

Multiple Ways to Force Quit an App on Your Mac

Note: This discussion is based on the latest version of macOS Sonoma, 14.4.1. Some illustrations may differ when using other versions of macOS. Also, some illustrations may be from screenshots on my iMac or MacBook Pro. Credits: See the credits at the end of this presentation.

Occasionally, you may find that an app has caused your Mac to freeze. When this happens, you'll likely see the spinning beach ball 🏖️ appear or the app that you're using just becomes unresponsive.

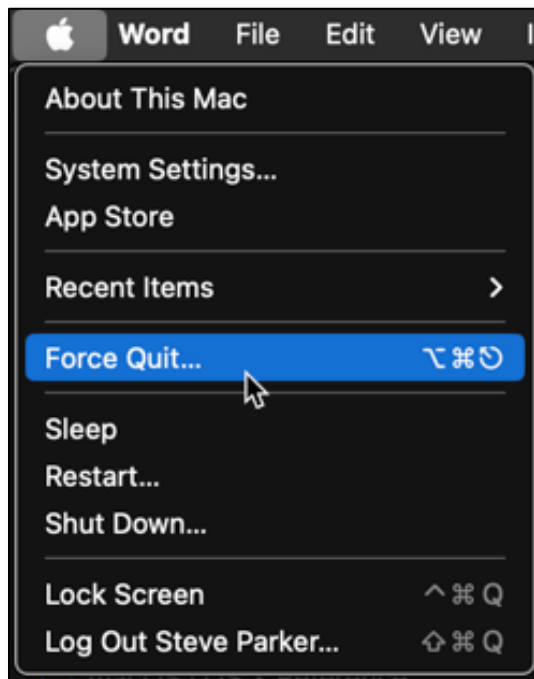
When this happens, you may resort to a **Force Quit** action that you've used in the past. However, this action might also have become frozen.

There are multiple ways to Force Quit, so it's helpful to be aware of these different methods. If one doesn't work, another one may, especially if your cursor/pointer is frozen.

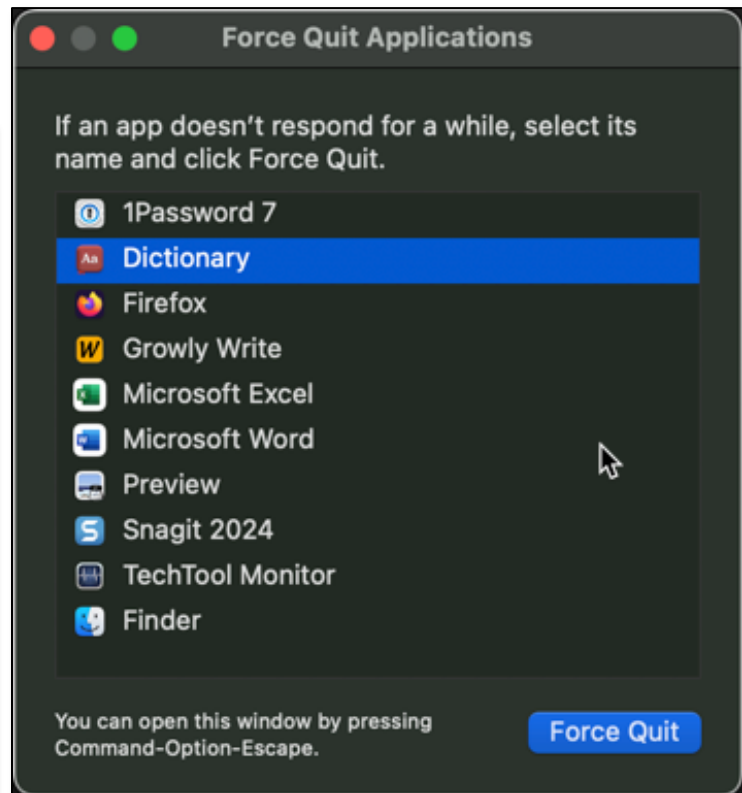
🍏 Menu – Choose Force Quit

Click on the Apple (🍏) Menu, and then choose **Force Quit** from the drop-down menu. This will bring up the **Force Quit Applications** menu where you can then select the application that you wish to quit. It doesn't have a **Cancel** button, so to dismiss it, you'll need to click the **Close** button.

