

Giving Commands with the Mouse, Trackpad, and Keyboard

To use OS X, you need to know how to point and click to choose commands. In addition, you need to know how to type and edit text. That means you need to know how to use keyboard and a mouse or a trackpad.

The mouse/trackpad is the main way to control a Mac. Once you understand how to move the pointer on the screen by moving the mouse (or sliding your finger across the trackpad surface), you need to know how to give commands to OS X. The following are the four basic tasks needed to perform commands through the mouse or trackpad:

- Hover
- Click (also known as *left-click* because you use the left mouse button)
- Drag
- Right-click (also known as *secondary click*)

Hovering

To *hover*, or *hovering*, means to move the pointer over something that appears on the screen. A common example of hovering is when you place the pointer over an icon and then wait a few seconds until a brief explanation of the icon's purpose pops up.

By hovering the pointer over the icons in any program's user interface, you can often learn the command that each icon represents.

Hovering lets you tell OS X this: “Do you see where the pointer is? Whatever appears underneath the pointer is what I want to choose.”

Note If you can't see the pointer, jiggle the mouse (or slide your finger erratically across the trackpad surface). This temporarily enlarges the pointer so you can easily find it on the screen.

Pointing and Clicking

The most common use for clicking is to choose a command. For example, if you move the pointer over the Apple icon on the menu bar and then click, you're telling OS X, “I want to open the Apple menu.”

When the Apple menu appears, you can move the pointer over the System Preferences command and click again, which tells OS X, “Choose the System Preferences command.” When you choose the System Preferences command, the System Preferences window appears.

When you move the pointer over the Mouse or Trackpad icon in the System Preferences window and click, you tell OS X, “Show me the options that I can use to modify the mouse or trackpad.”

Within the Mouse or Trackpad window, you could point and click check boxes to select or disable features such as secondary click.

When you finish changing options for the mouse or trackpad, you can then point at the red button (the close button) in the upper-left corner of the Mouse or Trackpad window and click to close the window.

This point-and-click procedure is something that you use every time you use a Mac. The most common use for point-and-click is to choose a command from a menu or to choose an option in a window, such as clicking a button or a check box.

Note Always make sure that you point at the correct item that you want to choose before clicking the mouse or trackpad. If you point at the wrong item and click, you won't get the expected result, which will likely confuse and frustrate you.

Pointing at something on the screen and then clicking it is the most common task that you'll do with a mouse/trackpad. To practice pointing and clicking, try the following exercise to discover the type of Mac that you have and which version of OS X you are using:

1. Click the Apple icon on the menu bar to display a pull-down menu.
2. Point and click About This Mac. A window appears, as shown in Figure 2-1.



Figure 2-1. The Overview tab tells you the OS X version and the type of Mac that you're using

3. Click the Displays tab (see Figure 2-2). The window now lists the resolution of your monitor and the type of graphics processor inside your Mac.

