

How to Personalize Your Mac Preferences

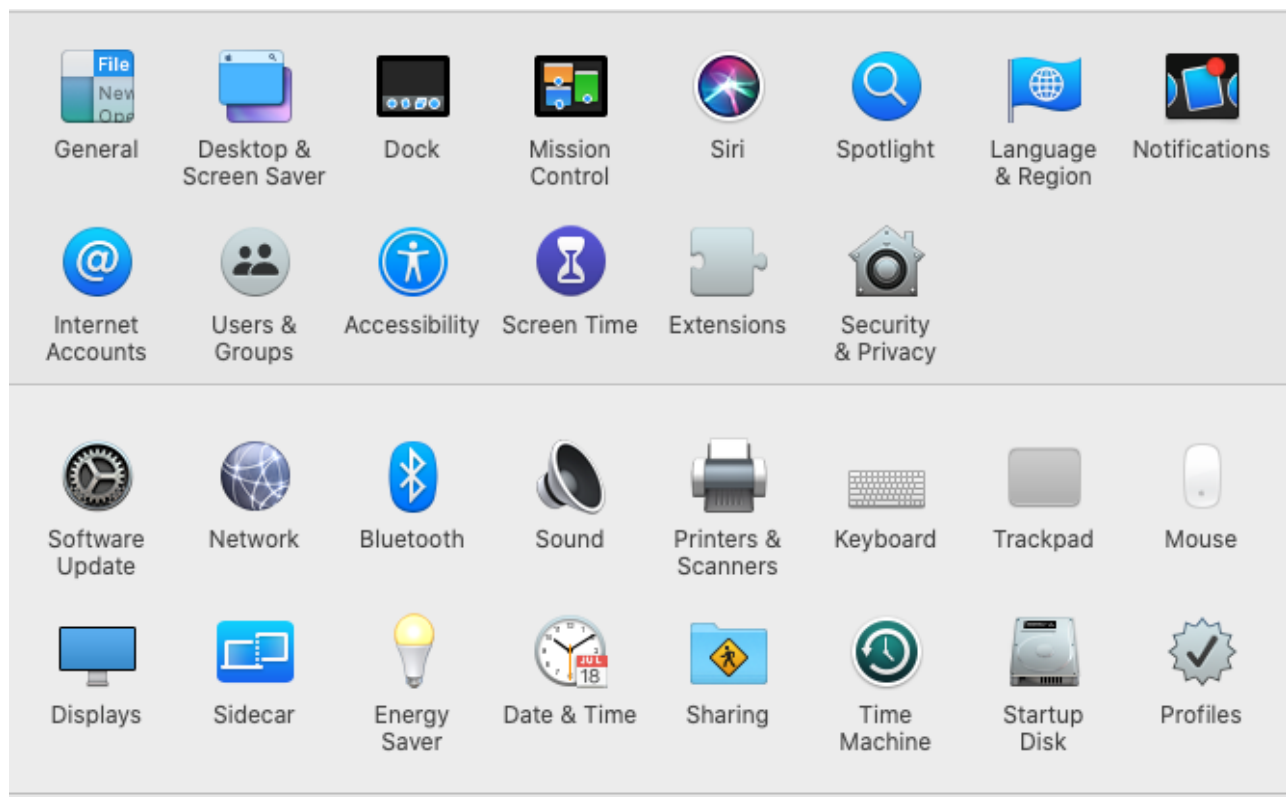
MugTalk April 2019

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I'm sure that everyone has spent a few minutes messing with your computer's System Preference settings. If nothing else, you have changed your boring desktop background image to your favorite grandchild, a beautiful sunset, or a bright flower. Although I find it hard to work with a cluttered background, it is your choice, so do what makes you happy.

Do you realize that you can do much more to enhance your computing experience? In this article, I will share a few of my favorite preference settings, including ones I change every time I set up a new computer. These will be the tip of the iceberg for you and I encourage you to explore all the options on your own.

Start by opening *System Preferences*. Click the *Apple* icon in the menu and select System Preferences from the drop-down menu. Now that wasn't so hard, was it. Now let's make a few changes.



General. I like to change Show scroll bars to *Always*. I like to see the scroll bars on the side of a window and don't want to wait for them to appear.

Dock. I make the following changes. Enable *Minimize windows into application icon*. Disable *Show recent applications in Dock*.

Security & Privacy > General. I turn off the *Require password after sleep or screen saver begins*. You will need to unlock the padlock at the bottom using your administrator (computer) password before you do this. However, if you travel with a laptop, you should leave this on, at least while traveling.

Security & Privacy > Firewall. Turn this on.

Energy Saver. I set my display time to 3 hrs.

Keyboard. Enable *Show keyboard and emoji viewers in menu bar*.

Keyboard > Input Sources. This is a good place to enable keyboards with alternate languages. Click the + at the bottom and select your alternate language. After you do this, you can switch between languages using the keyboard viewer icon you enabled in the menu bar.

Mouse > Point & Click. Make sure that the *Secondary click* is enabled. You can also decide whether to turn the *natural scroll direction* on or off. With *Natural* off, scrolling behaves like it always has on a computer. With *Natural* on, scrolling behaves like a mobile device. My preference is to turn it off.

Trackpad. Same advice as for the Mouse.

Bluetooth. Enable *Show Bluetooth in menu bar*.

Sharing. If you want to control this computer from another one on the same local network, enable *Remote Management*. You can also change your computer name from this preference panel.

Users & Groups. Create a second user account with administrator privileges to use in case something goes wrong with your main user account. Also, create a visitor account with standard privileges. Let visitors use this account rather than your own to prevent problems. Especially useful for visiting grandchildren.

Time Machine. Click the Options button at the bottom to get a window that allows you to select files and folders that need not be backed up. This is important if you want to exclude other external drives. For example, if you have a second backup drive with a clone of your system, you don't need to have this backed up to Time Machine.

As you can see, there are many more things that you can control in System Preferences. I suggest that you spend time in the Accessibility panel -- lots of useful tools in there. I may do an article specifically on this later on.

One important thing to remember. You can undo any change that you make. After all, the name of this function is **System Preferences**, and not **System Modifications** or **System Mandates**! Also, remember that every application on the computer will have its own set of preferences that you can spend hours manipulating.