

macOS 11 Big Sur

Apple's next-generation macOS operating system.

By MacRumors Staff on July 7, 2020



AT A GLANCE

- Previewed at the 2020 Worldwide Developers Conference in June, macOS Big Sur is the next update to Apple's macOS operating system.

FEATURES

- Design refresh
- Control Center
- Maps overhaul
- Revamped Messages app
- Built-in translator for Safari
- Major Safari improvements

Unauthorized access.

macOS 11.0 Big Sur

macOS Big Sur, unveiled in June 2020 at WWDC, is the newest version of macOS, set to be released this fall. macOS Big Sur features an overhauled look, and it's such a big update that Apple bumped the version number to 11. That's right, macOS Big Sur is macOS 11.0.

Apple introduced the **biggest design update** to macOS since the introduction of Mac OS X with macOS Big Sur, **overhauling everything** from the curvature of window corners to colors and dock icon designs. The revamped look was designed to feel both **fresh and familiar** at the same time.

Windows have a lighter appearance for a cleaner look with additional **translucency and rounded edges**, the Dock is more translucent, app icons have a new uniform squircle shape, menu bars in apps have been redesigned to make them less obtrusive and better able to blend in with your content, **system sounds have been entirely redone**, and there are new symbols in toolbars, sidebars, and controls to provide clarity and consistency across apps.

Buttons and controls for apps now **appear when needed** and disappear when not in use to provide more focus on content, and the **customizable menu bar** offers access to a **customizable Control Center** that houses Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and AirDrop controls, keyboard brightness, Do Not Disturb, Dark Mode, sound level, and more.

The Notification Center has been redesigned with **more interactive notifications** grouped by app and **iOS-style widgets** that can be customized in three different sizes. An

updated design for core apps provides **better organization for multiple open windows** and makes it easier to interact with apps.

Safari is faster and more battery efficient than ever in macOS Big Sur and features **a new start page** that can be customized with **user-selected wallpapers** and sections like **Reading List and iCloud Tabs**. The Mac App Store makes it easier to find extensions, and Apple added a feature that lets **Chrome and Firefox extensions be easily ported** to Safari.

Apple **redesigned tabs** to make Safari navigation faster by showing more tabs onscreen, with favicons displayed to identify tabs and a hover gesture offering quick page previews. Users can choose when and which websites can use a Safari extension, limiting system access.

Safari privacy has been improved with a **Privacy Report** that lets users know which trackers Safari is blocking when you visit websites. Safari has a **built-in translation** option for translating entire webpages from seven languages with a click.



For passwords saved in iCloud Keychain, Apple notifies users if there's been a data breach with **password monitoring**, a protection feature that joins auto-generated strong passwords and other tools.

Messages is now based on the Messages app for iOS and it includes many of the same features as iOS 14 like **pinned conversations**, **@mentions**, **inline replies**, and more. Message effects now work on the Mac, and it supports **Memoji creation and Memoji stickers**.

Search has been overhauled for the Messages app to make it easier to find links, photos, and matching terms, and a new photo picker available throughout macOS makes it easier to find photos by keyword to send to friends and family. The photo picker also includes trending images and GIFs for adding to messages.

Apple **redesigned the Maps app** for macOS Big Sur, adding support for **Look Around**, **indoor maps**, and **Guides**, which

are lists of notable attractions, restaurants, and more created by trusted sources. Maps for macOS can be used to **generate cycling and electric vehicle trips** that can be sent to iPhone, and **shared ETA updates** can now be **viewed on the Mac**.

The **Photos app** has expanded editing capabilities with a **new Retouch tool** powered by machine learning, and **Apple Music** has been overhauled with a new Listen Now section housing new releases, artist interviews, and personalized playlists.

In the Home app, **HomeKit Secure Video cameras** now feature support for **Face Recognition and Activity Zones**, **AirPods** have better than ever **automatic device switching**, and Siri can answer a much wider range of questions than before.

In the future, **apps in the Mac App Store** will help users better understand **privacy practices** and the information that a developer collects before choosing to download an app. Apple has likened this feature to a food nutrition label for apps in the Mac App Store.

macOS Big Sur introduces **faster updates** that begin in the background and finish more quickly to make it easier to keep your Mac up to date, and it includes a **cryptographically signed system volume** that protects against tampering.

Other new features include battery history usage for the past 10 days, Family Sharing support for apps with subscriptions, quick style editing and improved search in Notes, an option to assign reminders to people in the Reminders app, improved performance for Spotlight, and severe weather and minute-by-minute precipitation reports in Weather.

macOS Big Sur is available to developers at the current time, and Apple has seeded two developer betas so far. Apple is planning to make a public beta available to public beta testers in July, giving non-developers a chance to test out the software. macOS Big Sur will be a free update for all compatible Mac models.