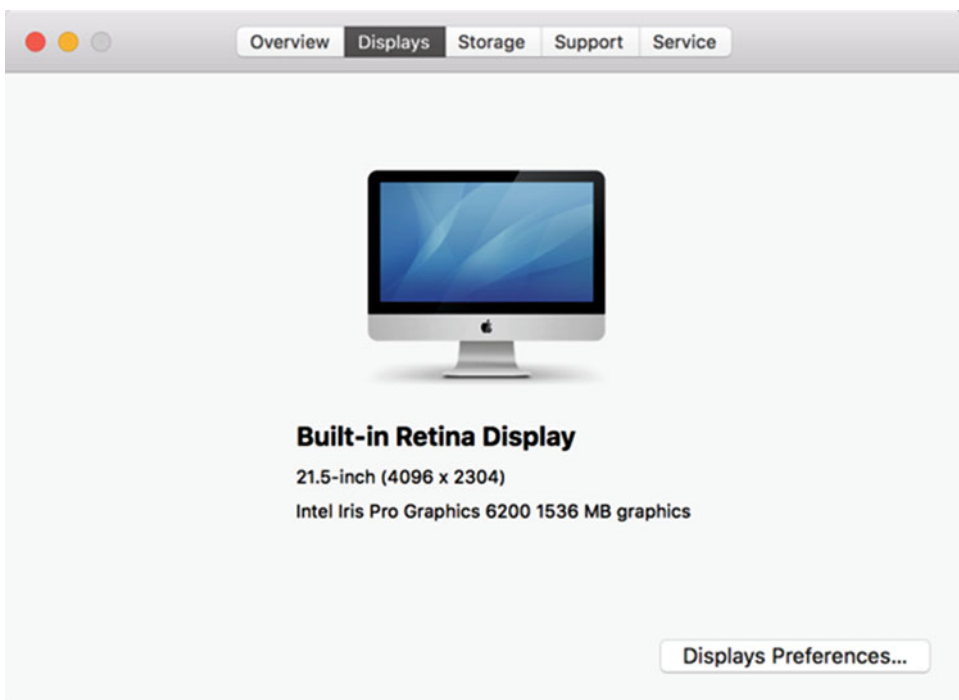


Figure 2-2. The Displays tab identifies information about your monitor and graphics processor

4. Click the Storage tab (see Figure 2-3). The window now lists the storage capacity of your hard disk and any external hard disks connected to your Mac.

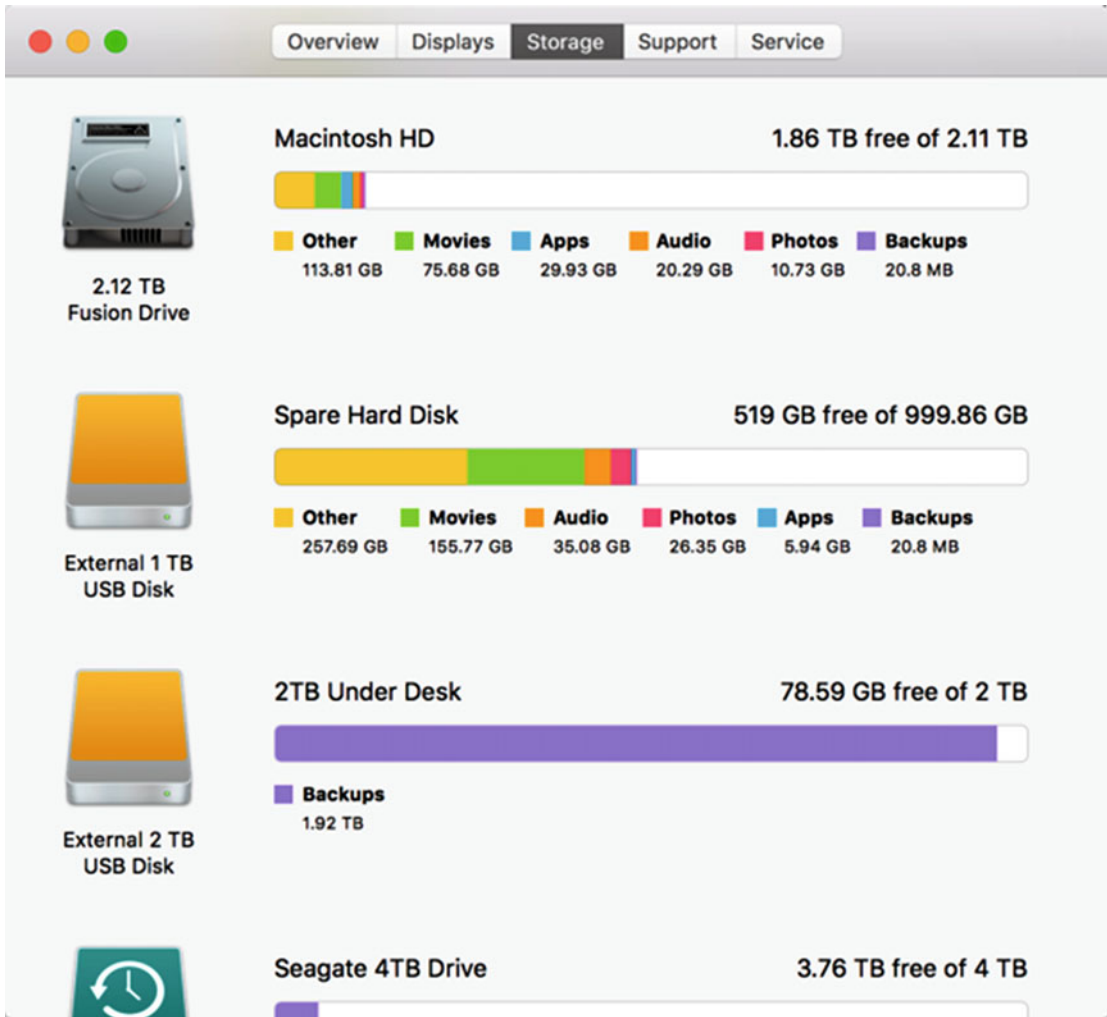


Figure 2-3. The Storage tab lets you see how much room your Mac has available on hard disk or solid-state storage

