Rethinking Stage Manager on macOS Ventura (Critical Analysis and Redesign)

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How Stage Manager works on macOS Ventura

Visibility

All open apps are moved to the left-hand side of the screen with a 3D perspective & a live preview of each window. The user can click on any of the previewed windows to display the app On-Stage.

Grouped Apps

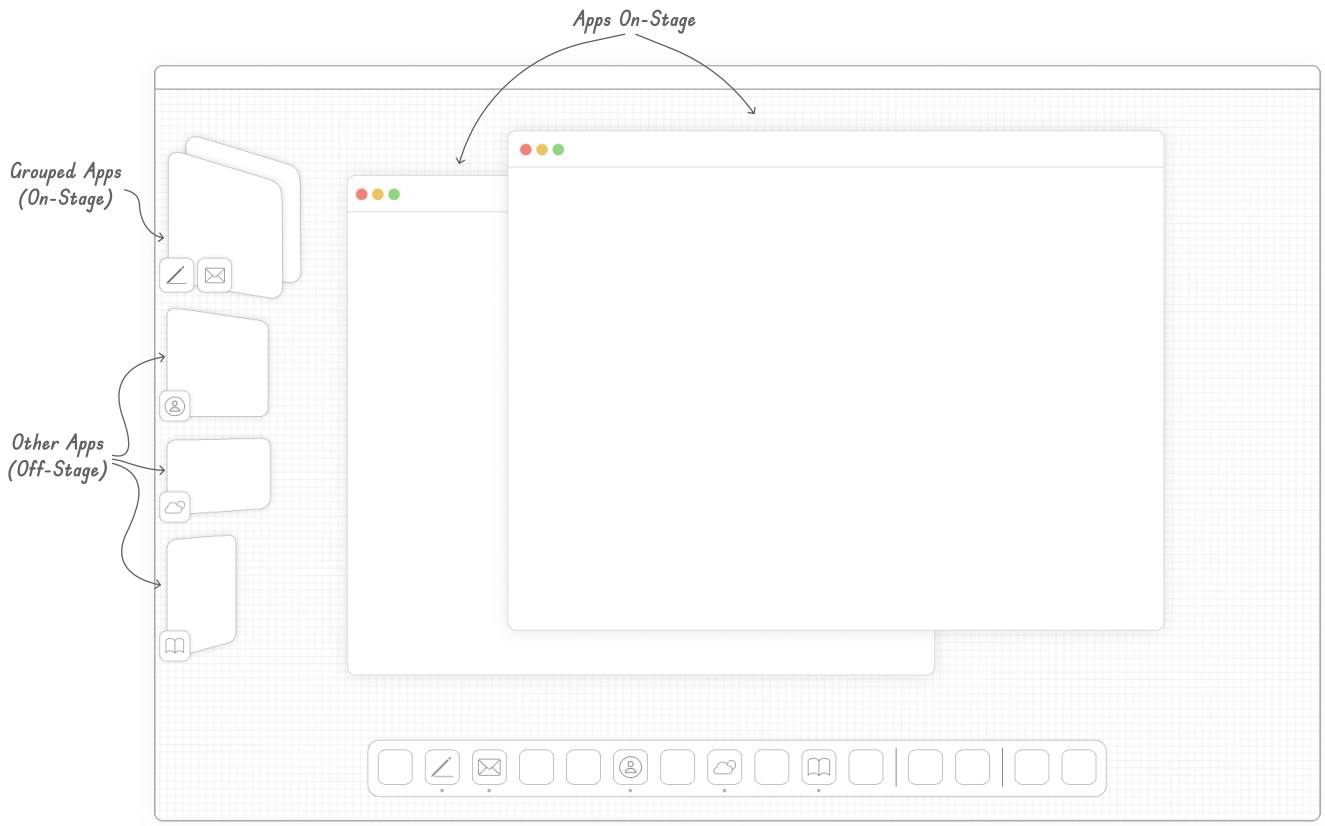
Apps can also be grouped and used on the desktop.

