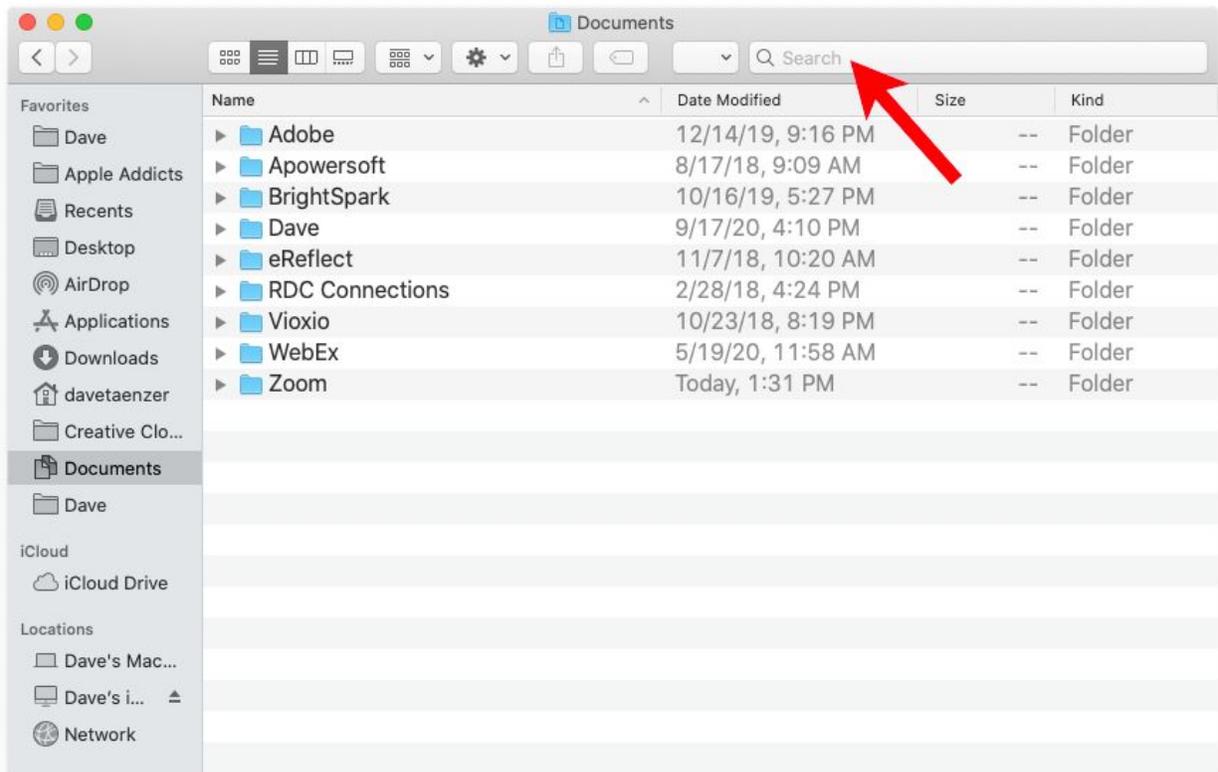# Organizing Files in Folders on a Mac

First of all, you really don't need to organize your files on a Mac.  If you know part of the name of a file or some text inside it, you can normally find it using the search window in Finder



or the search popup window you get when you hold down the command key and tap the spacebar.

If you don't want to organize your files, you can just move them into the Documents folder on your Mac.  You can periodically take the files that end up on your desktop and move them to Documents to clean up the desktop.

There are, however, times when it is useful to browse through sets of related files by looking in a folder that organizes them together.

