

# printout

Keystone MacCentral Macintosh Users Group ❖ [www.keystonemac.com](http://www.keystonemac.com)

## Keystone MacCentral January 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Please see your membership email for the links to this month's Zoom meeting or email us at [KeystoneMacCentral@mac.com](mailto:KeystoneMacCentral@mac.com).

During our program this month we plan to discuss

- Screen Capture Tips for your Mac
- How to use your iPhone camera



We have virtual meetings via Zoom on the third Tuesday of each month:

Emails will be sent out prior to each meeting. Follow the directions/invitation each month on our email – that is, just click on the link to join our meeting.

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Keystone MacCentral is a not-for-profit group of Macintosh enthusiasts who generally meet the third Tuesday of every month to exchange information, participate in question-and-answer sessions, view product demonstrations, and obtain resource materials that will help them get the most out of their computer systems. Meetings are free and open to the public. **The Keystone MacCentral printout** is the official newsletter of Keystone MacCentral and an independent publication not affiliated or otherwise associated with or sponsored or sanctioned by any for-profit organization, including Apple Inc. Copyright © 2024, Keystone MacCentral, 310 Somerset Drive, Shiresmanstown, PA 17011.

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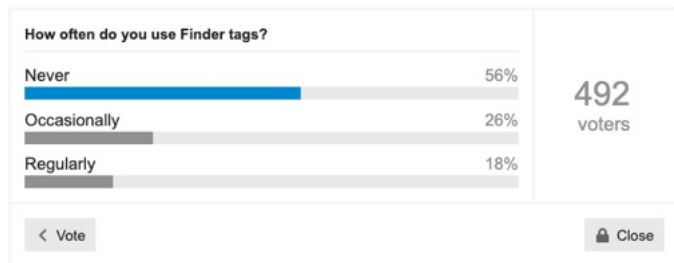
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# Finder Tags See Focused Use

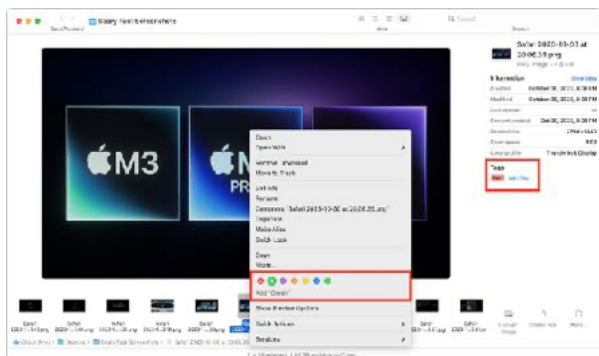
A few weeks ago, we asked [how often you use Finder tags](#). I haven't been a fan of Finder tags since they were introduced a decade ago in OS X 10.9 Mavericks, so I wasn't surprised that 56% of respondents never use them. Another 26% use them occasionally, with 18% relying on them regularly. But perhaps we naysayers are missing out.



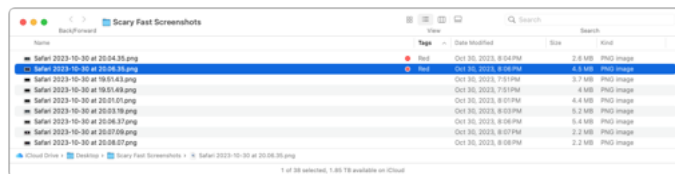
## Basics of Finder Tags

The point of Finder tags is to provide an alternative way of organizing files and folders beyond the traditional folder hierarchy. A file can exist in only one folder (although you can make aliases), but a single file can have as many tags as you like, making it possible to bring together files scattered across your drive or even just a subset of files within a single extensive collection.

Imagine you have a folder containing a few hundred images and need to select a handful for use on a website. If you change your Finder window view to Gallery, you can spin through the images quickly, applying a tag to those you like by adding it from the info pane or Control-clicking the file and choosing a tag from the contextual menu. There are many other ways to apply tags, too.



Once you're done, you can focus on just those files by adding a Tags column to a List view window (Control-click any of the column headers and select Tags) and then clicking it to sort by tags. Or you can put a tag in the Finder window's sidebar by selecting its checkbox in Finder > Settings > Tags. There are plenty of other ways, too. After you've finished, you can remove the tags just as you added them.