New Design

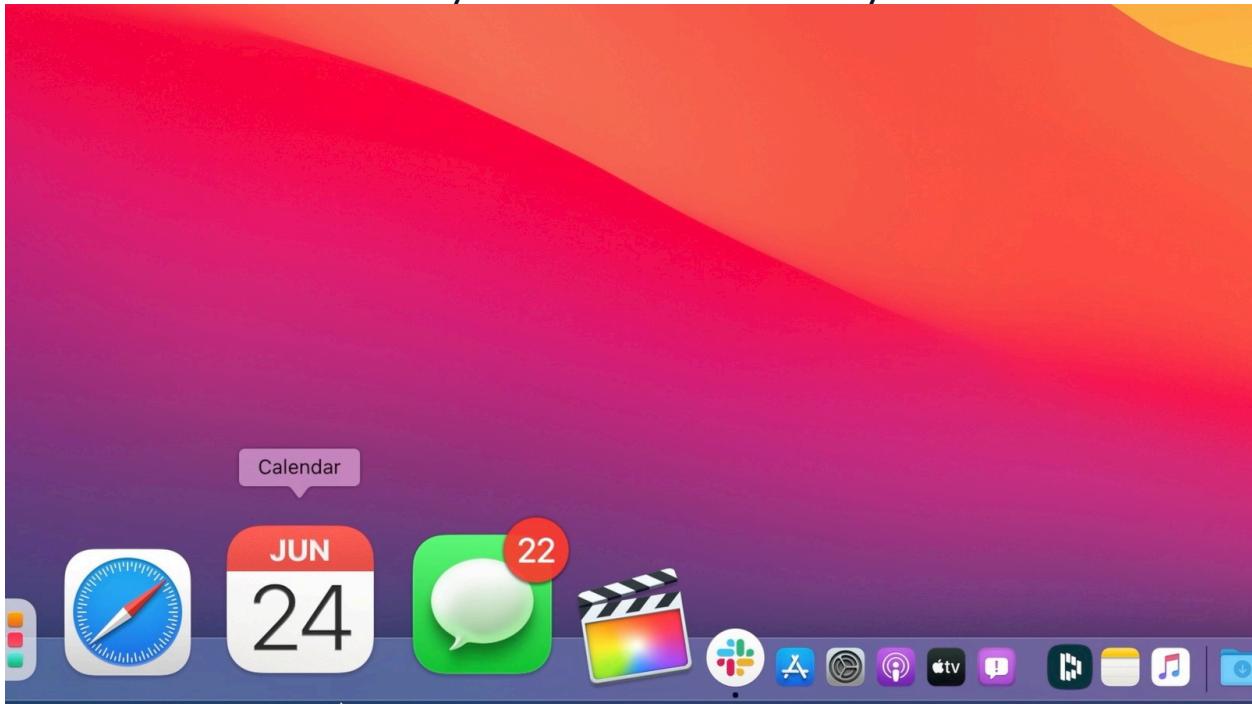
macOS Big Sur features the first major redesign to macOS since Mac OS X, with Apple introducing a new look that's modern but familiar, with a focus on translucency, consistency, and content.

Toolbars and sidebars have been redesigned to blend in better with each window, and sidebars are now full height. Toolbars at the top of apps no longer have separated buttons, which provides a more cohesive, streamlined look across the operating system.



Windows have a lighter design with softer, rounded edges, and icons within apps have received slight design tweaks and color changes. Apple has also tweaked icons for all of its native apps, giving them a uniform round-edged squircle design.

There are new symbols throughout macOS Big Sur in toolbars, sidebars, and controls to make it clearer where to click and what happens when you click. Apps that share common tasks, such as viewing the inbox in Mail or Calendar, now share the same symbol for consistency.



The updated app design can be seen in the refreshed Dock, which has also gained the same rounded corners as windows. The Dock is more translucent than it was before, and it has more of a lifted design so it blends with the desktop.

Menu Bar and Control Center

At the top of the display, the menu bar is now translucent to blend better with the desktop, plus it can be hidden when not

in use, much like the dock. Pull-down menus are easier to read with more spacing between lines.



All of the menu bar icons and dropdowns have been redesigned, and notably, the battery icon once again provides details on how much battery life is remaining. Battery usage history is available in System Preferences as well, and macOS Big Sur includes the [Optimized Battery Charging feature](#) first added in macOS Catalina for prolonging battery life.

The menu bar is home to a new Control Center for the Mac, providing quick access controls to Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, volume, display brightness, keyboard brightness, now playing, and toggles like Dark Mode, True Tone, Night Shift, Do Not Disturb and AirPlay. The Control Center is customizable, so you can set it up to put the functions you use most often right at your fingertips.

Your favorite menu items can be dragged out and pinned to the top of the menu bar for quick access.