On-Stage

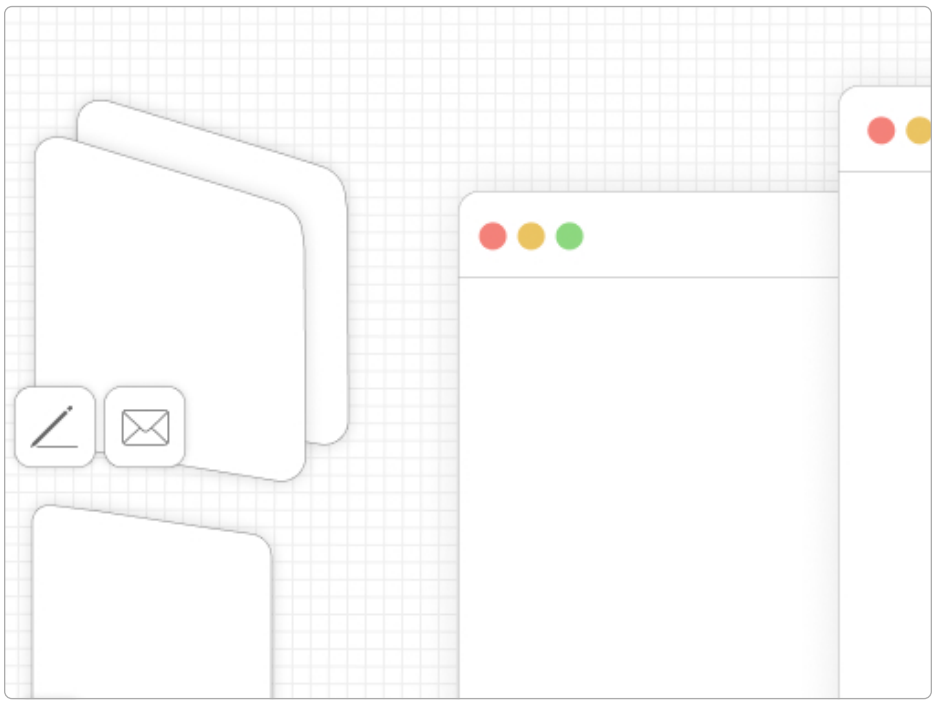
These are the apps that are visible on the desktop and being used by the user.

Off-Stage

These are the apps that are not being used by the user and are on the left-hand side of the screen.



Representation of Stage Manager on macOS Ventura



3D perspective windows

Issues Observed in Stage Manager

Screen Real estate

The windows of open apps take up a lot of screen real space on the left-hand side of the screen. These windows can be moved elsewhere which integrates with existing window management features.

Discoveribility

For a novice user, discovering new features in stage manager can be challenging and does not blend in well with existing macOS features such as minimizing an app or mission control.

Low Frame-rates

Older non-apple silicon-based macs face potential frame-rate issues due to the 3D perspective of the windows having a live preview of the app.

No Split-Screen View

Split-screen cannot be used when two or more apps are grouped in stage manager.

