

LEARNING MADE EASY



In Full Color

macOS[™] Sierra

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Get acquainted with the
newest features of macOS Sierra

Discover shortcuts for saving
time when working on your Mac[®]

Get creative with the latest
tools with macOS Sierra

Bob “Dr. Mac” LeVitus



macOS[™] Sierra

for **dummies**[®]

A Wiley Brand

by Bob “Dr. Mac” LeVitus

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

macOS™ Sierra For Dummies®

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Introduction

You made the right choice twice: macOS Sierra (version 10.12) and this book. Take a deep breath and get ready to have a rollicking good time. That's right. This is a computer book, but it's fun. What a concept! Whether you're brand spanking new to the Mac or a grizzled Mac vet, I guarantee that reading this book to discover the ins and outs of macOS Sierra will make everything easier. The publisher couldn't say as much on the cover if it weren't true!

About This Book

This book's roots lie with my international best seller *Macintosh System 7.5 For Dummies*, an award-winning book so good that long-deceased Mac clone-maker Power Computing gave away a copy with every Mac clone it sold. *macOS Sierra For Dummies* is the latest revision and has been, once again, completely updated to include all the tasty goodness in macOS Sierra. In other words, this edition combines all the old, familiar features of previous editions — but is once again updated to reflect the latest and greatest offering from Apple as well as feedback from readers.

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

In fact, I think you'll be so darned comfortable that I wanted the title to be *macOS Sierra Made Easy*, but the publishers wouldn't let me. Apparently, we *For Dummies* authors have to follow some rules, and using *For Dummies* in this book's title is one of them.

And speaking of dummies — remember, that's just a word. I don't think you're a dummy at all — quite the opposite! My second choice for this book's title was *macOS Sierra For People Smart Enough to Know They Need This Book*, but you can just imagine what Wiley thought of that. ("C'mon, that's the whole point of the name!" they insisted. "Besides, it's shorter our way.")

The book is chock-full of information and advice, explaining everything you need to know about macOS Sierra in language you can understand — along with time-saving tips, tricks, techniques, and step-by-step instructions, all served up in generous quantities.

Another rule we *For Dummies* authors must follow is that our books cannot exceed a certain number of pages. (Brevity is the soul of wit, and all that.) So I wish I could have included some things that didn't fit and while I feel confident you'll find what you need to know about macOS Sierra in this book, some things bear further looking into, including these:

» **Information about many of the applications (programs) that come with macOS Sierra:**

An installation of macOS Sierra includes roughly 50 applications, mostly located in the Applications and Utilities folders. I'd love to walk you through each one of them, but that would have required a book a whole lot bigger, heavier, and more expensive than this one.

I brief you on the handful of bundled applications essential to using macOS Sierra and keep the focus there — namely, Calendar, Contacts, Messages, Mail, Safari, Siri, TextEdit, and the like — as well as several important utilities you may need to know how to use someday.

» **Information about Microsoft Office, Apple lifestyle and productivity apps (iMovie, Numbers, Pages, and so on), Adobe Photoshop, Quicken, and other third-party applications:**

Okay, if all the gory details of all the bundled (read: *free*) macOS Sierra applications don't fit here, I think you'll understand why digging into third-party applications that cost extra was out of the question.

» **Information about programming for the Mac:**

This book is about using macOS Sierra, not writing code for it. Dozens of books — most of which are two or three times the size of this book — cover programming on the Mac; this one doesn't.

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 web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

Foolish Assumptions

Although I know what happens when you make assumptions, I've made a few anyway. First, 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. And so I do my best to explain each new concept in full and loving detail. Maybe that's foolish, but . . . that's how I roll.

Oh, and I also assume that you can read. If you can't, ignore this paragraph.

Icons Used in This Book

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



TIP

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



REMEMBER

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



TECHNICAL
STUFF

Put on your propeller-beanie hat and pocket protector; these parts include the truly geeky stuff. It's certainly not required reading, but it must be interesting or informative, or I wouldn't have wasted your time with it.



WARNING

Read these notes very, very, very carefully. (Did I say *very*?) Warning icons flag important cautionary information. The author and publisher won't be responsible if your Mac explodes or spews flaming parts because you ignored a Warning icon. Just kidding. Macs don't explode or spew (with the exception of a few choice PowerBook 5300s, which won't run Sierra anyway). But I got your attention, didn't I?



NEW

Well, now, what could this icon possibly be about? Named by famous editorial consultant Mr. Obvious, this icon highlights all things new and different in macOS Sierra.

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this product also comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet that provides handy shortcuts for use with macOS Sierra, offers my backup recommendations, and more. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and type **macOS Sierra For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box.

Where to Go from Here

The first few chapters of this book are where I describe the basic things that you need to understand to operate your Mac effectively. If you're new to Macs and macOS Sierra, start there.

macOS Sierra is only slightly different from previous Mac operating systems, and the first part of the book presents concepts so basic that if you've been using a Mac for long, you might think you know it all — and okay, you might know most of it. But remember that not-so-old-timers need a solid foundation, too. So here's my advice: Skim through stuff you already know and you'll get to the better stuff sooner.

I would love to hear how this book worked for you. So please send me your thoughts, platitudes, likes and dislikes, and any other comments. Did this book work for you? What did you like? What didn't you like? What questions were unanswered? Did you want to know more (or less) about something? Tell me! I have received more than 100 suggestions about previous editions, many of which are incorporated here. So please (please!) keep up the good work! Email me at macOSSierraForDummies@boblevitus.com. I appreciate your feedback, and I try to respond to all reasonably polite email within a few days.

So what are you waiting for? Go! Enjoy the book!

1

Introducing macOS Sierra: The Basics

IN THIS PART . . .

Find the most basic of basics, including how to turn on your Mac.

Get a gentle introduction to the Sierra Finder and its Desktop.

Make the Dock work harder for you.

Find everything you need to know about Sierra's windows, icons, and menus (oh my)!

Get all the bad puns and wisecracks you've come to expect.