Sheets

Sheets, the small pop up windows that come up when you do things like print or save a document, have been rethought in macOS Big Sur, with borders and bezels removed to make them less obtrusive. Sheets dim into the background automatically and scale into the center of the app.

System Sounds

All of the traditional Mac sounds have been updated and designed to be "more pleasing to the ear." Each sound was created with snippets of the original sounds, so they sound familiar but new at the same time.

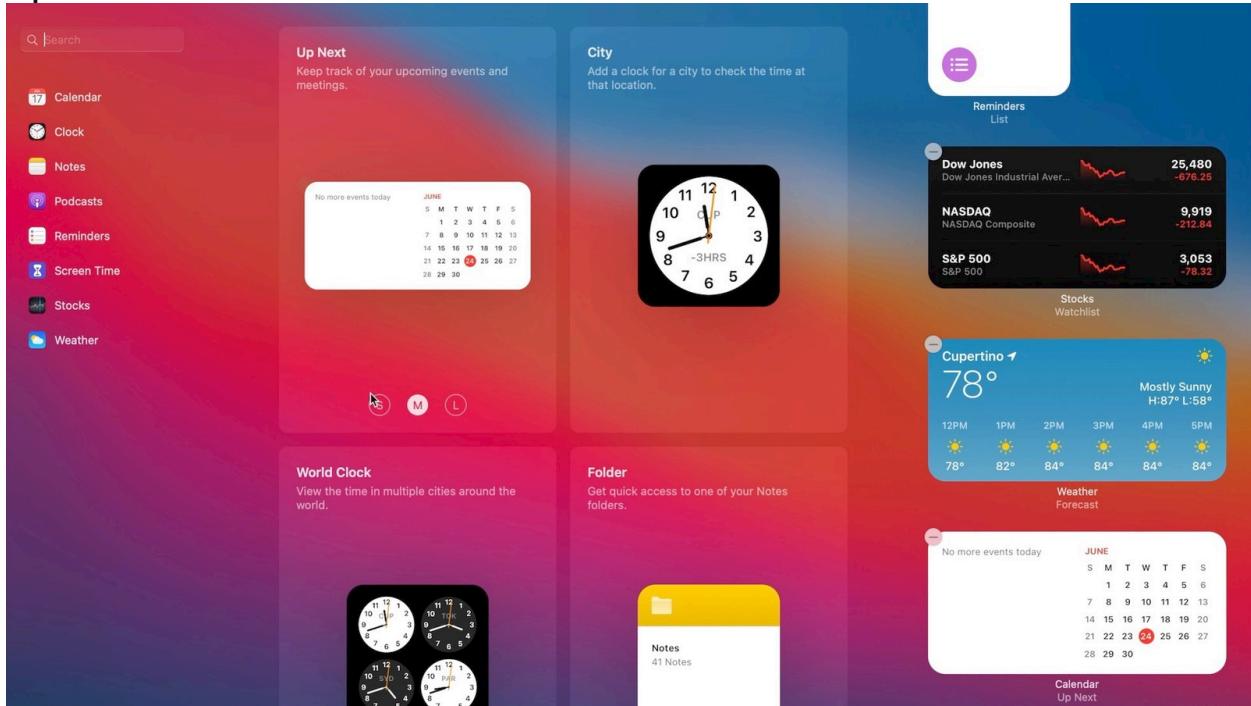
Apple has also brought back the [classic startup chime](#) that was removed from the MacBook lineup in 2016.

Notification Center

The Notification Center has been redesigned and it now combines incoming notifications with widgets in a single view to provide more information at a glance.



Notifications are now grouped by app and have additional interactive features, so you can do things like play a new podcast or reply to an email without having to open up an app. Just click and hold on a notification to access the new options.



Widgets have been redesigned and are similar to the widgets introduced in iOS 14, customizable in three sizes and with a widget gallery to set things up in a way that's perfect for your needs. There are also new widgets to work with for apps like Notes, Screen Time, Podcasts, and more.

Third-party widgets for the Notification Center can be found in the Mac App Store.

