

# **ProtonVPN on macOS**

**OLLI Digital Explorers SIG  
Spring 2026**

**David Shamlin**

ProtonVPN is a VPN service provided by a cybersecurity company named Proton. The company website is [proton.me](https://proton.me). Proton is a highly regarded cybersecurity company and ProtonVPN is rated as one of the best VPN services for personal use. Proton allows you to use ProtonVPN for free with some limitations; those restrictions can be lifted through a subscription plan. This guide walks you through installing and using the free option.

With ProtonVPN's free option, you can install the app on as many of your devices as you want, but you can only use it on one of those devices at a time. For example, if I am currently using ProtonVPN on my laptop and want to switch to using ProtonVPN on my iPad, I first have to "turn it off" on my laptop before I can "turn it on" on my iPad. I don't think limitation will cause too much "heartburn" for us in our SIG session. (Certainly not enough pain to justify paying for a subscription plan, in my humble opinion.)

This document describes how to install and use ProtonVPN on a macOS. You will need to create a [proton.me](https://proton.me) account to use ProtonVPN; this document describes creating an account with [proton.me](https://proton.me) (as there is one step that I found confusing). The top level steps to set your macOS device up to use the free version of ProtonVPN are

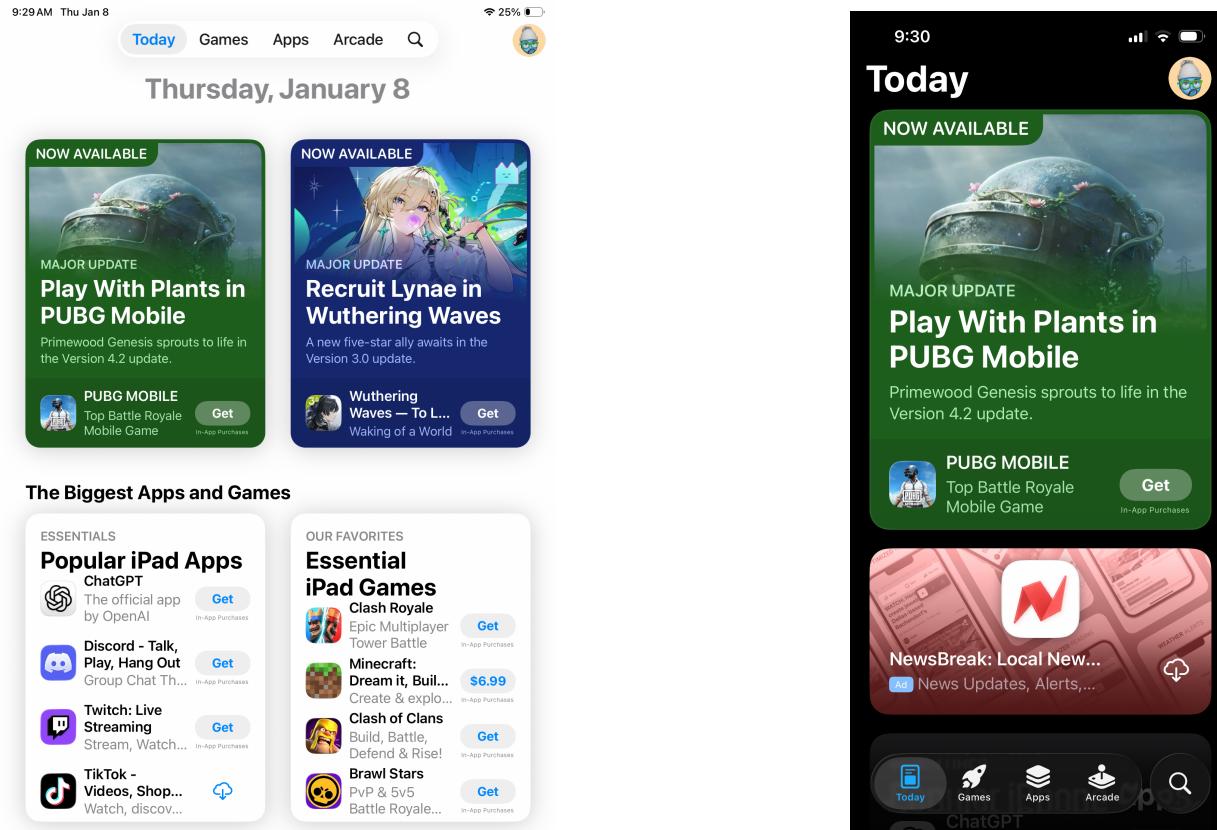
1. Install the ProtonVPN app
2. Run the ProtonVPN app
3. Create a VPN connection
4. Close a VPN connection
5. Quit the ProtonVPN app



