LEARNING MADE EASY

macOS® Sequoia™

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Proofread, summarize, and rewrite with Apple Intelligence

Protect your Mac with Apple's security features

Guy Hart-Davis

Author of *iPhone For Dummies*, 2025 Edition

macOS® Sequoia™

by Guy Hart-Davis

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macOS® Sequoia™ For Dummies®

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Contents at a Glance

Introduction 1

Part 1: Getting Started with macOS 5

CHAPTER 1: macOS Sequoia 101 (Prerequisites: None) 7
CHAPTER 2: Desktop and Windows and Menus (Oh My!) 25
CHAPTER 3: What's Up, Dock? 45
CHAPTER 4: Getting to Know Finder and Its Desktop 61
CHAPTER 5: Getting Fancy with the Desktop and Finder 89
CHAPTER 6: Setting Your Mac Straight 103

Part 2: Getting Things Done 125

CHAPTER 7: Opening and Saving Files 127
CHAPTER 8: Managing Files and Folders the Smart Way 149
CHAPTER 9: Eight Terrific Time-Saving Tools 159
CHAPTER 10: Organizing Your Life 189
CHAPTER 11: Finding Your Way with Maps 213
CHAPTER 12: Using Stocks, News, Voice Memos, and Shortcuts 229

Part 3: Getting Along with Others 241

CHAPTER 13: (Inter)Networking 243
CHAPTER 14: Dealing with People 267
CHAPTER 15: Communicating with Mail and Messages 277
CHAPTER 16: Sharing Your Mac with Others 305

Part 4: Making the Most of Your Mac 333

CHAPTER 17: Mac Machine Music 335
CHAPTER 18: Enjoying Multimedia 349
CHAPTER 19: Managing Fonts and Printing 361
CHAPTER 20: Features for the Way You Work 379
CHAPTER 21: Safety First: Backups and Other Security Issues 405
CHAPTER 22: Troubleshooting macOS 421

Part 5: The Part of Tens 431

CHAPTER 23: Ten Ways to Improve Your Mac Experience 433
CHAPTER 24: Ten Tools That Make Your Life Easier 441

Index 455

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 1
About This Book 1
Foolish Assumptions 2
Icons Used in This Book 2
Beyond the Book 3
Where to Go from Here 3

PART 1: GETTING STARTED WITH macOS 5

CHAPTER 1: macOS Sequoia 101 (Prerequisites: None) 7
Okay, What Does macOS Do? 8
Turning On Your Mac 9
What you should see on start-up 9
What you may see if things go wrong 10
Setting Up macOS Sequoia 10
Logging In 12
Meeting the macOS Desktop 14
Pointing, Clicking, and More 16
Putting Your Mac to Sleep and Shutting It Down 18
Putting your Mac to sleep 18
Shutting down your Mac 18
Care and Feeding of Your Mac 19
Feed your Mac 19
Treat your Mac gently 20
Back up your data 20
Getting Help 21
Getting the Lowdown on Apple Intelligence 23

CHAPTER 2: Desktop and Windows and Menus (Oh My!) 25
Touring Finder and the macOS Desktop 26
Dissecting a Window 27
Zooming, splitting, and minimizing windows 29
Scrolling 31
Active and inactive windows 33
Opening a Dialog with Your Mac 34
Working with Windows 36
Opening and closing windows 36
Resizing windows and window panes 37
Moving windows 37
Shuffling windows 37

Sampling the Menus 39
Using the ever-changing menu bar 40
Using the contextual (shortcut) menus 40
Recognizing disabled commands 41
Navigating submenus 42
Under the Apple menu tree 43
Giving commands via keyboard shortcuts 44

CHAPTER 3: **What's Up, Dock?** 45
Meeting Your Dock 45
Identifying the Dock's default icons 46
Trash talkin' 48
Opening app menus on the Dock 50
Reading Dock icon body language 52
Opening files from the Dock 52
Customizing Your Dock 53
Adding Dock icons 53
Removing an icon from the Dock 55
Resizing the Dock 55
Configuring your Dock settings 55

