TinkerTool: Frequently Asked Questions

What is TinkerTool?

TinkerTool is an application which gives you access to additional settings Apple has built into macOS. This allows to activate hidden features in the operating system and in some of the applications that come with the system.

TinkerTool does not provide any features itself. Its single task is to give you an extended interface to your personal settings. The tool will never change anything in the operating system. For this reason, the integrity of your system is not put at risk. All settings are restricted to the user accounts that launch TinkerTool. If you have multiple user accounts on your computer, settings of different users will not affect each other.

The feature set of macOS varies greatly between different operating system versions. For this reason, TinkerTool must automatically adapt to the system it is running on. The settings available in each system version are listed at the official web page.

When you detect a setting that causes a compatibility problem with a third-party application, you can simply reset this or all settings to their previous values.

Can I have a manual for TinkerTool?

There is no documentation other than this English FAQ list. Because TinkerTool doesn't provide any features, there is not much that could be documented. The tool has a single function: If you click on setting "X", TinkerTool will change your personal setting "X". Apple may change the meaning of setting "X" any time at their own discretion, so we have absolutely no influence on the effects each setting may achieve.

What version of TinkerTool should I use for which version of macOS, OS X, or Mac OS X?

Versions of TinkerTool are not directly related to versions of macOS. TinkerTool uses unique technology to automatically adapt its user interface to the operating system version you are currently running. However, in order not to overload TinkerTool with dozens of styles for all the different generations of macOS and to be able to support the latest interface features of the OS, there are currently six different applications in the TinkerTool series, designed for six basic product generations of macOS:

- For macOS 15 Sequoia, use **TinkerTool**. The program with the standard name TinkerTool is always designed to be compatible with the latest official version of Apple's operating systems.
- For macOS 13 Ventura or macOS 14 Sonoma, use **TinkerTool 9**.
- For macOS 11 Big Sur and macOS 12 Monterey, use **TinkerTool 8**.
- For macOS 10.14 Mojave and macOS 10.15 Catalina, use **TinkerTool 7**.
- For macOS 10.12 Sierra and macOS 10.13 High Sierra, use **TinkerTool 6**.

- For OS X 10.9 Mavericks, OS X 10.10 Yosemite, and OS X 10.11 El Capitan, use **TinkerTool 5**.
- For Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard, Mac OS X 10.7 Lion and OS X 10.8 Mountain Lion, use **TinkerTool 4**.
- For Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger and Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard, use **TinkerTool Classic Generation 2**.
- For Mac OS X 10.1 Puma, Mac OS X 10.2 Jaguar, and Mac OS X 10.3 Panther, use **TinkerTool Classic**.
- For Mac OS X 10.0 Cheetah, use the Historic Edition of **TinkerTool 1.5.2**.
- For Mac OS X Public Beta, use the Historic Edition of **TinkerTool 1.1.2**.

Operating System	TinkerTool variant
macOS 15 Sequoia	TinkerTool
macOS 14 Sonoma macOS 13 Ventura	TinkerTool 9
macOS 12 Monterey macOS 11 Big Sur	TinkerTool 8
macOS 10.15 Catalina macOS 10.14 Mojave	TinkerTool 7
macOS 10.13 High Sierra macOS 10.12 Sierra	TinkerTool 6
OS X 10.11 El Capitan OS X 10.10 Yosemite OS X 10.9 Mavericks	TinkerTool 5
OS X 10.8 Mountain Lion Mac OS X 10.7 Lion Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard	TinkerTool 4
Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger	TinkerTool Classic Generation 2
Mac OS X 10.3 Panther Mac OS X 10.2 Jaguar Mac OS X 10.1 Puma	TinkerTool Classic
Mac OS X 10.0 Cheetah	TinkerTool 1.5.2 Historic Edition
Mac OS X Public Beta	TinkerTool 1.1.2 Historic Edition

Could you please add feature "X" to TinkerTool?

In most cases, the answer is no. TinkerTool does not provide any features, so it cannot add any. The features you are seeing are provided by macOS and controlled by Apple. TinkerTool is only a helper application to activate them.

However, if you know an additional built-in setting neither accessible in System Settings nor in TinkerTool, suggestions are welcome. Note that we sometimes have to deny

integration of a setting because the setting may have a negative effect on some applications (which is the reason why Apple did not make access to this setting publicly available).

Do I need to restart the computer for changes to take effect?

No, this is never necessary. For many applications, it is sufficient to quit and relaunch the respective programs. In all other cases, it is sufficient to log out and log in for changes to take effect.

Will TinkerTool access any of my private files?

