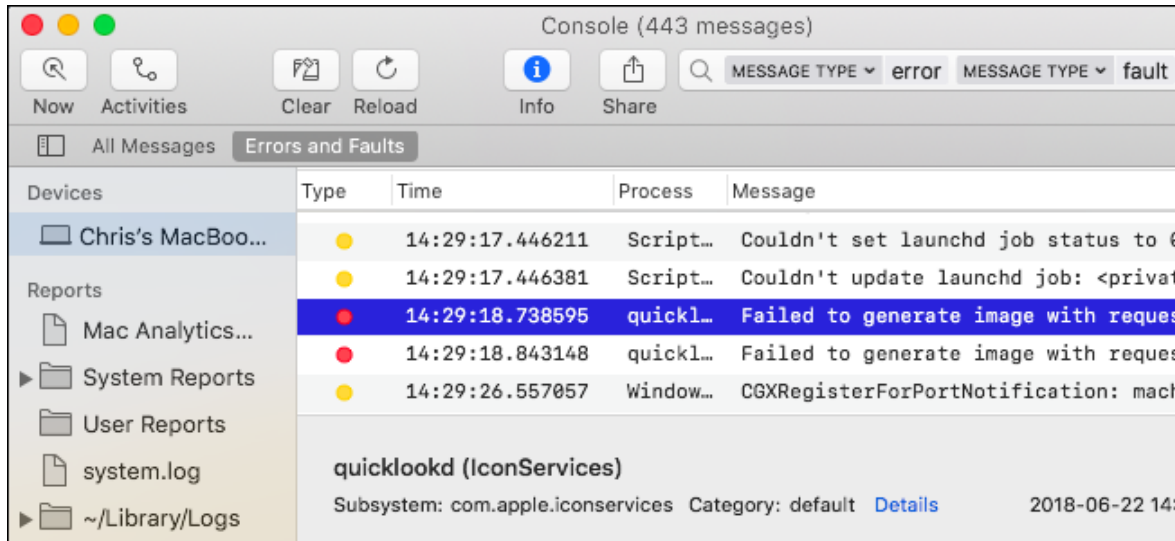# How to View the System Log on a Mac

CHRIS HOFFMAN 🐦 @chrisbhoffman
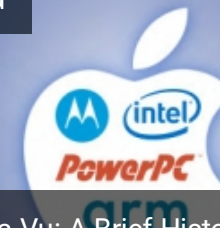JULY 9, 2018, 8:00AM EDT

Your Mac keeps system logs, which can help diagnose and troubleshoot problems with macOS and your installed applications. These logs are stored as plain-text log files on your Mac's system drive, and macOS also includes an app for viewing them.

View System Logs in the Console App

To view your Mac system logs, launch the Console app. You can launch it with Spotlight search by pressing Command+Space, typing "Console," and then pressing Enter. You'll also find it at Finder > Applications > Utilities > Console.

