



DockJuggler

Multiple Docks For Your Macintosh

macOS Catalina (10.15)

Source code at: <https://github.com/charlierobin/dockjuggler>

Universal, Intel, and Apple Silicon compiled binaries available for download at the GitHub site if you really don't want to compile from source yourself.

IDE/Compiler: Xojo from www.xojo.com

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Overview

DockJuggler is an Apple macOS utility that allows you to have multiple Finder Docks configured, and then allows you to switch between them with the click of a button.

Each Dock is the standard Apple Finder Dock, and behaves accordingly, with all the usual Dock magnification, size, and positioning functionality found in the Dock System Preferences pane.

In other words, it's important to note that DockJuggler is **not** a Dock replacement: it simply adds some management and swapping functionality to the existing Dock.

There are plenty of other very fine apps out there that provide extra Dock functionality, or are even complete replacements for the Dock — ActiveDock, Ubar, Sidebar, Taskbar, Stage Manager, Mission Control etc, to name a random few (in no particular order) — but I found that none of them worked quite the way I was after.

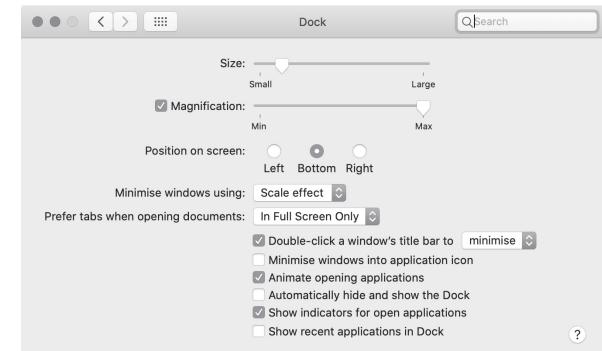
I wasn't interested in having a Dock that was more like a Windows Taskbar, and I didn't want sliding drawers of new stuff off to the left and the right of the screen.

I just wanted a way of having multiple versions of the Dock, especially with a way of having some applications common between all versions (Mail, Safari, Calendar, Contacts, Stickies, Notes etc) and then other applications specific to a particular workspace: 3D apps like Houdini, Maya, ZBrush and Cinema 4D in a "3D" dock, Xcode, Visual Studio Code, Unity and Xojo and the GitHub app in my "dev" dock, After Effects and Motion and DaVinci Resolve in a "video" dock, and so on.

We don't want to see this all the time ...



Neat little manageable and switchable docks that only show the apps we are interested in...



Remember, DockJuggler is not a Dock replacement.

So you can still add apps to the left side of the Dock, and you can still add folders to the right side of the Dock, all as you would expect.

The minute you switch to another Dock, any customisations you've made to your current Dock will be lost.

So if you've used DockJuggler to create a custom Dock, have activated it, and then dragged a new app/folder/document onto it, that change will disappear the next time you switch to another custom Dock, which is useful for making temporary "working changes" to the Dock.

Installation

At the moment the DockJuggler app is available as a zipped download, so download the version of ZIP archive you want — binary, Intel or Apple Silicon — and doubleclick to unzip it (or use the unarchive application of your choice).

Then drag and drop the DockJuggler application icon to a location on your computer.

DockJuggler can live anywhere on your Mac that you want it to; it doesn't have to be in your Applications folder. Having said that, Applications would still probably be the most logical place for it, in amongst all your other apps.

(Or in the Applications folder in your Home directory, if you are on a machine with multiple user accounts and you want to be the only user with access to it.)

/Applications

... or ...

/Users/YourUserName/Applications

... depending upon your preference.