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

IN THIS CHAPTER

Understanding what an operating system is and is not

Turning on your Mac

Getting to know the startup process

Turning off your Mac

Avoiding major Mac mistakes

Pointing, clicking, dragging, and other uses for your mouse

Getting help from your Mac

Chapter 1

macOS Sierra 101 (Prerequisites: None)

Congratulate yourself on choosing macOS Sierra 10.12, the thirteenth release of the operating system (OS) formerly known as OS X. Congratulate yourself for scoring more than just an OS upgrade. See, macOS Sierra includes a few new features that make using your Mac even easier, plus hundreds of tweaks to help you do more work in less time.

In this chapter, I start at the very beginning and talk about macOS in mostly abstract terms; then I move on to explain what you need to know to use macOS Sierra successfully.

If you've been using macOS (formerly OS X) for a while, most of the information in this chapter may seem hauntingly familiar; a number of features that I describe haven't changed in years. But if you decide to skip this chapter because you think you have all the new stuff figured out, I assure you that you'll miss at least a

couple of things that Apple didn't bother to tell you (as if you read every word in macOS Help — the only user manual Apple provides — anyway!).

Tantalized? Let's rock.

Gnawing to the Core of macOS

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.

“So what does an operating system do?” you ask. Good question. The short answer is that an 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 (No kidding!)

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 their magic. 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 crucial functions such as the following:

- » Providing the mechanism for drawing and moving the onscreen 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
- » And much, much more (stuff that only geeks could care about)

So, armed with a little background in operating systems, take a gander at the next section before you do anything else with your Mac.



THE MAC ADVANTAGE

Most of the world's personal computers use Microsoft Windows (although more and more people are switching to the Mac). But you're among the lucky few to have a computer with an OS that's intuitive, easy to use, and (dare I say?) fun. If you don't believe me, try using Windows for a day or two. Go ahead. You probably won't suffer any permanent damage. In fact, you'll really begin to appreciate how good you have it. Feel free to hug your Mac. Or give it a peck on the disc drive slot (assuming that your Mac has one; most, including the MacBook, MacBook Air, and Mac mini at this writing, don't). Just try not to get your tongue caught.

As someone once told me, "Claiming that macOS is inferior to Windows because more people use Windows is like saying that all other restaurants serve food that's inferior to McDonald's."

We might be a minority, but Mac users have the best, most stable, most modern all-purpose operating system in the world, and here's why: Unix, on which macOS is based, is widely regarded as the best industrial-strength operating system on the planet. For now, just know that being based on Unix means that a Mac running macOS will crash less often than an older (pre-OS X) Mac or most Windows machines, which means less downtime. Being Unix-based also means getting far fewer viruses and encounters with malicious software. But perhaps the biggest advantage macOS has is that when an application crashes, it doesn't crash your entire computer, and you don't have to restart the whole computer to continue working.

By the way, since the advent of Intel-powered Macs a few years ago, you can run Windows natively also on any Mac powered by an Intel processor, as I describe in Chapter 20. Note that the opposite isn't true: You can run Windows on your Mac if you care to, but you can't run macOS on a Dell or HP (or any other computer not made by Apple), at least not without serious hacking (which is technically illegal anyway).

And don't let that Unix or Windows stuff scare you. It's there if you want it, but if you don't want it or don't care (like most users), you'll rarely even know it's there. In fact, you'll rarely (if ever) see the word *Unix* or *Windows* again in this book. As far as you're concerned, Unix under the hood means your Mac will just run and run and run without crashing and crashing and crashing. As for Windows, your Mac can run it if you need it; otherwise, it's just another checklist item on the list of reasons Macs are better than PCs.

One last thing: As I mention in this book's Introduction (I'm repeating it here only in case you normally don't read introductions), macOS Sierra comes with more than 50 applications in its Applications folder. Although I'd love to tell you all about each and every one, I have only so many pages at my disposal.

A Safety Net for the Absolute Beginner (or Any User)

In the following sections, I deal with the stuff that macOS Help doesn't cover — or doesn't cover in nearly enough detail. If you're a first-time Mac user, please, *please* read this section of the book carefully; it could save your life. Okay, okay, perhaps I'm being overly dramatic. What I mean to say is that reading this section could save your Mac or your sanity. Even if you're an experienced Mac user, you may want to read this section. Chances are you'll see at least a few things you've forgotten that will come in handy now that you've been reminded of them.

Turning the dang thing on

Okay. This is the big moment — turning on your Mac! Gaze at it longingly first, and say something cheesy, such as, “You're the most awesome computer I've ever known.” If that doesn't turn on your Mac (and it probably won't), read on.

Apple, in its infinite wisdom, has manufactured Macs with power buttons on every conceivable surface: on the front, side, and back of the computer itself, and even on the keyboard and monitor.

So if you don't know how to turn on your Mac, don't feel bad; just look in the manual or booklet that came with your Mac. It's at least one thing that the documentation *always* covers.



If you don't have that little booklet, most Macs have the Power button in the upper-right corner of the keyboard (notebooks) or the back of the screen (iMacs); it usually looks like the little circle thingy you see in the margin.

Don't bother choosing Help ⇨ Mac Help, which opens the Help Viewer program. It can't tell you where the switch is. Although the Help program is good for finding out a lot of things, the location of the power button isn't among them. If you haven't found the switch and turned on the Mac, of course, you can't access Help anyway. (D'oh!)



TIP

Launch the iBooks app and search the iBook Store for the name of your Mac plus the word *Essentials* (for example, “MacBook Essentials,” “iMac Essentials,” or “MacBook Pro Essentials”). Click the Only Show Free Titles check box near the upper-right corner of the iBooks window, and grab the free e-book called, “*Your Mac’s Name Essentials*,” by Apple. At around 100 pages, this booklet isn’t in any way comprehensive, but it does include information you won’t find elsewhere, including where to find the power button on your particular Mac.

What you should see on startup

When you finally do turn on your Mac, you set in motion a sophisticated and complex series of events that culminates in the loading of macOS and the appearance of the macOS Desktop. After a small bit of whirring, buzzing, and flashing (meaning that the OS is loading), macOS first tests all your hardware — slots, ports, disks, random access memory (RAM), and so on. If everything passes, you hear a pleasing musical tone and see the tasteful whitish Apple logo in the middle of your screen, as shown in Figure 1-1.

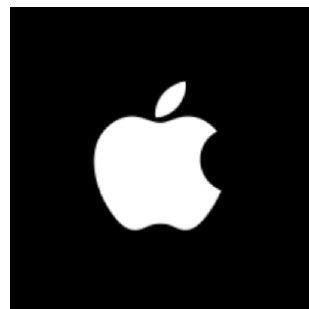


FIGURE 1-1:

This is what you’ll see if everything is fine and dandy when you turn on your Mac.