# Finder Basics

The Finder Window has a number of important features.  The current location (folder) of files being displayed is shown at the top center of the window:
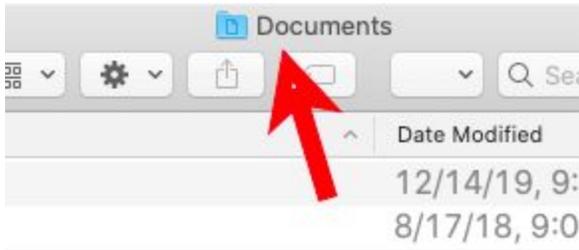


In this case, the Documents folder.  The left part of the window contains a sidebar with commonly used folders:
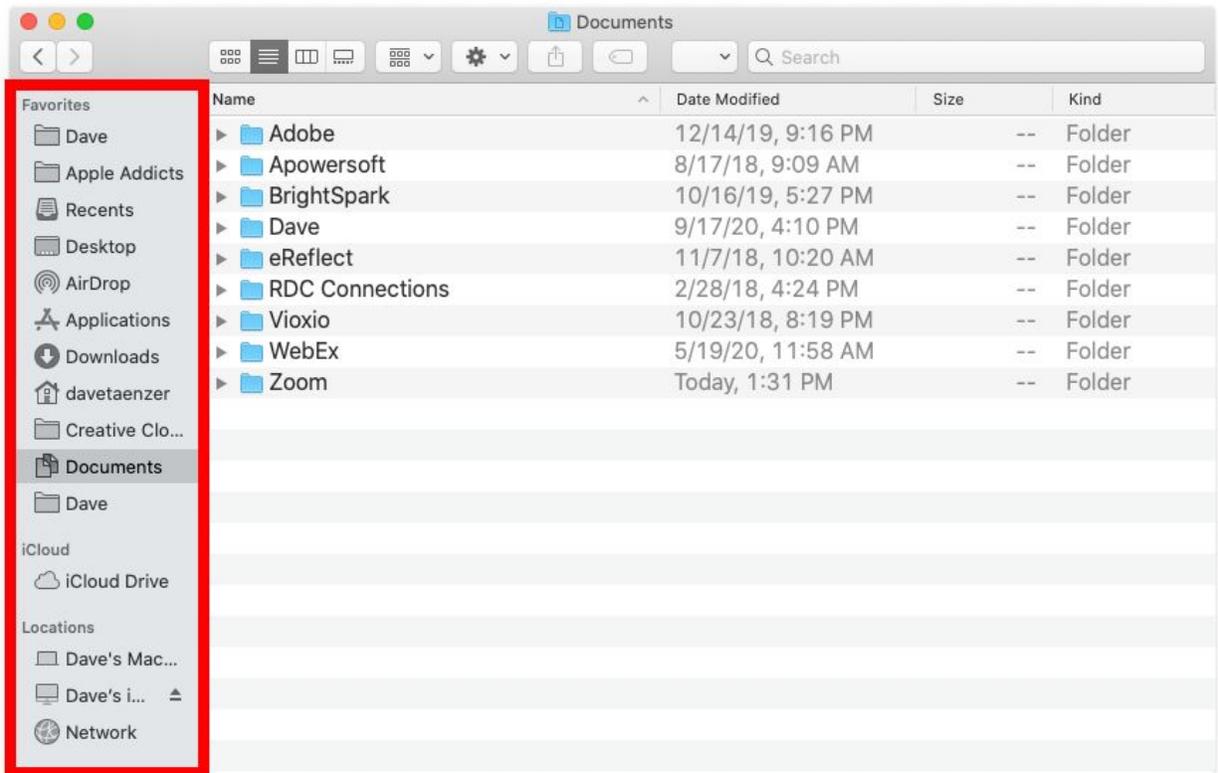
You (left) click on a folder name in the sidebar to open it.  If you have a mouse with one button, this means clicking on it.  If your mouse has two buttons, it means clicking the left button.