For more details about using tags, see Josh Centers's comprehensive article "[All about Tagging in the Mavericks Finder](#)" (14 November 2013). The details may have changed slightly in the last decade, but most of it still applies. Howard Oakley also [wrote about Finder tags](#) recently, and Jeff Carlson has a section on tags in [Take Control of Managing Your Files](#).

## Common Tagging Approaches

From the [discussion following the poll](#), it became clear that tags are essential to the workflow for some people and teams. For instance, Gobit wrote:

*Use them all the time at work (design studio and prepress operation for large printing company). Every job in its own folder, every folder on a server, every folder tagged by colour and initials. Column view. Makes it very easy to see who is/find by/group by person responsible for which of 600+ live jobs at any one time.*

And Anton Rang said:

*I have some thousands of technical papers and hundreds of standards documents on my Mac. By tagging the standards documents, I can easily limit a Spotlight search to just those, without the papers coming into play. I also use tags to a lesser extent to narrow down searches to particular standards families, or documents from a particular vendor, and sometimes for specific projects.*

But far more common were those who used tags more casually. Common uses include:

- Tagging files temporarily to make them stand out in a folder
- Tagging in-progress files differently from those that have been completed
- Tagging important files that are needed regularly
- Tagging frequently used folders to collect them from around the drive
- Tagging files that can likely be deleted in a later pass
- Tagging document versions to separate the current one from previous versions
- Tagging files by client so they can be found across multiple drives
- Tagging related files that are spread throughout multiple folders

I encourage you to read the entire discussion to see more real-world ways people use tags.

## Problems with Finder Tags

Some people have tried Finder tags but given up on them due to various problems:

- **Too few colors:** By default, the Finder provides seven tags named for their colors: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Purple, and Gray. (Alas, Roy G. Biv doesn't roll off the tongue like the rainbow color mnemonic [Roy G. Biv.](#)) You can rename the default tags—though there's little reason to do so—but you can't assign any other colors. Since a colored circle is the primary way of identifying tagged files in a Finder window, seven colors is unnecessarily limiting.
- **Harder to see tagged files than it used to be:** Numerous people mentioned that they found tags much less helpful since macOS stopped highlighting the entire file name with the tag color and moved to applying just the little colored circle. The main advantage of the circles is that it makes it easy to identify files with multiple tags.

- **Tags don't survive all transfer approaches:** In testing under the current versions of Dropbox, Google Drive, and iCloud Drive, applying tags to files caused those files on another Mac logged into the same account to reflect the tags only when transferred via Dropbox or iCloud Drive. With Google Drive, tags seem to be restricted to the Mac on which they're applied. Similarly, tagged files shared in other ways lose their tags unless the transfer approach supports metadata. Tags can appear on other devices, such as in the Files app on an iPad, but are not always consistent in services other than iCloud Drive.

- **Collaborator's tags can muddy your tag set:** When you share a folder with someone using Dropbox (but not iCloud Drive, interestingly), any tags the other person applies to shared files will automatically be added to your collection of tags. The same goes for tagged files shared on a USB flash drive or other approach that maintains metadata. On the one hand, this makes sense for a team using tags as part of their collaboration workflow, but it also means that your tag collection may include a bunch of tags that come from others and are thus meaningless to you.

- **Spotlight sometimes has problems:** Although those who rely heavily on tags seem to have few troubles, others said they had experienced issues with Spotlight performance and finding tags reliably. Even if Spotlight is reliable nearly all the time, the worry of losing tags might prevent some people from venturing beyond safe organization techniques involving folders and file names.

Personally, I've come away with a renewed appreciation for how I might use Finder tags. I'll never be a heavy user because I rely too much on Google Drive, which doesn't preserve tags between my Macs, but I recently found it helpful to tag files I wanted to collect temporarily. Since this poll has brought tags back to the forefront of my mind, I'll be considering whether other aspects of my workflow might be improved with the judicious use of tags. Hopefully, you'll remember that tags are an option the next time you find yourself in a situation where they could be helpful. 🍵

By Adam Engst

# The Hidden Secrets of the Fn Key

**Even** if you've used the Mac for decades, I suspect you have never fully understood the Fn key. Not helping is the fact that Apple sometimes calls it the Function key, but all Mac keyboards already have 12 or more numbered F-for-Function keys! The Fn key first appeared in 1998 in the PowerBook G3 Series (Wallstreet) and has become a fixture in the lower-left corner of laptop keyboards ever since. The Fn key migrated to standalone keyboards only in 2007 with the release of the Apple Keyboard with Numeric Keypad, where it occupies a spot between the Delete key and the Home key. On Apple's compact desktop keyboards, it reverts to the lower-left corner.