No, TinkerTool is fully sandbox-protected and has no access permission to ever read any of your personal data files. It can only access files holding a specific subset of your personal preference settings, its own work files, and settings files for its Import feature after they have been explicitly selected by you. This self-restriction is constantly monitored by macOS.
However, some versions of macOS may give you privacy warnings when you launch TinkerTool for the very first time. These warnings may have misleading messages because Apple's privacy analysis does not work as accurately as it should.

- You can receive a warning that the application tries to access preference settings of other applications. This is of course the only job of TinkerTool.
- You can receive a warning that the application tries to access media files. That's because TinkerTool is capable of displaying and changing several settings of the application "Music".
- Settings affecting critical areas, such as Time Machine, Mail, and Safari are disabled in TinkerTool until you confirm to macOS that the application can have Full Disk Access. Further information on this topic is provided below.

Are there unexpected issues when disabling the Finder animations for opening Desktop icons?

Yes, there is one specific interaction with the Finder where a missing animation for opening a Desktop icon may show an unusual result: When you drag a Finder tab to the Desktop, the Finder expects that it can always show an animation to convert the dragged miniature tab into a Finder window. If that animation is switched off, the icon for the miniature tab will just stay on the Desktop, behind the new window. It will automatically disappear the next time the Finder is restarted.

Are there alternative ways to restart the Finder?

Yes, in up-to-date versions of macOS, you can hold down the option (alt) key while right-clicking the Finder icon in the Dock. An item to restart the Finder will be displayed in the context menu.

I have heard I should see .DS_Store files in many folders when I switch on the Finder's "Show all files" option. Where are they?

The Finder puts a .DS_Store file in each folder you have opened. These files are used to save the positions of icons, the size of the respective Finder window, the window's background, and many more view options. While older versions of the Finder indeed displayed .DS_Store files after you enabled its option *Show hidden and system files* in TinkerTool, this will no longer happen with macOS 10.14 Mojave or later. The .DS_Store files and some other types of internal data, such as the so-called AppleDouble files (sometimes named "dot underscore" files, because they have names beginning with the pattern "._") are generally considered hidden by the Finder, even if you set it to show all files. You will need a different file viewer or the macOS Terminal to see Desktop Services Store or AppleDouble files.

How do I remove spacers from the Dock after I have added them?

You can either drag them far enough out of the Dock, or you can right-click (ctrl-click) them and choose the respective item in the context menu.

What should I do if adding a spacer did not work?

TinkerTool automatically restarts the Dock one second after a spacer was added. Unfortunately, this time is not always enough to let the Dock reliably pick up the change. Instead, the Dock may take the previous setting from its cache and ignores the change. If you are affected by this issue, please to the following:

1. Wait a few seconds until TinkerTool detects that the Dock has reverted the change. You will see that the spacer that was added disappears from the pop-up menu listing the Dock tiles.
2. Add the spacer again.
3. Go back to step (1) if the Dock still ignored the change.

What do I need to consider when changing the layout of the Launchpad?

Apple has changed the behavior of Launchpad during the lifetime of macOS 15 Sequoia. In older versions of macOS and OS X, all icons shown by Launchpad had been reset to their default positions after changing the layout. This was equivalent to the initial configuration that was automatically chosen for a new user who started Launchpad for the first time. With macOS 15.2 or later, this is no longer the case: Although all icons will change positions if the new layout enforces it, there won't be a complete reset. The placement of icons will depend on the user's previous settings which may not match the predictable default.

Can I use TinkerTool to change fonts in macOS?

No, this has never been a feature of TinkerTool and this would not be a good idea. Applications such as word processing or layout programs would become unusable if TinkerTool would somehow force them to replace given fonts with other fonts.

The pane "Fonts" is designed to change your personal preferred defaults for fonts. Applications designed in a user-friendly way won't request pre-specified fonts for controls in their user interface, they will ask macOS for the preferred default font settings for nine particular font categories instead. For example, an application displaying a fixed-pitch font for a specific text view in a window will not send the request to macOS to use the font "Menlo Regular 11 pt" for this text display. Instead, it will ask macOS to fetch the font the user is currently preferring for fixed-pitch use cases. This can be any font of your choice, currently set for the category *Fixed-pitch* in TinkerTool. The developers of applications determine for each single use of typographic output if they like to use a specific font, "hard-wired" in the application, or if they like to use a generic font, oriented at the user's personal settings.

Can I use the default font settings to increase the size of fonts?

Yes and no. You can specify a larger font as your preferred default font for a certain usage category, as explained in the previous section. However, this might not be a good idea for certain applications, because you risk that texts will be clipped by surrounding elements, like boxes, buttons, etc. when they are rendered with larger sizes. Parts of the user interface could become unreadable.