The Preferences option in the Finder menu has a Sidebar tab that lets you control which folders are visible in the left sidebar:
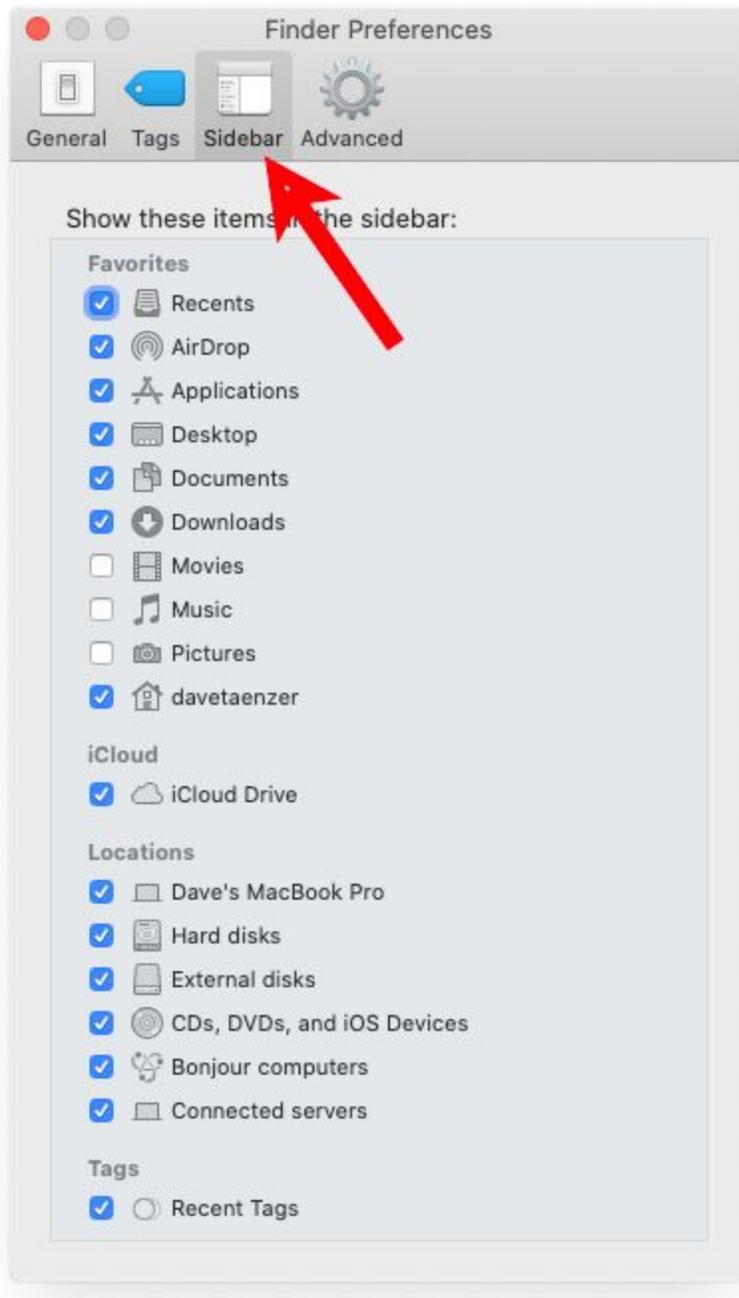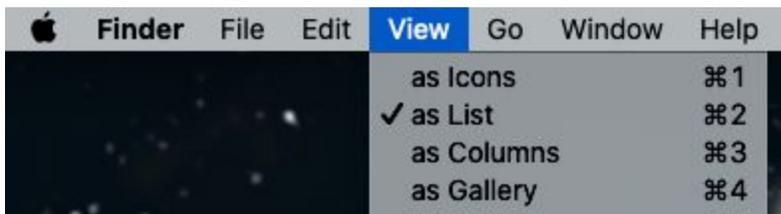
At the top left of the Finder window are the normal close (red), hide (yellow) and full screen (green) buttons.  Under them is a **<** button to move to the previous folder displayed and a **>** button to move to the next folder:
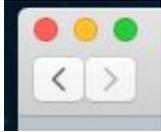