Apple began adding a globe icon to the Fn keycap a few years ago and, starting in macOS 14 Sonoma, began to call it the Globe key. This is likely for consistency with iPad keyboards, which dropped the lowercase “fn” letters entirely in favor of a globe icon. However, per the current entry in the [Apple Style Guide](#), I'll continue to refer to it as the Fn key throughout.

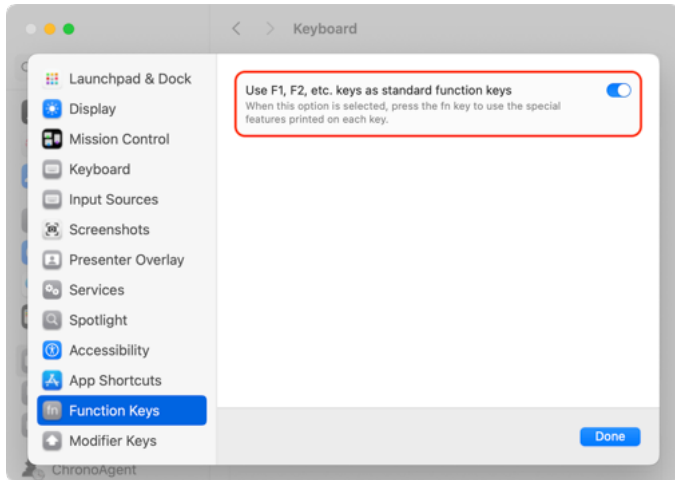
(As an aside, standard search engines were no help in my research into the Fn key's first appearance. ChatGPT scored a win, however, by identifying the

PowerBook G3 Series on its first try—yes, I confirmed it with keyboard photos—whereas Google's Bard guessed wildly, inventing multiple wrong answers that included the PowerBook 540c, iBook G3, and PowerBook 2400c. I never found any text about the introduction of the Fn key; for the standalone keyboards, I worked my way through MacTracker's images.)

Unlike Shift, Control, Option, and Command, the Fn key can't be used as a standard modifier key, and no interface elements change if you press Fn and choose a menu. Nor can you use it for custom keyboard shortcuts in System Settings > Keyboard > Keyboard Shortcuts, despite a few Apple-included items there showing it. Because Apple doesn't include the Fn key in the public Hot Key API, macro utilities like Keyboard Maestro can't access it for the most part, as [Peter Lewis explains](#). However, the Fn key can now be treated more like a modifier key with the free [Karabiner-Elements](#) or the \$10 [BetterTouchTool](#), both of which can access the keyboard at a lower level than the public APIs. I haven't used either, so I can't comment on how well they work.

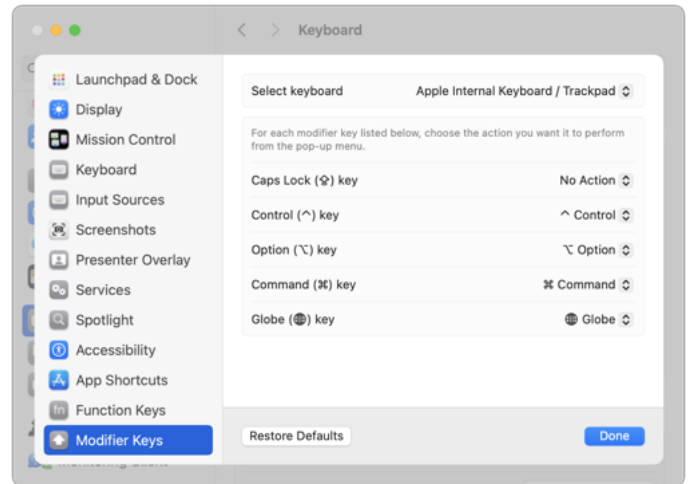
Until macOS 12 Monterey, the Fn key was essentially a hardware toggle key that switched the behavior of other keys to an alternative function, most notably toggling the F1, F2, etc. keys at the top of the keyboard between the default controls indicated by their icons—brightness, volume, media keys, etc.—and standard function keys. Those function keys were sometimes necessary when communicating with old online systems, but longtime Mac users have more commonly relied on them as user-definable hot keys thanks to the longstanding macOS option “Use F1, F2, etc. keys as standard function keys” that lets users activate the function keys directly, without also pressing the Fn key. That switch now lives in System Settings > Keyboard > Keyboard Shortcuts > Function Keys; find it in System Preferences > Keyboard > Keyboard in Monterey and earlier.



