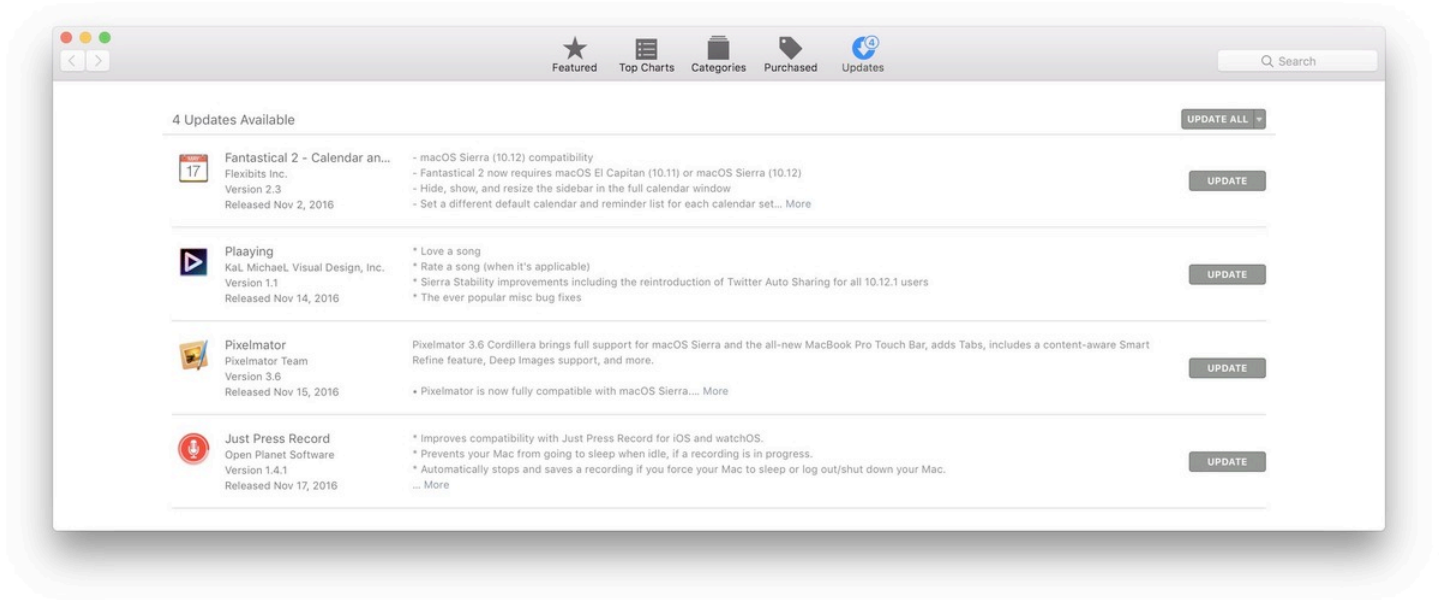


While you're in System Preferences, you might as well customize some other aspects of your system. This includes, but isn't limited to:


- 1 Whether you want Dark Mode for your toolbars (General)

- 2 Changing your desktop picture and screensaver (Desktop & Screen Saver)
- 3 Your Dock size and preferences (Dock)
- 4 FileVault and Gatekeeper (Security & Privacy)
- 5 Notification preferences (Notifications)
- 6 How long you want the display to stay on before sleeping (Energy Saver)
- 7 Touch Bar customization (Keyboard)
- 8 Enable Dictation (Keyboard)
- 9 Multitouch gesture customization (Trackpad)
- 10 Alert sounds (Sound)
- 11 Turn on Back to My Mac (iCloud, Sharing)
- 12 Add other cards to Apple Pay (Wallet & Apple Pay)
- 13 Customize your app preferences (App Store)
- 14 Add VPNs if necessary (Network)
- 15 Pair any Bluetooth accessories like headphones (Bluetooth)
- 16 Add any other fingerprints (Touch ID)
- 17 Add additional user IDs (Users & Groups)
- 18 Add any restrictions (Parental Controls)
- 19 Change Siri preferences (Siri)
- 20 Set up Time Machine (Time Machine)
- 21 Add any Accessibility preferences (Accessibility)