To the right of those buttons are four buttons to change the way the files are viewed:
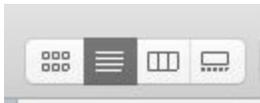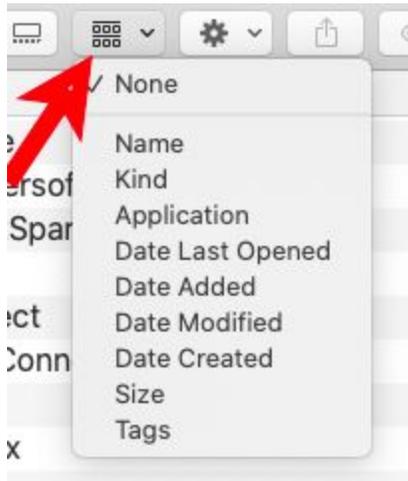


These correspond to the first four options in the View menu.



The files are displayed as either icons (pictures), a list of files and properties, a column display showing folders and the files and folders inside them or a gallery of files.

To the right of the View buttons is a Group By menu:



This will organize files in various ways.  This is different from sorting the files inside a group view.  It is sometimes useful to group files by Kind which clusters together files of each type (e.g. Microsoft Word, PDF, etc.)

Next comes the Action menu which looks like a gear:
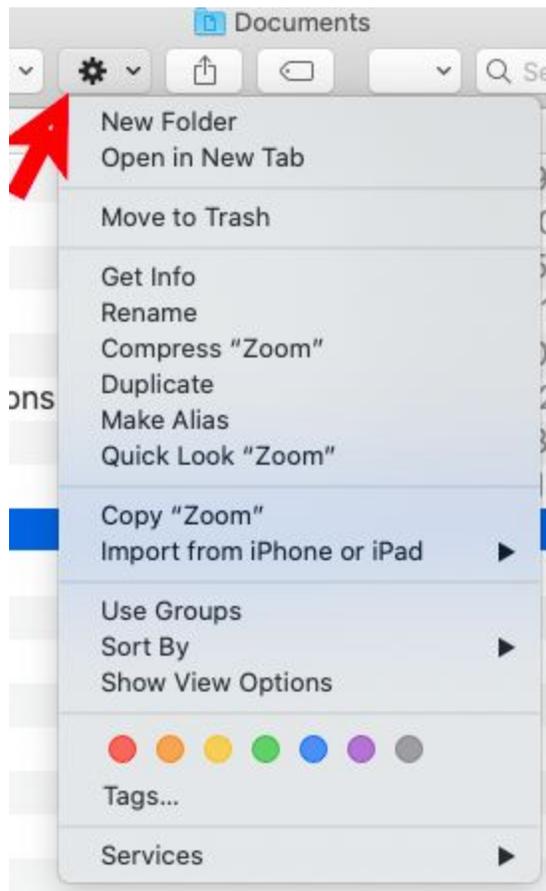


This lets you perform actions on a file or selected set of files, e.g. moving them to the Trash.

