

## Multiple Ways to Move Files from One Mac to Another, Part 1

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*Note: This discussion is based on the latest version of macOS Sonoma, 14.2.1. Some illustrations may differ when using other versions of macOS. Most illustrations are from screenshots on my iMac or MacBook Pro. Credit for Other Images: See the credits at the end of this presentation.*

If you have a file (or files) on one Mac and want to copy to another Mac, there are multiple ways to do this. The best way depends on the circumstances, varies widely, and also your preference. Key factors are the size of the file and the location of the two Macs. Discussed below are several relatively easy options. More will be discussed in Part 2 next month.

*Note: Some of these also apply to other Apple devices like an iPhone or iPad, but this discussion will generally focus on transferring files between two Macs.*

**1. Email.** If you're dealing with a single file (or just a few of them), perhaps the easiest way is to attach the file to an email message to yourself.

*Note: You can also use email with your iPhone or iPad.*

This method has one concern: Most email providers limit the attachment size. For example, Apple's iCloud service has a limit of 20 MB while Gmail limits you to 25 MB. As a result, email is best used for moving small files among your Macs and other Apple devices or sharing files with others.

However, there are a number of better ways of moving multiple files from one Mac to another. Also, attachments take up a lot of space in your email account, which might lead to you running out of space, potentially causing new messages to bounce.

**2. Messages App.** Similar to email, for relatively small files, adding a file in an iMessage (**Blue** bubble) encrypted conversation in Messages works well. You can also use Messages with your iPhone or iPad.

*Note: **Green** bubbles use the unencrypted SMS/MMS protocol. For reference, SMS stands for Short Message Service (text only) while MMS is Multimedia Messaging Service is used to send pictures, audio, phone contacts, and video files.*

However, with Messages, the file should be smaller than 100 MB. Also, be aware that files sent in Messages consume iCloud and local storage space unless you delete them. So, this approach is probably best used only occasionally.

**3. AirDrop.** You can copy a file to another Mac if the two devices are relatively close together by using **AirDrop** which can be a very convenient solution. However, AirDrop requires both **Bluetooth** (used for short-distance data transmission) and **Wi-Fi** being turned on in the **System Settings** app on both Macs and also that the device discovery options are correctly set.

*Note: You can also use AirDrop with your iPhone or iPad.*

The two Macs don't need to be connected to any network or to iCloud since AirDrop uses Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. AirDrop also doesn't have any file size limits. However, since Bluetooth and Wi-Fi can be relatively slow protocols, AirDrop isn't

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necessarily the fastest approach, and you might have issues with multi-gigabyte files, especially on older Macs.

*Note: Remember that Bluetooth is a short-distance data transmission technology. As noted by Apple Support, "Bluetooth is a wireless technology that makes short-range connections between devices (like your Mac, and a mouse or keyboard) at distances up to 10 meters (approximately 30 feet)." So, it might be best for the two Macs to be in the same room or at least in close proximity to each other.*

