

Apple's hidden white noise feature may be just the productivity boost you need

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[Source Photo: [cottonbro studio](#)/Pexels]

As I write this, the most pleasing sound is washing over me—gentle waves ebbing and flowing onto the shore. Sadly, I'm not actually on some magnificent tropical beach. Instead, the sounds of the sea are being generated by my Mac.

Yet, more than just being pleasing to the ear, this sound, and others the Mac can generate, have helped boost my focus in recent months when I'm under deadline and trying to get work done. The feature is

called "Background Sounds." Here are some of the benefits I've gotten from it and how you can use it, too.

The pandemic made me realize background sounds help me focus

I know some writers who need absolute silence when they are working. I've never been one of those people. I work best when there is low-level noise from something else in the space around me—the rustling of tree branches outside a window or the indistinct murmur of other people in a cafe.

I didn't realize how much I relied on background noise to stay focused until the early days of the pandemic when lockdowns hit. Like many, I was suddenly stuck [working from home](#), cut off from the background noises I had become accustomed to. I tried supplementing the newfound silence with music, but songs and even instrumentals were *too* distracting.

Then, by chance, while [browsing YouTube on my TV](#) out of boredom one day, I came across an eight-hour video titled something like "Relaxing Coffee Shop Ambience." The entire video was just an animated photo of the exterior of a visually appealing coffee house that played in a loop, but was set against a soundtrack of invisible customers murmuring, coffee mugs occasionally clacking, and autumn leaves blowing in the wind.

I played it on my television that day and, I swear, I'd never focused so well on work before. Since then, I almost always play background ambience videos while I write. The cafe ones are nice, but natural ones, like rain or ocean scenes, really work for me. They seem to have a dual effect: increasing my focus while boosting my creativity.

But playing those videos is not always practical if you go outside the house. At work, you don't want your boss to think you're wasting time watching YouTube, and playing an hours-long video on your laptop is a great way to run out of battery halfway through your workday.