Faster Updates and More Security

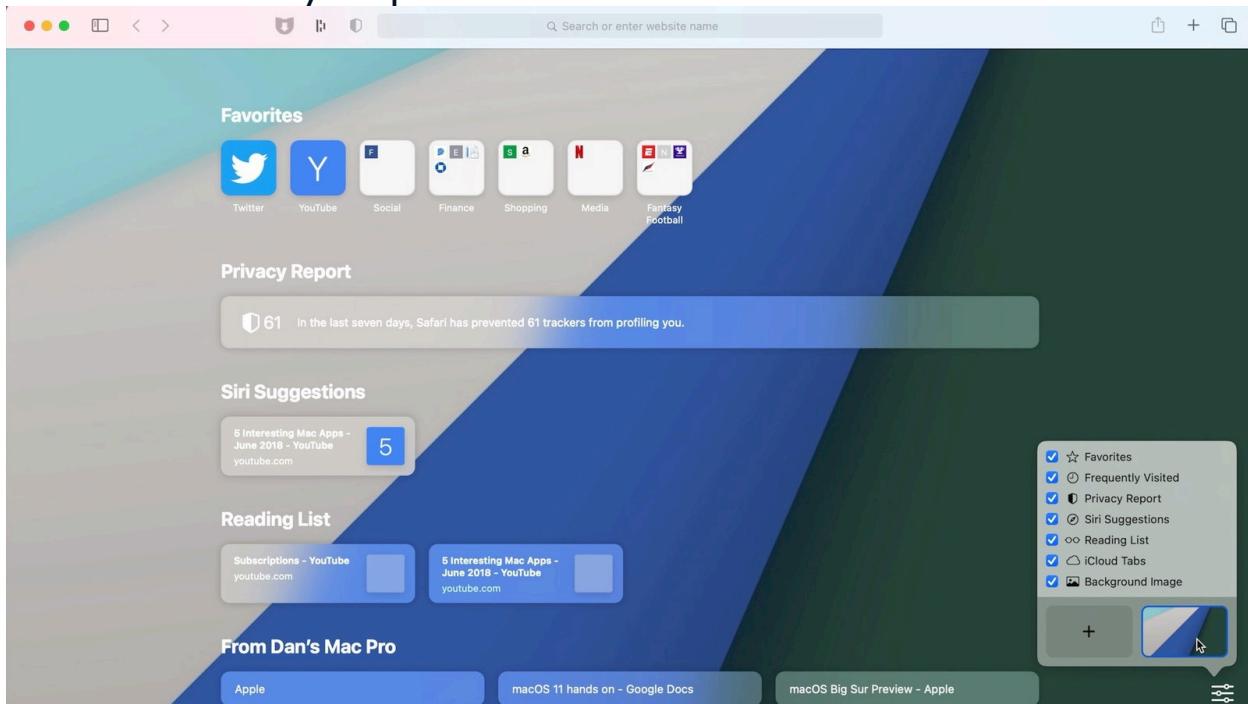
Along with the cleaner, more refined look, macOS Big Sur has a feature that lets software updates begin in the background and then finish faster, so installations of new software updates won't take as long. Installing macOS Big Sur is a

prerequisite for this feature, so the initial macOS Big Sur installation will take the standard amount of time.

The feature is powered by a cryptographically signed system volume that's new in Big Sur and which also adds a layer of protection against malicious tampering. macOS Big Sur also now supports APFS Time Machine backups, so you can use an APFS disk for backing up your Mac in addition to HFS+.

Safari

Safari has a new start page that can be customized with a wallpaper, and there are options to add Favorites, Frequently Visited Sites, Siri Suggestions, Reading List, iCloud Tabs, and the new Privacy Report feature.