Here are the things that might happen when you power-up your Mac:



TIP

- » **Fine and dandy:** Next, you might or might not see the macOS login screen, where you enter your name and password. If you do, press Return after you type your name and password, of course, and away you go.

If you don’t want to have to type your name and password every time you start or restart your Mac (or even if you do), check out Chapter 20 for the scoop on how to turn the login screen on or off.

Either way, the Desktop soon materializes before your eyes. If you haven’t customized, configured, or tinkered with your Desktop, it should look pretty much like Figure 1-2. Now is a good time to take a moment for positive thoughts about the person who convinced you that you wanted a Mac. That person was right!

- » **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.

FIGURE 1-2:
The macOS
Sierra Desktop
after a brand-
spanking-new
installation of
macOS Sierra.



REMEMBER



TIP



Some older Macs played the sound of a horrible car wreck instead of the chimes, complete with crying tires and busting glass. It was exceptionally unnerving, which might be why Apple doesn't use it anymore.

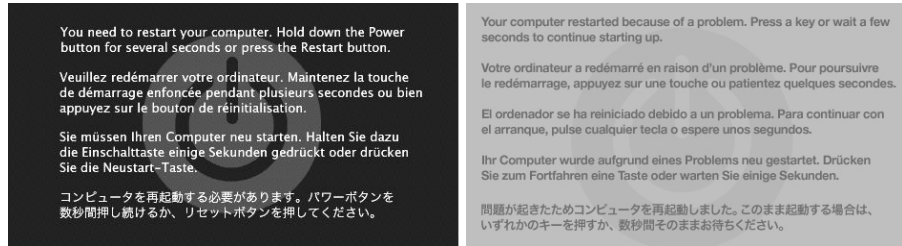
The fact that something went wrong is no reflection on your prowess as a Mac user. Something is broken, and your Mac may need repairs. If this is happening to you right now, check out Chapter 20 to try to get your Mac well again.

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. Before you do anything, though, skip ahead to Chapter 23. It's entirely possible that one of the suggestions there can get you back on track without your having to spend even a moment on hold.

» **Prohibitory sign or flashing question mark in a folder:** Most users eventually encounter the prohibitory sign or flashing question mark in a folder shown in the margin. These icons mean that your Mac can't find a startup disk, hard drive, network server, or DVD-ROM containing a valid Mac operating system. See Chapter 23 for ways to ease your Mac's ills.



» **Kernel panic:** You shouldn't see this very often, but you may occasionally see a block of text in several languages, including English, as shown in Figure 1-3. This means that your Mac has experienced a *kernel panic*, the most severe type of system crash. If you restart your Mac and see either message again, look in Chapter 23 for a myriad of possible cures for all kinds of ailments, including this one.

FIGURE 1-3:
If this is what
you're seeing,
things are
definitely
not fine and
dandy.



TIP

How do you know which version of the macOS your computer has? Simple:

1. **Choose About This Mac from the  menu (the menu with the  symbol in the top-left corner of the menu bar).**

A window pops up on your screen, as shown in Figure 1-4. The version you're running appears just below *macOS Sierra* near the top of the window. Version 10.12 is the release we know as *Sierra*.



FIGURE 1-4:
See which
version of
macOS you're
running.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

If you're curious or just want to impress your friends, OS X version 10.11 was known as 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.

2. **(Optional) Click the Displays, Storage, Support, or Service tabs to see additional details about your Mac.**
3. **Click the System Report button to launch the System Information application and see even more details.**

The System Information app shows you even more about your Mac including bus speed, number of processors, caches, installed memory, networking, storage devices, and much more. You can find more about this useful program in Chapter 22.


Shutting down properly

Turning off the power without shutting down your Mac properly is one of the worst things you can do to your poor Mac. Shutting down your Mac improperly can really screw up your hard or solid-state drive, scramble the contents of your most important files, or both.



WARNING

If a thunderstorm is rumbling nearby, or you're unfortunate enough to have rolling blackouts where you live, you may really want to shut down your Mac and unplug it from the wall. (See the next section, where I briefly discuss lightning and your Mac.) If it's a laptop, you can just disconnect it from its charging cable and continue using it if you like.

To turn off your Mac, always use the Shut Down command from the  menu or shut down in one of these kind-and-gentle ways:

- » Press the Power button for approximately two seconds and then click the Shut Down button in the Are You Sure You Want to Shut Down Your Computer Now? dialog.
- » On keyboards that don't have a Power key, press Control+Eject instead, and then click the Shut Down button that appears in the Are You Sure You Want to Shut Down Your Computer Now? dialog.



TIP

You can use a handy keyboard shortcut when the Shut Down button (or any button, for that matter) is highlighted in blue and pulsating slightly. Pressing the Return key is the same as clicking whichever button is highlighted.

The Are You Sure You Want to Shut Down Your Computer Now? dialog sports a check box option: Reopen Windows When Logging Back In. If you select this check box, your Mac will start back up with the same windows (and applications) that were open when you shut down or restarted. I think that's pretty darn sweet, but you can clear the check box and disable this option if that's not what you want!

Most Mac users have been forced to shut down improperly more than once without anything horrible happening, of course — but don't be lulled into a false sense of security. Break the rules one time too many (or under the wrong circumstances), and your most important files *could* be toast. The *only* time you should turn off your Mac without shutting down properly is when your screen is completely frozen or when your system crashed due to a kernel panic and you've already tried everything else. (See Chapter 23 for what those “everything elses” are.) A really stubborn crash doesn't happen often — and less often under macOS (formerly OS X) than ever before — but when it does, forcing your Mac to turn off and then back on might be the only solution.



ETERNALLY YOURS . . . NOW

macOS is designed so that you never have to shut it down. You can configure it to sleep after a specified period of inactivity. (See Chapter 20 for more info on Energy Saver.) If you do so, your Mac will consume very little electricity when it's sleeping and will usually be ready to use (when you press any key or click the mouse) in a few seconds. On the other hand, if you're not going to be using it for a few days, you might want to shut it down anyway.