CHAPTER 4: **Getting to Know Finder and Its Desktop** 61
Getting the Hang of Finder, the Desktop, and Icons 61
Introducing the desktop 62
Coming to grips with the toolbar 64
Grasping what an icon is 66
Identifying your Finder icons in the wild 67
Alias Files and Folders 68
Understanding the advantages of aliases 69
Creating aliases 69
Deleting aliases 70
Hunting down an alias's parent 70
Opening a Window and Enjoying the View 70
Moving through folders fast in Column view 71
Perusing in Icon view 72
Listless? Try viewing folders as a list 73
Playing to the Gallery 75
What's your view? 76
Finder on the Menu 78
The actual Finder menu 78
Navigating with the current folder's pop-up menu 80
Go places with the Go menu 80

Customizing Finder Windows 82
Adding files and folders to the sidebar 82
Configuring Finder settings 83
Digging for Data in the Info Window 86

CHAPTER 5: **Getting Fancy with the Desktop and Finder** 89
Cleaning Up Your Desktop Automatically with Stacks 89
Adding Widgets to Your Desktop 92
Doing Things Faster with Quick Actions 95
Getting the most out of Markup 95
Trimming video without launching an app 98
Creating PDFs Without Launching an App 99
Shooting Screen Stills and Movies 100

CHAPTER 6: **Setting Your Mac Straight** 103
Introducing System Settings 103
Setting Wallpaper 106
Configuring a Screen Saver or Just Turning Off the Display 108
Configuring Appearance Settings 111
Choosing Desktop & Dock Settings 112
Adjusting the Keyboard, Mouse, Trackpad, and Other Hardware . . . 114
Choosing keyboard settings 114
Tweaking your mouse 118
Configuring your trackpad 120
Configuring Sound Settings 122

PART 2: GETTING THINGS DONE 125

CHAPTER 7: **Opening and Saving Files** 127
Where Did That File Go? 127
Understanding the macOS Folder Structure 128
Understanding nested folders 129
The Computer folder 130
The Applications folder 131
The Library folders 131
The System folder 133
The Home folder 133
Opening your own Library folder 134
Saving Your Document 136
Understanding Auto Save and Versions 136
Stepping through a basic save 137
Save As versus Duplicate: Different names for the same result 141

Open, Sez Me 143
With drag-and-drop 145
With Quick Look 145
When your Mac can't open a file 145
With the app of your choice 145

CHAPTER 8: **Managing Files and Folders the Smart Way** 149
Organizing Your Stuff in Folders 149
What's the difference between a file and a folder? 150
Organizing your stuff with subfolders 150
Creating new folders 151
Navigating with spring-loaded folders 152
Using smart folders 153
Working with Files and Folders 155
Moving files and folders 155
Selecting multiple items 156
Renaming items 157
Renaming multiple items at once 157
Compressing files 157
Getting rid of files and folders 157
Using iCloud, iCloud+, and iCloud Drive 158

CHAPTER 9: **Eight Terrific Time-Saving Tools** 159
Getting to Grips with Siri 160
What Siri can do for you 160
Working with Siri 161
Making Siri your own 162
Introducing the macOS Clipboard 163
Copying files and folders 164
Pasting from the Clipboard 166
Expanding your horizons with the Universal Clipboard 166
Taking Actions from Quick Look 167
Share and share alike with the Share menu 169
Slide into Slideshow (full-screen) mode 169
Finding Files and Folders Fast with Spotlight 170
Using the Find command 171
Using the Spotlight menu and its keyboard shortcut 173
Blasting Off with Mission Control 174
Setting Mission Control parameters 175
Setting actions for hot corners 177
Organizing desktops and spaces with Mission Control 178
All the World's a Stage . . . and You're the Manager 180
Enabling Stage Manager 180
Using Stage Manager 182

Taking Control of Essential Settings 186
Configuring Launchpad to Launch Apps Quickly 187

CHAPTER 10: **Organizing Your Life** 189
Keeping Track with Calendar 189
Navigating Calendar views 190
Understanding the Calendar list 191
Creating calendars. 191
Sharing and publishing calendars. 192
Deleting a calendar 192
Creating and managing events 193
Staying Organized with Reminders. 196
Getting started with Reminders 196
Creating and managing reminders 198
Sharing lists and assigning reminders 200
Everything You Need to Know about Notification Center 200
Tweaking Notification settings. 200
Managing Widgets 101 202
Using Notification Center 203
Getting focused 203
Taking Notes with the Notes App 205
Taking a Quick Note with Quick Note. 209
Tracking Activities with Screen Time. 209