Redesigning Stage Manager

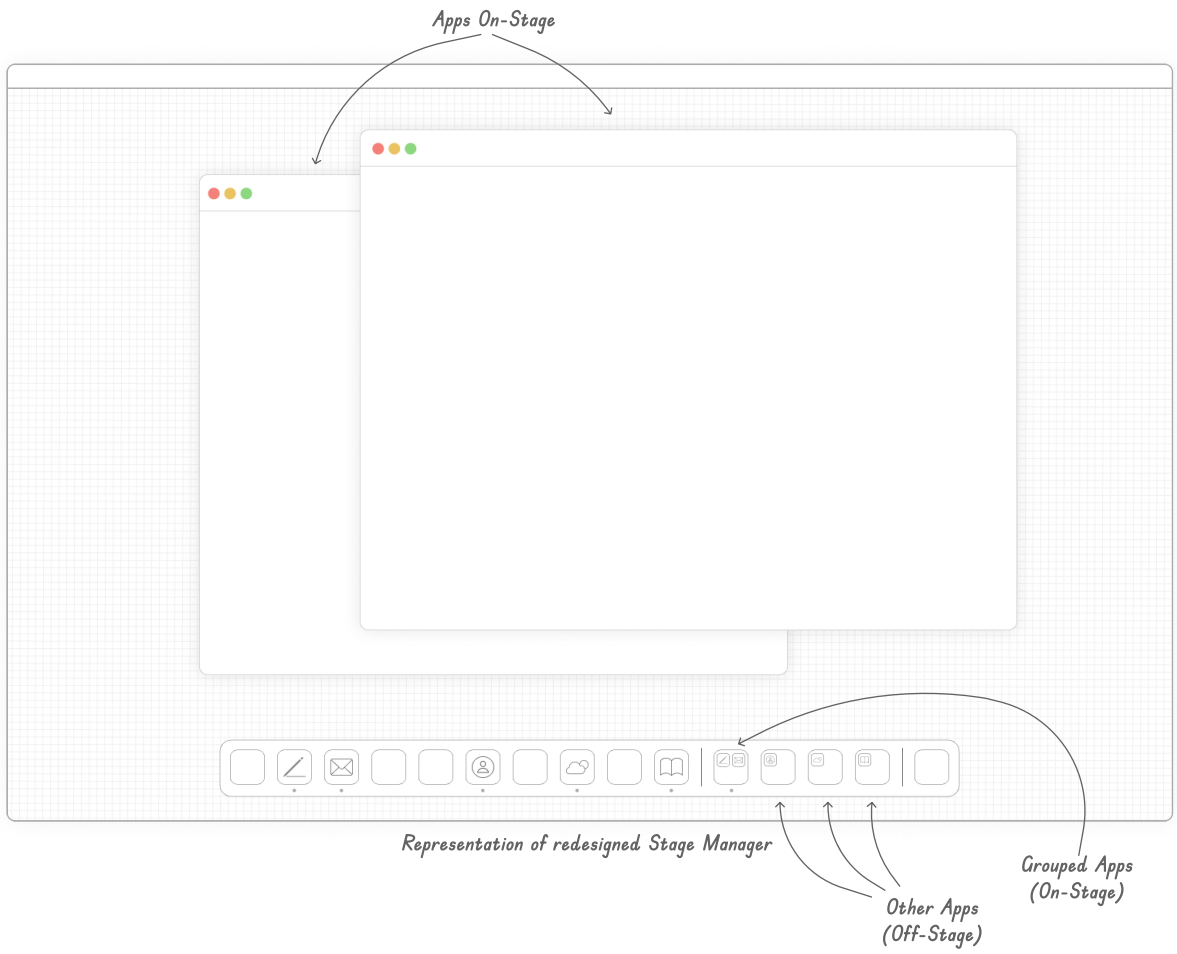
Incorporating Stage Manager for All User Types

This redesign mainly aims to combine stage manager with existing features such as minimizing to the dock, mission control & gesture controls to improve discoverability for all types of users. This results in a seamless window management system.