The appropriate way to increase the size of fonts is to enlarge all parts of the user interface. This is possible by modifying the rendering resolution of the interface which is normally fixed at 72 pixels per inch. Such changes cannot be controlled by simple user settings. For this reason, this cannot be part of TinkerTool.

When specifying preferred fonts, can I use color, shadow, or other effect settings?

No, macOS does not allow this. Although it is possible to control shadows and similar options via the system's font panel, only font types and font sizes will actually be set. All other settings you can establish for fonts will be ignored.

Can I specify typefaces for all font categories?

Preferred font sizes can be specified for all 8 font categories defined by Apple. The option to also set preferred typefaces, however, is not applicable to all font categories. In the technical specifications of macOS, Apple only defines the two use categories *Application Font* and *Fixed-pitch Font* as being user-customizable.

Can I specify font defaults for menus and the menu bar?

No, the menu-bar is a component taken over from the classic Mac OS. The predecessor of macOS, NeXT OPENSTEP for Mach, did not use a menu bar. For this reason, macOS never contained a feature to specify settings for the fonts used in menus.

The controls on the Safari pane are blocked. How can I use them?

All data of Safari are protected by the operating system so that other applications cannot change them. This includes its settings. In order to work with Safari's settings in TinkerTool, you'll have to give your approval to do so:

1. Quit TinkerTool if it's running.
2. Open **System Settings**.
3. Go to **Privacy & Security > Full Disk Access**.
4. Make sure the switch next to **TinkerTool** is in the on position.

Why are options for Mail, Safari, or Time Machine on other panes disabled?

The reason is the same as the one mentioned in the previous answer: These applications are critical for your privacy, so they are protected by macOS. You can only work with their settings after you have given your explicit approval that TinkerTool can do so. Just follow the instructions given in the preceding paragraph.

Why is the pane "Formats" not visible? It is advertised on the TinkerTool web page. Can't I use it?

Due to technical limitations of macOS, the pane Formats can only be opened if the primary language you have selected for your user account matches one of the languages supported by TinkerTool. In case the pane is not shown, you can temporarily change your primary language setting to make it visible and utilize it:

1. Quit TinkerTool if it is running.
2. Open **System Settings** and go to **General > Language & Region**.
3. If the table **Preferred Languages** does not include one of the languages supported by TinkerTool, add at least one of those languages by clicking the button **+** below the table. For example, add **English**. You can skip this step if one of the languages is already listed.
4. Drag a line with one of the supported languages to the top position of the table. **Do not restart the computer and do not enter an administrator password.** You can cancel the respective dialogs when macOS should open them.
5. Launch TinkerTool. The pane **Formats** should now be visible in the language you have chosen, and you can make the necessary adjustments if you like. The changes take effect immediately for all applications you start afterwards.

6. Quit TinkerTool and go back to System Settings. You can now drag your previously selected actual primary language to the top of the table again. As before, you don't need to restart the computer and don't need to enter an administrator password.

Notifications in Notification Center show black text on dark background after I have enabled the Appearance setting "Restrict dark mode to menu bar and Dock". Can I change the notifications to white text?

Unfortunately no. The Notification Center of macOS is a peculiar mix of different applications that take their appearance settings from different components of the operating system. Unfortunately, Apple did not consider that different parts of the OS could run with different appearance settings. For this reason, elements of Notification Center may combine colors in an inappropriate way in that case. At the moment, Apple does not provide a solution for this issue.

What is the difference between TinkerTool and TinkerTool System?

The applications share a similar user interface and internal technologies. However, the features and target audience of the applications are very different: TinkerTool is a utility that allows you to set personal settings Apple has built into macOS. TinkerTool is not capable of changing any system settings or other settings that may affect more than your private user account. For this reason, you don't need administrative permission to use TinkerTool. The tool can be used in professional networks where you have limited access, for example students working with the campus network.

TinkerTool System on the other hand is directed to system administrators, consultants or experienced users that need to change and optimize operating system settings. This will affect all users that share a computer. Only user accounts with administrative permission can use TinkerTool System, macOS does not allow access by standard users.

The tools do not share any duplicate settings or features. They complement one another, to have the full feature set you'll need both applications. It is not planned to offer the system tool in other languages than English and German.

How can I remove TinkerTool?

Just drag the application to the trash. Because TinkerTool doesn't install or change anything in the operating system, that's all. You might consider resetting macOS's settings you have changed via TinkerTool to the pre-installation state before removing the tool. (See the next item.)

I used TinkerTool for a while, then I deleted it. But all of its settings are still effective, what should I do?

As mentioned above, TinkerTool just changes user settings of macOS. Applications will respect their settings no matter if TinkerTool is on your disk or not. If you want to reset your configuration, just open the Reset pane in TinkerTool, choose one of the reset buttons, log out and log in.