CHAPTER 11: **Finding Your Way with Maps** 213
Finding Your Current Location 213
Finding a Person, Place, or Thing 214
Viewing, Zooming, and Panning 215
Using Maps with Contacts 217
Saving Time with Library, Guides, and Recents 218
Library 218
Guides 219
Recents 220
Getting Smart with Maps 220
Getting route maps and driving directions 221
Getting walking directions 223
Getting directions for public transportation 223
Getting cycling directions 223
Creating custom routes 223
Get traffic info in real time 224
Enjoying flyovers and look arounds 225
Doing more on the card for a location 226

CHAPTER 12: **Using Stocks, News, Voice Memos, and Shortcuts** 229
Tracking Your Stocks 230
Adding and removing stocks, funds, and indexes 231
The devil is in the details 231
Charting a course 232
Keeping Current with News 233
What are your interests? 233
How News works 233
Managing your news 234
Recording Memos with Voice Memos 235
Recording a voice memo 235
Listening to a voice memo 235
Transcribing a voice memo 236
Naming a voice memo 236
Trimming a voice memo 236
Automating Repetitive Tasks with Shortcuts 238

PART 3: GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS 241

CHAPTER 13: **(Inter)Networking** 243
Getting Connected to the Internet 244
Choosing an Internet service provider (ISP) 244
Connecting your Mac to a network via Wi-Fi 245
Managing your Wi-Fi networks 247
Connecting your Mac to a network via Ethernet 252
Browsing the Web with Safari 253
Using and customizing the toolbar 254
Using the Safari sidebar 255
Browsing smarter with Safari Highlights 260
Removing distracting items 260
Creating profiles for home and work 260
Creating web apps from websites 264
Controlling audio and video playback 265
Using passkeys 265

CHAPTER 14: **Dealing with People** 267
Collecting Your Contacts 267
Adding contacts 268
Importing contacts from other apps 270
Creating a basic list 271
Setting up a smart list (based on contact criteria) 272
Deleting a list or smart list 273

Syncing Your Contacts Across Your Devices 273
Making Audio and Video Calls with FaceTime 274
Making a FaceTime call 274
Using SharePlay during a FaceTime call 276

CHAPTER 15: **Communicating with Mail and Messages** 277
Sending and Receiving Email with Mail 277
Setting up Mail 278
Identifying the toolbar icons 279
Composing a new message 281
Proofing and rewriting a message with Writing Tools 284
Sending email from the Contacts app 286
Checking your mail 287
Dealing with spam 288
Managing your mailboxes 291
Changing settings for Mail 293
Signing your messages the smart way 293
Ruling over your mail 295
Run a slide show from Quick Look 297
Marking up an image or PDF document 297
Transferring large files via Mail Drop 298
Unsubscribing, muting, and blocking senders 299
Communicating with Messages 299
What can you do with iMessage? 299
Chatting with Messages 300

CHAPTER 16: **Sharing Your Mac with Others** 305
Introducing Networks and File Sharing 306
Understanding the essentials of home and home-office networking 307
Setting up your home or home-office network 309
Setting Up File Sharing 310
Controlling Access and Permissions: Who Can Do What 313
Understanding users, groups, and guests 313
Creating users 314
macOS knows best: Folders shared by default 318
Sharing a folder or disk by setting permissions 319
Applying useful settings for permissions 323
Unsharing a folder 324
Connecting to a Shared Disk or Folder on a Remote Mac 324
Changing the Password for Your Account 327
Resetting the Password for Another Account 328

Exploring Other Types of macOS Sharing 329
Sharing another Mac's screen 329
Sharing your Mac's Internet connection 330
Sharing printers and scanners 331
Sharing media 331
Sharing items via Bluetooth 332

PART 4: MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MAC 333

CHAPTER 17: Mac Machine Music 335
Understanding iTunes Match and Apple Music 335
Getting Started with the Music App 337
Working with Media 339
Adding songs 340
Listening to Radio 342
Making the Most of Playlists 345
Creating a regular playlist 345
Working with smart playlists 347
Working with the Genius playlist 348