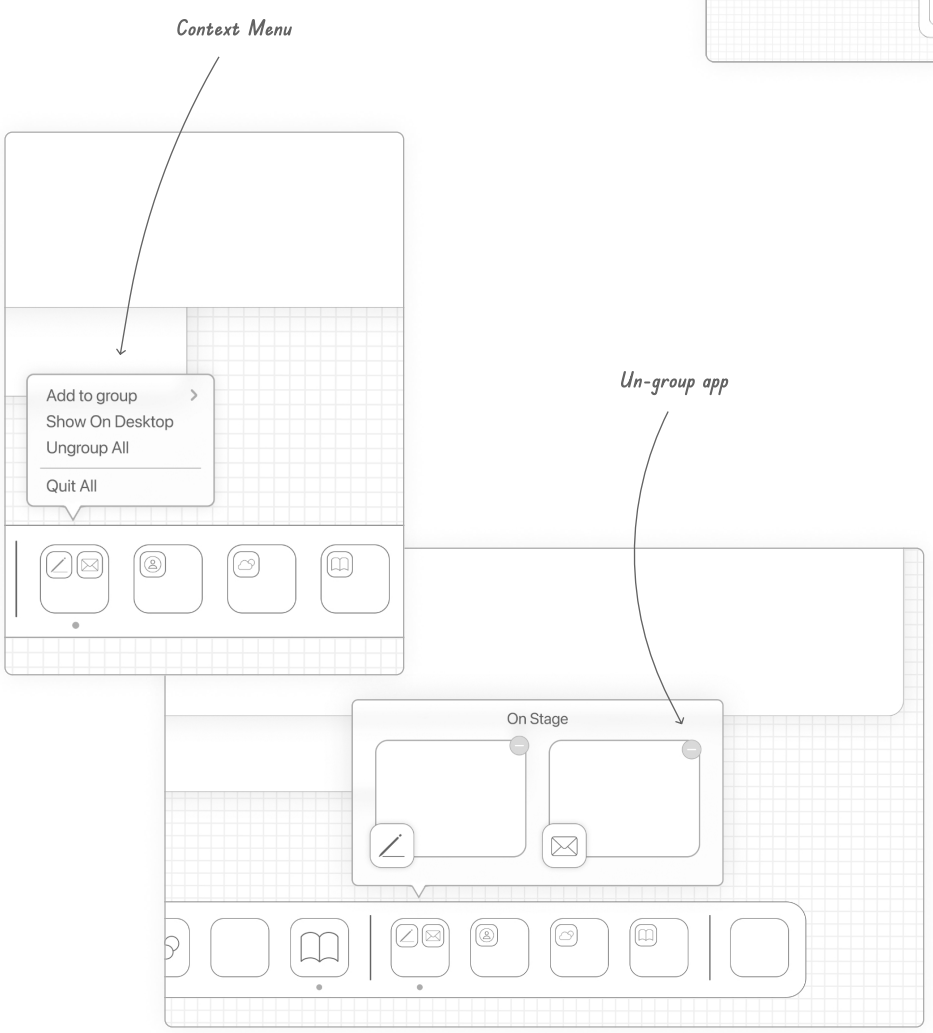
There are now 2 ways to use stage manager depending on the user type.

Novice Users

A Novice user generally would not use gestures, mission control, etc and mainly uses the dock for navigation. All open apps are moved to the dock similar to when an app is minimized. Apps are grouped together similar to folders on iOS.



Representation of redesigned Stage Manager



Open Apps are visible on the dock

Stage Manager on the Dock

Grouping Apps

Apps can be grouped by dragging open windows into existing app groups & can also be un-grouped using the minus icon. Alternatively, the user can use the context menu.

Live Preview

Left-clicking on the apps/group icon shows a live preview of the app window.

Context Menu

Right-clicking on the app/group brings up a context menu to customise the group. The user can add to the group, ungroup, show On-Stage or quit all apps.