You can also use the up/down arrows on your keyboard to select an application to Force Quit.



🍏 > Force Quit...



Force Quit Applications Window

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Force Quit – Keyboard Shortcut

If your cursor isn't working (or even if it is), you can also try using the keyboard shortcut, **Option+Command+⌘** (that's **Option+Command+Esc**) to bring up the Force Quit Applications window.



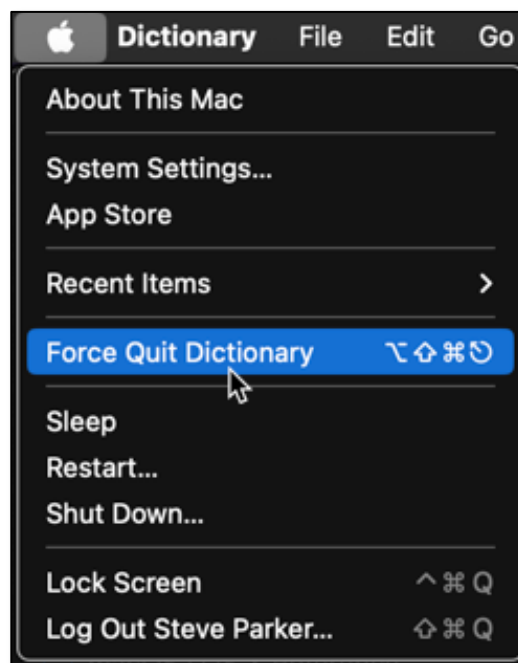
Option+Command+Esc

🍏 Menu + Shift Key (Force Quit the Active App)

Hold down the **Shift** key and click on the Apple Menu. The Force Quit menu item changes to **Force Quit [name of app]** to quit the active/foremost app.

Note: Force Quit is immediate. Unsaved changes will be lost!

Example (Force Quit the Dictionary app):



**🍏 > Force Quit... (With Shift Key)
Force Quitting the Dictionary App**

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Force Quit the Active App – Keyboard Shortcut

While in the app that you wish to Force Quit (the active/foremost app that you're using), you can type **Option+Shift+Command+Esc** to force it to quit. (Note the addition of the Shift key to the previous shortcut.)

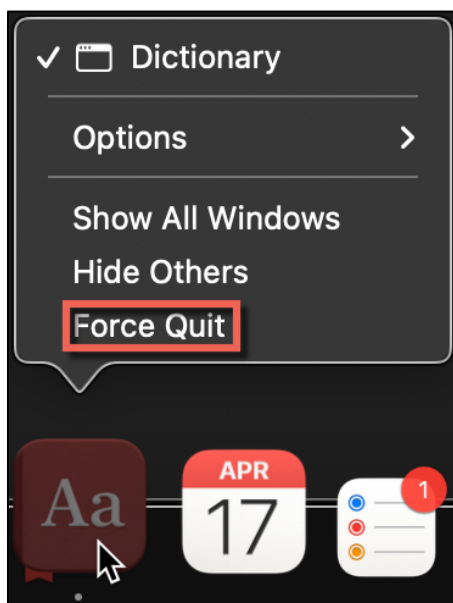


Option+Shift+Command+Esc

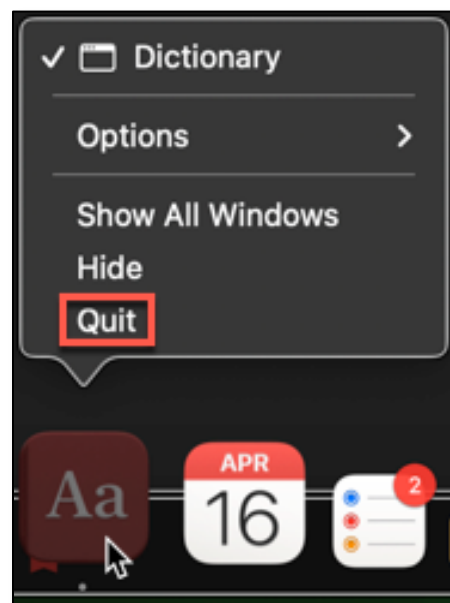
This is a very handy shortcut, especially if your Mac is frozen in an unresponsive app, and you can't get out of it.