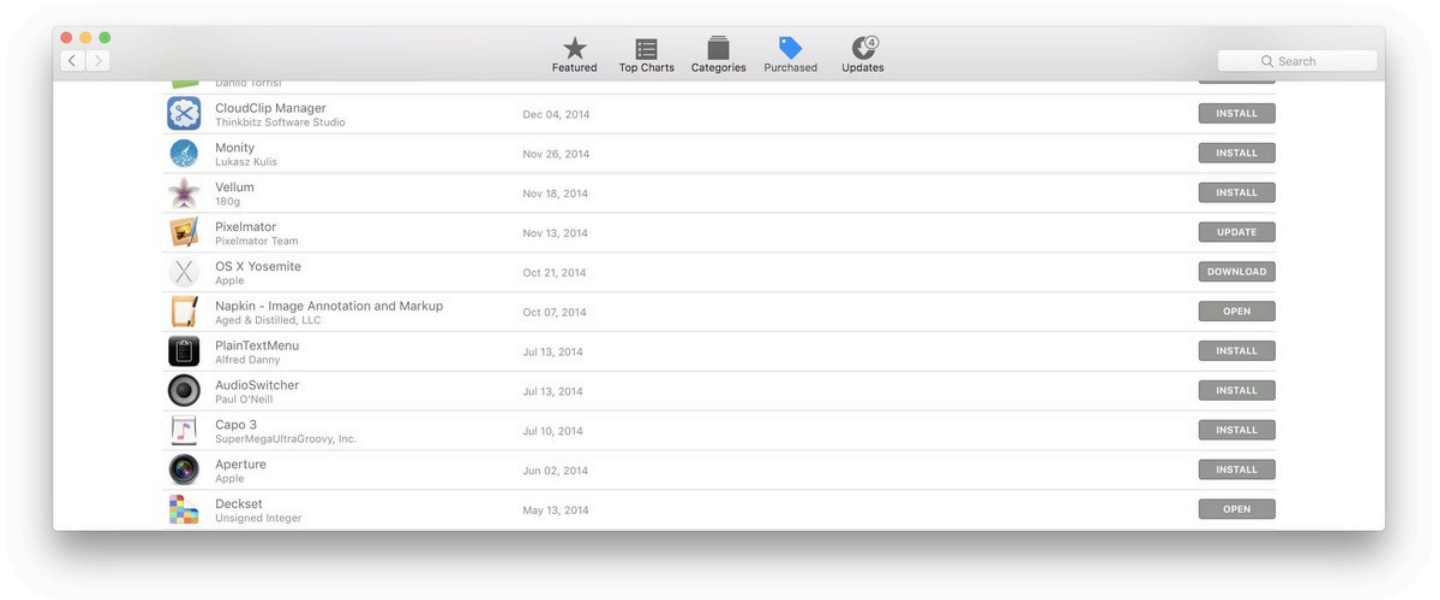
Step 4: Check for Software Updates




New Macs should ship with the latest and greatest software, but on the off-chance you're not on the latest version, check for new updates:

- 1 Go to the  menu in the top left corner.
- 2 Select App Store.
- 3 Click on the Updates tab.
- 4 Install all necessary updates.

