

We investigate the lifespan of Macs and MacBooks. Find out how long MacBooks last, how long Apple supports Macs and MacBooks for, and how to tell if a Mac is too old to be useful.

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**M**acs have a high price so it's understandable that many Mac users will want to put off replacing them for as long as they can. But just how long should you expect a Mac to last?

You may also be considering buying a secondhand Mac and wondering how old is too old? For example, is that 2017 MacBook Pro for

\$300/£300 a good deal, or would you be better off spending a bit more on a newer model?

One factor to consider is the age at which most Macs start to experience issues, such as random shutdowns and degraded batteries that no longer hold their charge. Unfortunately, at one point repairing your Mac or MacBook will no longer be a viable option and you will need to look for a replacement.

Another issue with aging Macs is that the software you need may not run on it. You may also find that Apple no longer supports the operating system software that runs on that Mac – which could leave you open to malware and security vulnerabilities.

In this article, we will address the above, as well as give advice about which Macs are still supported by Apple, the Macs that can still be repaired if required (Apple stops providing the required parts after a number of years), and the Macs that Apple considers obsolete and vintage. Being Vintage means Apple may have the parts available if you wanted to fix the Mac, but once Obsolete Apple will not provide parts if you want to try and fix the machine.

## **When do I need to replace my Mac?**

There are a few indicators that your Mac has reached the end of its useful life:

- Apple no longer supports the latest version of the software it runs (which could leave you vulnerable).
- The apps you need to use no longer run on it.

- The Mac struggles to perform the tasks you need it to – especially if you can't update the RAM or any other components.
- Something breaks and is too expensive to fix, or the parts aren't available.
- The Mac is becoming unreliable. Unexpected shutdowns are becoming commonplace and you've tried everything to fix the problem to no avail.

## **Which Macs are supported by macOS updates?**

Only the most recent version of macOS gets feature updates, but Apple usually maintains the last three versions of the macOS with bug fixes and important security updates, ensuring that the latest version of Safari will run, and that Apple Services, such as iCloud, are fully supported.

This means that Apple will currently provide support for these [versions of macOS](#): [macOS Sequoia](#), [macOS Sonoma](#) (macOS 14), and [macOS Ventura](#) (macOS 13). Prior to the arrival of Sequoia in September 2024, Monterey (macOS 12) was also supported, but now Monterey has fallen off that list and with it Mac from before 2017, and in some cases, 2018.

If your Mac is running Sequoia, Sonoma, or Ventura you should be able to be confident that Apple will keep an eye on any security vulnerabilities and other problems with these operating systems. (Indeed, Apple issued a security update for Sonoma and Ventura on the day that Sequoia arrived, and has issued further since that date).

However, if your Mac is running an older version of the operating system, such as macOS Big Sur, macOS Catalina or older, you will find yourself out in the cold when it comes to essential security updates to Apple's software.

If the software is too old you may also find that your other Apple products aren't compatible with your Mac. Without the latest security update, you may no longer be able to use Apple Pay or other means to pay for services online, for example. And if you want to sync your iPad or iPhone with your Mac (rather than using iCloud) you will need a recent version of macOS. Since Catalina, syncing is done via the Finder, rather than iTunes. If you can't run Catalina you will need at least iTunes 12.8.2.3 and at least Mac OS X 10.11.6 (El Capitan) or your Mac will not recognize your iPhone or iPad.

It's not just a case of updating your Mac to the latest version of macOS though. Each time Apple updates the Mac operating system more Macs fall off the list of those supported. Read: [The latest version of macOS your Mac can run](#).

If your Macs isn't in the list of supported Macs below, it won't receive important security updates:

## **Macs supported by macOS Sequoia**

2024's Sequoia supports the following Macs.

- MacBook Air from 2020 and later
- MacBook Pro from 2018 and later
- Mac mini from 2018 and later
- iMac from 2019 and later
- iMac Pro from 2017
- Mac Pro from 2019 and later
- Mac Studio (all models)

Read: [Which Macs will run macOS Sequoia?](#)

## **Macs supported by macOS Sonoma**

2023's Sonoma supports the following Macs.

- MacBook Air from 2018 and later
- MacBook Pro from 2018 and later
- Mac mini from 2018 and later
- iMac from 2019 and later
- iMac Pro from 2017
- Mac Pro from 2019 and later
- Mac Studio (all models)

Read: [Which Macs run Sonoma?](#)

## **Macs supported by macOS Ventura**

2022's macOS Ventura supports the following Macs:

- MacBook models from 2017 or later
- MacBook Air models from 2018 or later
- MacBook Pro models from 2017 or later
- Mac mini models from 2018 or later
- iMac models from 2017 or later
- iMac Pro (all models)
- Mac Pro models from 2019 or later
- Mac Studio (all models)

Read: [Can my Mac run Ventura?](#)

This means that the oldest Macs supported right now are from 2017, and in some cases, 2018—and come September 2025 those Macs will no longer be supported.