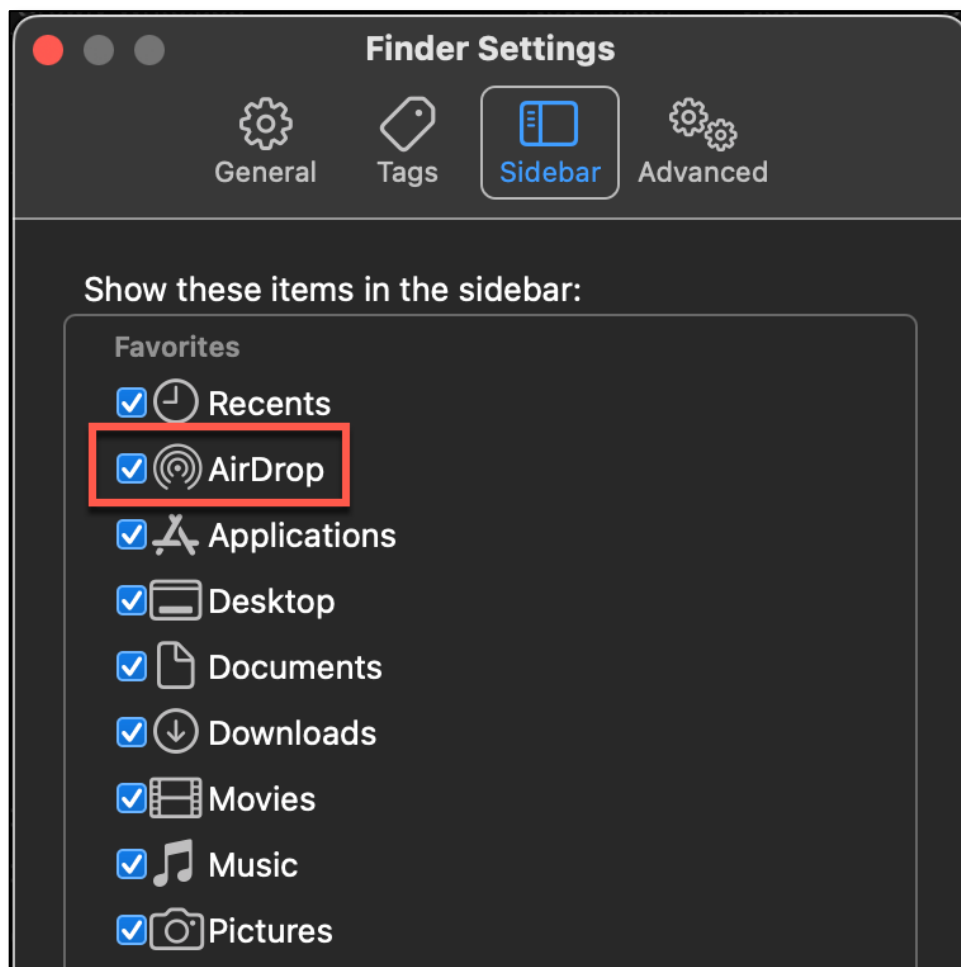
Other Macs and Apple devices where Bluetooth and Wi-Fi have been enabled, can accept and send files if they are physically close enough. If so, then they will appear as separate icons in the AirDrop window.

There are two ways to transfer a file:

Use AirDrop in a Finder Window Sidebar. This method requires the use of two Finder windows on the "sending" Mac.

- First, on the "sending" Mac, open a Finder window. Then in that window select **AirDrop** in the window's sidebar. Call this the "AirDrop" window.