CHAPTER 18: Enjoying Multimedia 349
Playing Movies and Music in QuickTime Player 349
Watching TV 351
Using the Books App 352
Buying an ebook or audiobook 353
Shopping for ebooks without Apple 354
Finding and Listening to Podcasts with the Podcasts App 355
You're the Star with Photo Booth 357
Viewing and Converting Images and PDFs in Preview 359

CHAPTER 19: Managing Fonts and Printing 361
Font Mania 361
Choosing font typefaces 362
Managing your fonts with Font Book 362
Printing 365
Pre-printer prep 365
Ready: Connecting and adding your printer 365
Set: Setting up your document with Page Setup 372
Preview: Checking the page and setting PDF options in the Preview app 373
Print: Printing from the Print dialog 374

CHAPTER 20: **Features for the Way You Work** 379
Going Over to the Dark Side 379
App Shopping Made Easy 381
Using Your iPhone as Your Mac's Camera or Scanner 382
Talking and Listening to Your Mac 385
Using Dictation: You talk, and your Mac types 385
Commanding your Mac by voice 386
Listening to your Mac read your screen 388
Controlling Your iPhone from Your Mac 390
Other Useful Goodies 392
Accessibility pane 393
Battery pane and Energy Saver pane 395
Bluetooth pane 396
Ink pane 396
Automatic login 397
Allow your Apple Watch to unlock your Mac 397
AirPlay and AirPlay to Mac 397
Handoff 398
Universal Control 399

CHAPTER 21: **Safety First: Backups and Other Security Issues** 405
Backing Up Is (Not) Hard to Do 406
Backing up with Sequoia's excellent Time Machine 406
Backing up by using the manual, brute-force method 410
Backing up by using commercial backup software 410
Why You Need Two Backups 411
Non-Backup Security Concerns 412
About viruses and other malware 412
Installing security updates — or more — automatically 414
Protecting Your Data from Prying Eyes 416
Blocking or limiting connections 416
Locking down files with FileVault 416
Putting your Mac in Lockdown mode 417
Setting other options for security 418

CHAPTER 22: **Troubleshooting macOS** 421
Understanding Start-Up Disks and Booting 421
Finding or creating a start-up disk 422
Interpreting prohibitory signs and messages 422
Recovering with Recovery HD 423
Step 1: Run First Aid 423
Step 2: Boot into Safe mode 425

Step 3: Zap the PRAM/NVRAM 426
Step 4: Reinstall macOS 427
Step 5: Things to try before taking your Mac in for repair 427
If Your Mac Crashes at Start-Up 428
Managing Storage with the Storage Feature 429

PART 5: THE PART OF TENS 431

CHAPTER 23: Ten Ways to Improve Your Mac Experience 433
Use Those Keyboard Shortcuts 434
Improve Your Typing Skills 435
Use Text Replacements and Automatic Correction 436
Change Your Resolution 436
Buy a Faster Mac 437
Add RAM 438
Add a Second Display 438
Use Your iPad as an Extra Display 439
Upgrade to a Solid-State Drive (SSD) 439
Get More Storage 440

CHAPTER 24: Ten Tools That Make Your Life Easier 441
Calculator 442
Activity Monitor 443
Disk Utility 445
Volume +/– 446
Partition button 446
First Aid button 446
Erase button 447
Mount/Unmount button 448
Info button 448
Passwords App 448
Migration Assistant 450
System Information 450
Terminal 451
Image Capture 451
Stickies 452
AirPort Utility 453

INDEX 455

Introduction

Looks like you've made three good choices: You have a Mac, macOS Sequoia (aka macOS version 15), and this book. If you're brand-new to the Mac, you're all set to start enjoying computing with the finest operating system on the planet. If you've been using your Mac and macOS for a while, you're ready to start enjoying using them even more. Sure, this book is a computer book, but it's not one of those dull books best suited to serve as a doorstop; it's one that makes discovering the ins and outs of macOS Sequoia easy and even fun!

About This Book

macOS Sequoia For Dummies is the latest revision of the best-selling book by legendary Mac maven Bob "Dr. Mac" LeVitus, technology columnist at the *Houston Chronicle.* The book has been completely updated for macOS Sequoia to cover all the latest features — such as Apple Intelligence, Writing Tools, and iPhone Mirroring — and everything else that has changed. This edition combines all the old, familiar features of dozens of previous editions with the very latest information on Macs and macOS Sequoia.