Note If the memory in your Mac can be upgraded, you also see a Memory tab that lists which types of memory chips are plugged into the memory slots in your Mac.

5. Click the red close button (the red dot in the upper-left corner of the window) to close the window.

Notice that by pointing and clicking with the mouse or trackpad, you can perform common tasks like choosing menu commands, opening and closing a window, and choosing options inside that window.

In this case, you learned how to open the About This Mac window to identify the different features of your Mac.

Dragging

The mouse and trackpad are most commonly used for pointing and clicking to select commands and options. The second-most common use for the mouse and trackpad is *dragging*.

Dragging involves the following three steps:

1. Move the pointer over the object that you want to manipulate.
2. Hold down the left mouse button (or keep your finger pressed on the trackpad).
3. Move the mouse (or hold your finger down on the trackpad and slide it around).

Dragging is most often used to move something on the screen such as a window, a picture, or a chunk of text. For novices, dragging might initially feel awkward since you need to hold down the left mouse button while moving the mouse (or keep your finger pressed down while moving your fingertip across the trackpad surface), so here's a simple exercise to let you practice dragging.

Note To move anything on the screen with the mouse or trackpad, make sure that you select it first. That means positioning the pointer exactly over the object that you want to move. If the pointer isn't over the object that you want to move, then dragging won't do anything but move the pointer.

1. Click the Apple icon on the menu bar to display a pull-down menu.
2. Choose (point and click) About This Mac. The About This Mac window appears.
3. Move the pointer over the gray area (called the *title bar*) near the top of the window, as shown in Figure 2-4.



Figure 2-4. The title bar of a window appears as a gray band near the top

4. Hold down the left mouse button and move the mouse (or press the trackpad surface and move your finger). Holding down the left mouse button or pressing the trackpad surface while moving the mouse or your finger at the same time is called *dragging*. Notice that the window moves wherever you move the pointer.
5. Release the left mouse button, or lift your finger off the trackpad, when you're happy with the position of the About This Mac window.
6. Click the red button (the close button) in the upper-left corner of the About This Mac window to make it disappear.

Remember, when dragging the mouse (or trackpad), keep the left mouse button or finger pressed down on the trackpad. If you lift up your finger too soon, OS X stops moving your selected object on the screen.

Right-Clicking (or Secondary Clicking)

Right-clicking (also known as *secondary clicking*) is used far less often. In fact, it's possible to use a Mac without ever using the right-click or secondary click command at all, which is why some Mac computers have secondary clicking turned off.

However, right-clicking offers shortcuts to common commands. To right-click, first move the pointer over the object that you want to manipulate. Then choose the right-click command in one of the following ways:

- (Mouse) Press and release the right mouse button
- (Trackpad) Press and release two fingers on the surface of the trackpad
- (Mouse or trackpad) Hold down the Control key and then press and release the left mouse button (or press and release one finger on the trackpad)

When you right-click over an item, a pop-up menu appears, showing you a list of commands for manipulating the object that the pointer currently appears on. So if you right-click a picture, you only see a pop-up menu of commands for manipulating pictures, as shown in Figure 2-5.