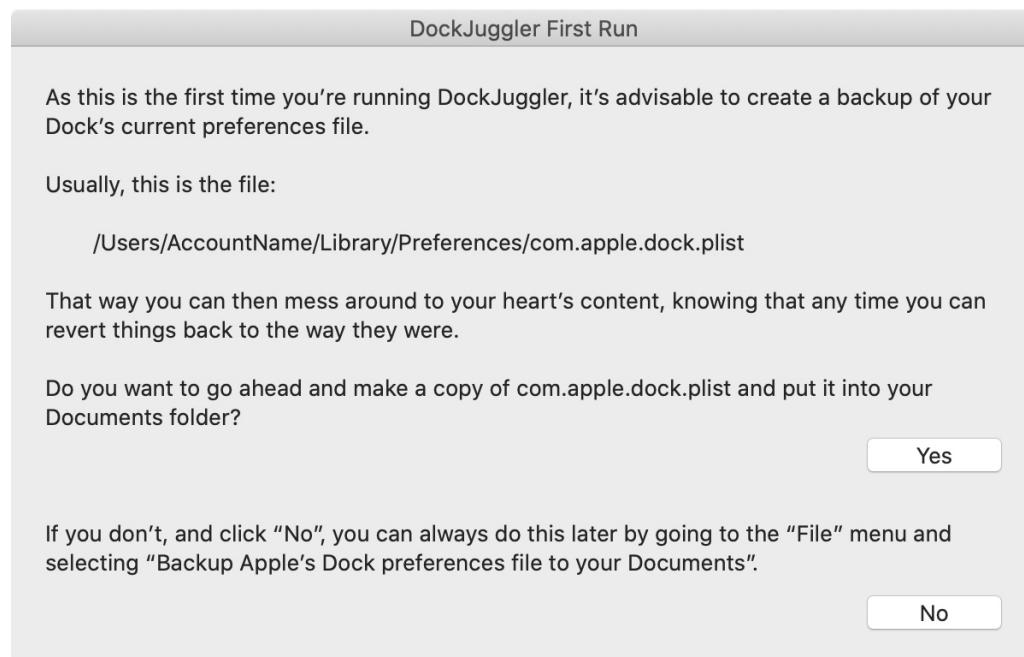
But if you have an extra Applications folder located on an external drive, simply for extra speed or because you ran out of space on your internal drive, well, no problem: DockJuggler can go there as well.

/Volumes/external/Applications

But don't launch DockJuggler just yet ...

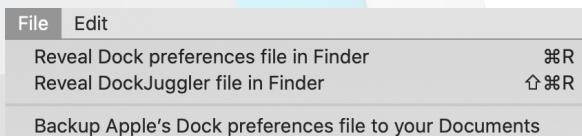
First Run

The first time you run DockJuggler (it assumes it's running for the first time if it doesn't find its preferences file in your computer's Preferences folder) you'll see this dialog box:



You can choose to automatically make a copy of your Dock's preferences file into your local user Documents folder by clicking the "Yes" button.

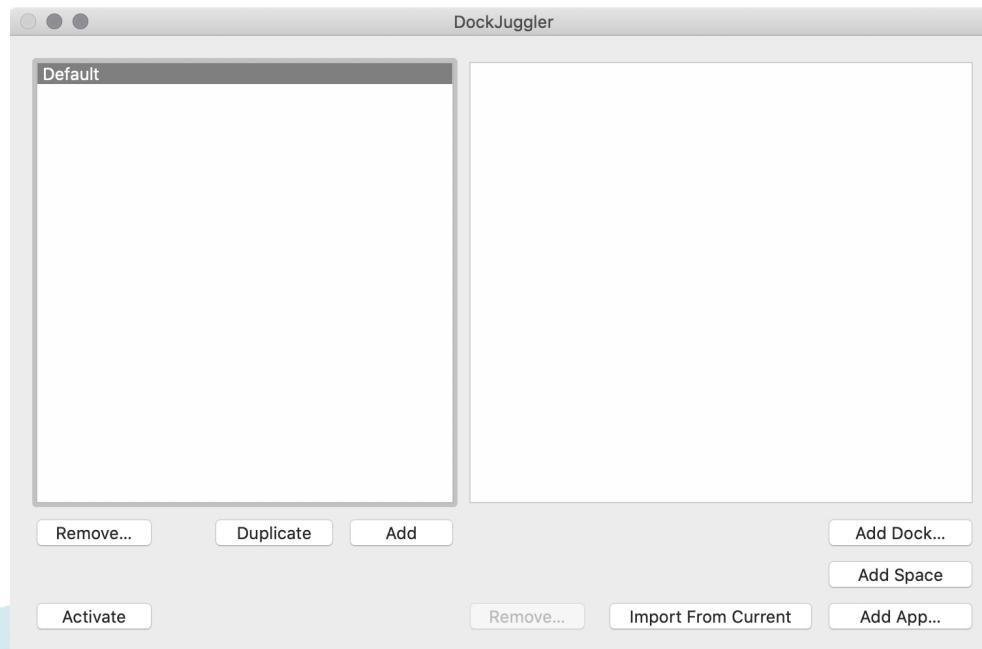
If you choose not to make any backup copies and click the "No" button, you can always do it later by selecting "Backup Apple's Dock preferences file to your Documents" from the "File" menu.