## Step 2: Installing ProtonVPN on an iPhone or iPad

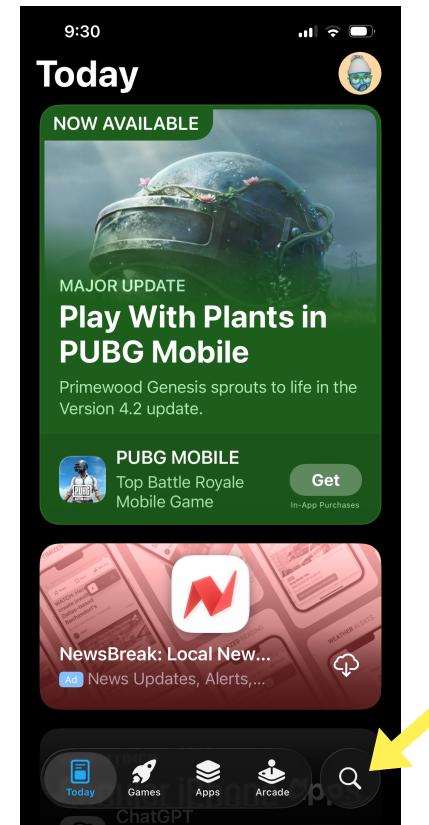
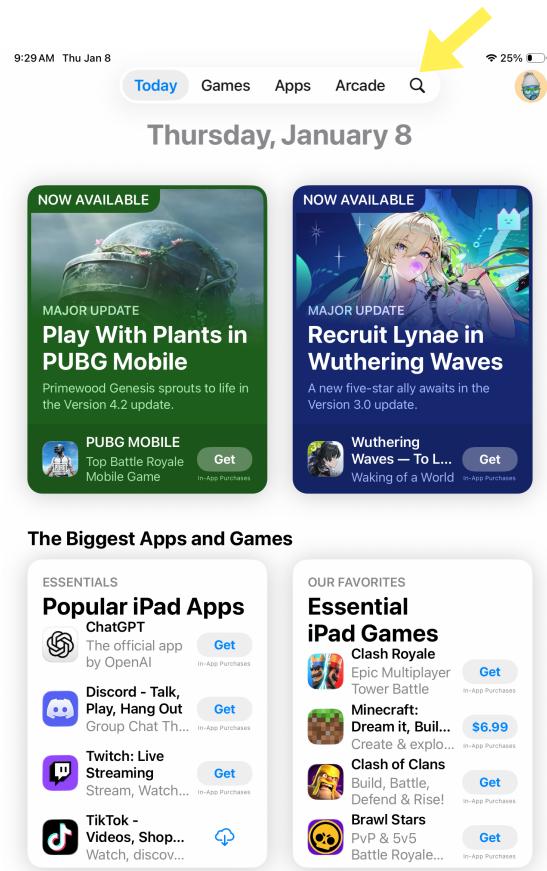
You need an app installed on the device(s) where you want to use Proton VPN. Installing this app on iPhones and iPad is *extremely* easy; installing the app on a laptop/desktop device involves an additional step or two, and these are pretty easy as well. Let's cover the iPhone/iPad cases first. Note that you do the same thing on both types of devices.

Using your iPhone/iPad first, open the App Store. If you need a reminder, the App Store icon looks like the image in the upper right hand corner of this page. Below are images of what I see on my devices screens when I open the App Store on each of them; my iPad screen is on the left and my iPhone screen is on the right.



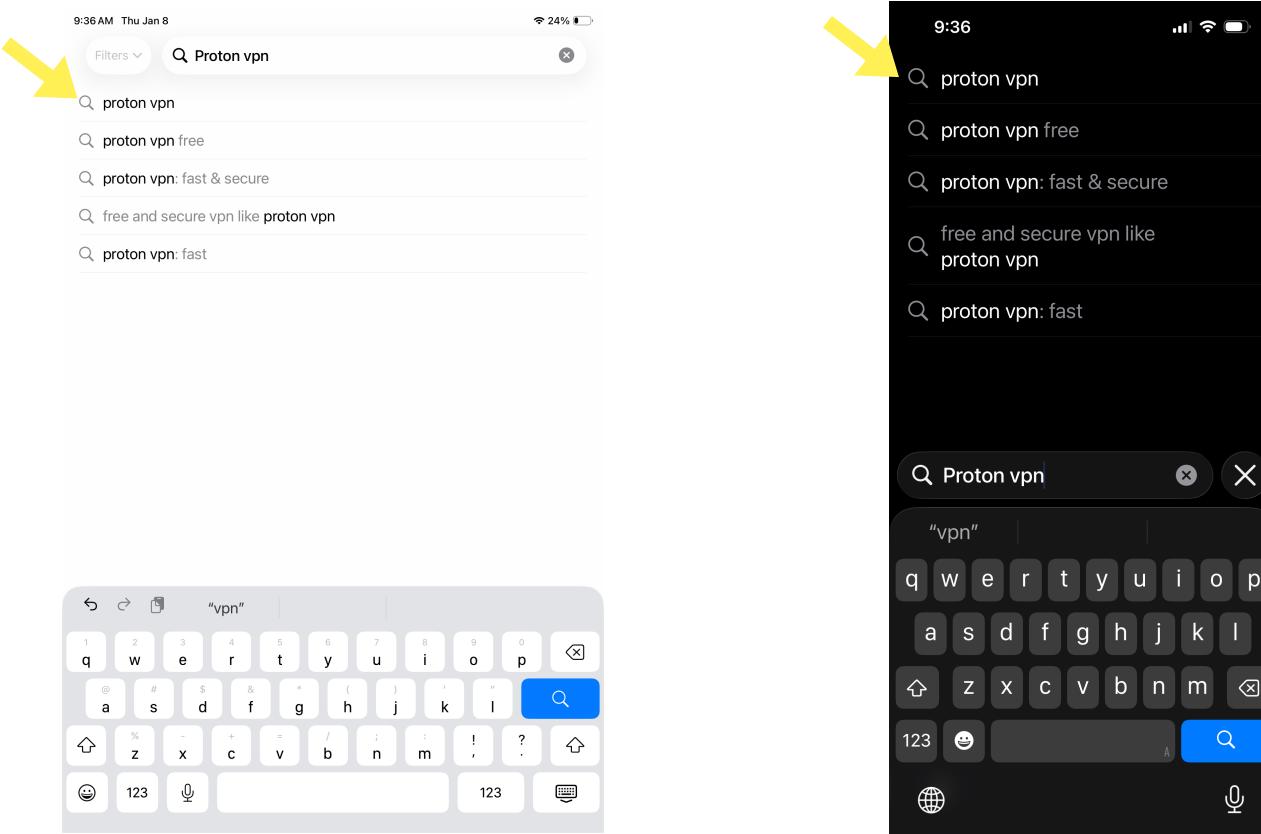
## Step 2: Installing ProtonVPN on an iPhone or iPad

Tap the magnifying glass icon (highlighted with the yellow arrows in the images below) and then type "Proton VPN" in the search box that appears.