## **Which Macs aren't supported by macOS?**

When Apple introduced Sequoia in 2023 it dropped support for macOS Monterey. These Macs will not get security updates following the removal of support for Monterey:

- iMac (models from 2015)
- MacBook Air (models from 2015 and 2017 models)
- MacBook Pro (2015 and 2016 models)
- Mac mini (2014 models)
- Mac Pro (2013 model: cylinder/trash can)
- MacBook (2016 model)

This adds to the list of Macs that aren't supported with security updates, which includes: the 12-inch MacBook introduced in early 2015, the mid-2013 MacBook Air and the early-2014 MacBook Air, late-2013 MacBook Pro and mid-2014 MacBook Pro, or the 2014 iMac.

All other Macs that pre-date those mentioned above are no longer supported by Apple's software updates.

If your Mac is a decade old then you certainly won't get security updates for it.

## **Does it matter if my Mac won't run a supported macOS?**

Once you cannot update your Mac to run a supported version of macOS you are vulnerable to security breaches, which should obviously be a concern. You may also find that you can't carry out transactions on the internet if you want to pay for things on your out-of-date Mac.

It's also probably that the software you need won't run on your Mac. Apple and other companies stop supporting older versions of the applications they make, so there could be issues with the versions of the software you are running. If you are experiencing random shutdowns, for example, it could be due to problems with an app you are running – problems that will not be addressed by the developer because that version of the app is no longer supported.

If you want to run fully supported software then you will need to update to a newer version of macOS – and that may mean that you need to update your Mac. Although, there are workarounds to [install a new version of macOS on an old Mac](#) if you need to.

Once Apple no longer supports your Macs with operating system updates, it's probably a good time to replace your Mac.

## When do Macs become obsolete?

But it's not just software updates that determine the lifespan of a Mac. It's also a question of whether it will be possible to fix your Mac should something go wrong with the hardware. Apple has two standards that indicate hardware support is waning: Obsolete or Vintage. The first stage is Vintage: you might be lucky enough to get parts for this Mac, the second is Obsolete: you are out on your own when it comes to any attempt to mend the Mac if it goes wrong.

If you look at Apple's list of Obsolete Macs – those being the Macs that Apple will no longer provide spare parts for – you will see that the company stops providing parts for Macs that it hasn't sold for more than seven years. In fact, the company may not even provide parts for Macs that haven't been sold for more than five years (considered Vintage by the company).

This could mean that you won't be able to get a faulty Mac fixed because the parts aren't available.

### Obsolete Macs

Obsolete Macs are generally Macs that Apple stopped selling more than seven years ago. Once a Mac is in Apple's obsolete list you have little chance of getting it repaired if something does go wrong. You might be able to find spare parts yourself, but Apple won't provide them.

You'll find more details about the exact models on [Apple's dedicated page](#), but the lists below will give you a general idea.

Apple considers the following Macs and older Obsolete, with the 2014 iMacs (21.5-inch and 27-inch) added in the second half of 2024.

- 11-inch MacBook Air (early 2014 and older)
- 12-inch MacBook (2016 and older)
- 13-inch MacBook Air (early 2015 and older)
- 13-inch MacBook Pro (2016 and older)
- 15-inch MacBook Pro (2016 and older)
- 27-inch iMac (2015 and older) – newly added
- 21.5-inch iMac (2015 and older) – newly added
- Mac mini (2012 and older)
- Mac mini Server (2012 and older)
- Mac Pro (2010 and older)
- Anything predating the Intel switch, obviously.

## Vintage Macs

Apple also has a list of Vintage Macs. These are Macs that Apple stopped selling between five and seven years ago. (If you live in France where a law means you can get support for spare parts for up to seven years after Apple stops selling a Mac).

Apple Authorized Service Providers will repair vintage products for up to seven years, as long as parts are available.

Apple lists the following products as being vintage, with the 2017 iMacs (21.5- and 27-inch), 2014 Mac mini, and the 2019 13-inch and 2018 15-inch MacBook Pro's added in the second half of 2024.

- 11-inch MacBook Air (2015)
- 12-inch MacBook (2017)
- 13-inch MacBook Air (2018)
- 13-inch MacBook Pro (2017, 2018 & 2019)
- 15-inch MacBook Pro (2015, 2017 & 2018)
- 21.5-inch iMac (2013 & 2017)
- 27-inch iMac (2015 & 2017)
- Mac Pro (2012)
- Mac mini (2014)

Based on the above, we'd suggest that if your Mac is more than eight years old, it's time to look for a new one. And, if you see a 2017 or earlier Mac on sale, it's not wise to buy it. In fact you will note that there are even 2018 and 2019 Macs on the vintage list. Read: [Why you shouldn't buy a second hand Mac](#).

See: [Best Mac 2024: Every Apple Mac and MacBook compared](#)

## Should I fix my Mac or buy a new one?

If your Mac is in the Obsolete category above and something goes wrong with it then you are going to struggle to get the necessary parts if you wanted to attempt to get it fixed as Apple won't provide the parts.

You might be able to buy an old Mac on eBay or similar and scrap it for the parts, but we'd suggest that it really wouldn't be worth the effort.