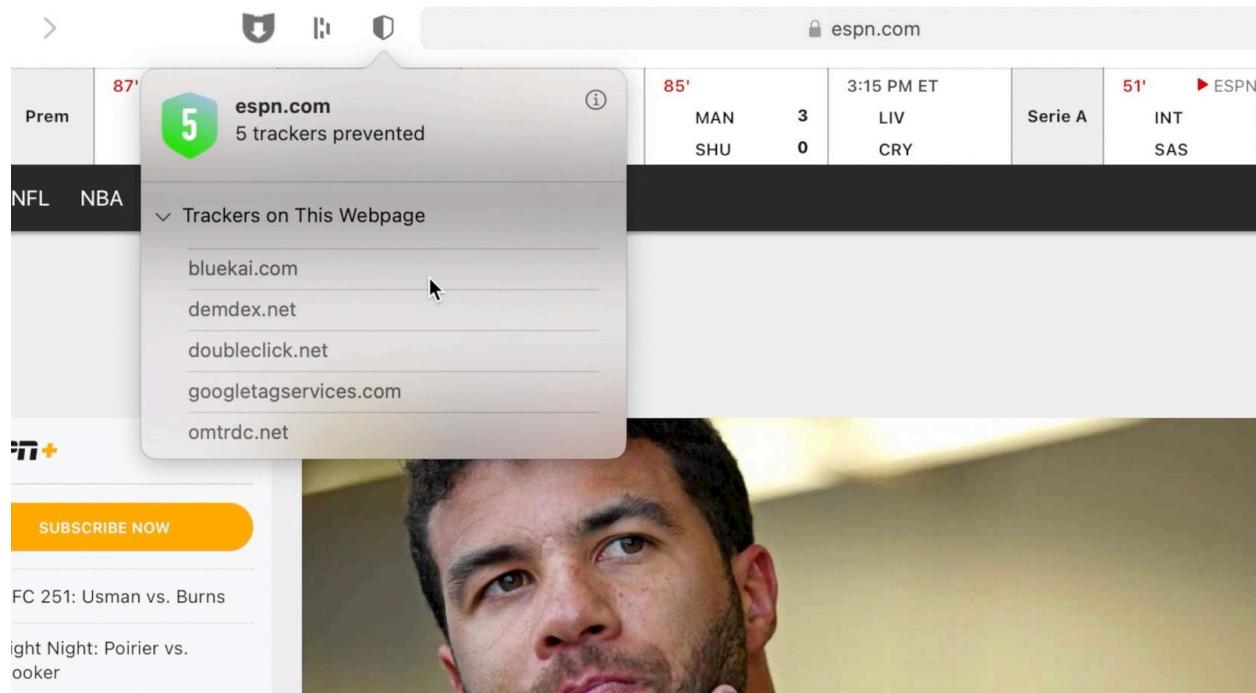


Safari is faster and more power-efficient than before. It's 50 percent faster at loading frequently visited sites than Chrome, and it lasts up to three hours longer when streaming videos compared to Chrome and Firefox.

History, bookmarks, and saved passwords can also now be imported from Chrome to Safari if you want to switch browsers to take advantage of the new features in Big Sur. Safari in macOS Big Sur supports HDR video and it works with 4K HDR and Dolby Vision content from Netflix. Mac owners with a 2018 or later Mac can watch 4K Netflix content in Safari when running Big Sur.

Privacy Report

On the start page, Privacy Report gives a rundown on how many trackers have been blocked from profiling you, and if you click on the shield icon next to the URL bar, you can see trackers on a site by site basis.



Privacy Report provides a list of all trackers on a website and the number of trackers that were blocked, preventing websites from keeping tabs on your browsing habits across the web. From the Privacy Report menu bar option, you can see how many trackers have been blocked in the last 30 days.

Tabs

Safari tabs have been redesigned and more tabs are visible at once, plus there's a new hover option that lets you hover over a tab to see a page preview. Tabs also have page icons so you can see what's what at a glance.

Extensions

There's a dedicated category for extensions in the Mac App Store, and Apple included support for the WebExtensions API that lets developers convert extensions designed for other browsers like Chrome and Firefox into a format that works with Safari.

With the additional focus on extensions, Apple added new privacy protections. You can choose which websites an extension can access, and you'll see a warning when an extension has broad permission to access every webpage you visit.

Built-In Translation

Safari has a built-in web translator that translates seven languages with just a click, so you can read an entire webpage in another language without having to have an extension installed.

Built-in translation works for English, Spanish, Chinese, French, German, Russian, and Brazilian Portuguese.

Password Monitoring

For passwords saved in iCloud Keychain, Safari now monitors to make sure they haven't been compromised in any known data breaches. If a password is leaked, Safari sends an alert so you can change it.

Messages

Messages is now a Mac Catalyst app, bringing it more in line with the Messages app on iOS devices with many of the same capabilities, including some of the new features introduced in iOS 14.

Up to nine of your most important conversations can be pinned to the top of the Messages app, with pinned conversations depicted as circular icons at the top of the app. Typing indicators let you know when someone's typing, and new messages and Tapbacks animate right above the pin.