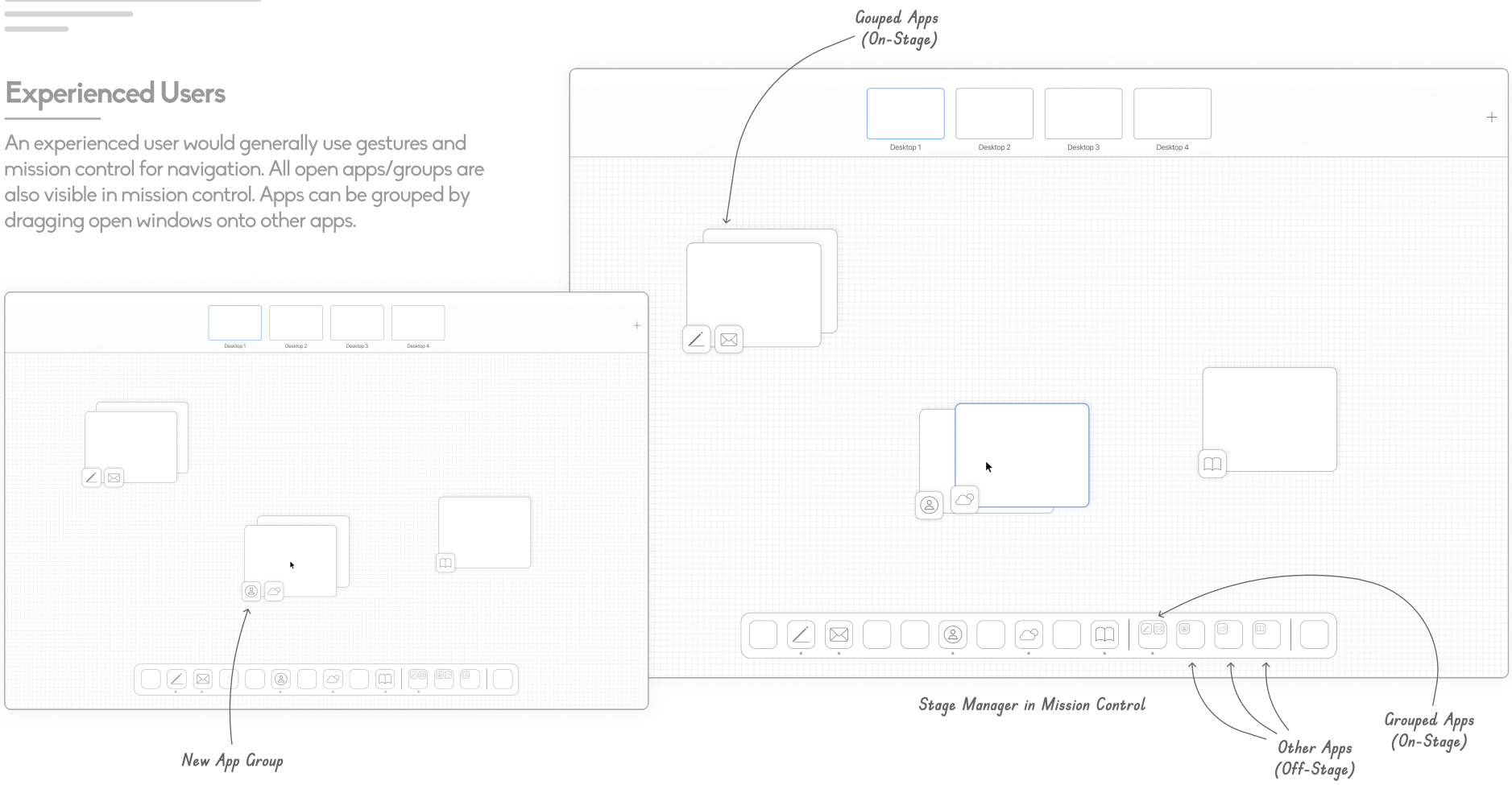
Discoveribility

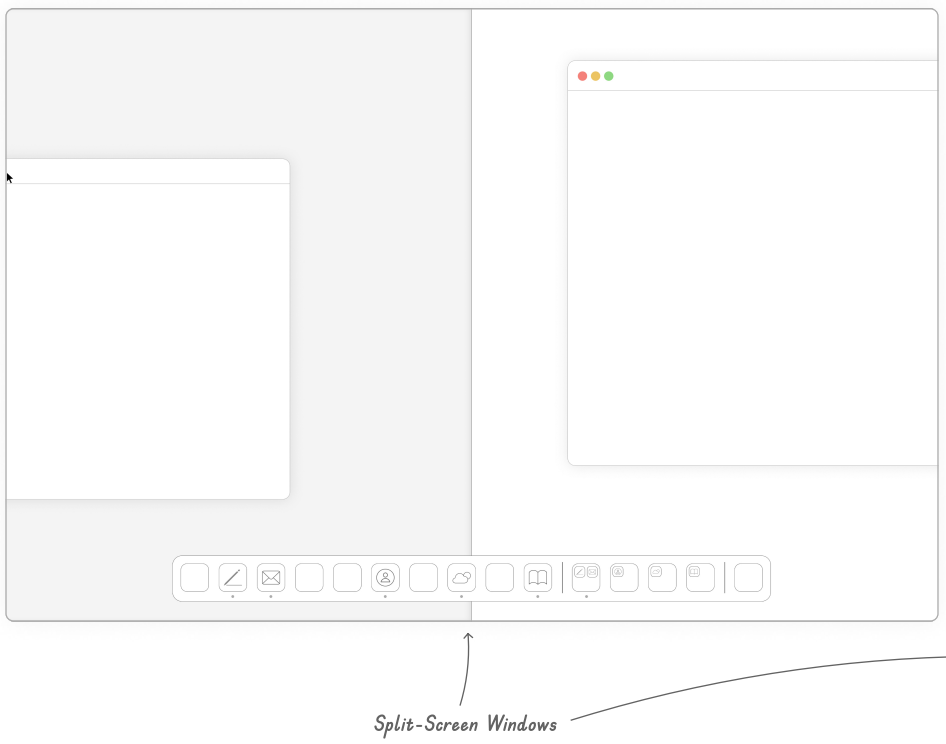
With stage manager being moved to the dock, discoverability for novice users would improve.

Stage Manager in Mission Control

Experienced Users

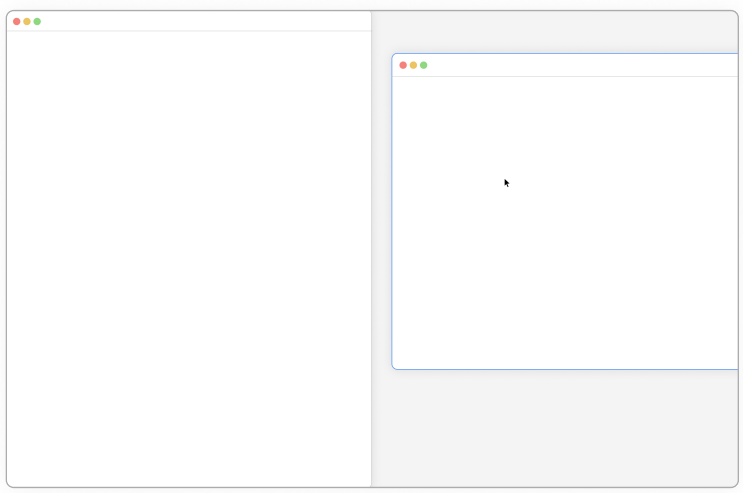
An experienced user would generally use gestures and