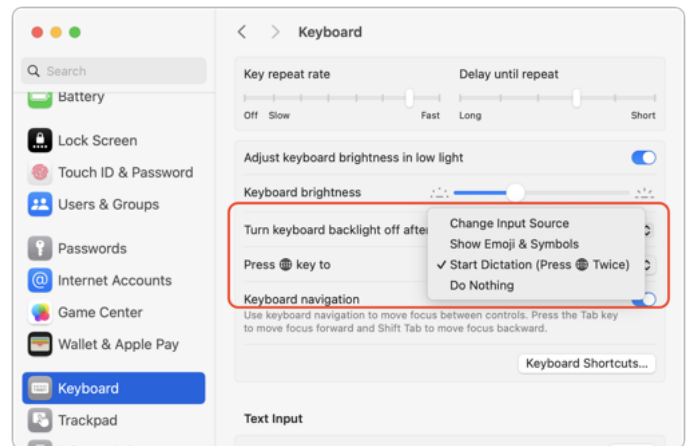


To me, the Fn key has always seemed extraneous because I've relied on F1 through F12 to switch among my core apps since roughly 1990, nearly a decade before Apple introduced Fn and another decade before it was available to desktop Mac users. Even after that, I mostly used third-party keyboards, many of which lacked an Fn key, and accessed all the dedicated hardware controls using onscreen interfaces. (My current Das Keyboard hides what turns out to be a non-functional Fn key to the right of the right-hand Option key. I hadn't even realized it was there until I started writing this article.) The Fn key wasn't something I needed for the first two-thirds of my Mac life, so I enabled the standard function keys as soon as that became an option and never went back. I will admit some pique that this limited key has occupied so prominent a spot on my Apple laptop keyboards for 25 years.

With Monterey, Apple also started letting us remap one modifier key (other than Shift) to another, so the Fn key could mimic Control for those who reach for the lower-left corner without looking. (I also always deactivate Caps Lock by remapping it to No Action.) In macOS 13 Ventura and later, you do that in System Settings > Keyboard > Keyboard Shortcuts > Modifier Keys; in Monterey and earlier, it's in System Preferences > Keyboard > Modifier Keys.



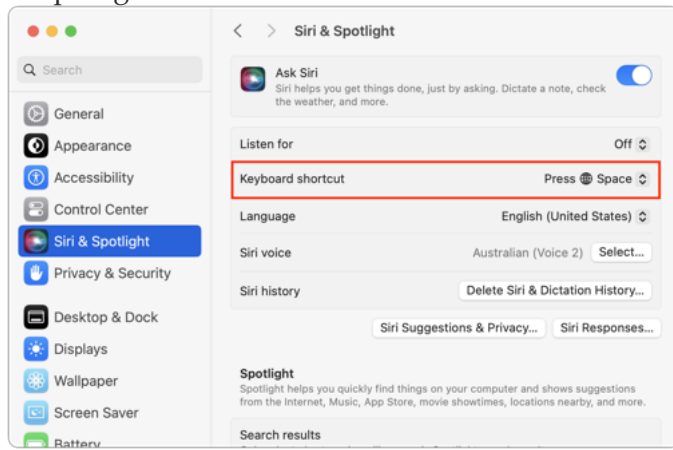
In recent macOS releases, Apple has continued to hard-code additional capabilities into the Fn key. In System Settings > Keyboard, you can choose whether the Fn key changes the input source (handy if you regularly work with different languages or keyboard layouts), open the Emoji & Symbols window, start dictation (by pressing it twice), or do nothing at all. In versions of macOS before Ventura, you could set the Fn key to start dictation in System Preferences > Keyboard > Dictation.



