Six Alternative Ways to Access System Preferences on Your Mac

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System Preferences are a Mac users one-stop location to make changes to the operating system, tweak the hardware, and configure features like Siri and Parental Controls. Most people access the System Preferences by clicking on it in the Dock. But there are at least six other ways to access the System Preferences.

Some of these methods let you access all of the System Preferences, while some let you pick the exact one you're after. Once you learn them, however, they will save you a little time here and there, which adds up over the long run.

Open Them from the Apple Menu

In case you hadn't noticed, when you click on the Apple menu in the upper-left corner, there's a shortcut to the System Preferences right below About This Mac.

If you already have System Preferences in your Dock, this is an extra click, but if your Dock is overloaded with icons, this is a nice alternative that lets you remove the System Preferences Dock icon entirely.

Right-Click for any Setting from the Dock

If you do keep the dock icon, there's no need to even open the System Preferences at all. Click and hold on the Dock icon to see a list of everything.

From there, you can go right to the preference pane you want.

Use Spotlight to Access Any Setting

Not a fan of the mouse? Use Spotlight instead. Just press Command+Space and type the name of the setting you seek and it will appear in the search results.

Note, if you don’t see any System Preferences show up, you might have disabled them from appearing in Spotlight search results, and you will need to reenable them for this method to work.

Search for Forgotten Settings

If you have forgotten exactly where a specific setting is, you can use the search pane in the upper-right corner to find where it is hiding. As you type your search term, suggestions will appear with their locations spotlighted in white.

Use the Show All Button or View Menu

Finally, if you already have the System Preferences open and you’re accessing one particular preference pane, click the Show All button on the toolbar to return to the main panel. You can also accomplish this using the Command+L keyboard shortcut.

If you don’t want to go back to the main panel, however, click and hold the Show All button. The System Preferences appear as a list, then just scroll to the pane you want.

Alternatively, you can do the same with the System Preferences View menu.

You’re not going to use these methods to access the System Preferences all the time, but it’s good to know how to use them some of the time, as a situation warrants.

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