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

This book is chock-full of information and advice, explaining everything you need to know about macOS Sequoia in easy-to-understand language — along with time-saving tips, tricks, techniques, and step-by-step instructions. I feel confident that you'll find what you need to know about using macOS Sequoia in this book.

Still, a book this size can't explain everything you might want to know about an operating system the size of macOS Sequoia and the apps that run on it. If you're looking for information on topics such as Microsoft Office, Apple's lifestyle and productivity apps (such as iMovie, GarageBand, Numbers, and Pages), or

programming, I recommend you look at other books published by Wiley. The Wiley website (`https://www.wiley.com/`) is the best place to start.

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 webpages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading it as an ebook, you've got it easy: Just click or tap the web address to be taken directly to the webpage.

Foolish Assumptions

Although I know what happens when you assume, I've made a few assumptions anyway. 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. So I do my best to explain each new concept fully.

Icons Used in This Book

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

TIP

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

REMEMBER

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

TECHNICAL STUFF

Put on your propeller-beanie hat and pocket protector; these tidbits include the truly geeky stuff. They're certainly not required reading, but they'll help you grasp the background, get the bigger picture, or both.

WARNING

Read these notes very carefully. Warning icons flag important cautionary information that could save you any amount of grief.

This icon highlights things new and different in macOS Sequoia.

App icons (such as the Launchpad icon shown here) and interface icons show you key items that you'll be clicking, dragging, and otherwise interacting with.

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this book comes with a free access-anywhere cheat sheet that provides handy shortcuts for use with macOS Sequoia, offers recommendations for backing up your Mac to avoid losing data, and more. To get this cheat sheet, simply go to `www.dummies.com` and type **macOS Sequoia For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box.

Where to Go from Here

The first few chapters of this book explain the basic things you need to understand to operate your Mac effectively. If you're new to Macs and macOS Sequoia, start there.

Although macOS Sequoia looks slightly different from previous versions, it largely works the same as always. The first part of the book presents concepts so basic that if you've been using a Mac for long, you may think you know it all — and okay, you might know some (or most) of it. But remember that not-so-old-timers need a solid foundation, too. So skim the stuff you already know, and you'll get to the better stuff soon enough.

Enough of the introduction. Turn the page, and let's get started!

1 Getting Started with macOS

IN THIS PART . . .

Master the basics, from starting your Mac to shutting it down.

Get a practical introduction to Finder and its desktop.

Make the Dock work harder for you.

Find everything you need to know about Sequoia's windows, icons, and menus.

Learn key Finder tips and tricks to make life with macOS even easier (and more fulfilling).

Wrangle System Settings to make your Mac work your way.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Understanding what an operating system is and is not
- Turning your Mac on and off
- Setting up Sequoia
- Logging in to macOS
- Meeting the desktop
- Pointing, clicking, and dragging
- Putting your Mac to sleep and shutting it down
- Taking care of your Mac
- Getting help from your Mac
- Getting the lowdown on Apple Intelligence

Chapter 1

macOS Sequoia 101 (Prerequisites: None)

So you're the proud owner of a Mac running macOS Sequoia? Great choice! Your Mac gives you powerful hardware in a sleek package, and Sequoia — macOS version 15, if you're feeling formal — puts an intuitive and easy-to-use interface on Unix, the best industrial-strength operating system in the world.

In this chapter, we'll make sure you're set up to put your Mac and macOS to good use. We'll start by taking a quick look at what macOS actually does. We'll then move along to getting started by the numbers: turning on your Mac, going through the setup routine if it's a new Mac or a new install, logging in, and meeting the

desktop. We'll review how to use your mouse or trackpad. We'll go through a few essentials of treating your Mac well and avoiding avoidable damage, then look at how to get help on Macs, macOS, and apps. Finally, we'll talk about Apple's new feature group, Apple Intelligence, and where to find it on your Mac.

If your Mac is all set up and you're comfortable with start-up, login, navigation, and shutdown, feel free to skip this chapter and move ahead to whichever chapter will most benefit you immediately.

Before we start, a quick word about macOS version numbers and version names . . .

TECHNICAL STUFF

Each version of macOS has both a version number and a version name. This book covers macOS version 15, whose version name is Sequoia. Most people prefer the version names because they're easier to remember.