## Step 2: Installing ProtonVPN on an iPhone or iPad

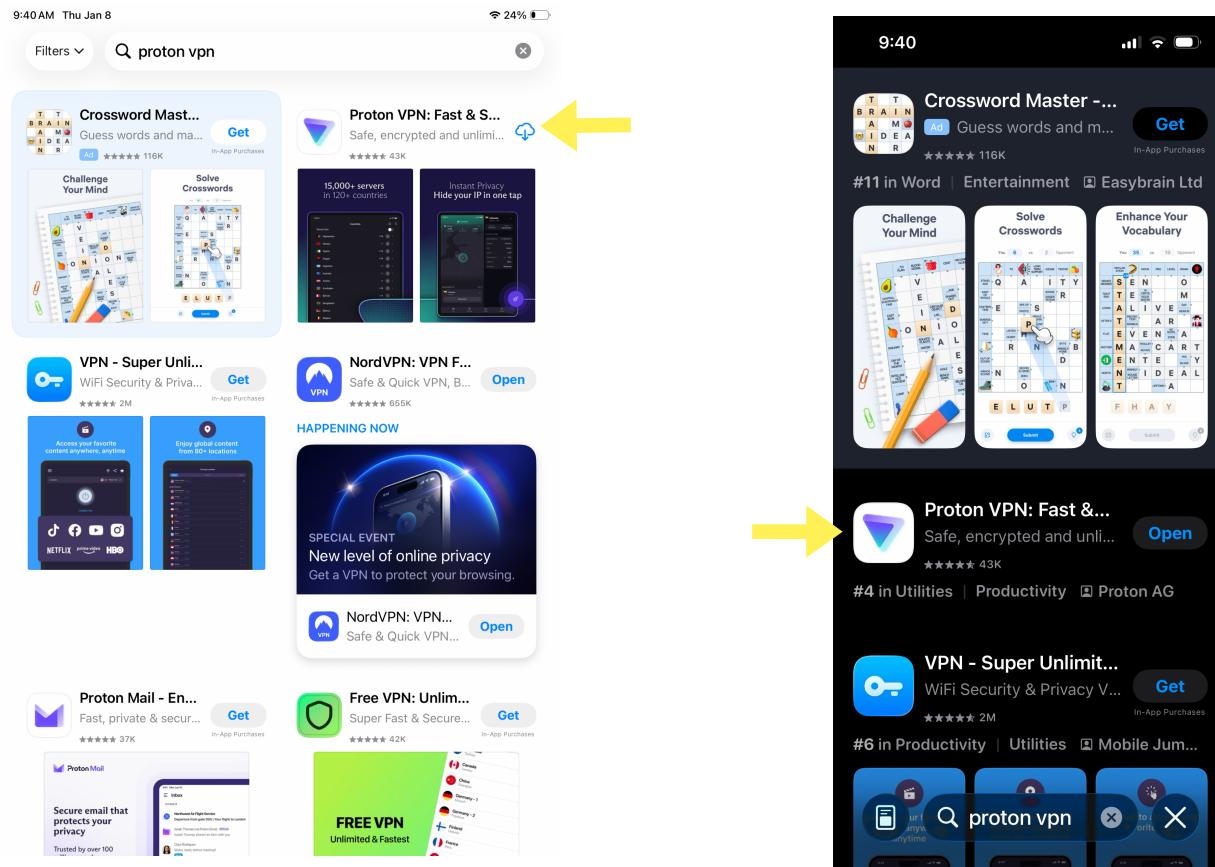
As you type in the search box, the app store will populate a set of refined search terms; from this list, tap "proton vpn" (highlighted with the yellow arrows in the images below).



## Step 2: Installing ProtonVPN on an iPhone or iPad

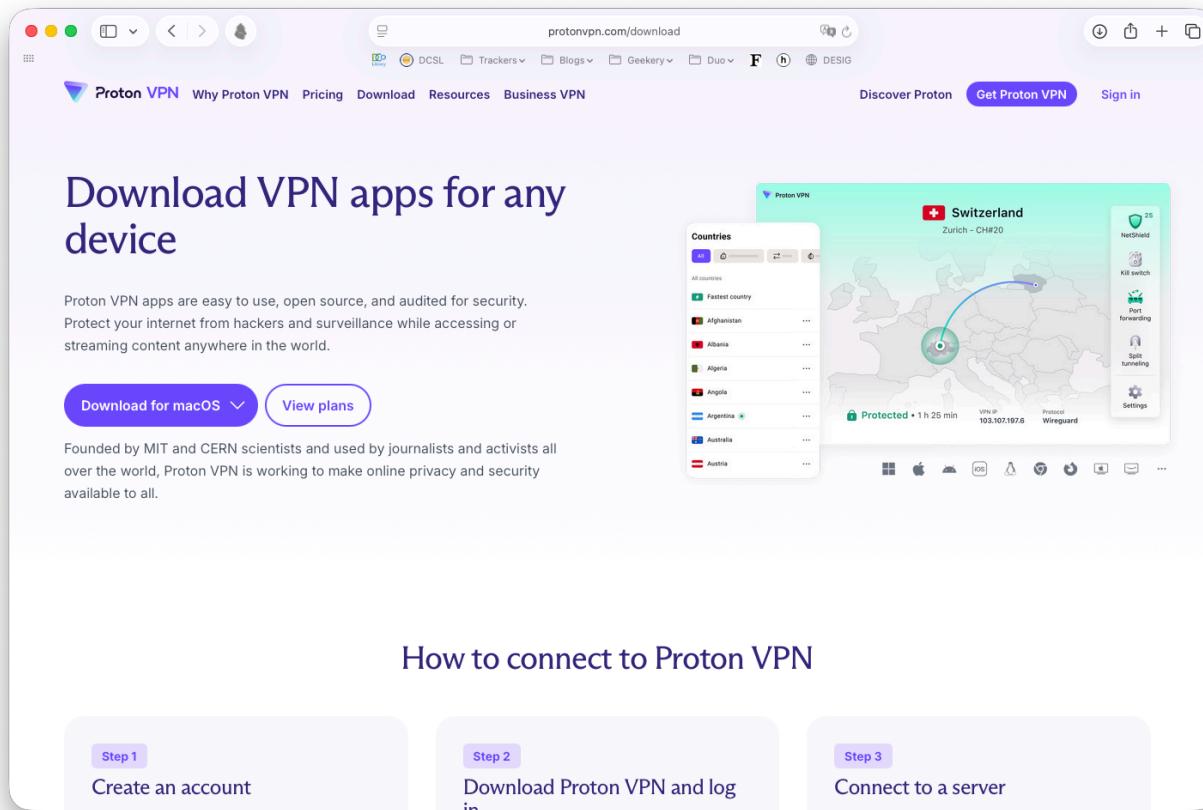
Scroll through the search results until you find an item that looks like the item highlighted by the yellow arrows in the images below. The images below show what this item looks like on each device; iPad is on the left and iPhone is on the right. Note on the right hand side of the Proton VPN item on my iPhone there is an "Open" button; this tells me I already have the ProtonVPN app installed on my iPhone at the time I took this screenshot. Now note on the right hand side of the Proton VPN item on my iPad there is a icon with a cloud and a downward arrow; this tells me that at some point in the past I installed the ProtonVPN app on my iPad and then uninstalled it. You are most likely to see a "Get" button on the right hand side of the ProtonVPN item on your device. Provided you do see a "Get" button or the icon with a cloud and downward arrow, tap it!