Setting Up Docks & Switching Between Them

DockJuggler's main window consists of two main areas: on the left is your list of docks, and on the right is the list of items specific for whatever is selected on the left.

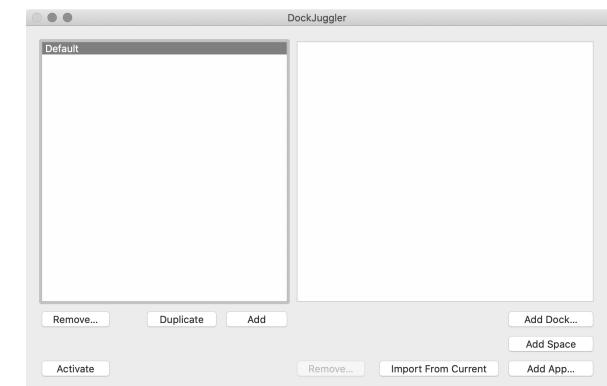
If you have nothing selected on the left, everything on the right is greyed out and unavailable.



You'll see that DockJuggler gives you an empty "Default" dock to get you started.

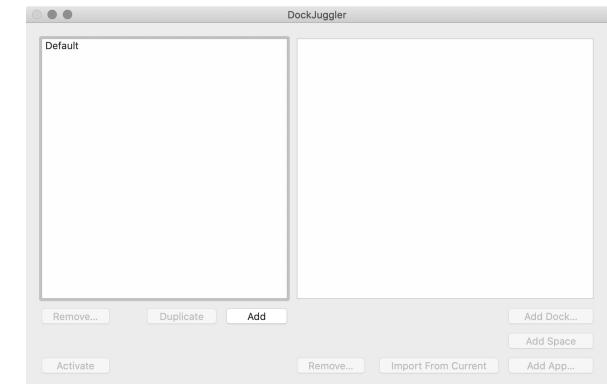
You can click "Add" under the left list to add new empty docks, or you can click "Duplicate" to make a copy of an existing dock.

To permanently delete a dock, click "Remove". (You will be asked to confirm your desired deletion, as this action cannot be undone.)



Above: the main DockJuggler window with a dock selected in the left list.

Below: the same window, with nothing selected.