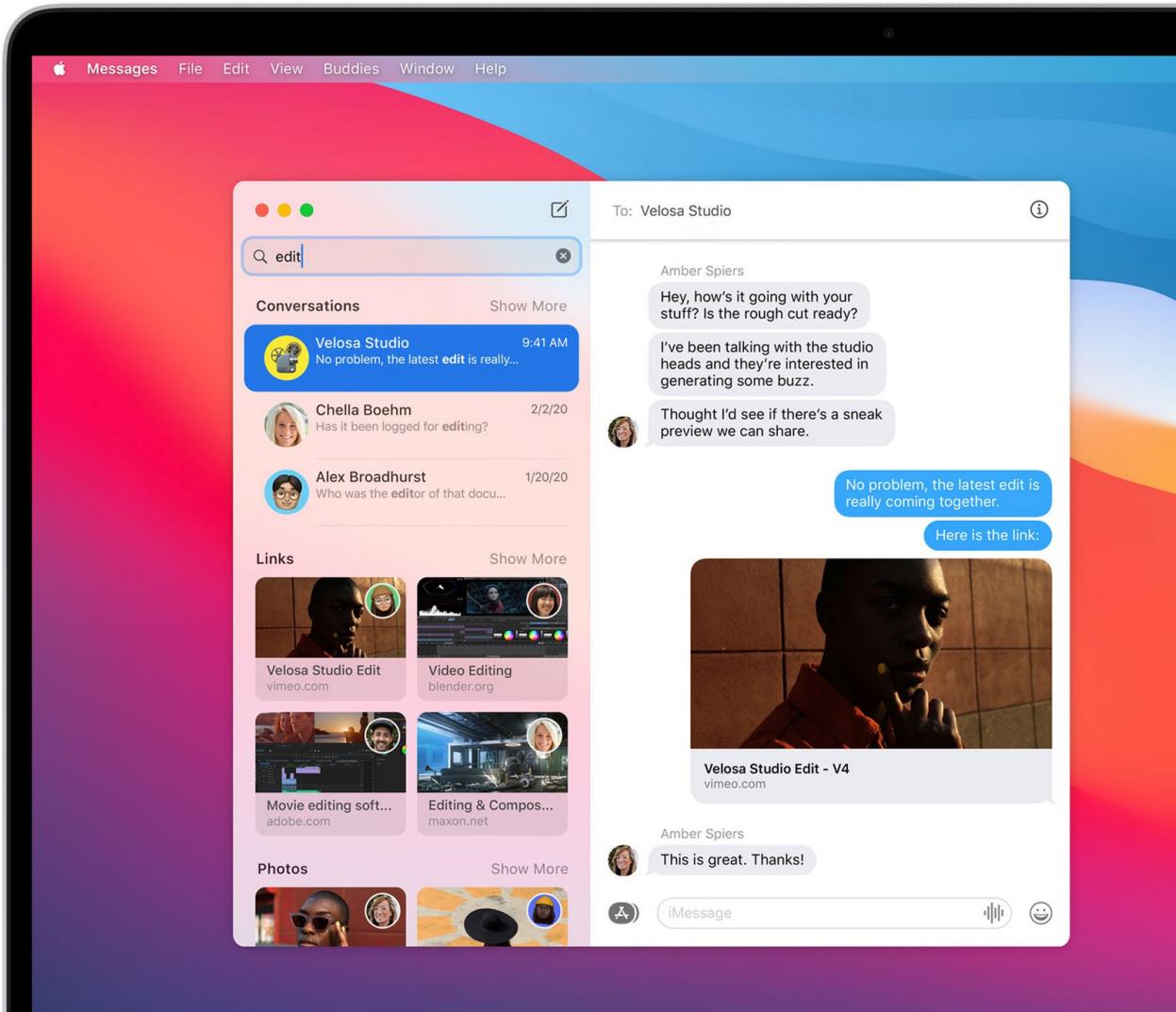
Inline replies help keep conversations more organized, letting you reply to a specific message that starts a new thread that can be singled out. It works in single-person conversations, but it's most useful in group chats.

Group chats can be customized with photos, Memoji, or emoji, and Mentions let you direct a message to a specific person. If an active group chat is muted and someone @mentions you in the conversation, you can have it send a notification so you don't miss the most important moments of a chat.

There's a new Photos picker in the Messages app that's accompanied by Memoji stickers (which can be created on the Mac for the first time with the Memoji editor), an #images search for finding trending images and GIFs, and Message effects, which have been available on iOS for several years.



Message effects like balloons, confetti, lasers, and more can take over the Messages screen, plus there are custom effects that can be applied to chat bubbles.