Use the Dock

You can Force Quit an app by moving your cursor to its icon in the Dock. Then hold down the **Option** key while you **Right Click** on the app's Dock icon. A **Force Quit** option appears in the pop-up menu. Note that toggling the Option key causes the pop-up menu item to alternate between **Quit** and **Force Quit**.



App Pop-up Menu + Option Key (Force Quit)

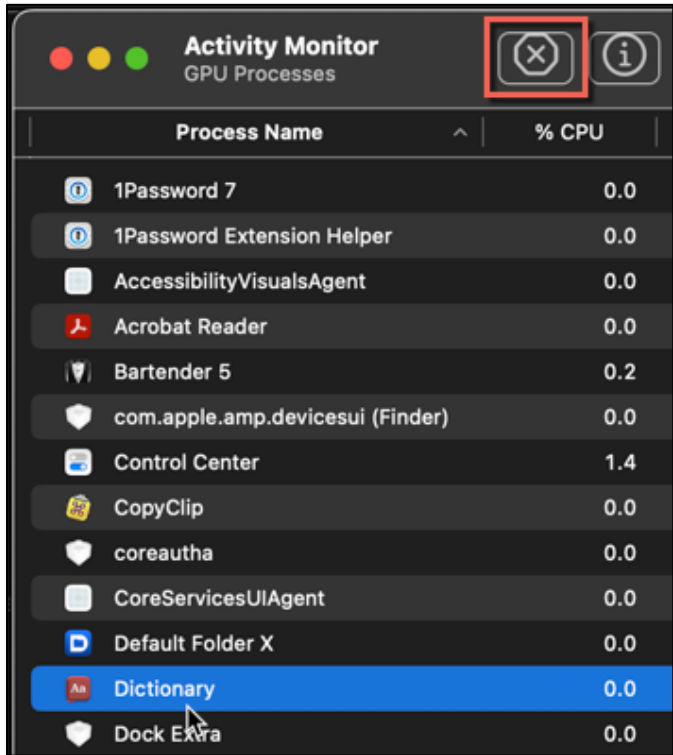


App Pop-up Menu (Quit)

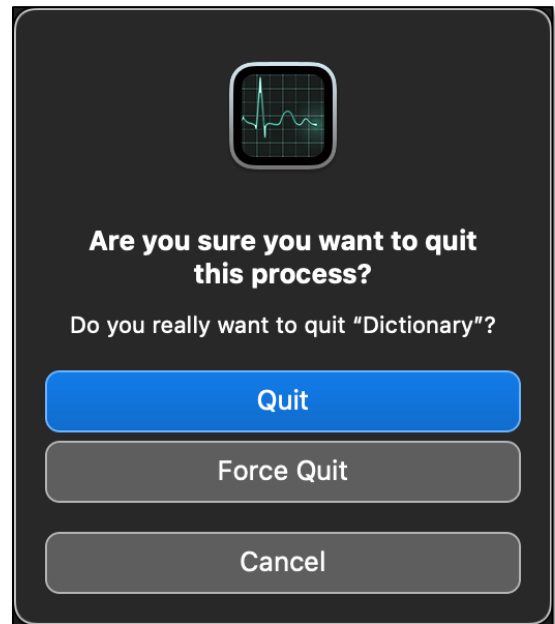
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Activity Monitor

If the Activity Monitor app is active (or if you can activate it), you can use it to quit a frozen app. In Activity Monitor, find the name of the app you wish to Force Quit (it may show up in red). Select the app and click the **X** button at top left in Activity Monitor's menu bar. A dialog will be displayed asking if you want to Quit (default) or Force Quit the application.



Activity Monitor (Dictionary App Selected)



Force Quit Dialog

Note: Remember that a handy way to bring up the Activity Monitor app (or any other app for that matter) is to do a Spotlight search with the keyboard shortcut **Command+Space**.