Your device will then download and install the app; when that's done, the cloud/down arrow icon or "Get" button will be replaced with an "Open" button. The next step in this document describes running the app. If you are going on to that step now, you can go ahead and click the "Open" button.



## Step 2: Installing ProtonVPN on an Apple laptop or desktop

While we are able to install the ProtonVPN app from the App Store on our iPhones and iPads, you won't find the ProtonVPN app in the App Store on your Apple laptop or desktop; instead you have to download the app using your browser. Open your preferred browser on your macOS device. I used Safari to generate the images in this document; you can use whatever browser you prefer. Once your browser is open, enter the following URL in the address bar and press the enter/return key on your keyboard: <https://protonvpn.com/download>. Your browser should look similar to the image below.



## Step 2: Installing ProtonVPN on an Apple laptop or desktop

Click on the "Download for macOS" button. A popup menu should appear listing the versions of macOS that the protonVPN app supports. Click the item in this menu that aligns with the version of macOS you are currently running on your device. I believe that will be the "MacOS 14 or newer" item in the list as almost all of us upgraded to Tahoe (ie., 18.2) during our class last fall; I don't recall anyone saying they were using a version prior to macOS 14, but if you want to check which version of macOS you have on your device, click the Apple icon at the upper left hand corner of your screen, then click "About this Mac". A window similar to the image on the left below will appear; the line with the "macOS" label will tell you the version of macOS you have; you can close this window by clicking on the red dot in it's upper left hand corner. Note: After you click the item in the popup menu beneath the "Download for macOS" button, you may see a small window prompting you to confirm you want to download; whether or not you see such a window depends on the browser you're using and its settings. If you do see such a window, just click "Allow." (I think the button is labelled "Allow"; if I'm remembering wrong, just click the button that conveys "yes"/"ok"/"do it".)

The screenshot shows the ProtonVPN website at protonvpn.com/download. On the left, there's a sidebar with a pink border containing a list of macOS versions from 10.14 to 14. A callout box highlights the "macOS 14 or newer (Sonoma, Sequoia, Tahoe)" option. Below this, there's a section titled "How to connect to Proton VPN" with three steps: Step 1 (Create an account), Step 2 (Download Proton VPN and log in), and Step 3 (Connect to a server). On the right, there's a large image of a MacBook Pro with its technical specifications listed:

<b>MacBook Pro</b>
14-Inch, M5
Chip Apple M5
Memory 32 GB
Serial number L12QX74RHJ
macOS Tahoe 26.2
<a href="#">More Info...</a>
<small>Regulatory Certification ™ and © 1983-2025 Apple Inc. All Rights Reserved.</small>

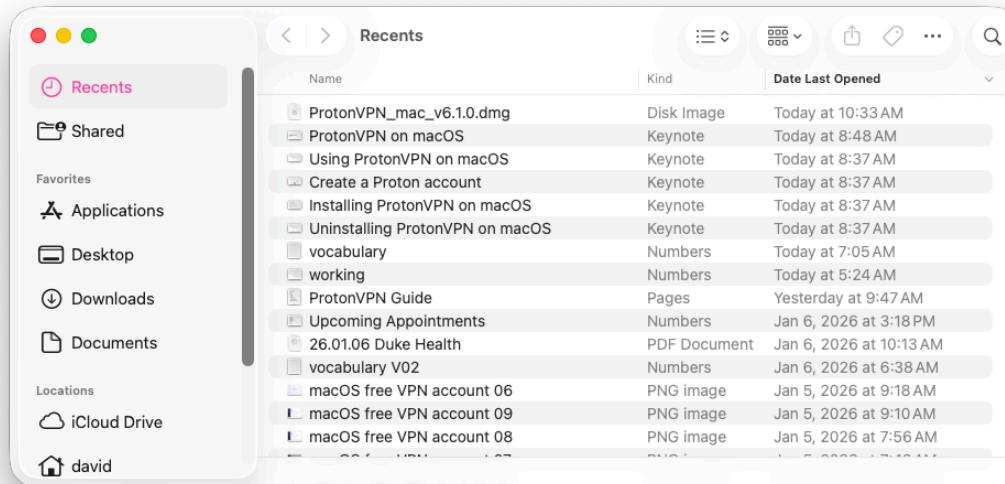


## Step 2: Installing ProtonVPN on an Apple laptop or desktop

The download should complete fairly quickly; unless you have a really slow internet connection, it shouldn't take more than a few seconds. Once it's done, you need to go to your downloads folder. To do that, open the Finder app; the Finder app icon looks like the image at the top left hand corner of this page. You should see that icon on your doc; most likely it will be the leftmost icon on the doc; click on it to open a Finder window.