What about previous versions? Okay (deep breath): macOS version 14 was Sonoma, version 13 was Ventura, version 12 was Monterey, version 11 was Big Sur, version 10.15 was Catalina, 10.14 was Mojave, 10.13 was High Sierra, and 10.12 was Sierra. Before that, Apple called the operating system "OS X" (with the X pronounced "ten") rather than "macOS." OS X version 10.11 was 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.

Okay, What Does macOS Do?

The operating system (that is, the *OS* part of *macOS*) 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 (but only its own — not yours)

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. 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 the following crucial functions:

- Providing the mechanism for drawing and moving the on-screen 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

There's much, much more — but you get the idea.

Turning On Your Mac

No great surprises here: You turn on your Mac by pressing the power button — once you find it. Here's where to look:

- **MacBook:** At the upper-right corner of the keyboard
- **iMac:** At the back of the screen, lower-left corner or lower-right corner
- **Mac mini, Mac Studio:** At the back of the enclosure
- **Mac Pro:** On the front panel

The power button usually looks like the little circle icon you see in the margin — but on some Mac models, the power button doubles as the Touch ID button for authenticating you via your fingerprint and doesn't show the icon.

What you should see on start-up

When you turn on your Mac, the Mac powers up, checks the hardware, and then loads macOS. While loading macOS, the Mac displays a white Apple logo in the middle of the screen, as shown in the margin here.

If you need to set up macOS Sequoia, the setup routine begins automatically. See the following section, "Setting Up macOS Sequoia." Otherwise (assuming Sequoia has already been set up), the login screen appears, and you can log in. See the section "Logging In," later in this chapter.

What you may see if things go wrong

If something is wrong with your Mac, you may see any of the following on start-up:

- **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. See Chapter 22 for moves to try to get your Mac well again. Failing those, it may need repairs. If your computer is under warranty, set up a Genius Bar appointment at your nearest Apple Store or dial 1-800-SOS-APPL (or the equivalent number in your country or region), and a customer-service person can tell you what to do.

- **Prohibitory sign or flashing question mark in a folder:** These icons mean that your Mac can't find a start-up disk, hard drive, USB drive, or network server containing a valid Mac operating system. See Chapter 22 for ways to ease your Mac's ills.
- **Kernel panic:** You may occasionally see a block of text in several languages, including English, as shown in Figure 1-1. This means that your Mac has experienced a *kernel panic*, the most severe type of system crash. Restart your Mac (there's no other choice). If either of these messages recurs, see Chapter 22 for advice.

FIGURE 1-1: If you're seeing something like this, consult Chapter 22 for suggestions.

Okay, assuming you're not seeing any of the above nasties, let's return to our scheduled programming: first, setup (if your Mac needs it), and then login.

Setting Up macOS Sequoia

If your Mac is new, or if you've just installed Sequoia from scratch rather than upgrading it from an earlier version of macOS, you'll need to run through a setup routine. The following list explains the main steps:

- **Specify your country or region.** On the Select Your Country or Region screen, click your country, and then click the Continue button.

- **Choose Accessibility features.** On the Accessibility screen, set up any accessibility features you need by clicking the Vision button, the Motor button, the Hearing button, or the Cognitive button, and then working through the resulting screens. You can set up most accessibility features at this point if you know that you or other users of the Mac will need them. However, you may find it better to set up only those features that you need now to help you complete the setup routine, and then configure other accessibility features after setup. If you don't need to set up any accessibility features now, click the Not Now button to move right along.
- **Connect to a Wi-Fi network.** On the Select Your Wi-Fi Network screen, click the network you want your Mac to use, and then type the network password in the Password box. Once the connection is established, click the Continue button.

TIP

If your Mac has an Ethernet port that is connected to your wired network via a cable, you won't need to connect to a Wi-Fi network.

