



Turn on gentle rain and ocean sounds while you work

D. Griffin Jones 7:30 am, December 3, 2024



Working in an office or in the city, you're probably inundated with noise from people chattering, cars running and nearby music. Your iPhone has a built-in feature called Background Sounds for playing rain noises or white noise to tune it all out.

You don't need to download any apps or pay a cent; it comes for free on your Mac and iPhone. Let me show you how it works.

Chill out and silence the sounds of your environment with the sounds of rain, the ocean and more.

Image: D. Griffin Jones/Cult of Mac/W.carter/Wikimedia Commons

How to turn on Background Sounds

on iPhone

Go to **Settings > Accessibility**, scroll down a bit and tap on **Audio & Visual > Background Sounds**.

Turn on **Background Sounds** to start playing. Tap on **Sound** to switch between noises:

- **Balanced Noise**, a medium static sound.
- **Bright Noise**, a higher-pitched static sound.
- **Dark Noise**, a lower-pitched static sound.
- **Ocean**, the sound of waves slowly crashing.
- **Rain**, with occasional birds chirping.
- **Stream**, a running creek.
- **Night**, to hear crickets and frogs.
- **Fire**, for a crackling wood fireplace. (Marshmallows not included.)

Selecting any sound will start to download, which only takes a few moments.

Below, you have two volume sliders: one for adjusting the volume of the sound and one for adjusting the volume while other music or videos are playing. You can't typically play two things at once on the iPhone, but this is an exception.

Tap **Play Sample** to get an idea of how loud the background sound will be when you have music playing. You can also turn it off entirely with the **Use When Media Is Playing** switch.

Stop Sounds When Locked, if turned on, will only play your background sounds when your phone is being used.

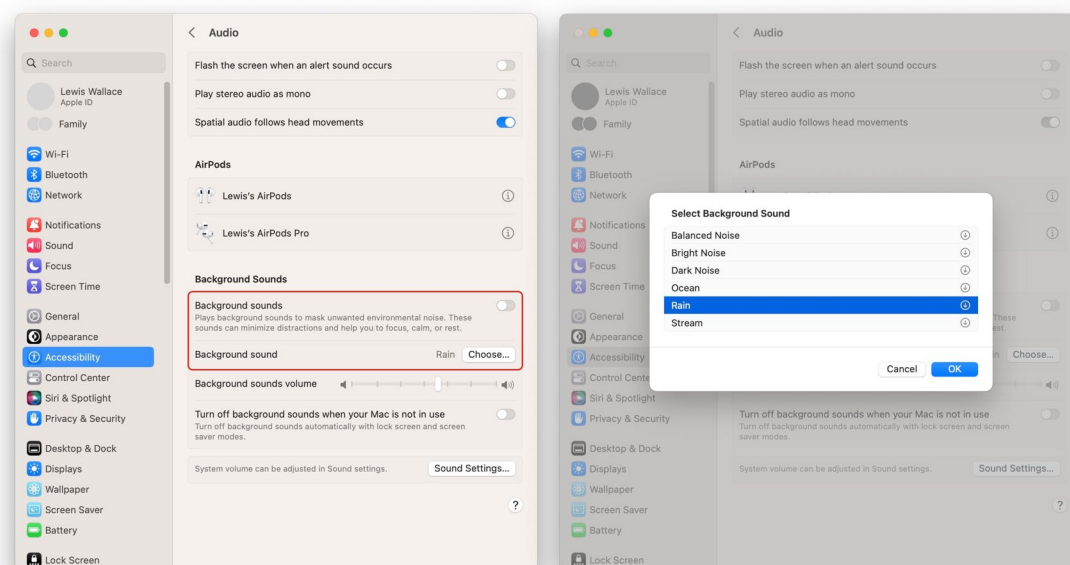
Quickly turn it on and off

If you like this feature, you don't want to dig through three menus in Settings to turn it on and off — there's a much faster way.

After turning it on for the first time, I saw that it added a Hearing control to Control Center. Swipe down from the top-right of your phone (or drag up from the bottom if you have a phone with a Home Button). Tap the ear icon and tap **Background Sounds** to turn it on. To turn it off, tap Background Sounds at the bottom — this control turns it on and off.

You can also add a dedicated Background Sounds button to Control Center directly. Add and remove icons from Control Center by tapping and holding on the screen and tapping Add a Control, type in Background Sounds to add it and drag it wherever you want.

On the Mac, too



You have the same options in the latest version of macOS. You can find this feature on the Mac if you're running macOS 13 or later. If you work on a Mac, you might consider playing these sounds out of your computer instead of your phone.

Background sounds on iPhone are a relaxing way to work

Since I work from home alone and I live at the far end of a street in the woods, I don't have any chatter or background noise to cover up. But long, long ago, I worked in an office, so I can easily imagine how someone might get some great mileage out of playing white noise or rain sounds on iPhone.

It's a pretty great feature. I'd like to see more sounds added in the future: the woods, heavy wind, a café, a bustling city street and maybe a room full of buzzing and whirring old computers.

This article on background sounds on iPhone was originally published on January 16, 2023. It has been updated with the latest information.