If your Mac is in the Vintage list then Apple might be able to provide the required parts, but there is no guarantee. If you are lucky enough to get the part an Apple service provider might even be able to fix the Mac for you – but the cost of the work is likely to be prohibitive.



You might find that the Mac was included in part of a recall due to the issue you are experiencing, in that case, it might be worth enlisting in a [repair program](#). However, if the time period in which Apple was offering the repairs has passed (which is unfortunately likely) then you will still have to find the money for the repair, which again might be prohibitive.

## Apple repair programs

If the Mac you own, or are considering buying would be affected by any of the problems listed below that's another reason to avoid it.

Apple's current Mac repair programs include:

- A recall for 15-inch MacBook Pro units due to a battery fault. September 2015 to February 2017 models affected.

Service programs that have now ended:

- There was a keyboard services for some Mac laptops bought since 2016, but this is no longer running.
- A 13-inch MacBook Pro backlit service program for models from 2016-2018.
- A SSD service program for 13in MacBook Pro models from 2017-2018.
- A battery replacement program for 13in MacBook Pros from 2016-2017.

We have more [information about Apple's product recalls and repair programs here](#). Plus, visit [this page](#) for more information on the above repair programs.

Assuming your fault isn't one of those listed above, you may be faced with a pricy repair bill. We suggest that if your Mac is older than five years then repairing it will not be worth it – unless of course there are important documents or photos on it that you want to retrieve in which case it might be worth looking at [how to recover these files](#).

## Should I update my Mac or buy a new one?

This is a similar question to the one above in as much as you will be weighing up whether spending money to improve your Mac might be more savvy than buying a new Mac.

There are various ways you might be able to improve your existing Mac, including adding more RAM or changing from a hard drive to a SSD. If you can upgrade the components inside your Mac you may be able to speed it up and make it more capable of doing what you need. See [How to upgrade a Mac](#).

However, many Macs can't be upgraded at all. In recent years Apple has taken to soldering RAM in place and hiding components away to make access impossible (or at least impossible if you don't want to completely destroy your Mac attempting to get

to them). With M-series Macs memory, GPU and CPU are all integrated onto the chip, so it is impossible to upgrade them. Nor can you update the SSD as it is soldered onto the motherboard.

That said, there are ways to upgrade your Mac. Read: [How to upgrade your Mac mini](#) for ideas.

If you decide to buy a new Mac check out our round-ups of the best Mac deals you can get:

- [Best iMac deals](#)
- [Best Mac mini deals](#)
- [Best Mac Studio deals](#)
- [Best MacBook Pro deals](#)
- [Best MacBook Air deals](#)

## **Can I update the RAM in my Mac?**

If you have one of the following Macs you might be able to update the RAM:

- MacBook (2008 to 2011 models)
- MacBook Pro (2009-2012 13in, 2008-2012 15in, all 17-inch models)
- iMac: The RAM can be updated in the majority of iMacs except for the 21.5in models from Mid-2014 and Late-2015, which had their RAM soldered into place.
- Mac mini: (2010-2012 and the 2018 model)
- Mac Pro: (all models)
- iMac Pro: RAM isn't user-accessible, but can be updated at an Apple Store or Apple Authorized Service Provider.

You can't update the RAM in any MacBook Air models.

We explain [which Macs have accessible RAM in this article](#) and also look at how to update the RAM.

## **What can I update in my Mac?**

It may be possible to update other components, including the SSD, hard drive, battery, logic board, hard drive, but this is only possible for a few Macs and the process is only for the expert. If you'd like to try read: [How to upgrade a Mac](#).

If you are up for pulling your Mac apart and attempting to upgrade its components then by all means try, but make sure you back it up first and be prepared to admit defeat if it doesn't go as planned.

As for whether it is worth upgrading your Macs RAM or any other component – assuming you can get the parts – rather than buying a new Mac? Perhaps it will buy



you a few more years of use. However, we'd be inclined to suggest that if your Mac is older than seven years it really isn't worth it (and, you'll notice, the MacBooks that can have their RAM upgraded tend to be older than that).

## **How long do Macs last?**

So, in answer to the question: How long do Macs last? We'd say five to eight years, but beware that you may not be able to replace any faulty parts in a Mac when more than five years have passed since Apple last sold it.

Before you buy a new Mac, read our article about the [best time to buy a Mac or MacBook](#).

You may also want to read our [Best Mac Buying Guide](#) for help deciding which Mac to buy. We also have a guide to the [Best MacBook](#).

Wondering how long Apple supports iPhones and iPads for? Read [How long do iPhones last](#) and [how long Apple supports iPads for](#).

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Karen has worked on both sides of the Apple divide, clocking up a number of years at Apple's PR agency prior to joining Macworld more than two decades ago. Karen's career highlights include interviewing Apple's Steve Wozniak and discussing Steve Jobs' legacy on the BBC. Having edited the U.K. print and online editions of Macworld for many years, more recently her focus has been on SEO and evergreen content as well as product recommendations and buying advice.