Command+Space

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Terminal – Killall Command

If you can, launch the Terminal app, and type this command:

```
killall [applicationname]
```


For example, if you want to kill the Dictionary app, type:

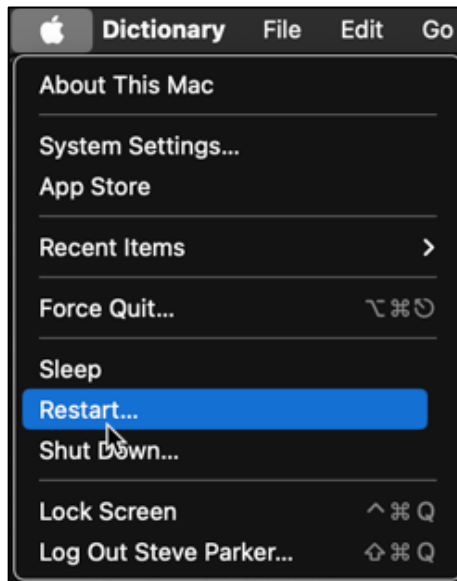
```
killall Dictionary (Note: Spelling counts, including Capitalization,)
```

If All Else Fails

You may find that none of these Force Quit options work. If you're stuck in this frustrating situation, you still have some options, but you'll likely lose all of your unsaved changes.

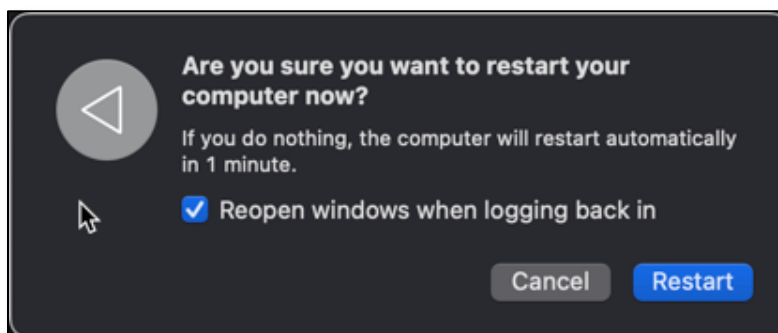
Restart Your Mac. Restarting your Mac closes all programs, allowing it to start fresh when back up and running. You have several options here.

Apple Menu > Restart... Go to the  Menu and choose **Restart...** from the drop-down menu.



 > Restart...

A pop-up notification window will be displayed asking if you're sure that you want to perform a Restart along with a countdown timer. You can then decide if you want to restart immediately or let the 60-second timer finish and initiate the restart.



Restart Dialog

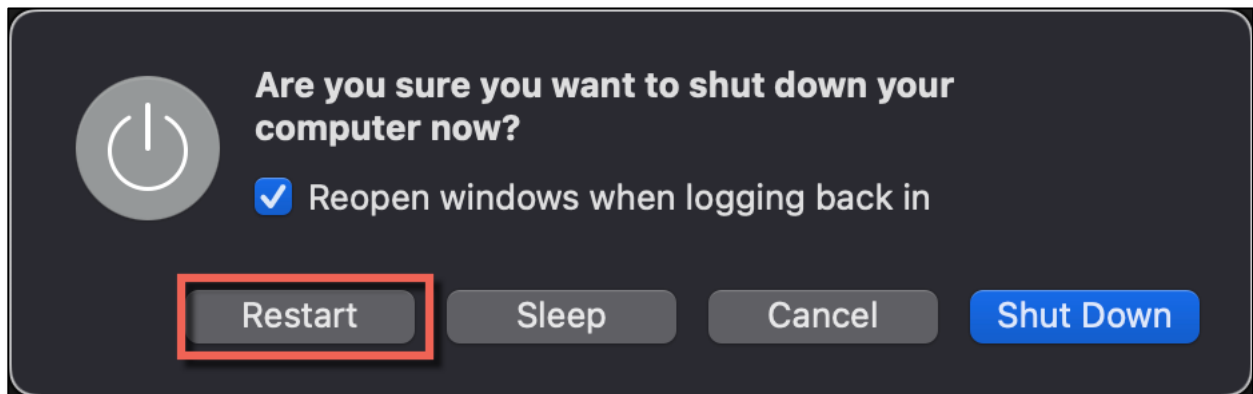
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Restart Keyboard Shortcut. Alternatively, you can use the keyboard shortcut, **Control+Eject**, to perform a Restart. The Eject button is located in the top row of the keypad and has an upward facing arrow above a thin line (⏏).



Control+Eject

A Restart dialog is then displayed asking if you're sure that you want to Shut Down your Mac. Since the default option is to Shut Down your Mac, you'll need to choose the option to Restart instead.