Note: If you leave your Mac on constantly, and you're gone when a lightning storm or rolling blackout hits, your Mac might get hit by a power surge or worse. So be sure you have adequate protection — say, a decent surge protector designed specifically for computers — if you decide to leave your Mac on and unattended for long periods. See the section “**A few things you should definitely *not* do with your Mac**,” elsewhere in this chapter, for more info on lightning and your Mac. Often as not, I leave it on when I'm on the road so that I can access it from my laptop via remote screen sharing. So, because macOS is designed to run 24/7, I don't shut it down at night unless the night happens to be dark and stormy.

One last thing: If your Mac is a laptop and will be enclosed in a bag or briefcase for more than a few hours, turn it off. Otherwise, it could overheat — even in Sleep mode.

A few things you should definitely not do with your Mac

In this section, I cover the bad stuff that can happen to your computer if you do the wrong things with it. If something bad has already happened to you . . . I know, I'm beginning to sound like a broken record, but see Chapter 20.

» **Don't unplug your Mac when it's turned on.** Very bad things can happen, such as having your OS break. See the preceding section, where I discuss shutting down your system properly.

Note that this warning doesn't apply to laptops as long as their battery is at least partially charged. As long as there's enough juice in the battery to power your Mac, you can connect and disconnect its power adapter to your heart's content.

» **Don't use your Mac when lightning is near.** Here's a simple life equation for you: Mac + lightning = dead Mac. 'Nuff said. Oh, and don't place much faith in inexpensive surge protectors. A good jolt of lightning will fry the surge protector and your computer, as well as possibly frying your modem, printer,

and anything else plugged into the surge protector. Some surge protectors can withstand most lightning strikes, but those warriors aren't the cheapies that you buy at your local computer emporium. Unplugging your Mac from the wall during electrical storms is safer and less expensive. (Don't forget to unplug your external modem, network hubs, printers, and other hardware that plugs into the wall as well; lightning can fry them, too.)

For laptops, disconnect the power adapter and all other cables because whatever those cables are connected to could fry and fry your laptop right along with it. After you do that, you can use your laptop during a storm if you care to. Just make sure that it's 100 percent wireless and cableless if you do.



TIP

- » **Don't jostle, bump, shake, kick, throw, dribble, or punt your Mac, especially while it's running.** Many older Macs contain a hard drive that spins at 5,200 revolutions per minute (rpm) or more. A jolt to a hard drive while it's reading or writing a file can cause the head to crash into the disk, which can render many — or all — files on it unrecoverable. Ouch!

Don't think you're exempt if your Mac uses a solid-state drive with no moving parts. A good bump to your Mac could damage other components. Treat your Mac like it's a carton of eggs, and you'll never be sorry.

- » **Don't forget to back up your data!** If the files on your hard drive mean anything to you, you must back up. Not maybe. *Must*. Even if your most important file is your last saved game of Bejeweled, you still need to back up your files. Fortunately, Sierra includes an awesome backup utility called Time Machine. (Unfortunately, you need either an external hard drive or an Apple Time Capsule device to take advantage of it.) So I beg you: Please read Chapter 21 now, and find out how to back up before something horrible happens to your valuable data!



TIP

I *strongly* recommend that you read Chapter 21 sooner rather than later — preferably before you do any significant work on your Mac. Dr. Mac says, "There are only two kinds of Mac users: Those who have lost data and those who will." Which kind do you want to be?

- » **Don't kiss your monitor while wearing stuff on your lips.** For obvious reasons! Use a clean, soft cloth and/or OmniCleans display cleaning solution (I love the stuff, made by RadTech; www.radtech.us) to clean your display.



WARNING

Definitely do not use household window cleaners or paper towels. Either one can harm your display. Use a soft clean cloth (preferably microfiber), and if you're going to use a cleaner, make sure it's specifically designed not to harm computer displays. Finally, spray the cleaner on the *cloth*, not on the screen.

Point-and-click boot camp

Are you new to the Mac? Just figuring out how to move the mouse around? Now is a good time to go over some fundamental stuff that you need to know for just about everything you'll be doing on the Mac. Spend a few minutes reading this section, and soon you'll be clicking, double-clicking, pressing, and pointing all over the place. If you think you have the whole mousing thing pretty much figured out, feel free to skip this section. I'll catch you on the other side.

Still with me? Good. Now for some basic terminology:

» **Point:** Before you can click or press anything, you have to *point* to it. Place your hand on your mouse, and move it so that the cursor arrow is over the object you want — like on top of an icon or a button.

If you're using a trackpad, slide your finger lightly across the pad until the cursor arrow is over the object you want.

» **Click:** Also called *single click*. Use your index finger to push the mouse button all the way down and then let go so that the button (usually) produces a satisfying clicking sound. (If you have one of the optical Apple Pro mice, you push the whole thing down to click.) Use a single click to highlight an icon, press a button, or activate a check box or window.

In other words, first you point and then you click — *point and click*, in computer lingo.

If you're using a trackpad, press down on it to click.

» **Double-click:** *Click twice* in rapid succession. With a little practice, you can perfect this technique in no time. Use a double-click to open a folder or to launch a file or application.

Trackpad users: Press down on the pad two times in rapid succession.

» **Control-click:** Hold down the Control key while single-clicking. (Also called *secondary-click* or *right-click*.)

Trackpad users can either hold down the Control key while pressing down on the pad with one finger, or by tapping the trackpad with two fingers without holding down the Control key.

If tapping your trackpad with two fingers didn't bring up the little menu, check your Trackpad System Preferences pane (see Chapter 5).

Control-clicking — the same as right-clicking a Windows system — displays a menu (called a *contextual* or *shortcut menu*). In fact, if you're blessed with a two-or-more-button mouse (such as the Apple Magic Mouse), you can right-click and avoid having to hold down the Control key. (You may have to enable this feature in the Mouse System Preference pane.)



» **Drag:** *Dragging* something usually means you have to click it first and hold down the mouse or trackpad button. Then you move the mouse on your desk or mouse pad (or your finger on the trackpad) so that the cursor and whatever you select moves across the screen. The combination of holding down the button and dragging the mouse is usually referred to as *clicking and dragging*.