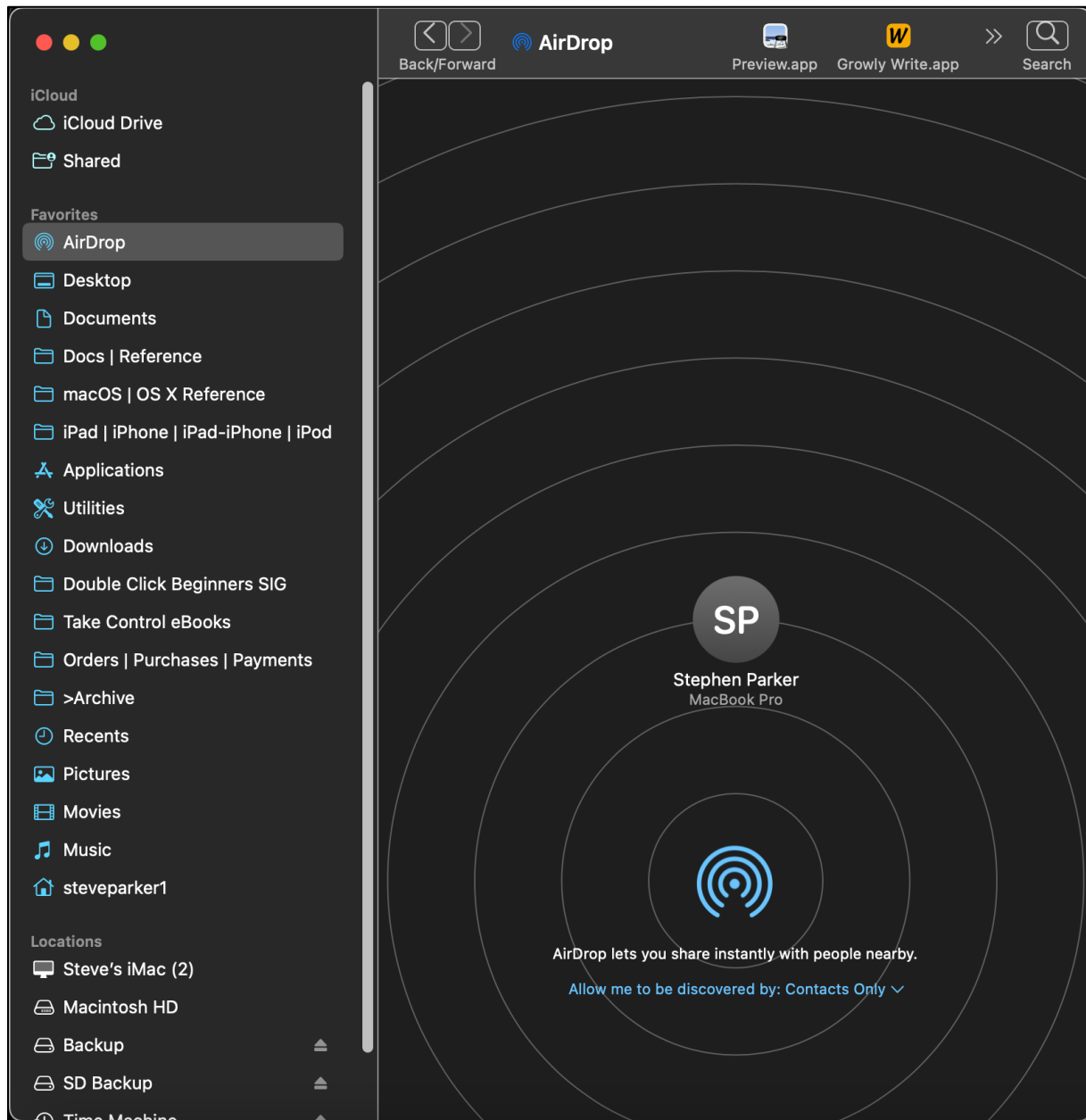
If the AirDrop icon isn't present in the sidebar, enable it in **Finder > Settings > Sidebar**:



**Finder Settings > Sidebar (AirDrop)**

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The image below shows an AirDrop window on my iMac and also an icon for my MacBook Pro:



### AirDrop Window (Also Shows "Receiving" Mac Icon)

- Next, also on the "sending" Mac, open a second Finder window containing the file to be sent. Then drag the selected file from this window to the AirDrop window and drop it on the icon of the other Mac (or Apple device). (See the image on the next page which shows a file being dropped on the AirDrop icon for the "receiving" Mac. Notice that the icon becomes highlighted when the file is dropped on it.)