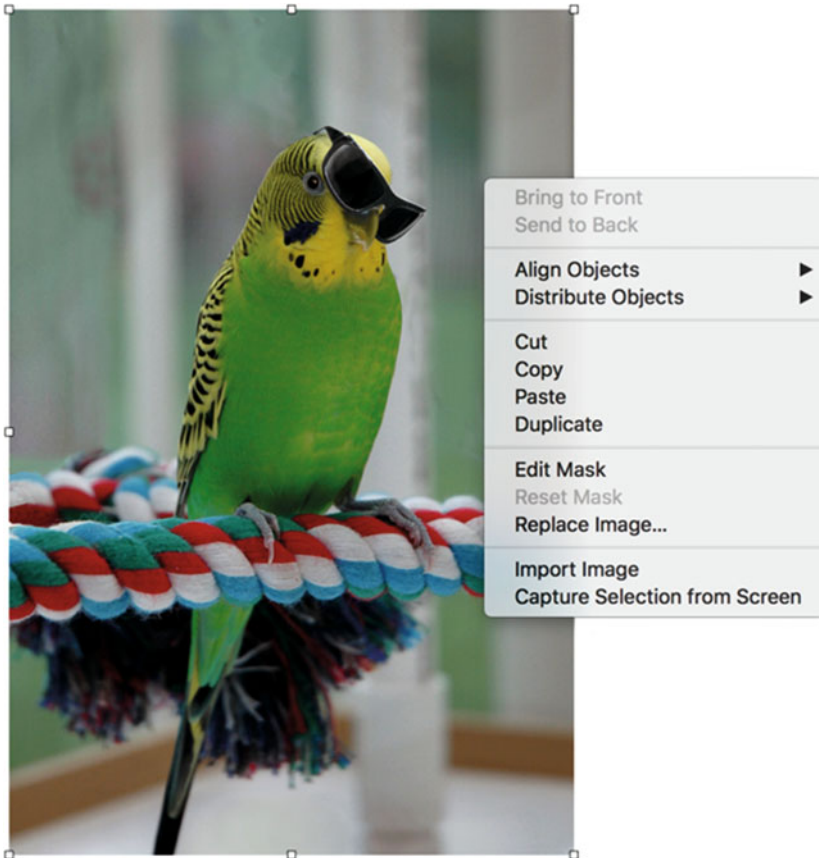


Figure 2-5. Right-clicking over an image displays a pop-up menu of image manipulation commands

If you right-click over selected text, you only see a pop-up menu of commands for manipulating text, as shown in Figure 2-6.

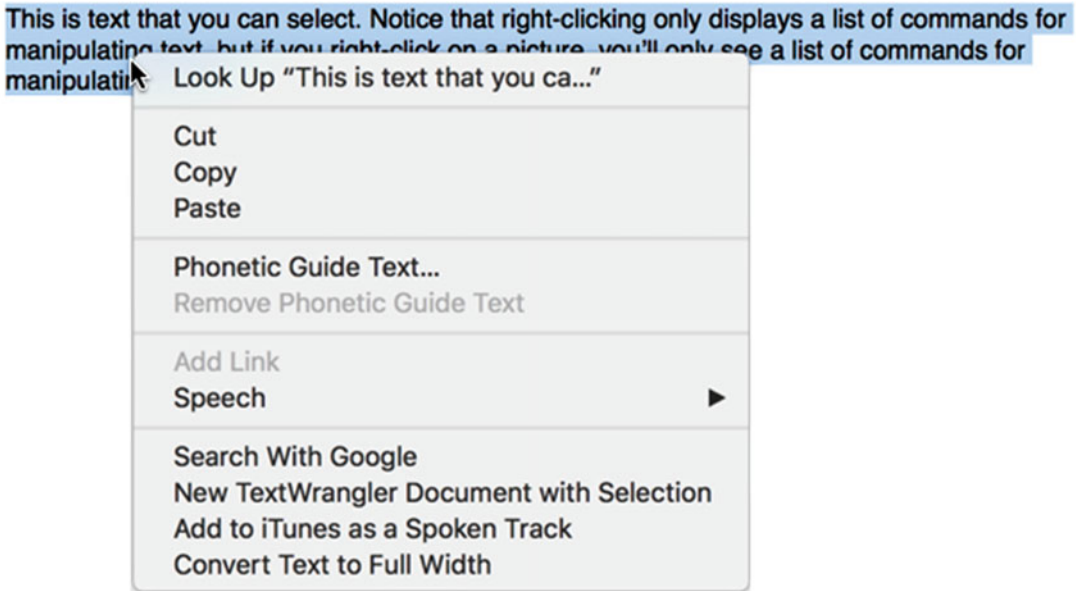


Figure 2-6. Right-clicking over selected text displays a pop-up menu of text manipulation commands

To see how right-clicking can display a pop-up menu of commands, try the following exercise:

1. Move the pointer anywhere over the desktop wallpaper image.
2. Click the right mouse button (or press two fingers on the trackpad surface) and lift up your fingers. A pop-up menu appears, as shown in Figure 2-7.