On the left hand side of the finder window, look for the "Downloads" item in the "Favorites" section and click on it. The right hand side of your finder window should change to show you the contents of your Downloads folder.



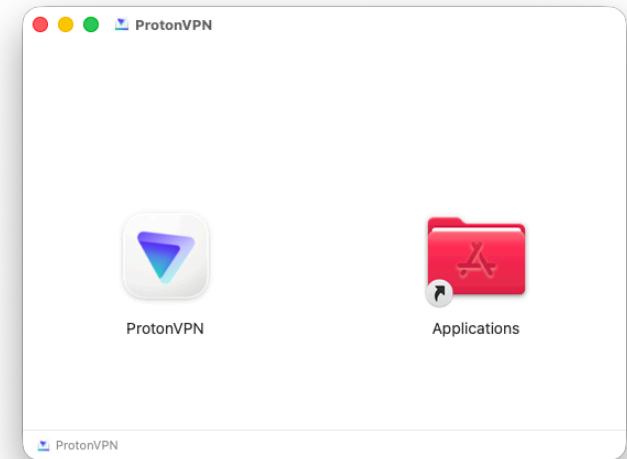
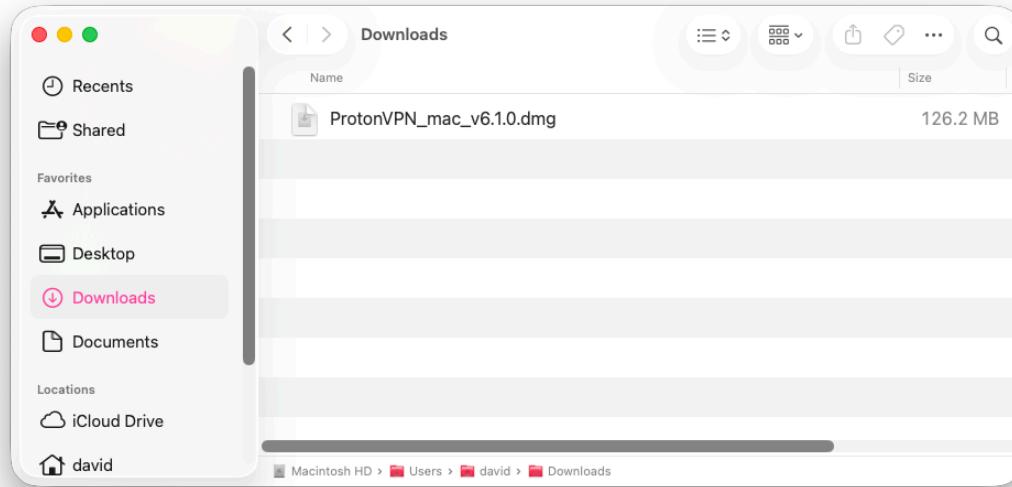


## Step 2: Installing ProtonVPN on an Apple laptop or desktop

Once you have navigated to your Downloads folder in a Finder window, look for a file whose name starts with "ProtonVPN\_mac\_v". (The lefthand image below shows an example.) The numbers that appear after the "v" are the release number of the app.

Double-click the file. A new window should appear that looks similar to the image below on the right. The icon on the left in this window is the ProtonVPN app; the icon on the right is a shortcut to your Applications folder. Using your mouse or trackpad, drag the ProtonVPN icon over the Applications icon and "drop it" into the Applications folder by releasing your mouse button or lifting your finger from your trackpad.

The ProtonVPN app is now installed on your macOS device!



## Step 3: Running ProtonVPN on an Apple laptop or desktop

The ProtonVPN app resides in the Applications folder on your hard drive. The app's icon looks like the following:

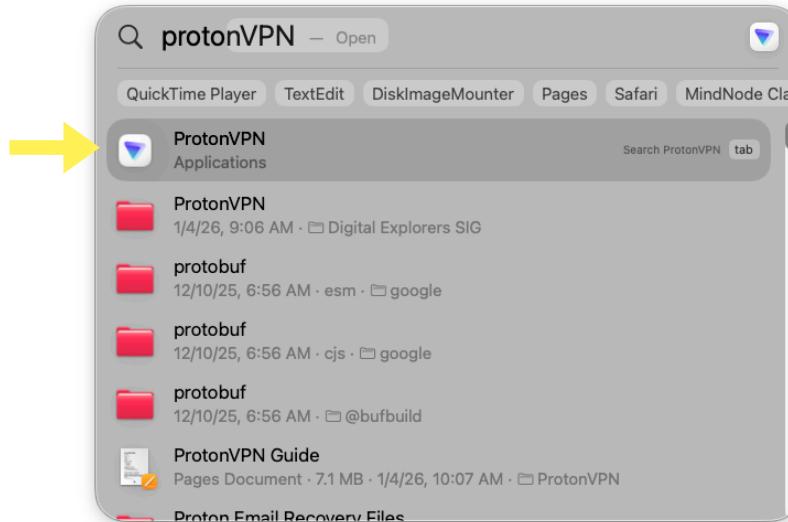


To start the app, you can simple double click it after locating it in your Applications folder.