» **Wiggle (or jiggle):** This welcome improvement, introduced in El Capitan (and terrific if I do say so myself) is awesome when you lose track of the pointer on your screen. Just wiggle your mouse back and forth (or jiggle your finger back and forth on the trackpad) for a few seconds and the pointer will magically get much bigger, making it easier to see on the screen. And, of course, when you stop wiggling or jiggling, the pointer returns to its normal size.

» **Choosing an item from a menu:** To get to macOS menu commands, you must first open a menu and then choose the option you want. Point at the name of the menu you want with your cursor, press the mouse button, and then drag downward until you select the command you want. When the command is highlighted, finish selecting by letting go of the mouse button.



If you're a longtime Mac user, you probably hold down the mouse button the whole time between clicking the name of the menu and selecting the command you want. You can still do it that way, but you can also click the menu name to open it, release the mouse button, point at the item you want to select, *and then click again*. In other words, macOS menus stay open after you click their names, even if you're not holding down the mouse button. After you click a menu's name to open it, you can even type the first letter (or letters) of the item to select it and then execute that item by pressing the spacebar or the Return key. Furthermore, menus remain open until you click something else.

Go ahead and give it a try . . . I'll wait.



The terms given in the preceding list apply to all Mac laptop, desktop, and tower systems. If you use a MacBook, MacBook Pro, MacBook Air, or Apple Magic Trackpad, however, there are a few more terms — such as *tap*, *swipe*, *rotate*, *pinch*, and *spread* — you'll want to add to your lexicon. You can read all about them in full and loving detail in Chapter 4.

Not Just a Beatles Movie: Help and the Help Menu

One of the best features about all Macs is the excellent built-in help, and macOS Sierra doesn't cheat you on that legacy: This system has online help in abundance.

When you have a question about how to do something, the Help Center is the first place you should visit (after this book, of course).

Clicking the Help menu reveals the Search field at the top of the menu and the Mac Help and New to Mac items. Choosing Mac Help opens the Mac Help window, as shown in Figure 1-5; choosing New to Mac launches Safari and displays a tour of macOS Sierra.

Table of Contents button

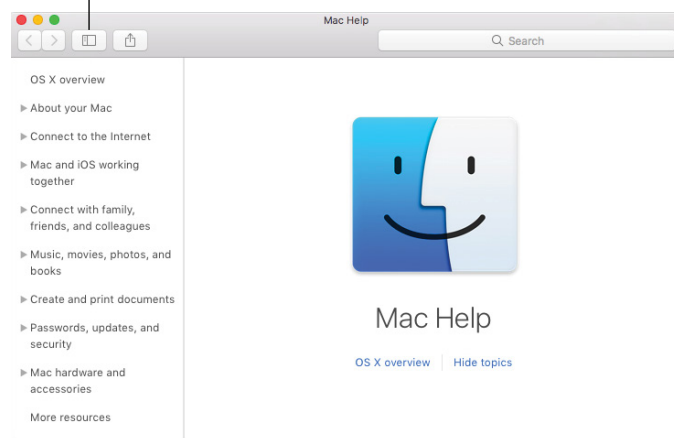


FIGURE 1-5:
Mac Help is
nothing if not
helpful.

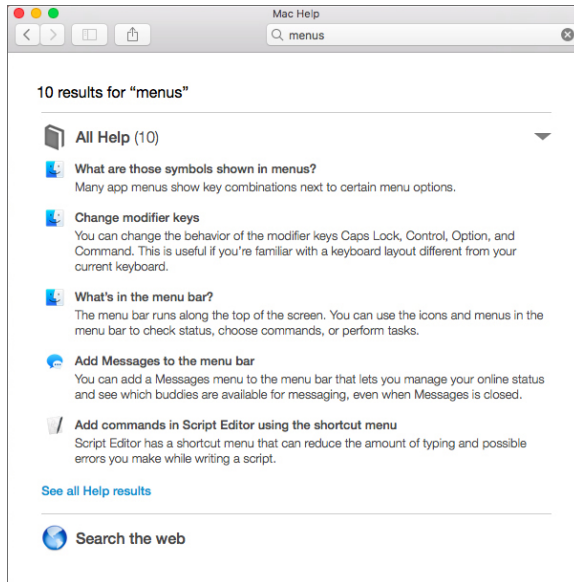
Though the keyboard shortcut for Help no longer appears on the Help menu, the same shortcut as always, Shift+⌘+?, still opens Help.

You can browse Help by clicking a topic in the Table of Contents and then clicking a subtopic. If you don't see the Table of Contents, click the Table of Contents button as shown in Figure 1-5.

To search Mac Help, simply type a word or phrase in either Search field — the one in the Help menu itself or the one near the top of the Help window on the right side — and then press Return. In a few seconds, your Mac provides you one or more articles to read, which (theoretically) are related to your question. Usually. If you type **menus** and press Return, for example, you get ten results, as shown in Figure 1-6.

As long as your Mac is connected to the Internet, search results include articles from the Apple online support database.

FIGURE 1-6:
You have
questions?
Mac Help has
answers.



REMEMBER

Although you don't have to be connected to the Internet to use Mac Help, you do need an Internet connection to get the most out of it. (Chapter 12 can help you set up an Internet connection, if you don't have one.) That's because macOS installs only certain help articles on your hard drive. If you ask a question that those articles don't answer, Mac Help connects to the Apple website and downloads the answer (assuming that you have an active Internet connection). These answers appear when you click See All Help Results near the bottom of Figure 1-6. Click one of these entries, and Help Viewer retrieves the text over the Internet. Although this can sometimes be inconvenient, it's also quite smart. This way, Apple can update the Help system at any time without requiring any action from you.

Furthermore, after you ask a question and Mac Help has grabbed the answer from the Apple website, the answer remains on your hard drive forever. If you ask for it again — even at a later date — your computer won't have to download it from the Apple website again.

Click Search the Web (near the bottom of Figure 1-6) to launch Safari and perform a web search for the phrase you typed.