mission control for navigation. All open apps/groups are also visible in mission control. Apps can be grouped by dragging open windows onto other apps.





Split-Screen View

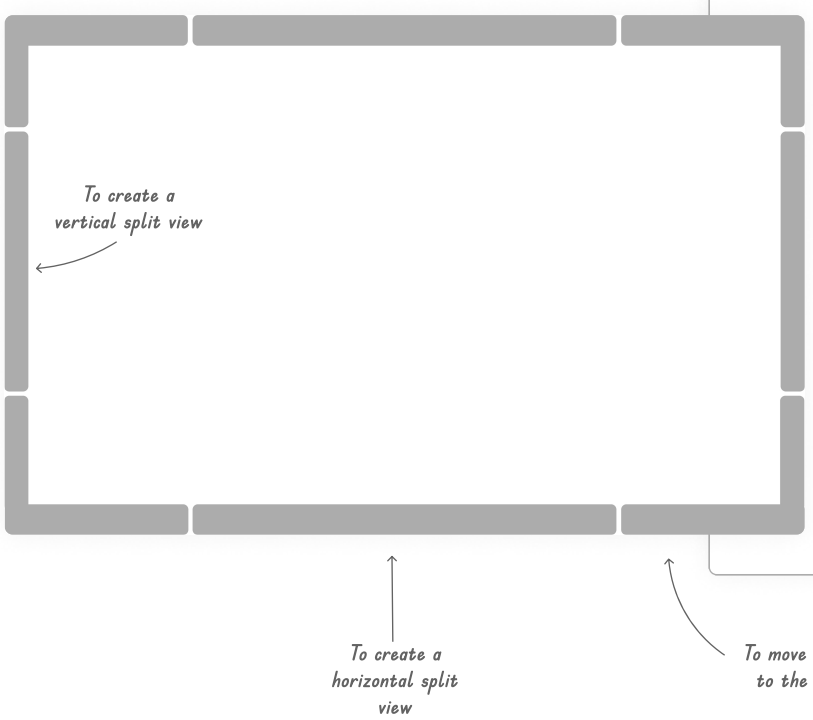
Apps can be viewed in split-screen by dragging & holding the window to each side/corner of the screen, similar to Windows OS.