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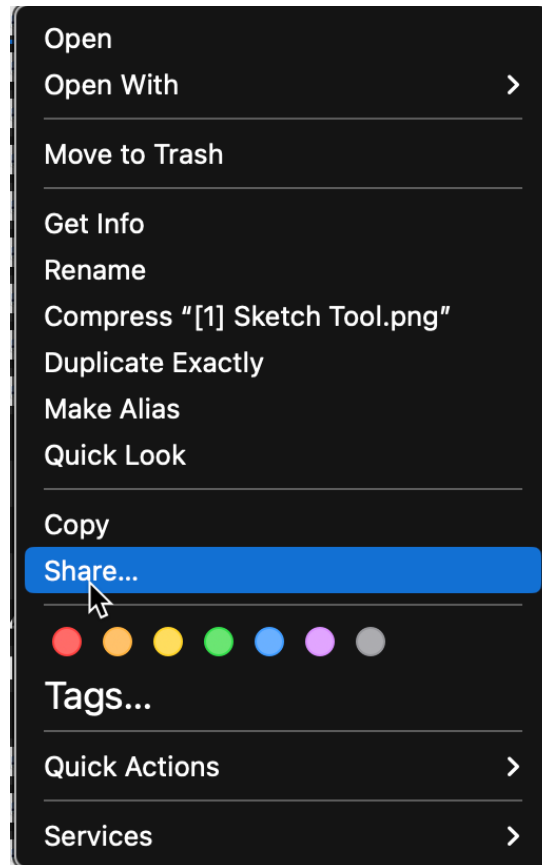
### AirDrop Widow (File Being Dropped on the "Receiving" Mac Icon)

- A brief message ("Sending") will appear on the "sending" Mac's icon in the AirDrop window.
- When the transfer is complete, the other ("receiving") Mac will signal with a brief confirmation tone.

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Use the Share Option. This method uses the Share option available for files in the Finder.

- Right-Click (Control-Click) the file(s) in a Finder window, and choose **Share...** from the pop-up menu:



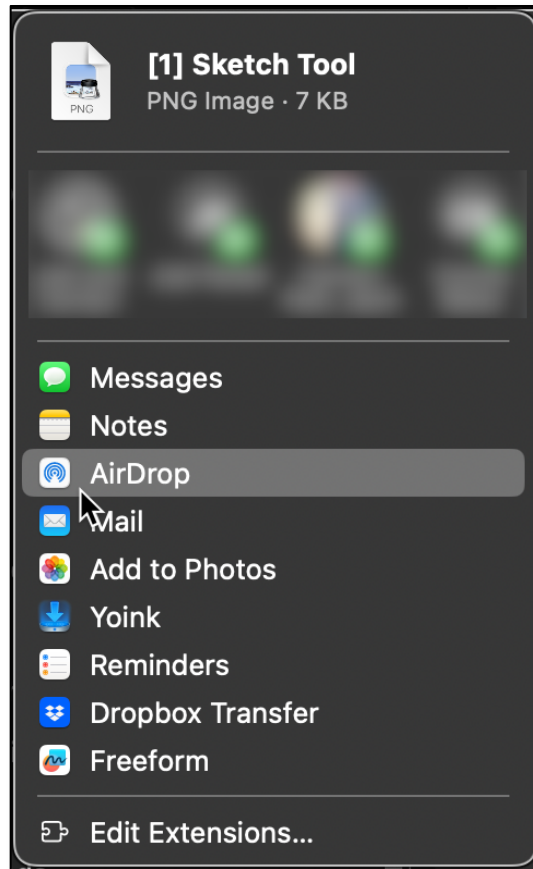
### Right-Click on Finder File > Pop-up Window (Share Selected)

- Another pop-up window will appear next to the file(s) with various sharing options to choose from. Select **AirDrop**, and then select the desired Mac or other Apple Device.

(See the image on the next page showing AirDrop being selected in the Share pop-up menu.)