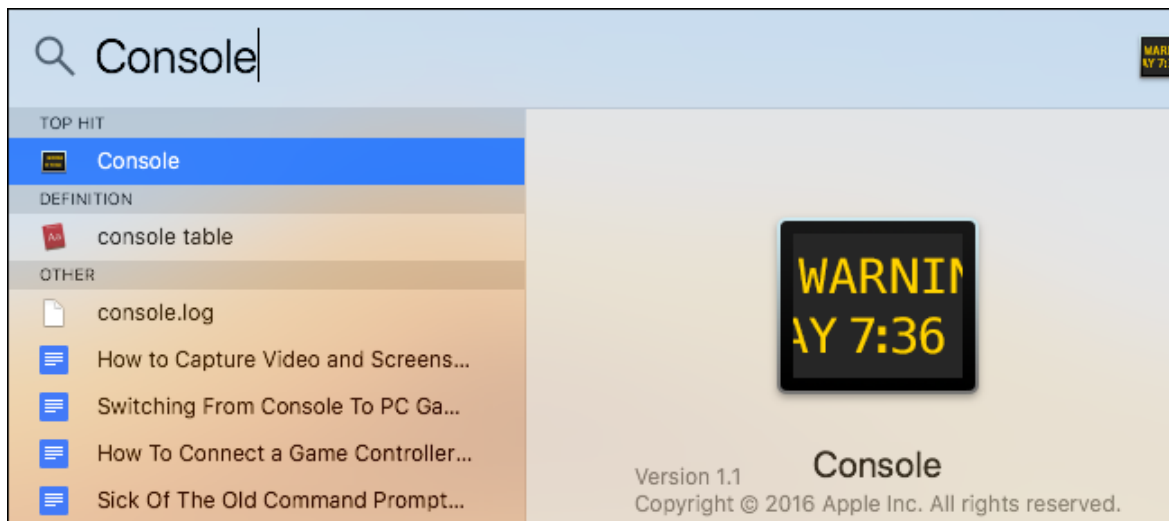The Console app, also known as Console.app, is like a [Windows Event Viewer](#) for Mac.
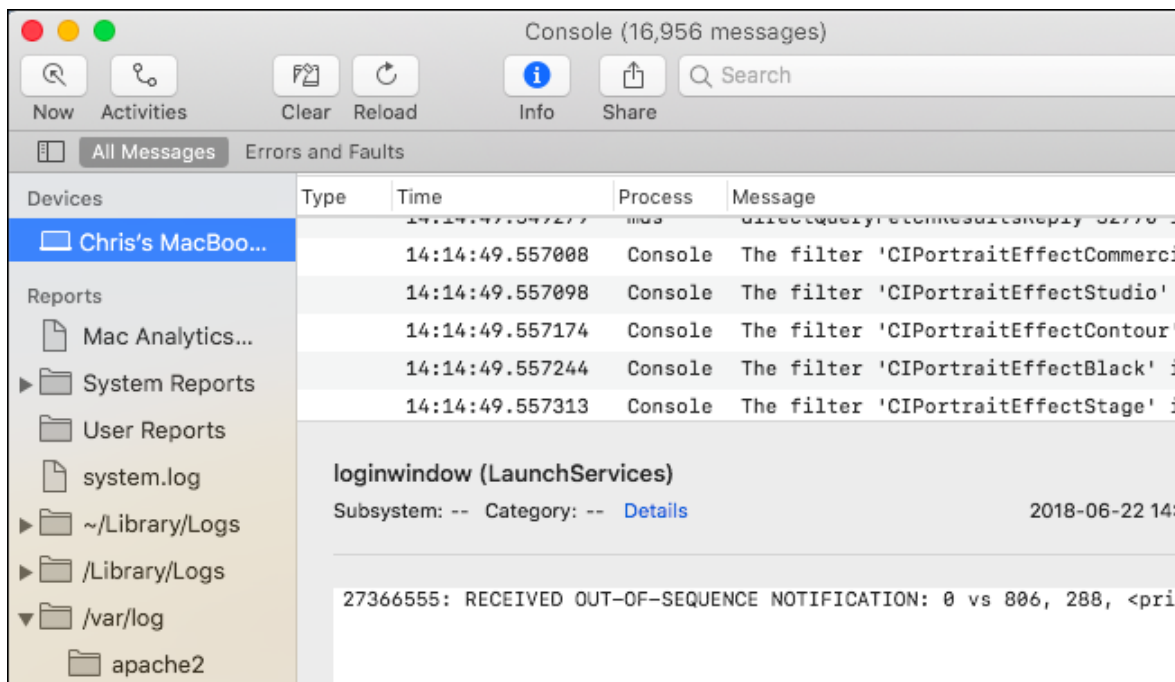
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By default, you'll see a list of console messages from your current Mac. You can click "Errors and Faults" in the toolbar to see only error messages, if you like. You can also use the search box to search for a type of error message you want to see.

More logs are available under Reports. To see application crash and freeze logs, click either "System Reports" for system applications or "User Reports" for user applications. You'll see a variety of logs with file extensions like .crash, .diag, and .spin. Click them to view them in the Info pane.

If you need more information about why an application crashes on your system, you may be able to find it here. An application's developer may need this information to fix a crash that occurs on your Mac, too.

To view the system log file, click "system.log." To browse different application-specific logs, look through the other folders here. "~Library/Logs" is your current Mac user account's user-specific application log folder, "/Library/Logs" is the system-wide application log folder, and "/var/log" generally contains logs for low-level system services. The search bar works to filter these log files, too.

To view another Mac user account's logs located under "User Reports" or "~/Library/Logs," you'll have to sign in as that user and then open the Console app.

You can copy data from your system logs to a text file, if you need to export it to share it with someone else for troubleshooting purposes. First, click Edit > Select All to select all the messages on the current screen. Next, click Edit > Copy to copy them to your clipboard.

Next, open the TextEdit application—for example, by pressing Command+Space, typing "TextEdit," and pressing "Enter." Create a new document and then select Edit > Paste to paste the messages into the text file. Click File > Save to save your text file afterwards.

Find Log Files on Disk

These logs are plain-text files you can find on your Mac's local disk, too. This means you can browse to them in Finder or via the Terminal, open them in other applications, use command-line tools with them, and back up the files.

To find these log files, look in the following locations:

- **System Log Folder**: /var/log

- **System Log**: /var/log/system.log

- **Mac Analytics Data**: /var/log/DiagnosticMessages

- **System Application Logs**: /Library/Logs

- **System Reports**: /Library/Logs/DiagnosticReports

- **User Application Logs**: ~/Library/Logs (in other words, /Users/NAME/Library/Logs)

- **User Reports**: ~/Library/Logs/DiagnosticReports (in other words, /Users/NAME/Library/Logs/DiagnosticReports)

If you ever need to remember where to find one of these folders, you can open the Console app (at /Applications/Utilities/Console.app), Ctrl+click or right-click one of the logs or folders in the sidebar, and select "Reveal in Finder" to view its location on disk.

READ NEXT

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Chris Hoffman is Editor in Chief of How-To Geek. He's written about technology for nearly a decade and was a PCWorld columnist for two years. Chris has written for The New York Times, been interviewed as a technology expert on TV stations like Miami's NBC 6, and had his work covered by news outlets like the BBC. Since 2011, Chris has written over 2,000 articles that have been read more than 500 million times---and that's just here at How-To Geek. **READ FULL BIO »**

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