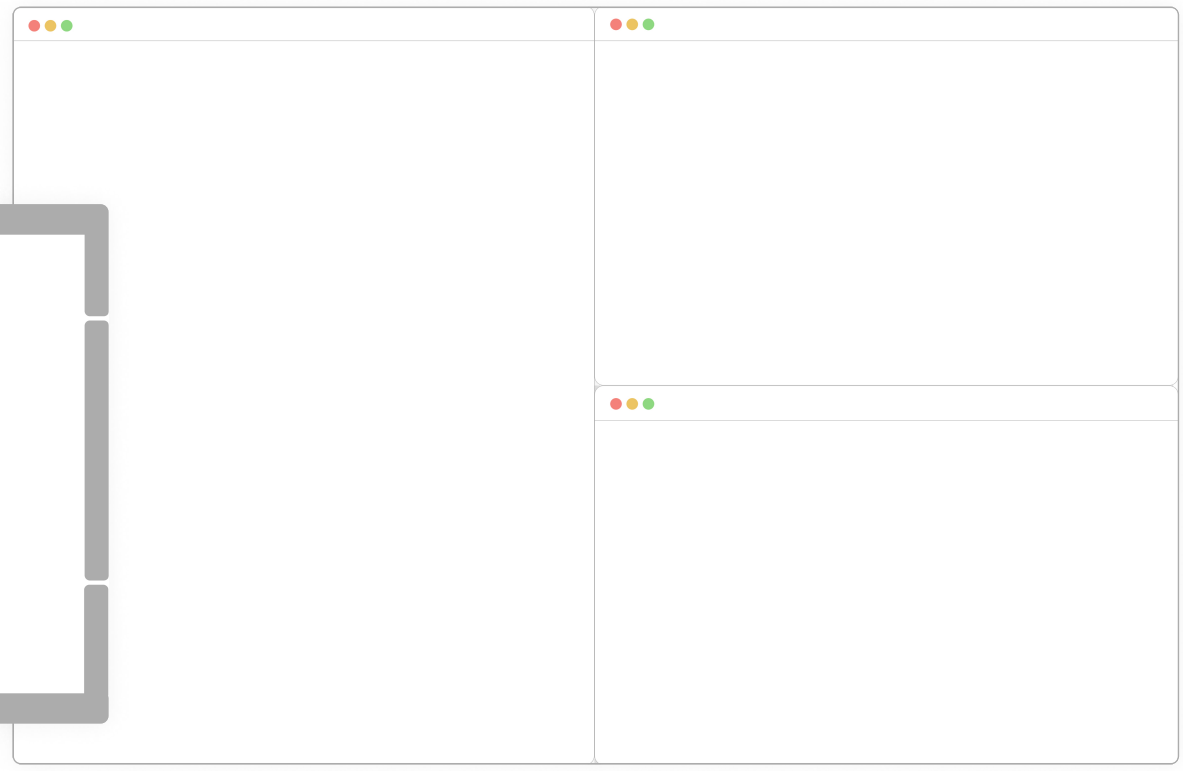


Creating complex Split-Screen Views

Using Hot Corners

Complex grid views can be created by dragging & holding windows to a corner/side (hot corners).





Complex Split-Screen Layouts