Restart Dialog – Controlled Restart

Keyboard Shortcut – Forced/Immediate Restart. Use the keyboard shortcut **Control+Command+Eject**. (Note the addition of the Command key to the previous shortcut.) Beware that this will *immediately* restart your computer! (See the keyboard image on the next page.)

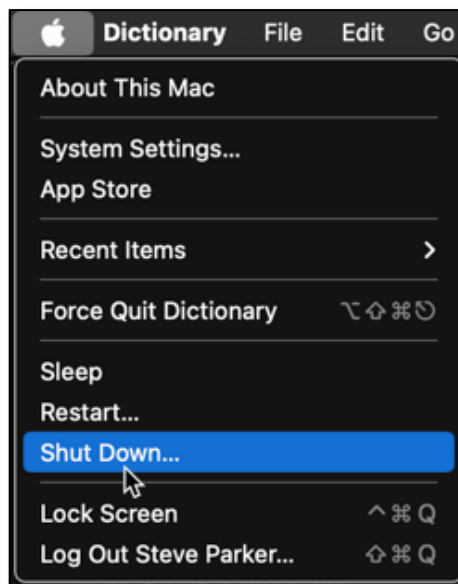
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Control+Command+Eject

Shut Down Your Mac. If restarting your Mac doesn't resolve your problem, or you can't Restart, you can try to force your Mac to shut down.

Apple Menu > Shut Down... If you can, go to the Apple Menu and choose **Shut Down...** from the drop-down menu. A dialog similar to the one that's displayed after choosing Restart... will be displayed (referring to Shut Down... instead).



🍏 > Shut Down...

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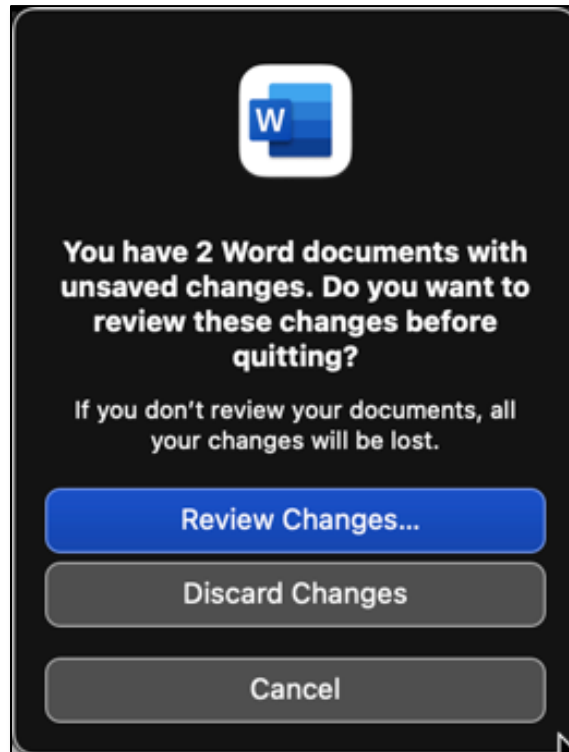
Shut Down Keyboard Shortcut. **Control+Option+Command+Eject**.



Control+Option+Command+Eject

If you have any open documents that have unsaved changes, a dialog box will be displayed, and you'll be asked whether you want to save them. Otherwise, your unsaved changes will be lost. Also, you'll be notified which app(s) with unsaved changes interrupted the Shut Down process.

If there are no unsaved changes, Shut Down will be immediate!



Force Quit Dialog Box – Open Document(s)

Power Button. Press and hold the **Power** button. However, you'll lose all your unsaved changes.

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Summary

There are multiple ways to Force Quit your Mac when you run into a problem. These include making choices from the Apple menu (or using various associated keyboard shortcuts), selecting from an app's Dock icon, using the Activity Monitor app, using the Terminal app, Restarting your Mac, or in the worst case, Shutting Down your Mac.

Next Presentation

Next month we'll take a look at another macOS feature or utility.

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.

–Steve Parker

Credits:

7 Ways to Force Quit Apps on Macs

<https://www.applemust.com/7-ways-to-force-quit-apps-on-macs/>

Sleep, log out, and shut down shortcuts

<https://support.apple.com/en-us/102613>