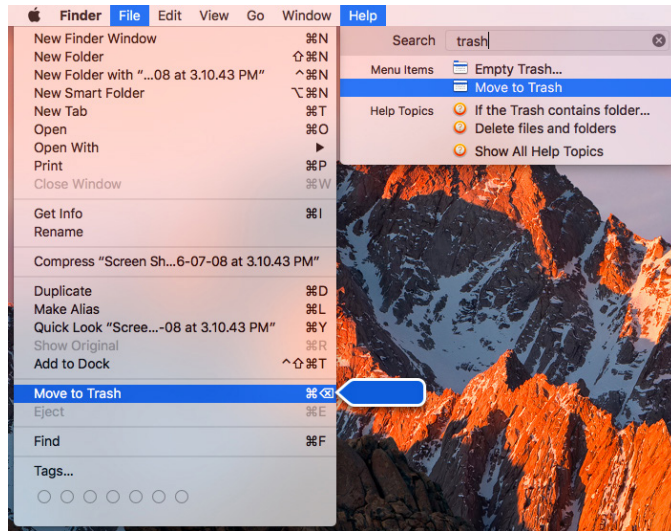
TIP

Here's a cool feature I like to call automatic visual help cues. Here's how they work:

1. **Type a word or phrase in the Help menu's Search field.**
2. **Select any item that has a menu icon to its left (such as the three items with *Trash* in their names in Figure 1-7).**

The automatic visual cue — an arrow — appears, pointing at that command in the appropriate menu.

FIGURE 1-7:
If you choose an item with a menu icon, an arrow points to that item in context.



Finally, don't forget that most apps have their own Help systems, so if you want general help with your Mac, you need to first click the Finder icon in the Dock, click the Desktop, or use the app-switching shortcut $\text{⌘}+\text{tab}$ to activate the Finder. Only then can you choose Mac Help from the Finder's Help menu.

Chapter 2

Desktop and Windows and Menus (Oh My!)

This chapter introduces important features of macOS, starting with the first things you see when you log in: the Finder and its Desktop. After a quick look around the Desktop, you get a look into two of its most useful features: windows and menus.

Windows are (and have always been) an integral part of Mac computing. Windows in the Finder (or, as a PC user would say, “on the Desktop”) show you the contents of the hard drive, optical drive, flash (thumb) drive, network drive, disk image, and folder icons. Windows in applications do many things. The point is that windows are part of what makes your Mac a Mac; knowing how they work — and how to use them — is essential.

Menus are another quintessential part of the Mac experience. The latter part of this chapter starts you out with a few menu basics. As needed, I direct you to other parts of the book for greater detail. So relax and don’t worry. By the end of this chapter, you’ll be ready to work with windows and menus in any application that uses them (and most applications, games excluded, do).

Touring the Finder and Its Desktop

The *Finder* is the program that creates the Desktop, keeps track of your files and folders, and is always running. Just about everything you do on your Mac begins and ends with the Finder. It's where you manage files, store documents, launch programs, and much more. If you ever expect to master your Mac, the first step is to master the Finder and Desktop. (The default Sierra Finder and Desktop appear in the preceding chapter, in Figure 1-2).

The Finder is the center of your Mac OS experience, so before I go any further, here's a quick description of its most prominent features:



TIP



TECHNICAL
STUFF

» **Desktop:** The Desktop is the area behind the windows and the Dock. In macOS 10.12, the default Desktop picture again honors its namesake, showing a portion of the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

It's also where your hard drive icon (ordinarily) lives, although if you bought a new Mac with Sierra preinstalled, there won't be any icons on it at all.

If you don't see your disk icon(s), and you're old-school like me and prefer to always see disk icons on your Desktop, never fear — you'll learn how to enable this behavior in Chapter 4.

The Desktop isn't a window, yet it acts like one. Like a folder window or disk window, the Desktop can contain icons. But unlike most windows, which require a bit of navigation to get to, the Desktop is always there behind any open windows, making it a great place for icons you use a lot, such as oft-used folders, applications, or documents.

Some folks use the terms *Desktop* and *Finder* interchangeably to refer to the total Mac environment you see after you log in — the icons, windows, menus, and all that other cool stuff. Just to make things confusing, the background you see on your screen — the picture behind your hard drive icon and your open windows — is *also* called the Desktop. In this book, I refer to the application you use when the Desktop is showing as the *Finder*. When I say *Desktop*, I'm talking about the picture background behind your windows and the Dock, which you can use as a storage place for icons if you like.

To make things even more confusing, the Desktop is a full-screen representation of the icons in the Desktop folder inside your Home folder. Don't panic. This will become crystal clear in upcoming pages and chapters.

» **Dock:** The Dock is the Finder's main navigation shortcut tool. It makes getting to frequently used icons easy, even when you have a screen full of windows. Like the Desktop, the Dock is a great place for the folders, applications, and specific documents you use most. Besides putting your frequently used icons

at your fingertips, it's extremely customizable; read more about it in Chapter 3.

- » **Icons:** Icons are the little pictures you see in your windows and even on your Desktop. Icons represent the things you work with on your Mac, such as applications (programs), documents, folders, utilities, and more.
- » **Windows:** Opening most icons (by double-clicking them) makes a window appear. Windows in the Finder show you the contents of hard drive and folder icons; windows in applications usually show the contents of documents. In the sections that follow, you can find the full scoop on Sierra windows.
- » **Menus:** Menus let you choose to do things, such as create new folders; duplicate files; cut, copy, or paste text; and so on. I introduce menu basics later in this chapter in the “Menu Basics” section; you find details about working with menus for specific tasks throughout this book.

Whereas this chapter offers a basic introduction to the Finder and Desktop, Chapter 6 explains in detail how to navigate and manage your files in the Finder. But before you start using the Finder, it helps to know the basics of working with windows and menus; if these Mac features are new to you, I suggest that you read this entire chapter now and pay special attention to Chapter 6 later.

Anatomy of a Window

Windows are a ubiquitous part of using a Mac. When you open a folder, you see a window. When you write a letter, the document that you're working on appears in a window. When you browse the Internet, web pages appear in a window . . . and so on.

For the most part, windows are windows from program to program. You'll probably notice that some programs (Adobe Photoshop or Microsoft Word, for example) take liberties with windows by adding features such as custom toolbars or textual information (such as zoom percentage or file size) around the edges of the document window and in toolbars.

Don't let it bug you; that extra fluff is just window dressing (pun intended). Maintaining the window metaphor, many information windows display different kinds of information in different *panes*, or discrete sections within the window.

When you finish this chapter, which focuses exclusively on macOS Finder windows, you'll know how to use most windows in most applications.

And so, without further ado, the following list gives you a look at the main features of a typical Finder window (as shown in Figure 2-1). I discuss these features in greater detail in later sections of this chapter.