- **Read about data and privacy.** On the Data & Privacy screen, read the information, and click the Learn More link if you want to learn more. Click the Continue button when you're ready to move along.
- **Choose whether to transfer your data to this Mac.** On the Migration Assistant screen, select the From a Mac, Time Machine Backup, or Startup Disk option button if you want to transfer data from one of these Mac-based sources; or select the From a Windows PC option button if you want to transfer data from a PC; and then click the Continue button and follow the prompts to specify the data. If you don't want to transfer data at all, or you want to transfer it later, click the Not Now button.
- **Sign in using your Apple ID.** On the Sign In with Your Apple ID screen, type the email address associated with your Apple ID. Enter the password, and then click the Continue button.
- **Accept the Terms and Conditions.** On the Terms and Conditions screen, read the terms and conditions. If you want to proceed, click the Agree button, and then click the Agree button again in the confirmation dialog.
- **Read the Find My information.** On the Find My screen, read how the Find My feature helps you retrieve your Mac when it goes missing and protects your Mac with Activation Lock. Click the Continue button to proceed.
- **Choose whether to enable Location Services.** On the Enable Location Services screen, select the Enable Location Services on This Mac check box if you want to turn on Location Services, which tell apps like Maps and services like Spotlight Suggestions where your Mac is located. Once more, click the Continue button to proceed.

- **Choose whether to share your Analytics information.** On the Analytics screen, choose whether to share your analytics data with Apple and with app developers. This is a public-spirited action that helps Apple and the developers improve their software, and Apple anonymizes the data so that it cannot come back to haunt you. Click the Continue button to move along.
- **Choose whether to enable Screen Time.** On the Screen Time screen, read the details of the Screen Time feature, which enables you to set usage limits for the Mac for yourself and other users. Click the Continue button if you want to enable Screen Time now; if not, click the Set Up Later button.

TIP

The setup routine implies Screen Time is something you should want to use. Screen Time can certainly be useful, especially if you need a commitment device to limit your Mac usage in certain ways (such as setting time limits on social media) or you need to manage family members' usage. But if your Mac is yours alone and you don't need or want Screen Time, don't set it up. Screen Time is not a notorious resource hog, but it certainly doesn't make your Mac run faster. You can set up Screen Time later if needed.

- **Choose whether to enable Ask Siri.** On the Siri screen, select or clear the Enable Ask Siri check box, as needed, and then click the Continue button. If you enable Ask Siri, choose a voice on the Select a Siri Voice screen. Click the Continue button to keep moving along.
- **Choose whether to set up Touch ID.** If your MacBook or your Mac's keyboard includes a Touch ID fingerprint reader, set up Touch ID fingerprint recognition by clicking the Continue button on the Touch ID screen, and then following the prompts. If you prefer to set up Touch ID later, click the Set Up Touch ID Later link.
- **Choose Light Mode, Dark Mode, or Auto Mode.** On the Choose Your Look screen, click the Light button, the Dark button, or the Auto button, as needed. Auto Mode switches between light and dark to match the time of day in your current location. Click the Continue button one final time.

The setup routine finishes, and your desktop appears. Move on to the section "Meeting the macOS Desktop," later in this chapter.

Logging In

After starting up successfully, macOS displays the login screen. Figure 1-2 shows an example of the login screen with four user accounts set up on the Mac. As you can see, the user accounts appear at the bottom of the screen.