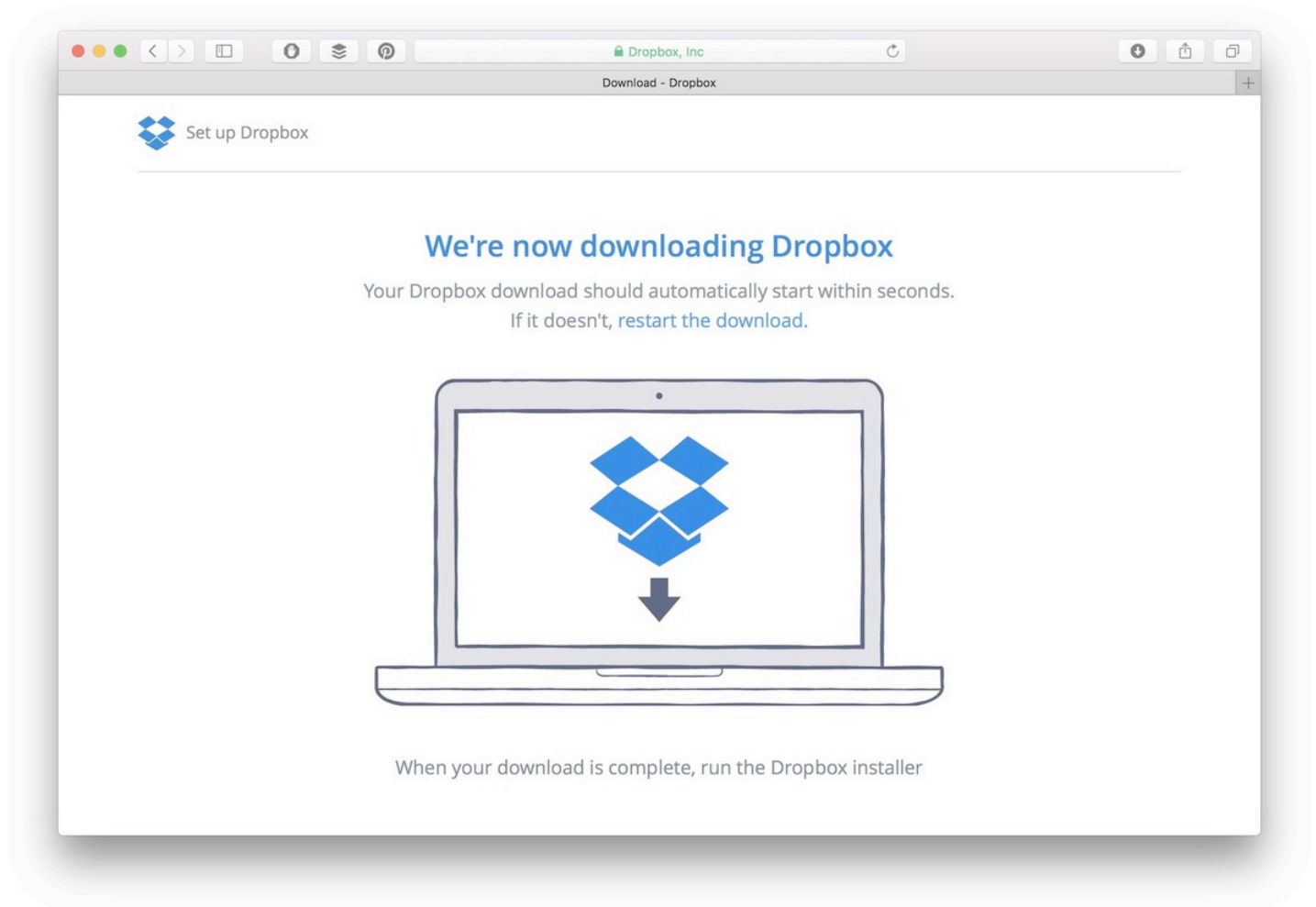
Step 5: Redownload Mac App Store apps



In System Preferences, you can toggle all App Store apps to re-download onto your new Mac, but I prefer to selectively choose which ones should live on a new computer, and you can do so by visiting the Purchased tab.

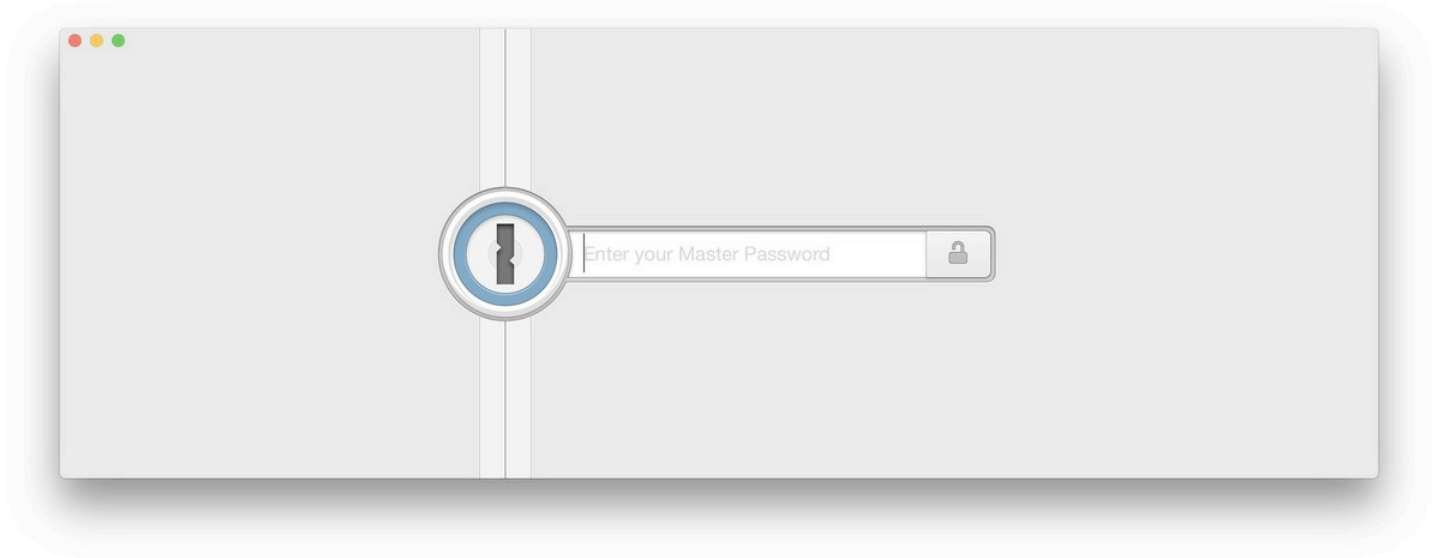
- 1 Go to the  menu in the top left corner.
- 2 Select App Store.
- 3 Click on the Purchased tab. (You may have to sign in to iCloud again.)
- 4 Accept any purchases for your Apple ID (like iLife or iWork apps).
- 5 Download any previously purchased apps you wish to install on your Mac.