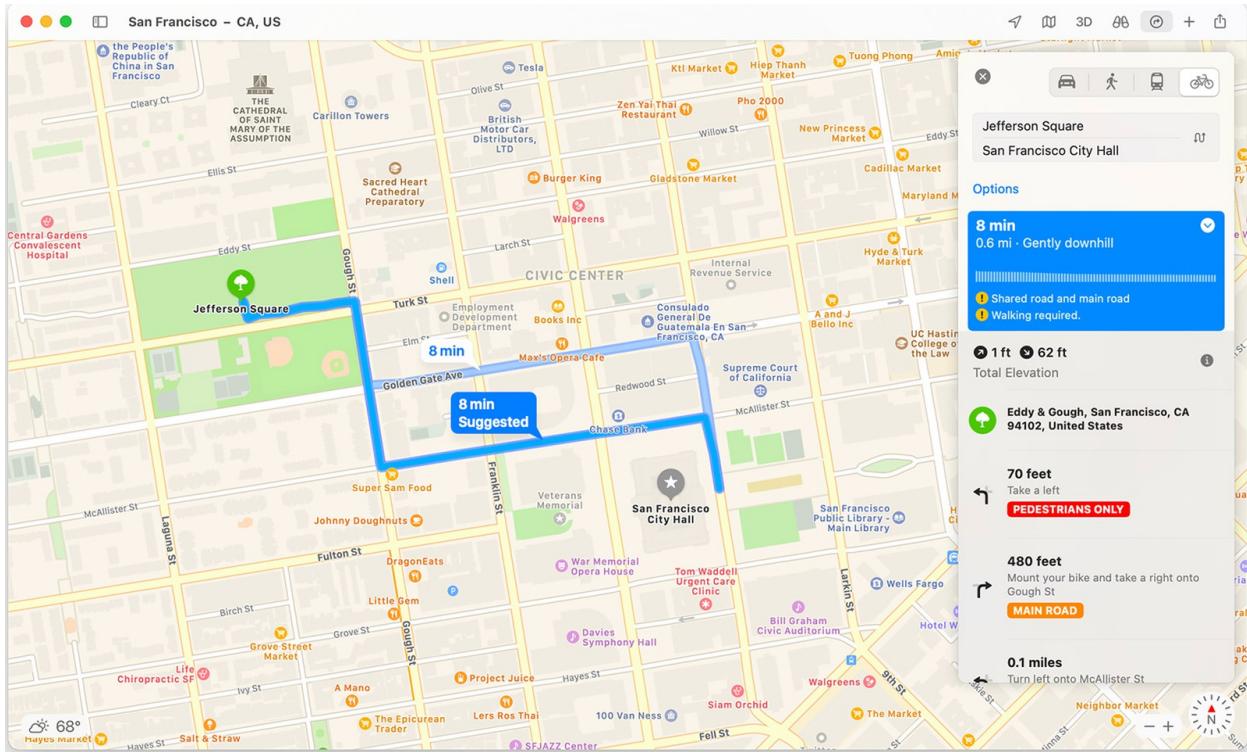


Search in Messages has been streamlined, and search results organize links, photos, and phrases.

Maps

Like Messages, Apple has improved Maps for Mac, bringing several features that were previously limited to iOS, as well as adding the same new capabilities brought to iOS 14.

Routes with cycling directions can be planned on Mac and sent to iOS, with the directions taking into account elevation, busy roads, stairs, and more, plus there are options for planning routes that incorporate electric vehicle charging stations.



Guides created by trusted brands and partners list suggestions of places to eat, shop, and visit in cities across the world, and you can create your own Guides in the Maps app in macOS Big Sur and then share them with friends and family.



macOS Big Sur adds Look Around to the Maps app, so you can explore cities in a detailed, street-level view, and with indoor maps, you can see inside airports and shopping centers to familiarize yourself with layouts before heading out.

Live updates for shared ETAs can be viewed in the Maps app so you can follow along with the progress of someone who has shared an ETA right on your Mac, and Apple's more

detailed maps are set to be rolled out in Canada, Ireland, and the UK in 2020.

Other New Features

Spotlight

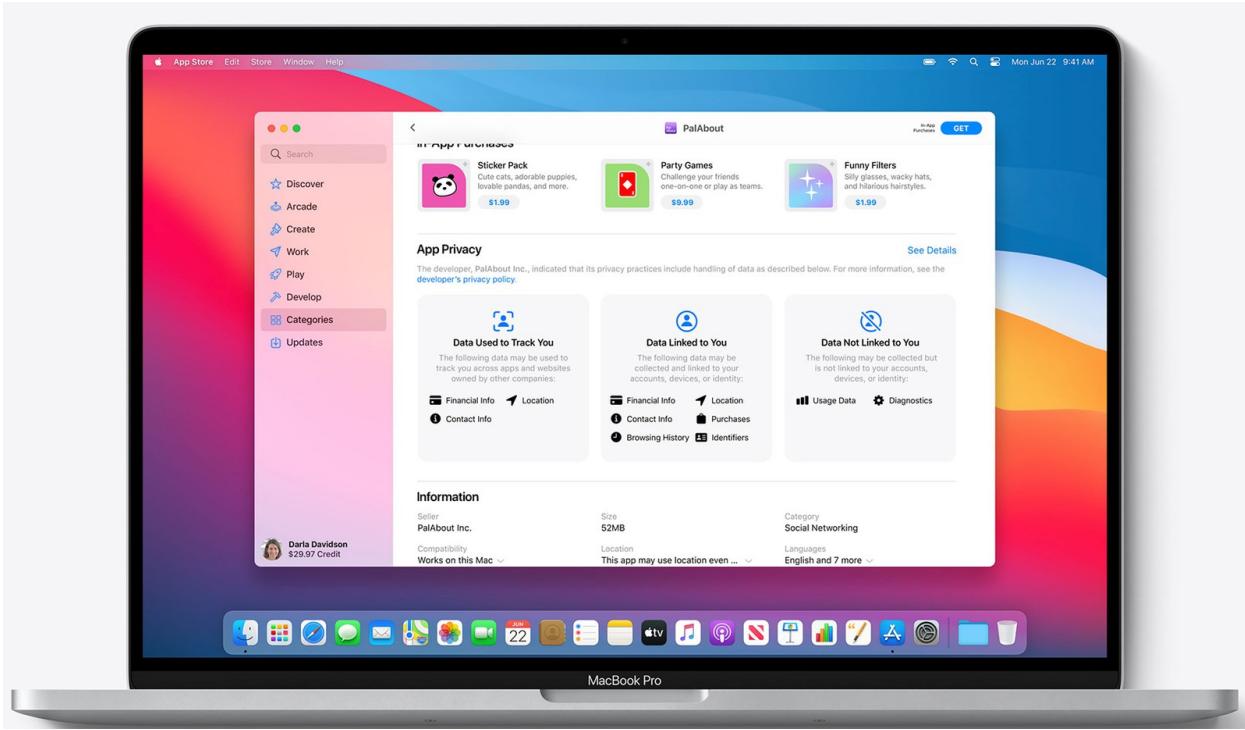
Searching with the Spotlight feature in Finder is faster than before, and the results are presented in a more streamlined list that's easier to parse.