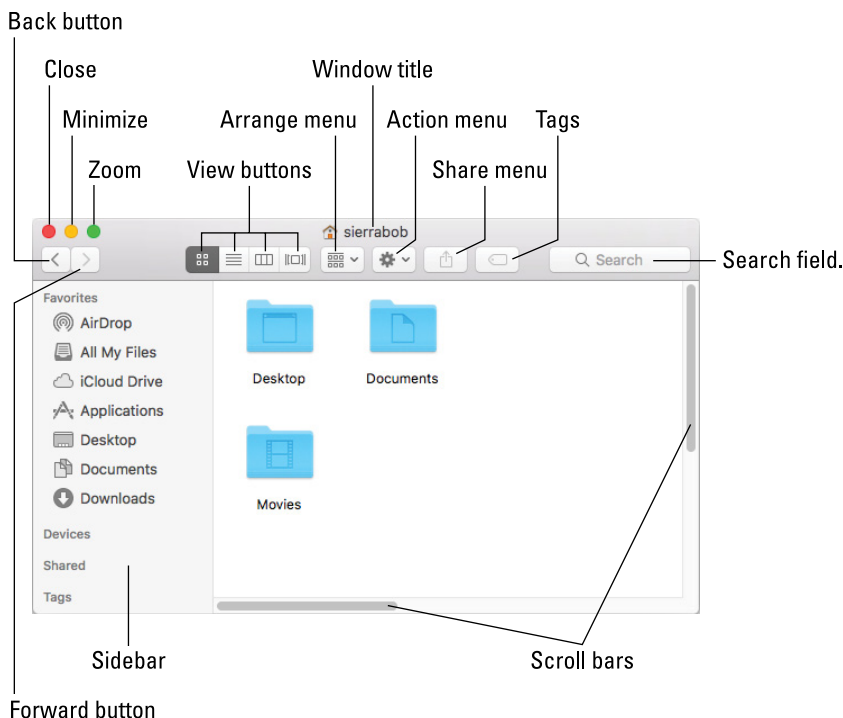


FIGURE 2-1:
A typical Finder
window in
macOS Sierra.



TIP

If your windows don't look exactly like the one shown in Figure 2-1, don't be concerned. You can make your windows look and feel any way you like. As I explain later in the "Working with Windows" section, moving and resizing windows are easy tasks.

Meanwhile, here's what you see on the toolbar: (clockwise from top left):

- » **Close, Minimize, and Zoom buttons:** Shut 'em, shrink 'em, and grow 'em.
- » **View buttons:** Choose among four exciting views of your window: Icon, List, Column, and Cover Flow. Find out more about views in Chapter 4.
- » **Arrange menu:** Click this little doohickey to arrange this window's icons by Name, Kind, Application, Date Modified, Date Created, Date Last Opened, Date Added, Size, or Tags. Or, of course, by None, which is the default.



TIP

» **Action menu:** This button is really a pop-up menu of commands you can apply to currently selected items in the Finder window or on the Desktop. (These are generally the same commands you'd see in the Contextual menu if you right-clicked or Control-clicked the same items.)

» **Window title:** Shows the name of the window.

⌘-click (or Control-click) the window title to see a pop-up menu with the complete path to this folder (try it). This tip applies to most windows you'll encounter, not just Finder windows. So ⌘- or Control-click a window's title (a right-click or two-fingered tap on a trackpad will work, too), and you'll usually see the path to its enclosing folder on your disk.

You can also have the path displayed at the bottom of every Finder window by choosing View ⇨ Show Path Bar.

» **Share menu:** Another button that's actually a menu; click it to share selected files or folders via email, Messages, AirDrop, or Notes.

» **Tags menu:** Yet another button/menu; click it to assign a tag to the selected files or folders.

» **Search field:** Type a string of characters here, and macOS Sierra digs into your system to find items that match by filename or document contents (yes, words within documents).

» **Scroll bars:** Use the scroll bars for moving around a window.

» **Sidebar:** Frequently used items live here.

» **Forward and Back buttons:** These buttons take you to the next or previous folder displayed in this particular window.

If you're familiar with web browsers, the Forward and Back buttons in the Finder work the same way. The first time you open a window, neither button is active. But as you navigate from folder to folder, these buttons remember your breadcrumb trail so you can quickly traverse backward or forward, window by window. You can even navigate this way from the keyboard by using the shortcuts ⌘+[for Back and ⌘+] for Forward.

The Forward and Back buttons remember only the other folders you've visited that appear in *that* open window. If you've set a Finder Preference so that a folder always opens in a new window — or if you forced a folder to open in a new window, which I describe in a bit — the Forward and Back buttons won't work. You have to use the modern, macOS-style window option, which uses a single window, or the buttons are useless.

Top o' the window to ya!

Take a gander at the top of a window — any window. You see three buttons in the top-left corner and the name of the window in the top center. The three buttons (called “gumdrop buttons” by some folks because they look like, well, gumdrops) are officially known as Close, Minimize, and Zoom, and their colors (red, yellow, and green, respectively unless you’ve switched to the Graphite appearance in the General System Preference pane as described in Chapter 5) pop off the screen. Here’s what they do:



TIP

» **Close (red):** Click this button to close the window.

» **Minimize (yellow):** Click this button to minimize the window. Clicking Minimize appears to close the window, but instead of making it disappear, Minimize adds an icon for the window to the right side of the Dock.

See the section about minimizing windows into application icons in Chapter 3 if a document icon doesn’t appear in your Dock when you minimize its window.

To view the window again, click the Dock icon for the window that you minimized. If the window happens to be a QuickTime movie, the movie audio continues to play and a tiny still image from the video appears as its icon in the Dock. (I discuss the Dock in detail in Chapter 3.)

» **Zoom (green):** Click a window’s green Zoom button, and the window expands to cover the whole screen, including the menu bar.

If you prefer the old behavior, where a window zoomed to the largest size it could but didn’t cover the full screen, hold down the Option key when you click the green button.

To shrink the window back to its previous dimensions, slide the cursor up to the very top of the screen, wait for the menu bar to appear, and then click the green Zoom button.