Step 6: Re-download non-Mac App Store apps



If you use any Adobe products or other non-Mac App Store items, you won't be able to re-download them from the App Store: Instead, open Safari and download them from their respective websites. A big one here is [Dropbox](#): Not only is it good to get your folders synced, but if you use Dropbox for syncing your information (say, 1Password), you'll want it installed so that your passwords are easily accessible.

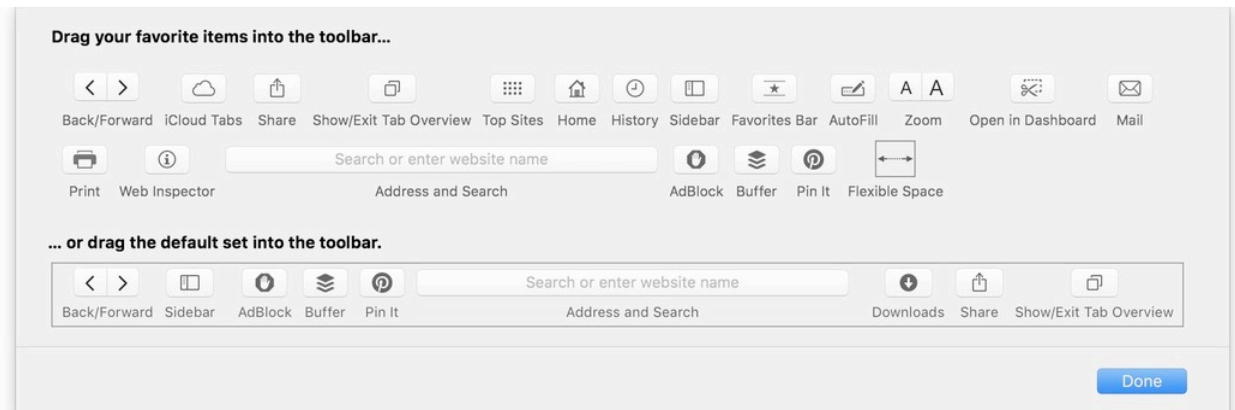
Step 7: Set up your password manager



Before you get into customizing Safari and your other apps, make sure you can sign in to all of them by setting up your password manager. (You do have a password manager, right? If not, now is a great time to think about getting one, so you don't have to scrounge for passwords any time you need to set up a device from scratch.)

[Best password manager apps for Mac](#)