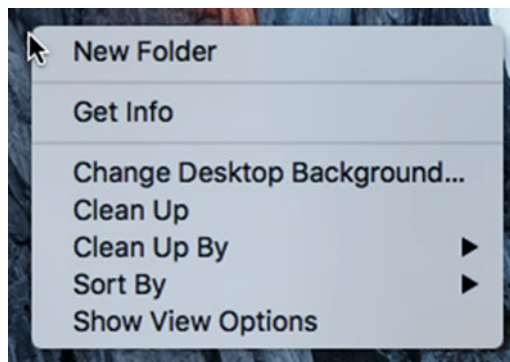


Figure 2-7. Right-clicking over the desktop displays a pop-up menu of commands for manipulating the desktop

3. Click the Change Desktop Background command. The Desktop & Screen Saver window appears.
4. Click the red dot (the close button) in the upper-left corner of the Desktop & Screen Saver window to make it disappear.

Let's see how to find the Change Desktop Background command without right-clicking. It takes the same number of steps, but notice how you need to hunt around to finally find it.

1. Click the Apple icon on the menu bar at the top of the screen. A pull-down menu appears.
2. Click System Preferences. The System Preferences window appears.
3. Click the Desktop & Screen Saver icon. The Desktop & Screen Saver window appears.
4. Click the red dot (the close button) in the upper-left corner of the Desktop & Screen Saver window to make it disappear.

Both methods work, but right-clicking saves you the time of hunting around the screen, looking for the right commands to choose. Just remember that right-clicking may not always display a commands pop-up menu for everything that the pointer appears over.

Using the Keyboard

The keyboard is mostly used to create and edit text. Beyond the normal character keys that let you type letters, numbers, and symbols, the two other types of keys on the keyboard are the cursor keys and the modifier keys.

The cursor keys let you move the cursor up, down, left, or right within text. Occasionally, you can also use the cursor keys to move objects on the screen after you have selected them.

The modifier keys are used to change the behavior of another key, such as the S or O key. Pressing a modifier key along with another key lets you access keystroke shortcuts for common commands.

The most common modifier key is the Command key. The following are the most common keystroke shortcuts that work in nearly every OS X program:

- Command+N: The New command
- Command+O: The Open command
- Command+P: The Print command
- Command+S: The Save command

The advantage of keystroke shortcuts is that they let you choose a command quickly, without wasting time looking for the command in a pull-down menu. The disadvantage is that you must memorize the keystrokes to choose your favorite commands.

To help you find keystroke shortcuts for common commands, just look at the commands in any pull-down menu. The most common commands in each pull-down menu show the keystroke shortcuts to the right of the command, as shown in Figure 2-8.