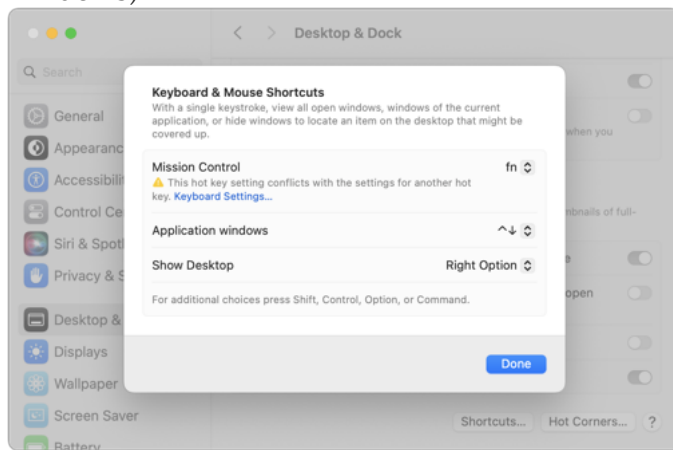
Other keyboard-related options in System Settings that can be set to use the Fn key include:

- **Siri:** You can use the Fn key plus the Space bar to invoke Siri; choose that option from the Keyboard Shortcut pop-up menu in System > Settings > Siri

& Spotlight.



- **Mission Control:** In System Settings > Desktop & Dock > Mission Control > Shortcuts, you can set the Fn key to trigger Mission Control (thumbnails for all windows and Spaces), Application Windows (thumbnails for all windows for the current app), or Show Desktop (hide all windows).



Notice the warning about the Fn key setting for Mission Control conflicting with the settings for another hot key. I believe the warning is both sometimes spurious and evidence of a bug in System Settings because it sticks around even after I eliminate the conflict by returning the setting to the default of Control-Up Arrow. Restarting the Mac clears the message. However, you can still get yourself into a pickle with conflicting settings. If some action related to the Fn key doesn't work as you expect, revisit the settings mentioned throughout this article and ensure they don't conflict.

Along with the options exposed in System Settings, Apple's engineers have slipped in a bunch of additional hard-coded shortcuts. Here are all of those I've found, many of which aren't documented in [Apple's list of keyboard shortcuts](#). Post in the comments if you know of any others!

- **Fn-A:** Selects an item in the Dock, after which you can use the arrow keys to select different items and press Return to switch to the app
- **Fn-Shift-A:** Opens Launchpad
- **Fn-C:** Opens Control Center
- **Fn-D:** Starts dictation (or set a modifier key to do this when you press it twice)
- **Fn-E:** Open the emoji picker (same as choosing Edit > Emoji & Symbols)
- **Fn-F:** Toggles full-screen mode
- **Fn-H:** Hides current windows to reveal the desktop; a second press restores them
- **Fn-M:** Selects the Apple menu, after which you can use the arrow keys to navigate menus and activate the selected command by pressing Return
- **Fn-N:** Displays Notification Center
- **Fn-Q:** Starts a new Quick Note in Notes
- **Fn-Delete:** Forward delete on keyboards without a Forward Delete key (or use Control-D)
- **Fn-Return:** Equivalent to the Enter key on the numeric keypad, which is slightly different than Return in certain contexts
- **Fn-Up Arrow:** Scroll up one page (same as the Page Up key)
- **Fn-Down Arrow:** Scroll down one page (same as the Page Down key)
- **Fn-Left Arrow:** Scroll to the beginning of a document (same as the Home key)
- **Fn-Right Arrow:** Scroll to the end of a document (same as the End key)

A few of these shortcuts fail when invoked if certain apps are in the foreground at the time—some apps don't support the Home and End keys, for instance, so the Fn key variants won't work either. Google Docs also intercepts some of them, so other Web apps may prevent some of them from working, too.

But now that you know everything the Fn key can do, perhaps you can make better use of it than you have in the past. Personally, I'm remapping mine to Control now that I use Control-Tab hundreds of times per day to switch among my tabs in Arc. 🐼





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