If you don't know how to (or, like me, are too lazy to) navigate to the Applications folder of your hard drive using the Finder app, you can press and hold down the command key and then press the spacebar to launch Spotlight. (The command key is marked with either the ⌘ symbol or the word "Command", sometimes both.). Once Spotlight is launched, you will see a "widget" appear on your screen like the following. Click on this widget, type "ProtonVPN" and then press the enter/return button on your keyboard.

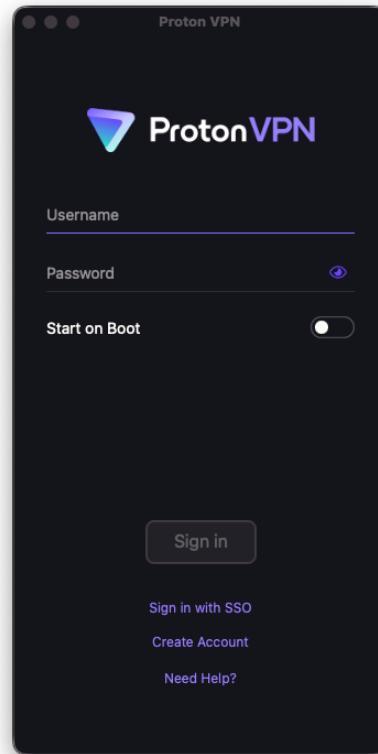


Click on the word "Spotlight" and then start typing "ProtonVPN". Spotlight will immediately begin to show you items. Find the item with the ProtonVPN app icon and the word "Applications" beneath it and double-click on that item to start the ProtonVPN app (highlighted with a yellow arrow in the image below).



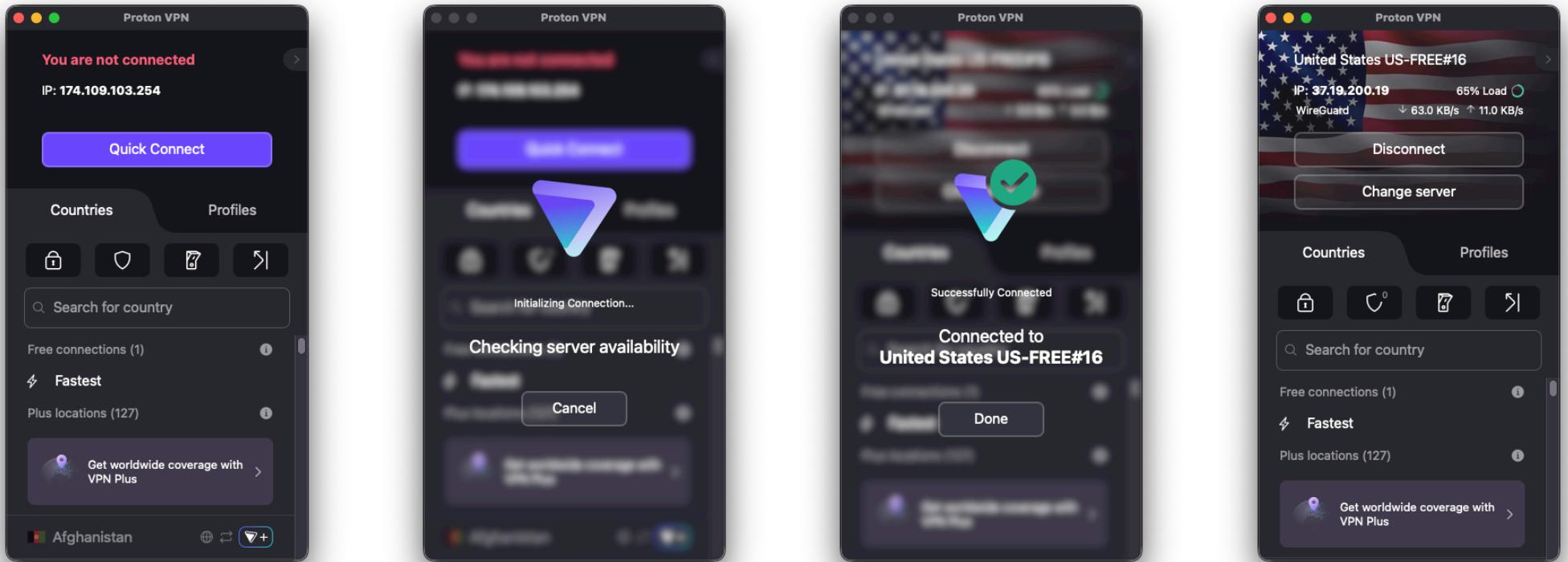
## Step 3: Running ProtonVPN on an Apple laptop or desktop

When you run the ProtonVPN app for the first time, you will see a window appear similar to the image below. Enter the email address and password you entered when you created your [proton.me](#) account in the Username and Password textboxes respectively. Then click the "Sign in" button.