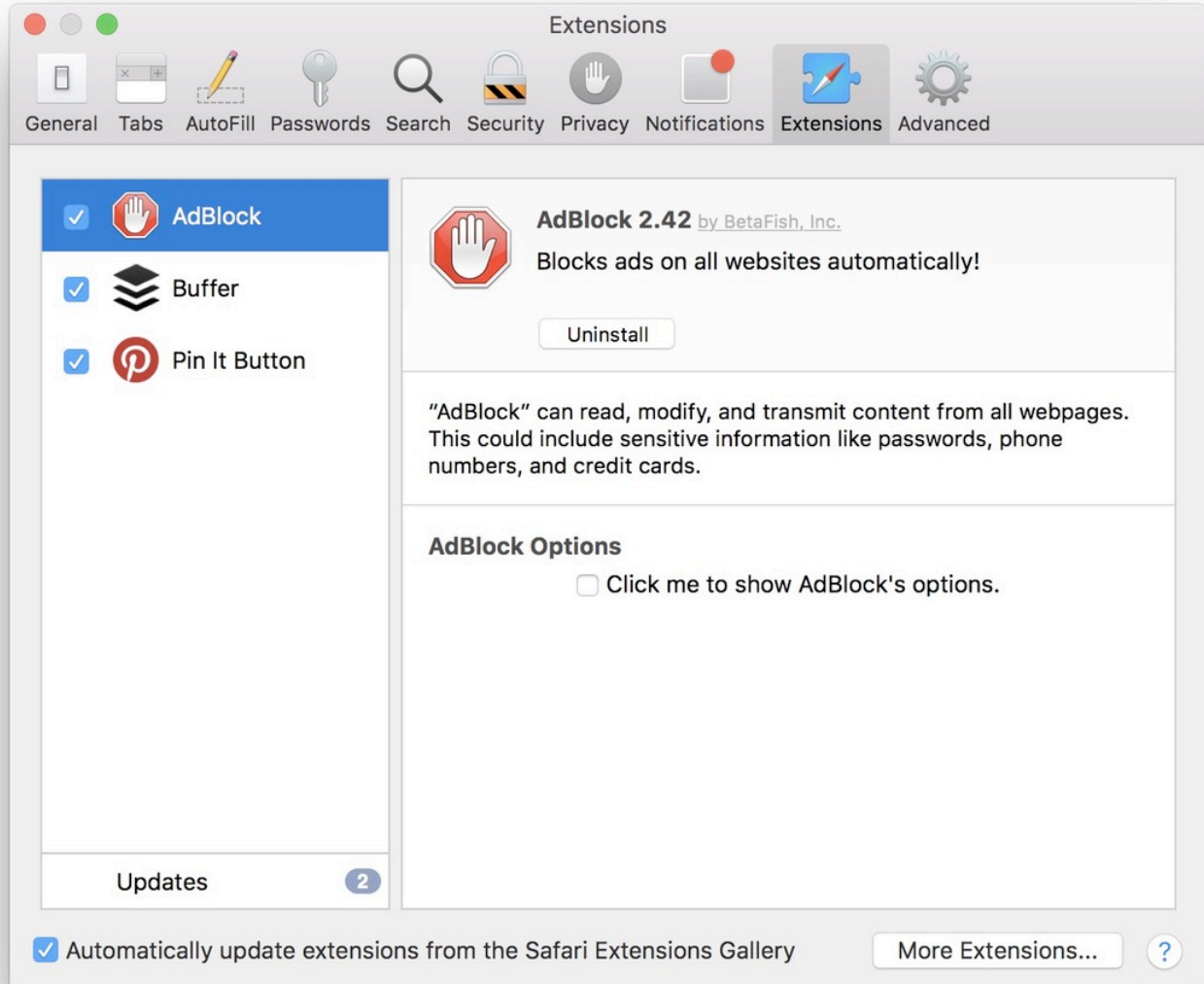
Step 8: Customize the Finder, Safari, and other app views



The View menu allows most app windows to be pretty thoroughly changed, depending on your preference; my must-customize list includes Finder, Safari, and Mail, but pick the apps you use most often to fix first!

This is also the time you might want to [customize the Touch Bar for each app](#), if you have a compatible Mac, and or add Favorites to Mail's toolbar (which don't sync via iCloud, for some reason).