Another way to escape from a full-screen window, at least in the Finder, is to press the Esc key on your keyboard. Sadly, this trick doesn’t work with some apps, though it’s quite useful in apps that support it as well as in the Finder.

If you prefer the old behavior, where a window zoomed to a larger size but didn’t cover the full screen, hold down the Option key when you click the green button.

El Capitan (OS X 10.11) introduced a new feature called Split View to the green gumdrop button. To see Split View in action, press the green button for a moment (that is, perform the first half of a click). Half the screen turns light blue.



TIP

Without releasing the mouse button, drag to the left or right; the blue tint moves to the left or right side of the screen. Release the mouse button and the window fills the blue half of the screen. The other half of the screen displays miniature versions of all open windows. Hover the cursor over a miniature window to see its name; click a miniature window and it fills that half of the screen.

To work in Split View, click either window to activate it and do what you have to do. To activate the other window, click it. To exit Split View, do one of the following:

- Press Esc.
- Move the pointer to the top of the screen; when the buttons (for both windows) reappear, click any button.
- Quit either application.

My colleague at The Mac Observer, John Martellaro, called Split View silly, but I'm not so sure. I use it for certain tasks (assuming I remember that it's hiding under the green gumdrop button, which I often forget).

A scroll new world

Yet another way to see more of what's in a window or pane is to scroll through it. Scroll bars appear at the bottom and right sides of any window or pane that contains more stuff — icons, text, pixels, or whatever — than you can see in the window. Figure 2-2, for example, shows two instances of the same window: Dragging the scroll bar on the right side of the smaller window would reveal the icons above and below the six that are currently visible. Dragging the scroll bar on the bottom of the smaller window would reveal items to the left and right of the six that are currently visible.

Simply click and drag a scroll bar to move it up or down or side to side.

If your scroll bars don't look exactly like the ones in Figure 2-2 or work as described in the following list, don't worry. These are System Preferences you can configure to your heart's desire, which you can discover in Chapter 5.

Here are some ways you can scroll in a window:

- » **Click a scroll bar and drag.** The content of the window scrolls proportionally to how far you drag the scroll bar.

FIGURE 2-2:
The same window twice; in the front window, you use the scroll bars to see the hidden icons that are visible in the back window.



TIP

- » **Click in the scroll bar area but don't click the scroll bar itself.** The window scrolls either one page up (if you click above the scroll bar) or down (if you click below the scroll bar). You can change a setting in your General System Preference pane to cause the window to scroll proportionally to where you click.

For what it's worth, the Page Up and Page Down keys on your keyboard function the same way as clicking the white scroll area (the vertical scroll bar only) in the Finder and many applications. These keys don't work in every program, though, so don't become too dependent on them. Also, if you purchased a mouse, trackball, or other pointing device that has a scroll wheel, you can scroll vertically in the active (front) window with the scroll wheel or press and hold down the Shift key to scroll horizontally. Alas, this horizontal scrolling-with-the-Shift-key works in Finder windows but not in all applications. For example, it works in the Apple TextEdit application, but not in Microsoft Word.

- » **Use the keyboard.** In the Finder, first click an icon in the window and then use the arrow keys to move up, down, left, or right. Using an arrow key selects the next icon in the direction it indicates — and automatically scrolls the window, if necessary. In other programs, you might or might not be able to use the keyboard to scroll. The best advice I can give you is to try it — either it will work or it won't.
- » **Use a two-finger swipe (on a trackpad).** If you have a notebook with a trackpad or use a Magic Trackpad or Magic Mouse, just move the arrow cursor over the window and then swipe the trackpad with two fingers to scroll.

(Hyper)active windows

To work within a window, the window must be active. The *active* window is always the frontmost window, and *inactive* windows always appear behind the active window. Only one window can be active at a time. To make a window active, click it anywhere — in the middle, on the title bar, or on a scroll bar. It doesn't matter where; just click anywhere to activate it.



TIP

The exceptions are the Close, Minimize, and Zoom buttons on inactive windows, which always do what they do, regardless of whether a window is active or inactive.

Look at Figure 2-3 for an example of an active window in front of an inactive window (the Applications window and the Utilities window, respectively).



FIGURE 2-3:
An active window in front of an inactive window.

The following is a list of the major visual cues that distinguish active from inactive windows:

- » **The active window's title bar:** By default, the Close, Minimize, and Zoom buttons are bright red, yellow, and green, respectively. If you chose the Graphite Appearance in the General System Preferences pane, they'll be dark gray; the inactive windows' buttons are light gray regardless of Appearance settings.



TIP

- » This is a nice visual cue. Colored items are active, and gray ones are inactive. Better still, if you move your mouse over an inactive window's gumdrop buttons, they light up in their usual colors so you can close, minimize, or zoom an inactive window without first clicking it to making it active. Neat!
- » **The active window's toolbar:** Toolbar buttons are darker and more distinctive; the inactive window's toolbar buttons are light gray and more subdued.
- » **The active window's drop shadow:** Notice how the active window has a more prominent shadow? This tricks your eye into thinking the active window is in front of the inactive one.

One last thing: If you're wondering how to resize a window, just hover the cursor over a window's edge or corner or over the dividing line between two panes in the same window (such as the Sidebar and the main area of Finder windows). A helpful little arrow appears as a visual cue that you can now drag the edge, corner, or dividing line to resize the window or pane.

Dialog Dealie-Boppers

Dialogs are special windows that pop up over the active window. You generally see them when you select a menu item that ends in an ellipsis (. . .).

Dialogs can contain a number of standard Mac features (I call them *dealie-boppers*), such as radio buttons, pop-up menus, tabs, text entry fields, and check boxes. You see these features again and again in dialogs. Take a moment to look at each of these dealie-boppers in Figure 2-4.



TIP

- » **Radio buttons:** *Radio buttons* are so named because, like the buttons on your car radio (if you have a very old car), only one at a time can be active. (When they're active, they appear to be pushed in, just like the old radio buttons.) Radio buttons always appear in a group of two or more; when you select one, all the others are automatically deselected.

Here's a nifty and undocumented shortcut: You can usually select check boxes and radio buttons by clicking their names (instead of the buttons or boxes).
- » **Tabs:** When a dialog contains more information than can fit in a single window, the info may be divided among panes denoted by tabs. In Figure 2-4, the New Document tab is selected on the left, and the Open and Save tab is selected on the right.