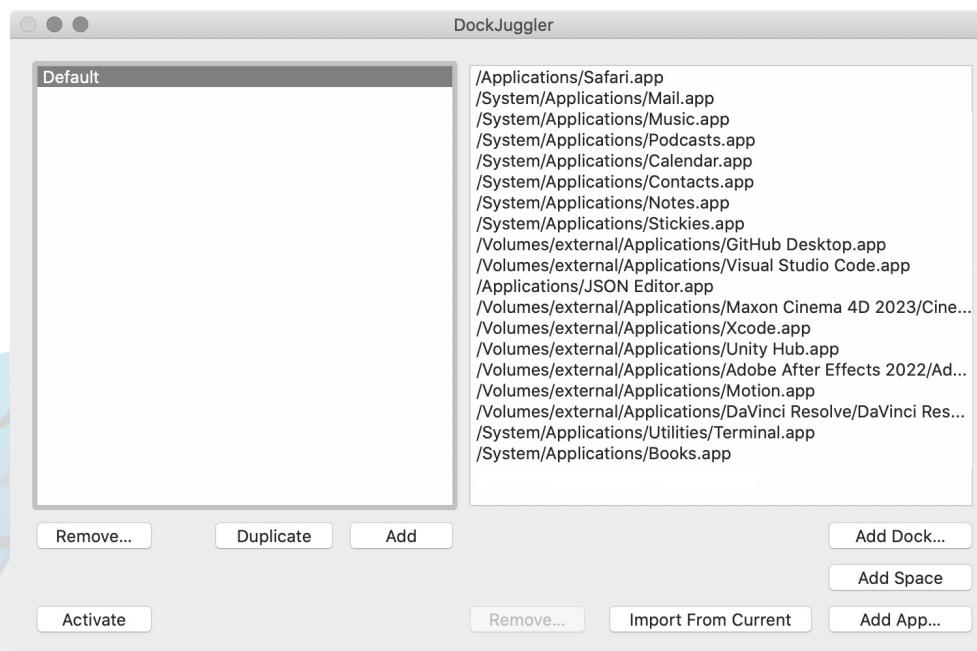


You would click the “Activate” to change your current Dock to the new selected one, but **don’t do that yet**.

First, you need to start populating your empty dock with a few things: apps, spacers, and even the content of other docks.

If you want to use your existing Dock as the jumping off point for your new dock, clicking “Import From Current” will populate the dock contents list on the right with the current contents of your live Finder Dock.

You should note that only items that have been marked as “Keep in Dock” are imported. Running applications that are in the Dock because they are running but are not marked as “Keep in Dock” are not imported. Items to the right of the Dock line (documents and folders) are also ignored.



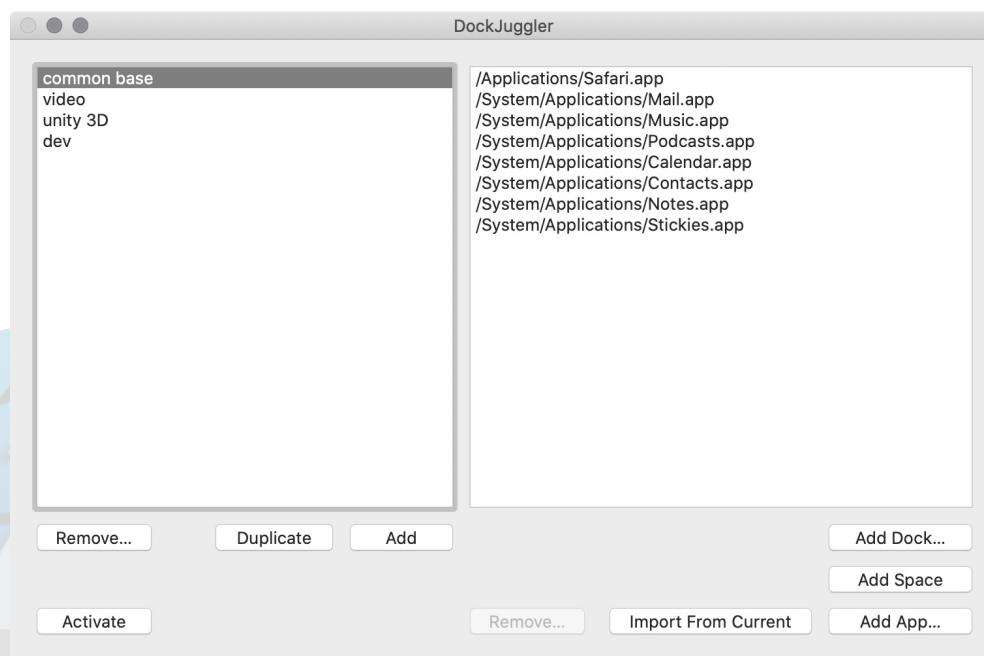
After the import, you should see something like the above, although obviously it will depend on the contents of your own Dock.