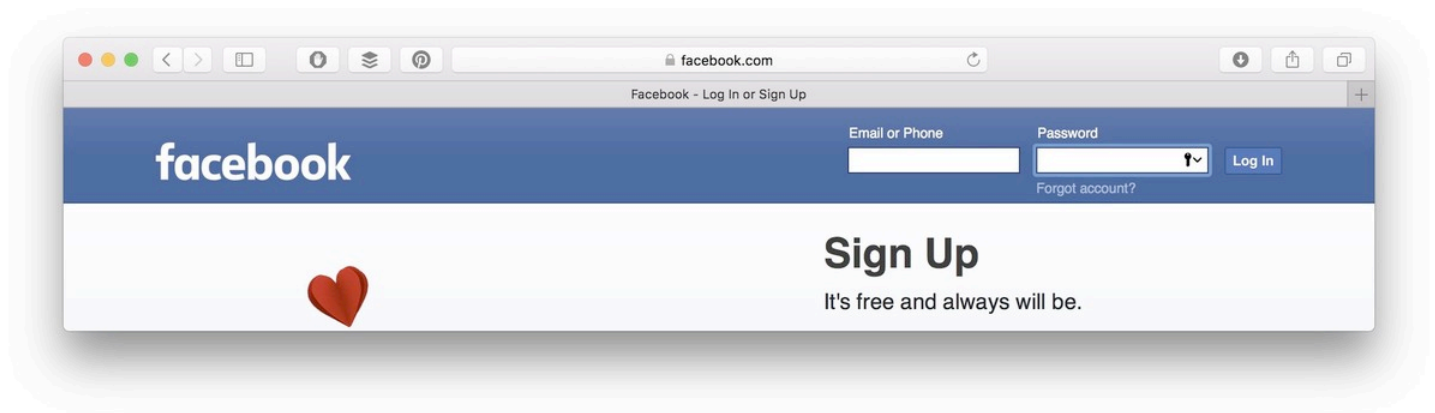
Step 9: Add Safari extensions



Most of us use at least one Safari extension on our Macs, whether that's a Pinterest pinner, Buffer socialer, or ad blocker. After you've customized Safari, it's a great time to configure your Safari extensions.

[Safari Extension Gallery](#)

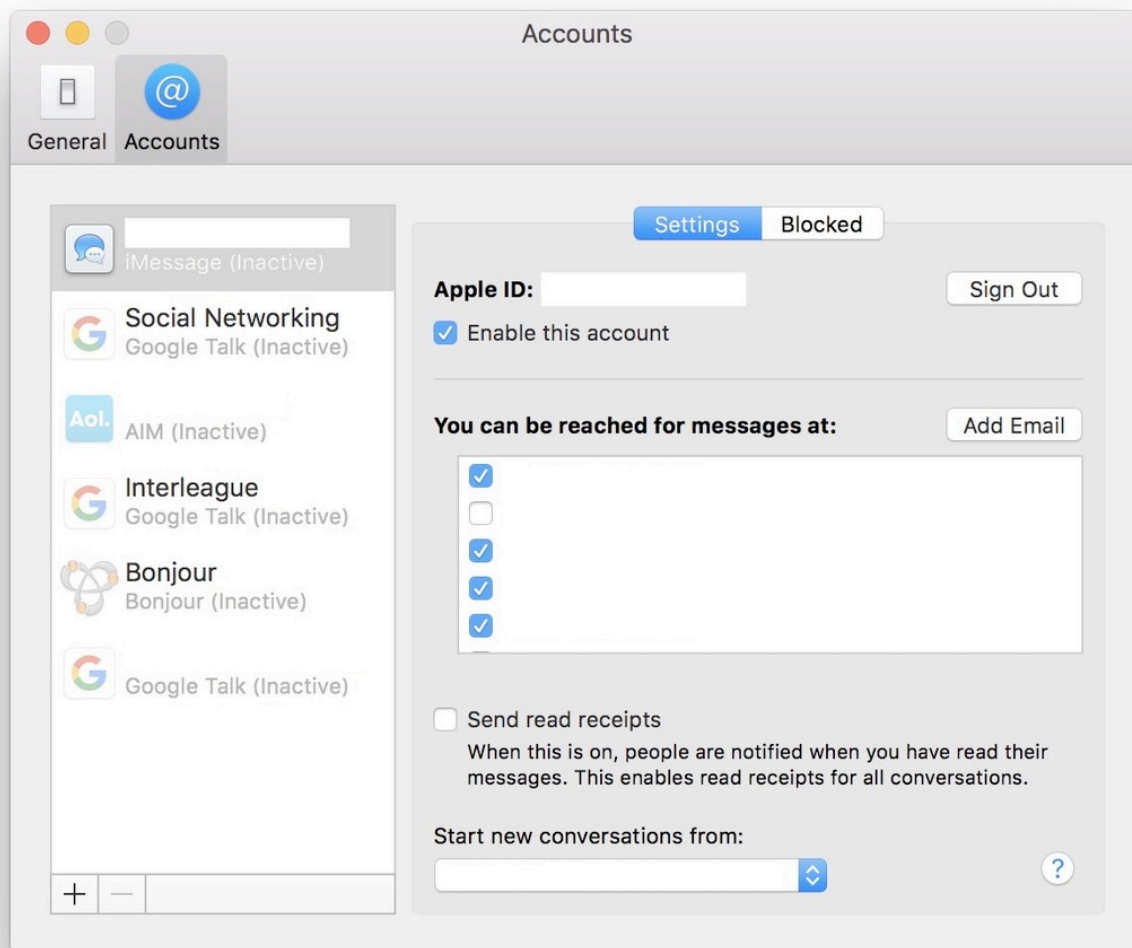
Step 10: Log in to common websites



Whether your internet addiction includes Facebook, Quora, Twitter, Google, or Reddit, chances are there's a web service you can't live without. Go ahead and log into those now, so you don't have to worry about scrounging around for two-factor codes. (You do have two-step authentication set up, right?)