## Step 4: Creating a VPN connection on an Apple laptop or desktop

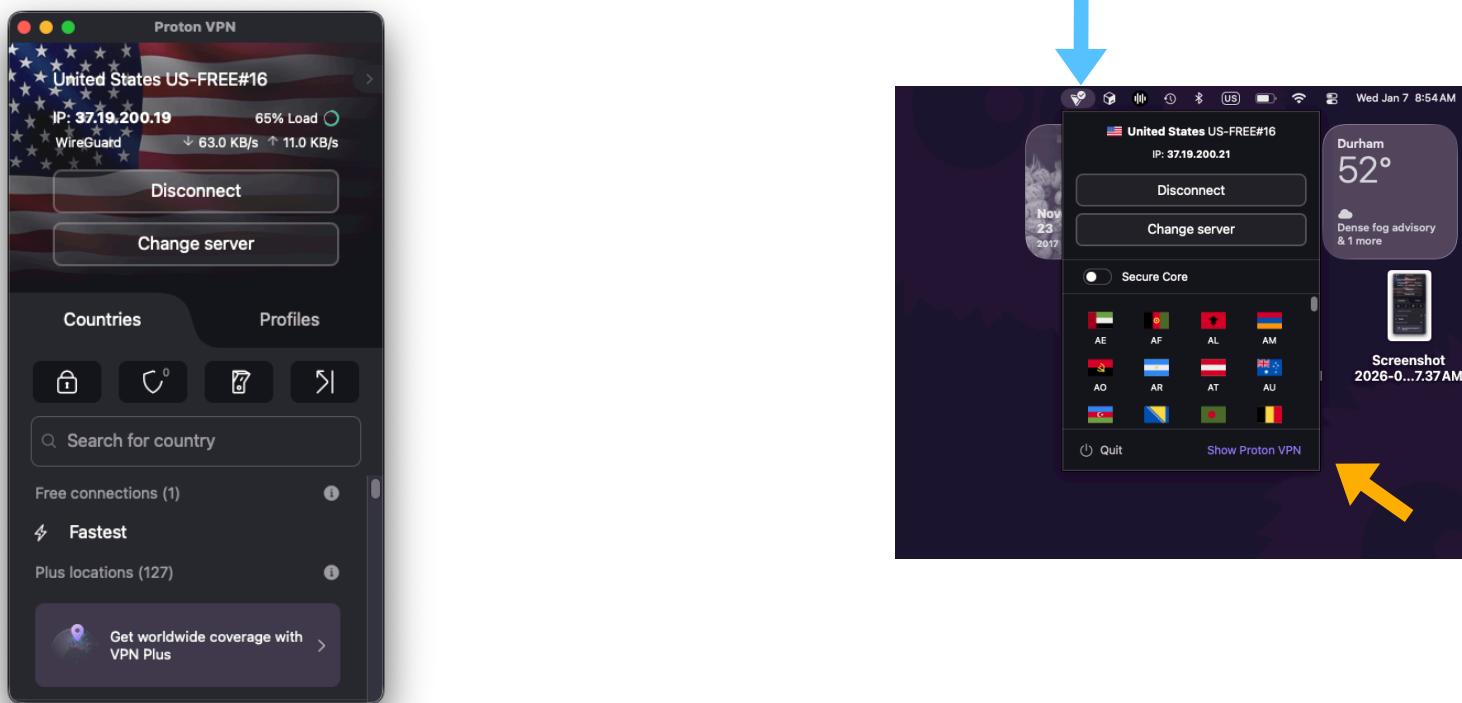
Once you have successfully signed in, the ProtonVPN app window should look similar to the image on the left. Click the "Quick Connect" button to start a VPN connection. The app window should update to (briefly; i.e., for a few seconds) look like the second image from the left and then update again to (again, briefly) look like the third image from the left. You can either click the "Done" button or simply wait a few seconds before the app window looks similar to the leftmost image below. Also look at the ProtonVPN icon on the right hand side of your menu bar; notice the "x" has been replaced with a checkmark.



## Step 4: Creating a VPN connection on an Apple laptop or desktop

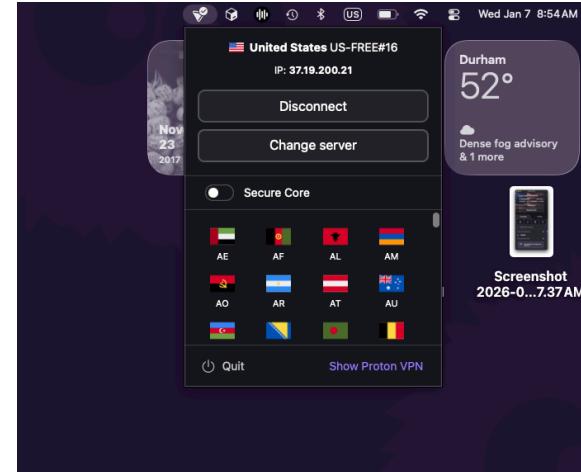
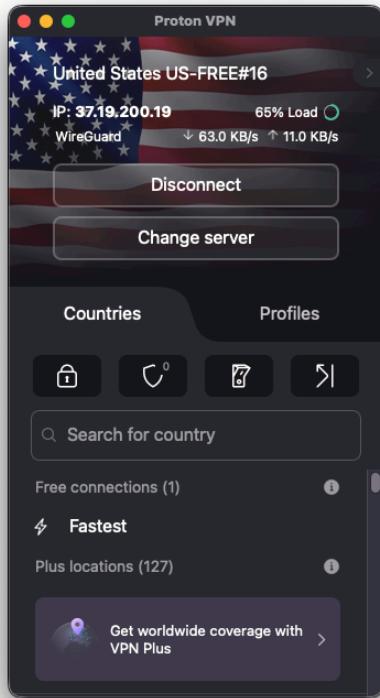
You now have a VPN connection and can go on about other things. While you do those other things you probably don't want/need the ProtonVPN window to be visible on your screen. You can hide it by clicking either the red dot or the yellow dot in the upper left hand corner of the window. If you click the yellow dot, the window will be minimized; you will continue to see the ProtonVPN app in the dock. If you click the red dot, the window will be closed; you won't see the ProtonVPN app in the dock.

To see the ProtonVPN app window again after you minimized or closed it, click on the ProtonVPN icon on the right hand side of the menu bar (highlighted by the blue arrow below), and then click on "Show ProtonVPN" (highlighted by the orange arrow below).