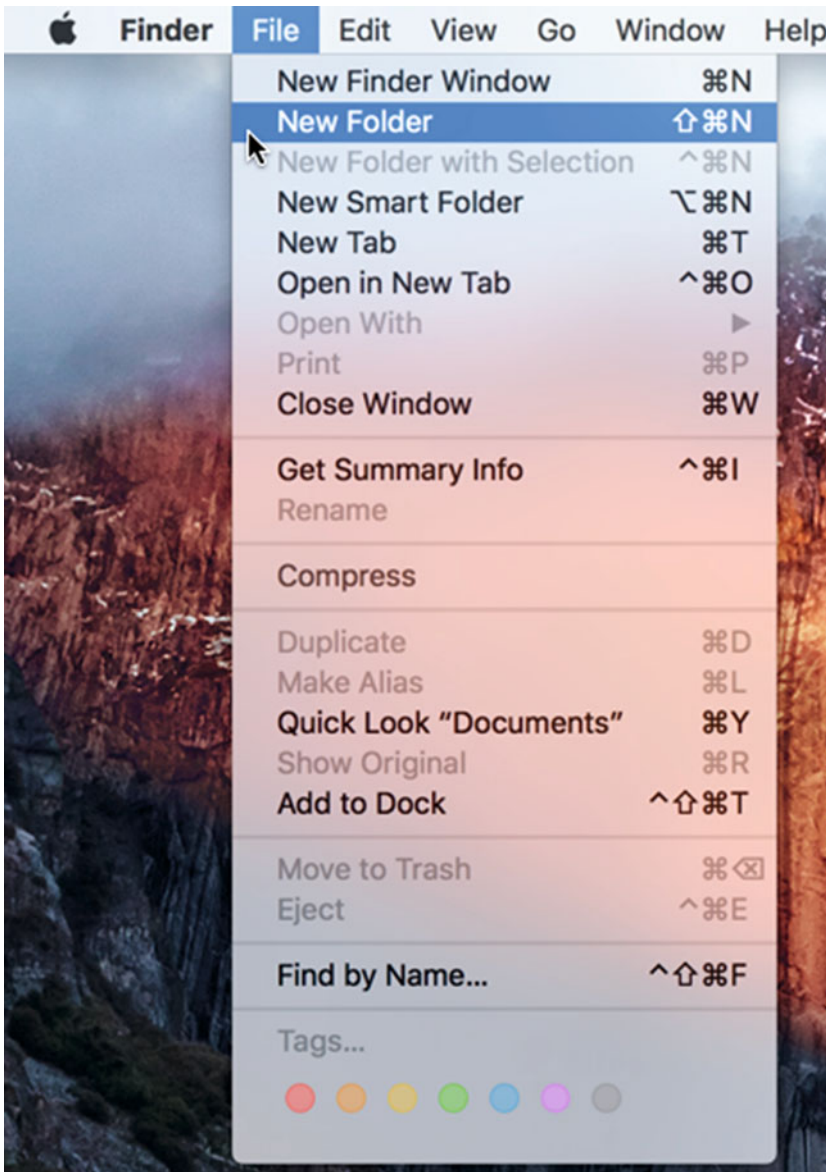


Figure 2-8. Almost every pull-down menu lists keystroke shortcuts

Keep in mind that the same keystroke shortcuts may not work the same in every program. In the Finder program shown in Figure 2-8, for example, you can press Shift+Command+N to choose the New Folder command, but if you press Shift+Command+N in another program, nothing at all may happen.

The most common keystroke shortcuts only use two keys, such as Command+S. The less common keystroke shortcuts use three or more keys, such as Control+Shift+Command+T.

To see how keystroke shortcuts work, try the following exercise:

1. Click the Finder icon on the Dock, as shown in Figure 2-9.



Figure 2-9. The Finder icon appears on the left side of the Dock at the bottom of the screen

2. Hold down the Command key and tap the N key (Command+N). Release both keys. This chooses the New Finder Window command, which opens another Finder window on the screen.
3. Click the File menu and choose New Finder Window. Notice that this opens another Finder window on the screen.
4. Click the red dot (the close button) in the upper-left corner of each Finder window to make it disappear.

For commonly used commands, it's much faster to memorize and use keystroke shortcuts. For less commonly used commands, it's easier to use pull-down menus rather than trying to memorize obscure keystroke combinations.

Summary

The three ways to control your computer involve the mouse, trackpad, and keyboard. Most desktops use the mouse, whereas most laptops use the trackpad, but it's possible to use both.

The four commands for using a mouse or trackpad are hover, click, drag, and right-click.

Hover means moving the pointer over something on the screen, such as an icon, which usually displays a brief explanation of the command that the icon represents.

Clicking means pressing and releasing the left mouse button once, or pressing and releasing your finger on the trackpad surface.

Dragging means holding down the left mouse button while moving the mouse, or pressing one finger on the trackpad while sliding your fingertip across the trackpad surface.

Right-clicking means pressing and releasing the right mouse button once, or pressing and releasing two fingers on the trackpad surface.

Right-clicking displays a pop-up menu of common commands for manipulating the object that the pointer currently appears on.

The keyboard offers modifier keys to choose shortcuts. The most common modifier key is the Command key.

Make sure that you feel comfortable using the mouse to click and drag. Right-clicking is optional but it can make using OS X much easier.

To find common keystroke shortcuts, look in the different pull-down menus of your favorite programs. Just remember that each program may use different keystroke shortcuts to choose the same commands.

Once you get comfortable giving commands to your Mac through the mouse/trackpad and keyboard, you're ready to start exploring and customizing the different features of OS X.