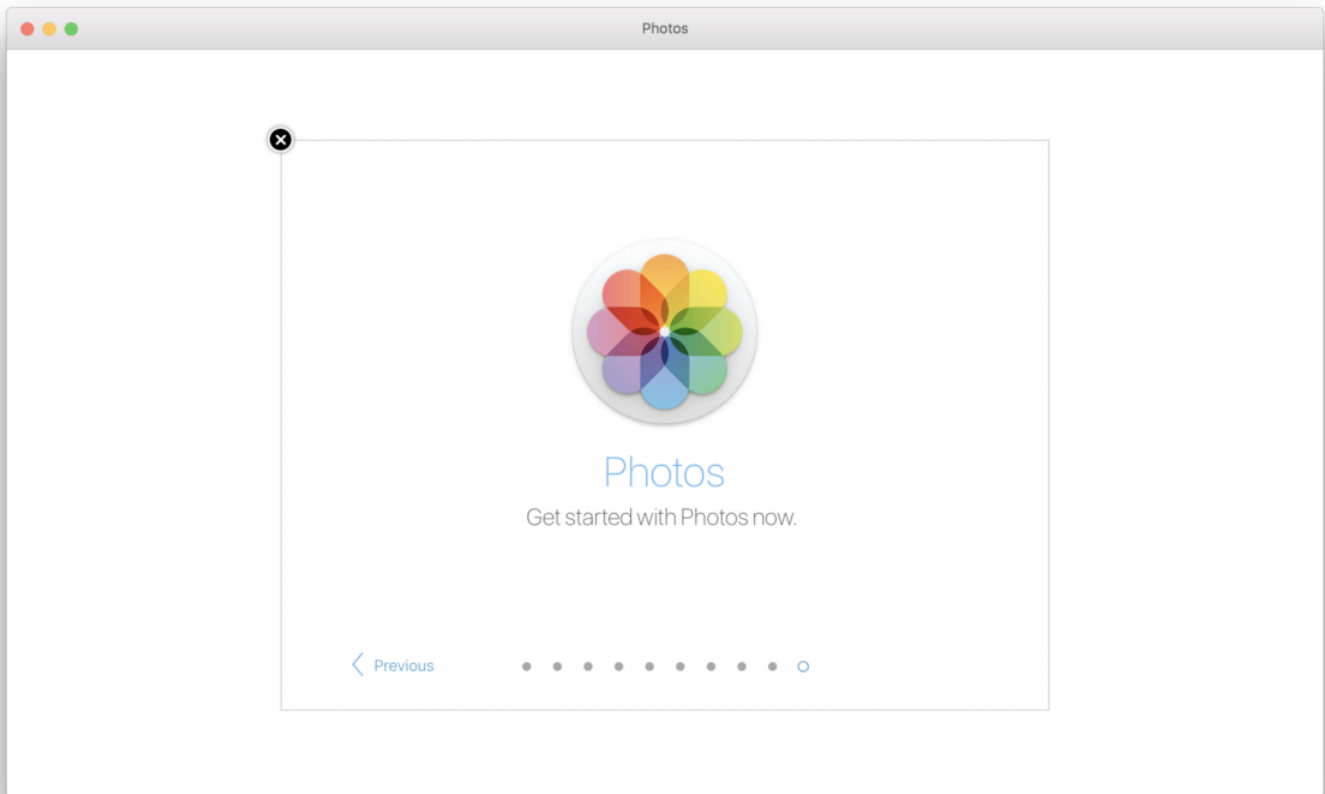
[How to use two-step and two-factor authentication](#)