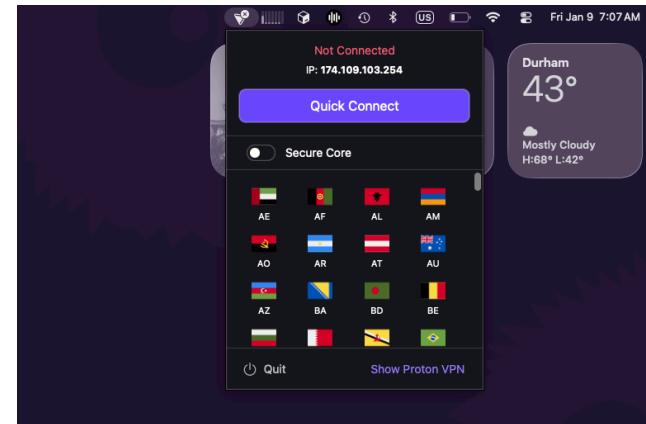
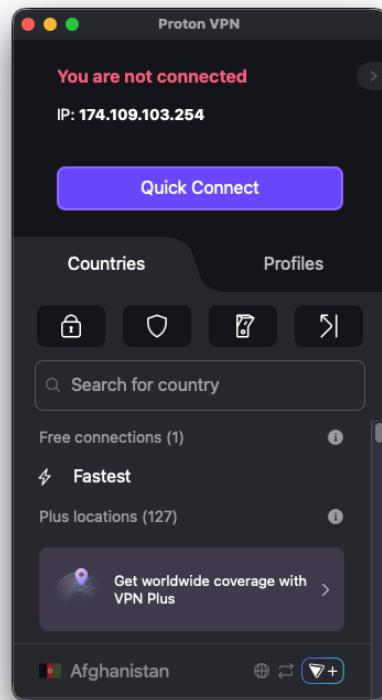
# Step 5: Closing a VPN connection on an Apple laptop or desktop

Once you are done working online, you can close your VPN connection by clicking the "Disconnect" button in either the app window (image on the left) or the widget menu (image on the right.)



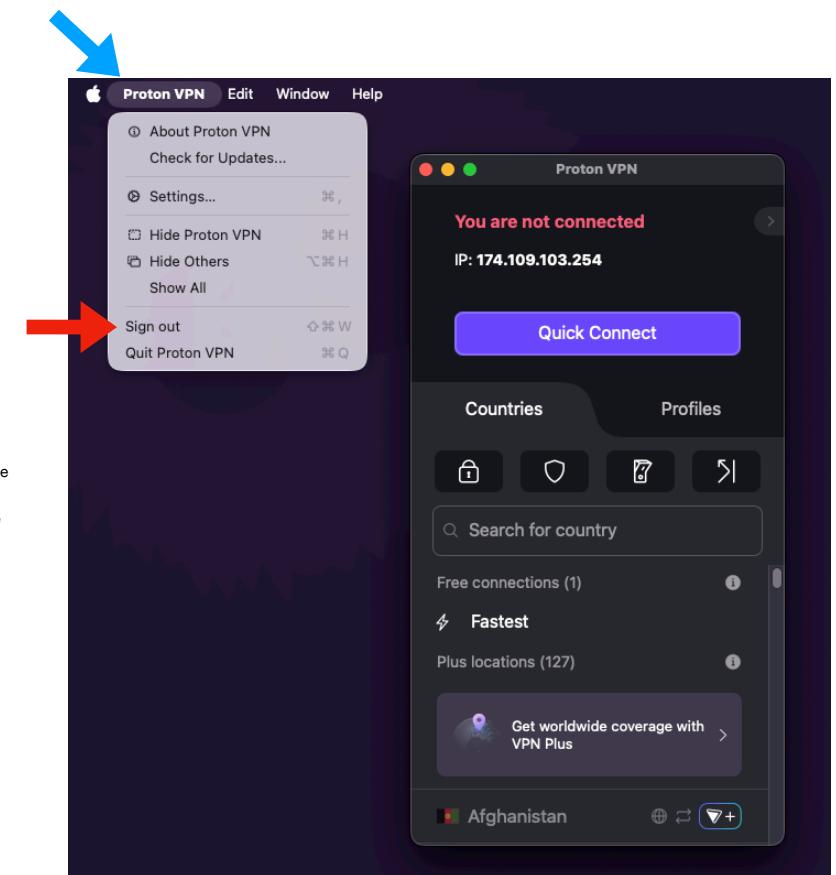
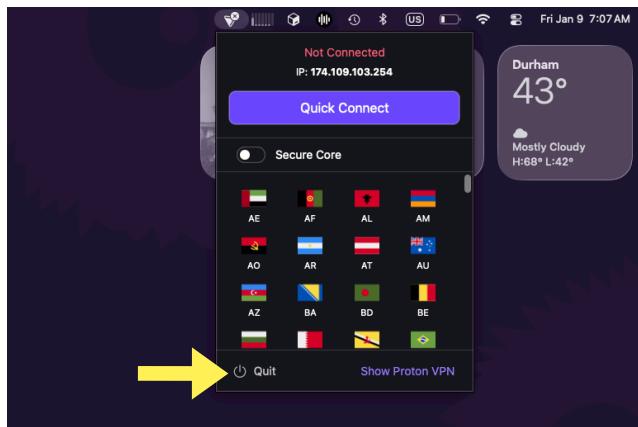
## Step 5: Closing a VPN connection on an Apple laptop or desktop

Once you have closed the VPN connection, the ProtonVPN app window should look similar to the image on the left and the ProtonVPN widget menu should look similar to the image on the right.



## Step 6: Quitting the ProtonVPN app on an Apple laptop or desktop

You can quit the ProtonVPN by clicking the word "Quit" in the widget menu (highlighted by the yellow arrow in the image below).



Recall that you entered your proton.me email address and password when you started the app; the app used that email address and password to sign in to the ProtonVPN service. The app will "remember" your proton.me email address and password (i.e., the app will store them on your drive) so that the next time you use the ProtonVPN app you will not have to provide them again. That's pretty convenient!

If you prefer to enter your email address and password yourself the next time you use the app, click on the app menu (highlighted by the red arrow in the image to the right) and then click the "Sign out" menu item (highlighted by the blue arrow in the image to the right) before you quite the app.

**Congratulations! You did it!**

Here's a gold star for a job well done.