One feature of DockJuggler is the ability to “import” a list of applications from one dock into multiple others. I wanted to be able to do this just so that I could have a “base” set of applications — Safari, Mail, Contacts, Notes etc — which would then serve as the basis for all my other docks.

But it could be used for other purposes: having your standard suite of video applications defined in a dock called “video”, and then pulling that list in whenever you want to refer to it from any of your other docks.

As long as you spell the name of the dock you want to import correctly, DockJuggler will find it and substitute its contents.

After a little bit of re-arrangement and sorting, we can see how the original monolithic dock has been sorted into four areas: one called “common base”, and three called “video”, “unity 3D” and “dev” respectively:



Clicking on the “video” dock, we can see that our new video-centric dock consists of a reference to

Note that this only works at the “top” level, through: in other words, **you cannot nest imported dock references**.

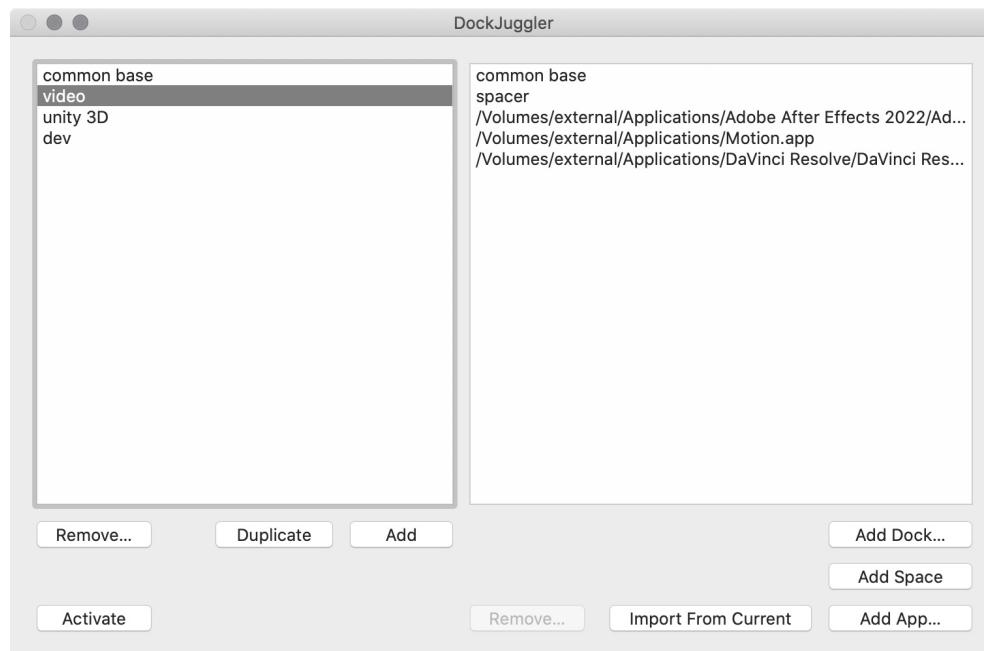
In the example to the left, “video”, “unity 3D” and “dev” all refer to the “common base” dock.

So if the “video” dock is activated (by clicking the “Activate” button), DockJuggler substitutes all the apps listed in the “common base” dock into the “video” dock before activation.

But “common base” cannot itself refer to another dock.