Step 11: Make sure Messages is sending from the right iCloud address



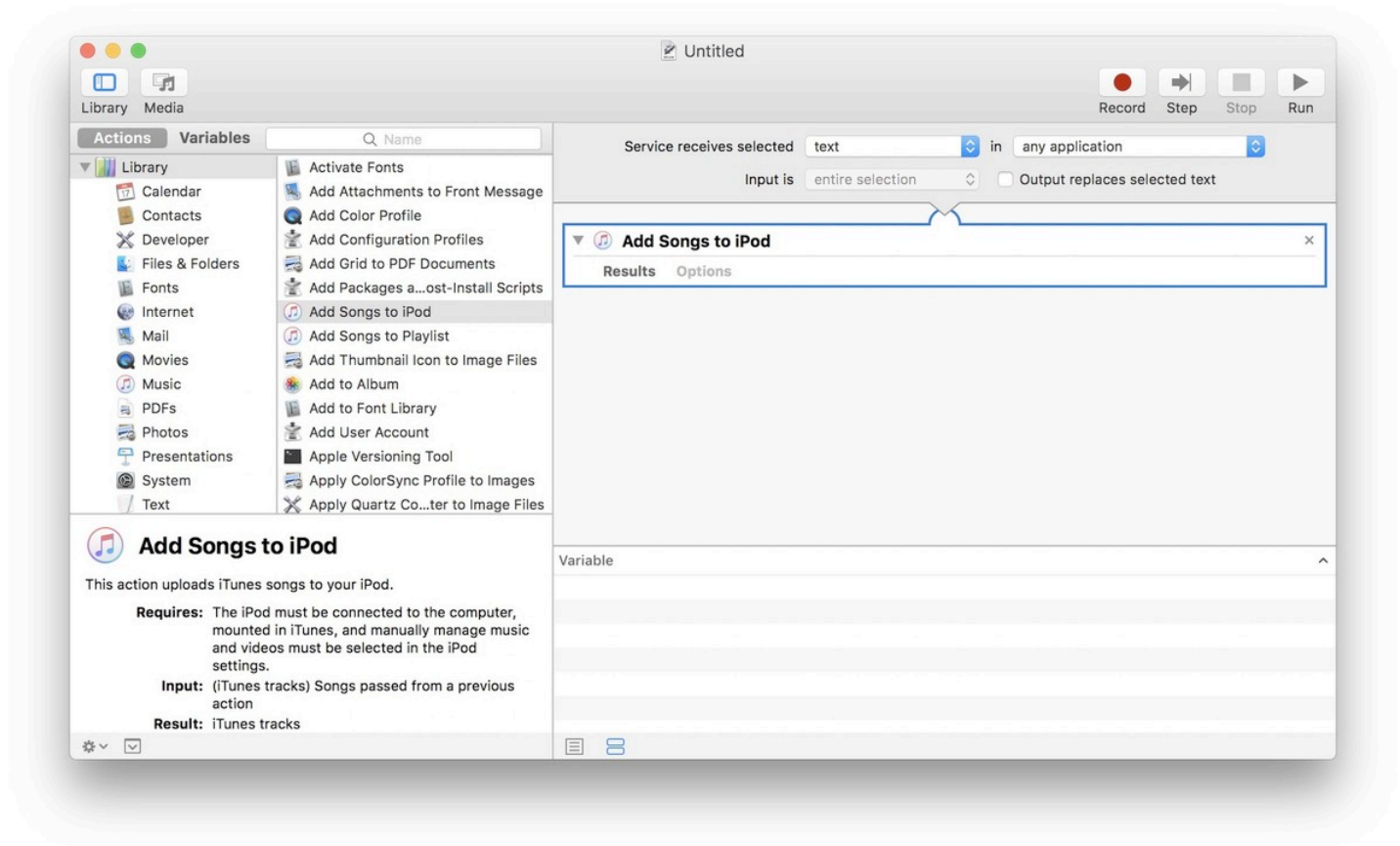
When you set up a computer from scratch, you lose out on a key part of your history: Your iMessage archive, which is encrypted and only synced as part of an iCloud backup. As such, you'll need to re-customize your Messages settings, including which address you send from by default. Otherwise, people may not understand why ["icloudjokeaddress@icloud.com"](mailto:icloudjokeaddress@icloud.com) is suddenly sending them iMessages.

Step 12: Sign into iTunes and Photos



Want to use Apple Music and iCloud Photo Library? You'll need to open iTunes and Photos before doing so and likely log in with your Apple ID and password.

Step 13: Add any Automator scripts you rely on and any dev tools



Apple's Automator is little-used outside the tech enthusiast population, but it's a great tool for automating simple tasks on your Mac. (I use it all the time to convert images from PNG to JPG on my desktop, for example.) If you have must-use scripts, now's the time to set them up.

If you're a developer, you may also want to download Xcode and its requisite developer toolset, along with any other tools you might want around.

[How to automate your Mac](#)

Step 14: Enjoy your new Mac!



After all that customization, take some time to enjoy using it! It's new and shiny, after all.

(And then maybe [make a backup](#), so you don't have to set up from scratch again.)

Original article :

<http://www.imore.com/how-set-and-customize-your-mac-scratch>