Quick Look in Spotlight allows for full-size scrollable previews of almost any document or website with tools for making quick edits like cropping, signing PDFs, and more. Quick Look tools can be used without launching an app for speedier editing.

Spotlight also now powers the Find menu in Safari, Pages, Keynote, and other apps.

App Store

Apple is adding a "nutrition label" for apps in the App Store and Mac App Store, which will include information from developers on what data is collected and whether that data is used to track you across other apps and websites, so you can make informed decisions about the apps you download.



Developers will be self-reporting this information, and it will be included in the Mac App Store when Big Sur launches.

Apple Arcade includes deeper Game Center integration so you can see games that are popular with friends, view games that have achievements and milestones, and view your achievements in-game with the Game Center profile.

Apple Arcade in Big Sur also allows recently played games to be viewed in the Apple Arcade tab so you can seamlessly switch between platforms. There are new filters for finding Apple Arcade content, and in the future, the Apple Arcade section of the App Store will include sneak peeks at upcoming games.

App developers are now able to make in-app purchases and app subscriptions sharable among multiple family members, so multiple people can use subscription app features.

Photos

The Photos app has an improved retouching tool for removing unwanted elements from images, and all of the photo editing tools are now also available when editing videos.

Vibrance can be applied to photos, and the intensity of filters and Portrait Lighting effects can be adjusted for subtler edits.

Descriptions, the feature that allows text to be added to images to add another search element, has been renamed "Captions" to fit in with the new Captions option in iOS 14.

AirPods

With macOS Big Sur and iOS 14, AirPods automatically switch between active devices paired to the same iCloud account.

So if you watch a video on your iPhone and then swap over to your Mac, your AirPods will switch between the iPhone and the Mac seamlessly without the need to use the Bluetooth controls to change devices.

HomeKit

HomeKit Secure Video cameras viewed in the Home app now support Face Recognition and Activity Zones. With Face Recognition, the camera learns people's names from the Photos app, so it can detect friends and family to let you know who's at the door or captured on video.

Activity Zones allow certain areas of high motion to be blocked out, so you can better tailor motion detection notifications.

HomeKit-connected smart lights that change color throughout the day can take advantage of a new Adaptive

Lighting feature that's basically Night Shift for light bulbs. It changes the color temperature of the bulb throughout the day, minimizing blue light at night.

The Home app also features a redesigned main toolbar interface that lets you see important accessories at a glance and accessories that need attention, such as those low on battery, having connectivity problems, or with updates to install.

Apple Music

"For You" in Apple Music has been replaced with "Listen Now," an interface that provides new releases, artist interviews, and personalized playlists in one place. It's similar to "For You," but with more emphasis on personalized content and new releases.

Search in Apple Music incorporates different genres and music based on categories like "Summertime Sounds" to make it easier to find something new to listen to.

Notes

As with iOS, the Pinned notes section can be expanded or collapsed, and there are additional text styles and formatting options that can be accessed in a flash with the new Quick Styles feature.

Search includes "Top Hits" with suggestions of what might be most relevant, and the scanner feature for Continuity Camera is better, resulting in sharper scans with improved autocropping.

Reminders

Reminders can now be assigned to people who share lists, and smart suggestions are offered up based on reminders

you've created in the past. Lists can be personalized with emoji, there are more organizational options for smart lists, search is better than ever, and there are new keyboard shortcuts for navigating lists and changing reminder dates.

Weather

The Weather widget provides government alerts about severe weather events, offers details on when there are major shifts in temperature coming, and provides next-hour precipitation details.

Compatibility

macOS Big Sur is compatible with most 2013 and later machines, outlined below:

- 2015 and later MacBook
- 2013 and later MacBook Air
- Late 2013 and later MacBook Pro
- 2014 and later iMac
- 2017 and later iMac Pro
- 2014 and later Mac mini
- 2013 and later Mac Pro

The operating system update does not support the following Macs that were capable of running macOS Catalina:

- 2012 and Early 2013 MacBook Pro
- 2012 MacBook Air
- 2012 and 2013 iMac
- 2012 Mac mini