Obviously substitutions cannot be circular; ie: “dock2” cannot reference “dock3” when “dock3” references “dock2”. (Think circular spreadsheet cell references.)

the “common base” dock, a spacer, and then our video-specific applications:



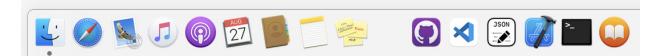
The “video” dock, when activated:



The “unity 3D” dock, when activated:



The “dev” dock, when activated:

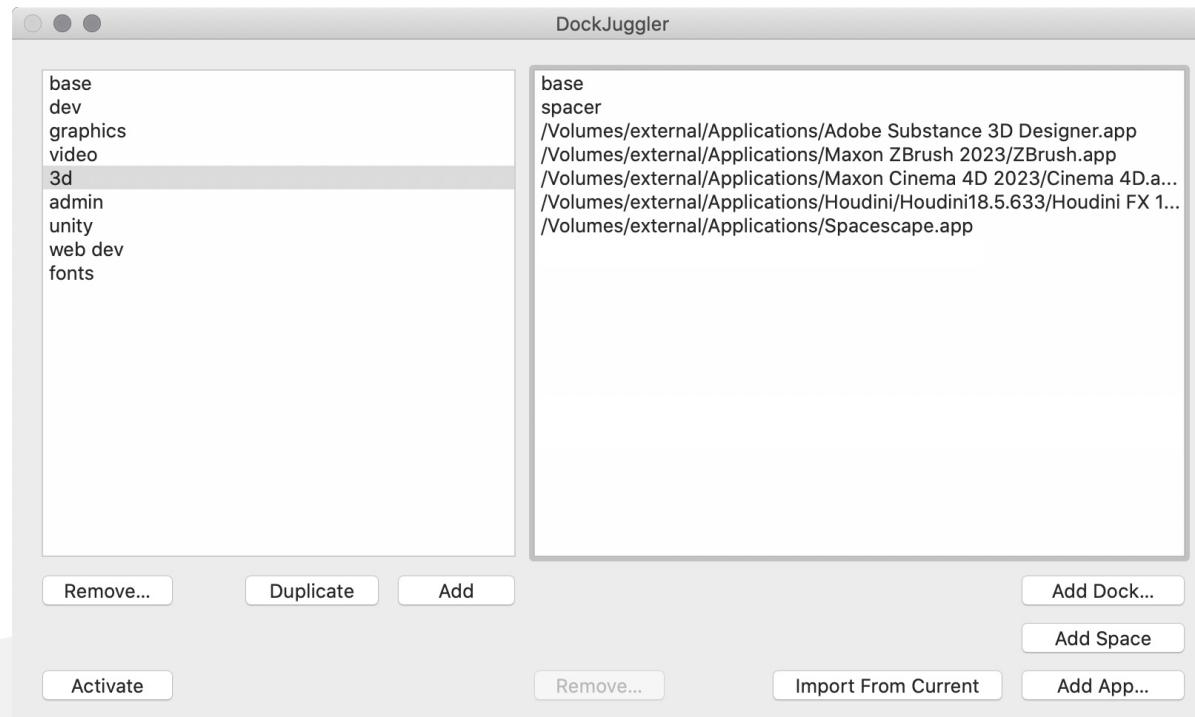


So with a bit of luck you can now see how (relatively quickly) you can organise your apps and docks in a far more productive (and simple) manner. (Without having to install Dock-replacement apps or the like.)

Anyway, I hope DockJuggler is as useful for you as it has been for me over the years.

Charlie

Reference: The Left Pane & The Right Pane



Click on a dock entry in the left list to activate editing on the right hand side.

Click again on the text of the name to edit the name of the dock entry.

Click on a dock item entry to enable the "Remove..." button.

Click again on the text of the entry to directly edit it.

Valid entries are:

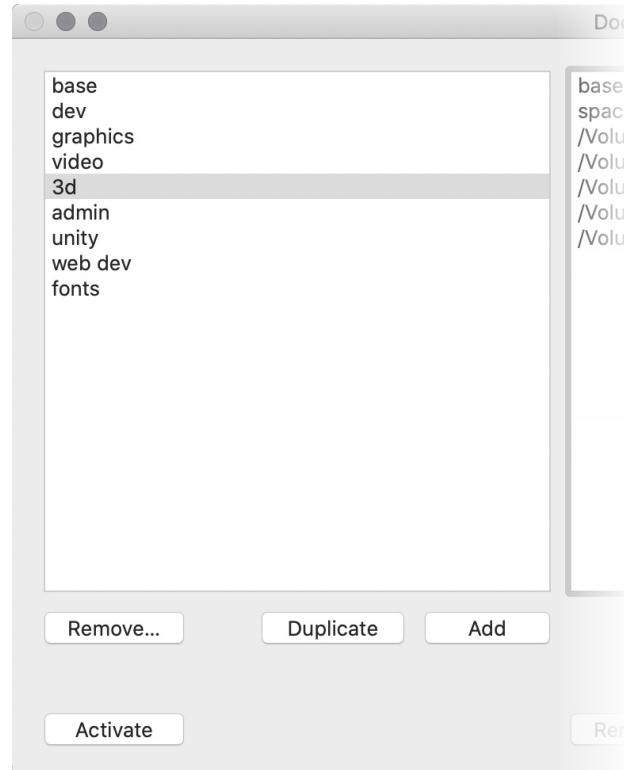
1: the name of another dock

2: the full path to an application

3: spacer

Anything else is invalid and will not be understood by DockJuggler.

Reference: What Every Button & Every Menu Item Does — The Left Side



- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Remove... | Permanently delete this dock |
| Duplicate | Make a copy of the currently selected dock |
| Add | Add a new empty dock to the list |
| Activate | Activate the currently selected dock |

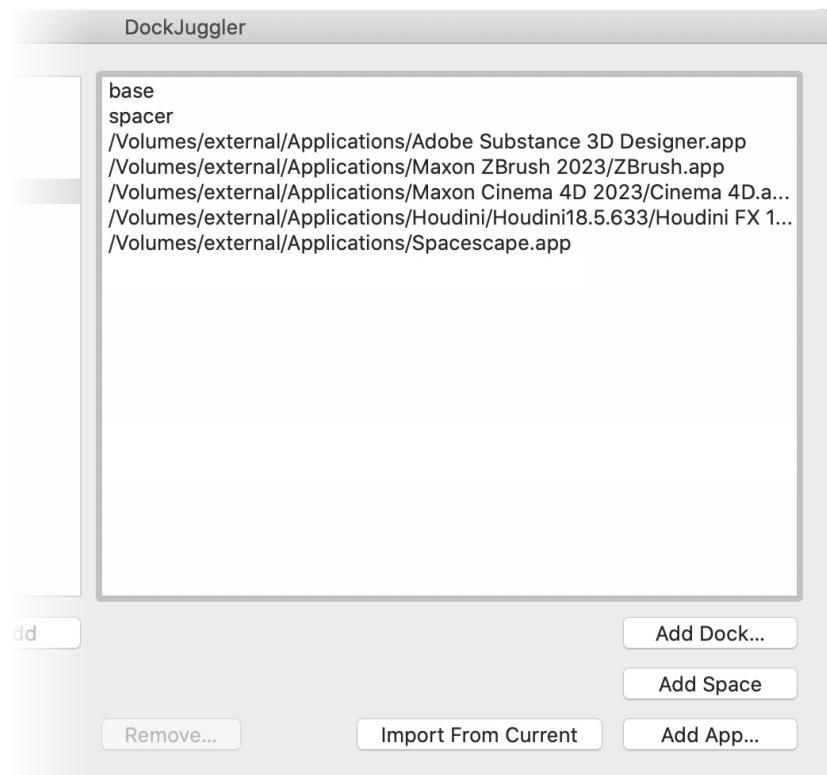
Reference: What Every Button & Every Menu Item Does — The Right Side

- Add Dock...** Displays a popup menu of your other defined docks.
Allows you to import the contents of that dock into this one by name.

(The same as typing the name of the dock.)
- Add Space** Adds a spacer at this position in the dock

(The same as typing “spacer”.)
- Add App...** Displays standard Mac dialog box for selecting an app to put at this position in the dock

(The same as typing the full path to the app.)
- Import From Current** Imports all the permanent apps from your current live Dock
- Remove...** Removes the currently selected item from the dock (after confirming the deletion). Cannot be undone.