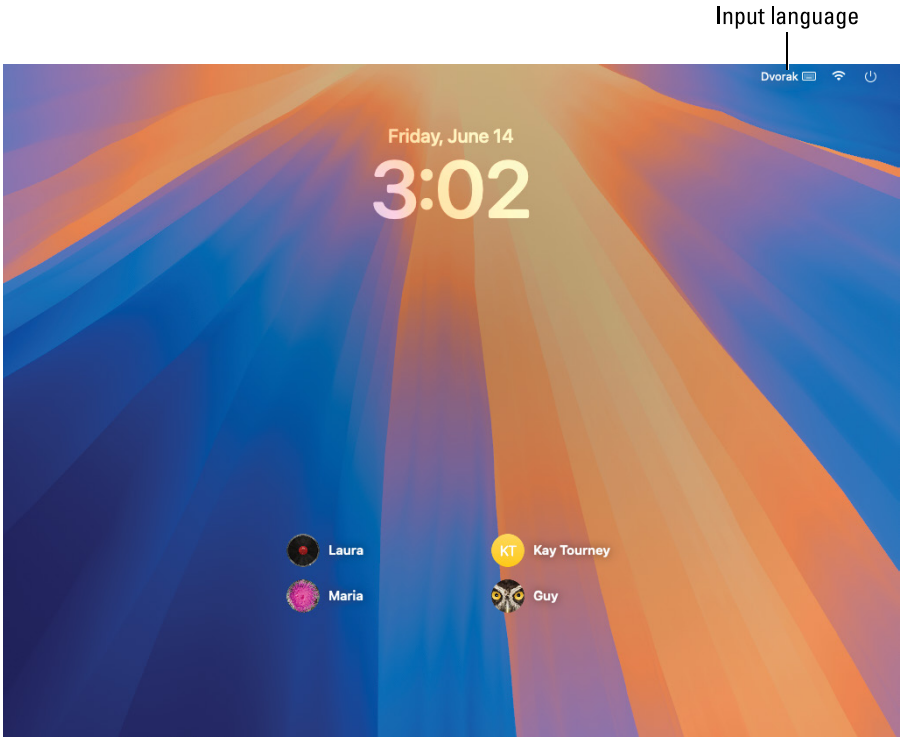

FIGURE 1-2: On the login screen, click your username. You may sometimes need to change the input language.

Click your username to display the Enter Password field (see the left screen in Figure 1-3), type your password, and then press Return or click the little right-arrow-in-a-circle to the right of the password (see the right screen in Figure 1-3). The arrow appears once you've typed something in the Enter Password field.

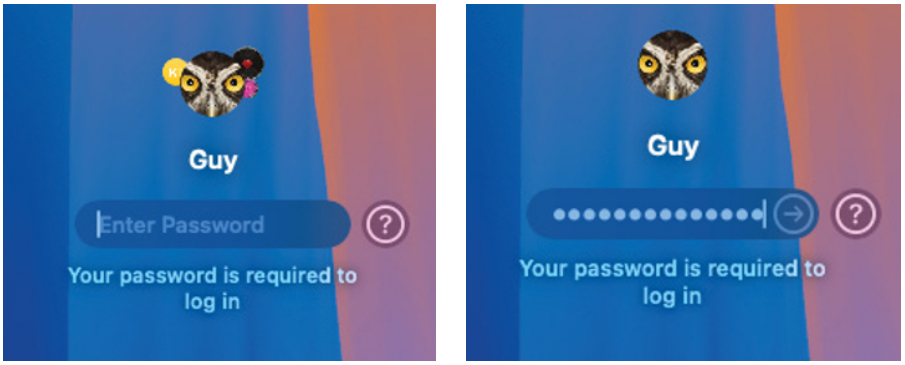

FIGURE 1-3: Type your password (left), and then press Return or click the arrow (right).

Login should be straightforward, provided that you know your password and can type it without mistakes (and without seeing the characters). But there are three things that might trip you up:

- **Caps Lock or Num Lock is enabled.** If Caps Lock or Num Lock is enabled on the keyboard, your password likely won't match. The login screen may or may not show a warning that Caps Lock or Num Lock is on. If in doubt, look at the keyboard to see if there's a status light showing that Caps Lock or Num Lock is on.
- **The keyboard is set to a different layout.** Look at the readout in the upper-right corner of the screen to make sure the keyboard is set to the appropriate layout, such as U.S. If not, click the readout, and then choose the right layout on the menu that appears. This problem occurs only when the Mac is configured to use multiple layouts, such as the U.S. layout and the Dvorak layout.
- **Your Bluetooth keyboard isn't connected or isn't working.** If you're using a Bluetooth keyboard, make sure it's showing its usual lights. If not, try connecting the keyboard via USB (if it supports that) or using a different keyboard.

TIP

If you don't want to type your password every time you start or restart your Mac, you can set up automatic login. Full disclosure: This is almost never wise, but some people find it useful. See Chapter 20 for details.

Meeting the macOS Desktop

Once you've logged in, the macOS desktop appears. Figure 1-4 shows how the desktop looks before you customize it. The desktop is mostly empty space at first, so for visual interest, this figure also shows the About This Mac window, whose macOS readout shows the version of macOS your Mac is running — Sequoia 14.0 in this example. To open this window, click the icon in the upper-left corner of the screen, and then click the About This Mac command on the menu that opens. To close the window, click the red button in its upper-left corner.

Here are the elements you see in the figure:

- **Apple menu:** This menu always appears at the left end of the menu bar. It gives you access to essential system commands, including Sleep, Restart, Shut Down, and Log Out.
- **Menu bar:** This bar appears across the top of the screen and displays the menus for the active app. In Figure 1-4, the active app is Finder, the macOS file-management app. Chapters 4 and 5 dig into Finder in depth.