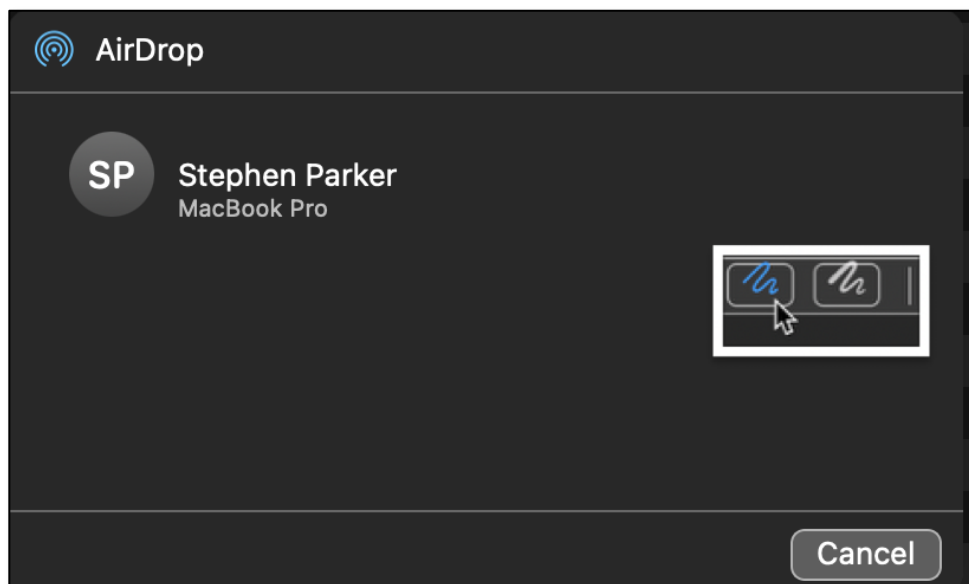
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**Share Pop-up Window (AirDrop Selected)**

- Once that AirDrop is selected for the file(s), an AirDrop window appears. Select the device (my MacBook Pro in this example) to receive the file(s) by tapping its icon:



- The received file(s) will appear in the **Downloads** folder on the other Mac.

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**4. Use an External Drive.** Another easy way to transfer or back up files from one Mac to another is to use an external USB drive (flash drive, hard drive, SSD, or even by burning to a CD or DVD). Use the drive's USB cable or connector to plug the drive to one of your Mac's USB ports.

Make sure that the drive is properly formatted. Choose **Mac OS Extended (Journaled)** as the format.

*Note: If your "receiving" Mac is a newer MacBook, it may not have a traditional rectangular USB port. If this is the case, you'll need to use a USB-to-Thunderbolt 3 adapter.*

- To copy files to your Mac, first connect the USB external drive to the other Mac (the "sending" Mac) where the files reside. Then locate the file(s) that you want to copy, and drag them to the USB device.
- To transfer the file(s) to your Mac, first plug in the USB device. Then click on the USB device icon, and drag the file to the desktop or desired folder in the Finder.

### Summary

There are multiple ways to move a file (or files) on one Mac to another Mac. Which one that you find best depends on the circumstances, varies widely, and your preference. Key factors for moving files are file size and the location of the two Macs.

This presentation discussed four relatively easy ones: Email, Messages, AirDrop, and using an External Drive.

### Next Presentation

Next month in Part 2, we'll look at some additional ways to move files from one Mac to another.

Have a favorite Mac Tip or utility? Please feel free to pass it along, and I'll see if I can work it into a future presentation.

If you have any suggestions for presentation topics, including macOS utilities, please contact me at [slp4668@gmail.com](mailto:slp4668@gmail.com).

*—Steve Parker*

Credits:

Mac Business Solutions (<https://www.mbsdirect.com/mbs-blog/article-nine-ways-of-moving-data-from-one-mac-to-another>), 12-01-2023

MacTech (<https://mactech-solutions.com/9-ways-of-moving-data-from-one-mac-to-another/>), 12-21-2023 [Identical to Mac Business Solutions article]

MCServices (<https://www.mcservices.com/nine-ways-of-moving-data-from-one-mac-to-another>), 12-18-2023 [Identical to Mac Business Solutions article]

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iMore (<https://www.imore.com/how-to-transfer-old-mac-data-new-mac>), 12-30-2023

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PCMag (<https://www.pcmag.com/how-to/transfer-data-from-old-to-new-mac-with-apple-migration-assistant>), 03-02-2023

MacRumors (<https://www.macrumors.com/how-to/transfer-data-old-mac-to-new-mac/>), 12-03-2021

Target Disk Mode | Kibbles & Bytes # 2036, 01-27-2023 (link not available)

wikiHow (<https://www.wikihow.com/Transfer-Files-Between-Two-Macs>)