Uninstalling DockJuggler & Going Back To How It Was Before

To uninstall DockJuggler, simply quit it and then drag the DockJuggler application icon to the Trash.

(If you think you might still use it in the future, you don't need to Trash it. Unless you explicitly added it to your collection of user login items for automatically opening, DockJuggler will not launch itself and will just sit patiently waiting on your hard drive for the next time you want to play.)

One note, though:

If you've been merrily switching between Docks, remember that once you quit DockJuggler you'll lose that functionality, so it's probably best to make sure that the Dock you want is active before you quit.

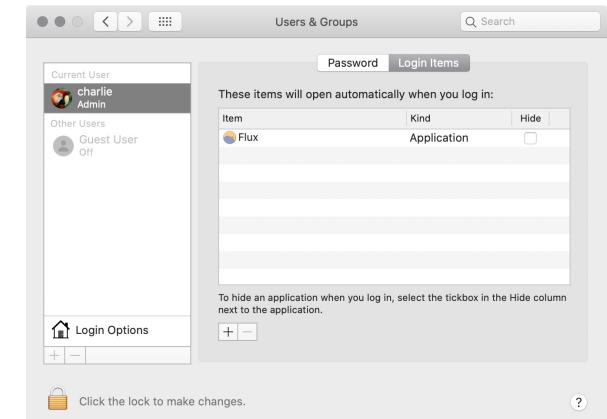
Although of course if you discover too late that you've made a mistake, you can just run DockJuggler again, fix the mistake, and then quit again, so no great harm will be done.

If you used the option to make a backup of your original Apple Dock preferences file, this would be where you could use it to restore your Dock to the way it was before you ever let DockJuggler into your life in the first place.

If you do this, you'll probably have to re-launch the Dock to get it to observe its newly restored preferences. Launch the Mac Terminal and type

```
killall Dock
```

...to force the Dock to quit and re-launch.



DockJuggler doesn't mess with your Login Items setup, so if you like it so much that you want it to auto-launch upon login I'm afraid you have to set that up yourself at the moment.

Dock Preferences & DockJuggler Preferences

Some techie information on how the Dock (and DockJuggler) works under Catalina (macOS 10.15.7):

The Dock's preferences (settings) file lives at:

/Users/YourUserName/Library/Preferences/com.apple.dock.plist

You'll notice that it's stored in the Library directory in your own user Home directory, which makes sense of course, as on a multi-user machine everybody would want to have their own version of the Dock.

This is the file that DockJuggler edits as you switch between the docks that you've authored. (And then relaunches the Dock app to force it to update itself.)

DockJuggler itself stores its preferences as a JSON file, also stored in your Preferences folder:

/Users/YourUserName/Library/Preferences/com.charlierobin.dockjuggler.json

JSON was deliberately chosen as being a relatively human-friendly file format, so if you're curious to see what information you are generating you can open this file in almost any text editors and understand what you are seeing.

A good JSON editor is [JSON Editor from VDT Labs](#), if you want to go beyond a simple text editor and see DockJuggler's JSON in all its structured glory.

Having said the above, it's probably best if you resist the temptation to actually edit the file yourself. Stick with the DockJuggler app itself for that.

Select Startup Disk on Desktop	
Recent	⇧⌘F
Documents	⇧⌘O
Desktop	⇧⌘D
Downloads	⌥⌘L
Home	⇧⌘H
Computer	⇧⌘C
AirDrop	⇧⌘R
Network	⇧⌘K
iCloud Drive	⇧⌘I
Applications	⇧⌘A
Utilities	⇧⌘U
Recent Folders	▶
Go to Folder...	⇧⌘G
Connect to Server...	⌘K

To get to your user Library folder on your Mac, go to the Finder's "Go" menu and then hold down the option key to show "Library" in the menu between "Home" and "Computer" (usually it is hidden by default – Apple trying to protect us from ourselves).

You can then scroll down to the "Preferences" folder and open it.

Alternatively: select "Go to Folder..." (shift-command-G) and enter "~/Library/Preferences", then press "Go":