The other main feature of the top row is the search area (next to the magnifying glass icon):
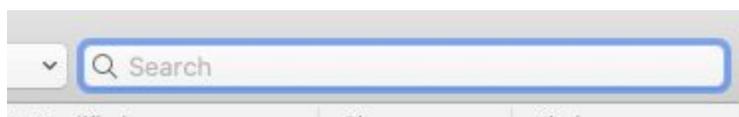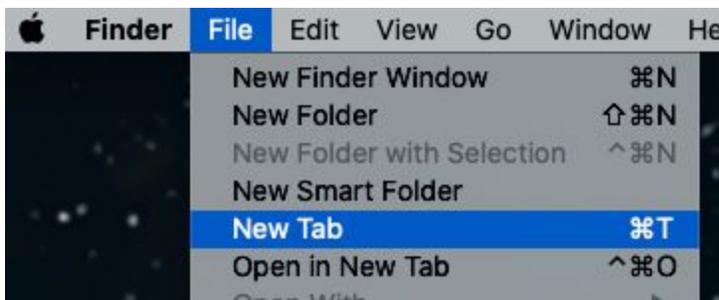
When you type in a name, it gives you a rectangular button below the search area which you click to limit the search to files that match the name.
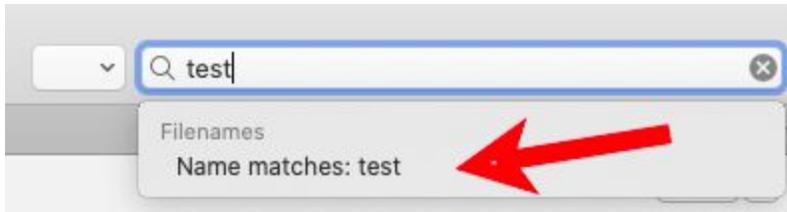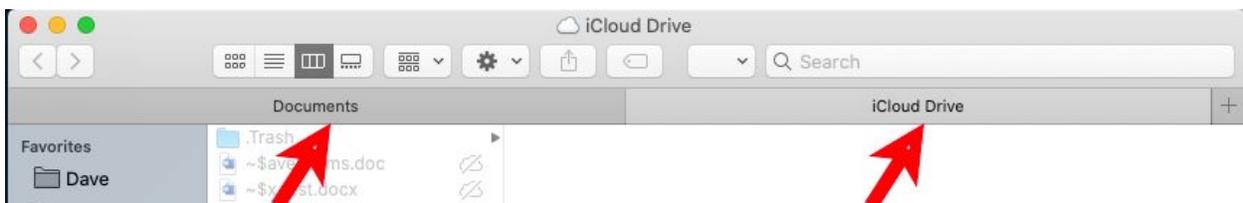
When you click on that box, the search is only by name and does not look for the text inside the files.

Another basic feature is tabs.  If you select the New Tab option on the File menu or click Command / T:

A new tab is added to the window:

The tabs are displayed as boxes in a tab bar (a rectangular area below the other buttons and above the sidebar and file display).  The current tab is displayed in light gray and the other tabs in dark gray.  You switch between tabs by clicking on them.

Finally, if you have the Finder window display in List mode, you can sort the files by clicking on the column headers:
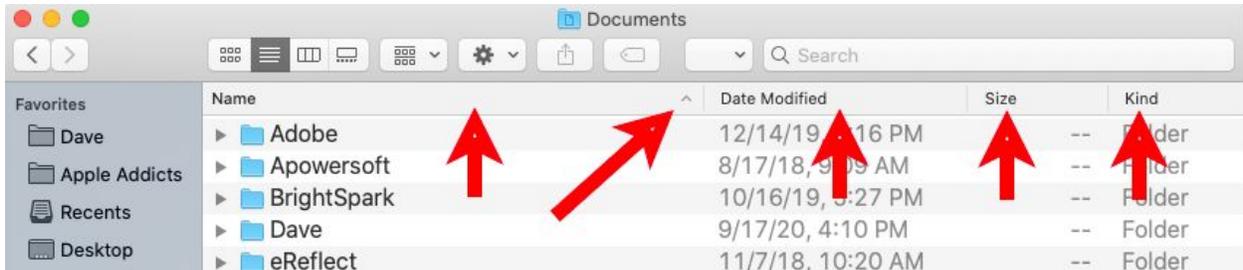


The current column used for sorting (in this case Name) has an up arrow (**^**) character to the right side if sorting first to last and a down arrow (**v**) if sorting last to first (alphabetical or reverse alphabetical sorting in this case).

For example if you click on the Name header box the sort is changed from A-Z to Z-A.  If you click on the Date Modified header, the files are displayed most recently modified first.  Click on it again and it reverses this order. You can also sort by size and the kind of file (which puts folders at the top of the list).

For example, in the display above, if you click on Name, the files will be show in reverse alphabetical order
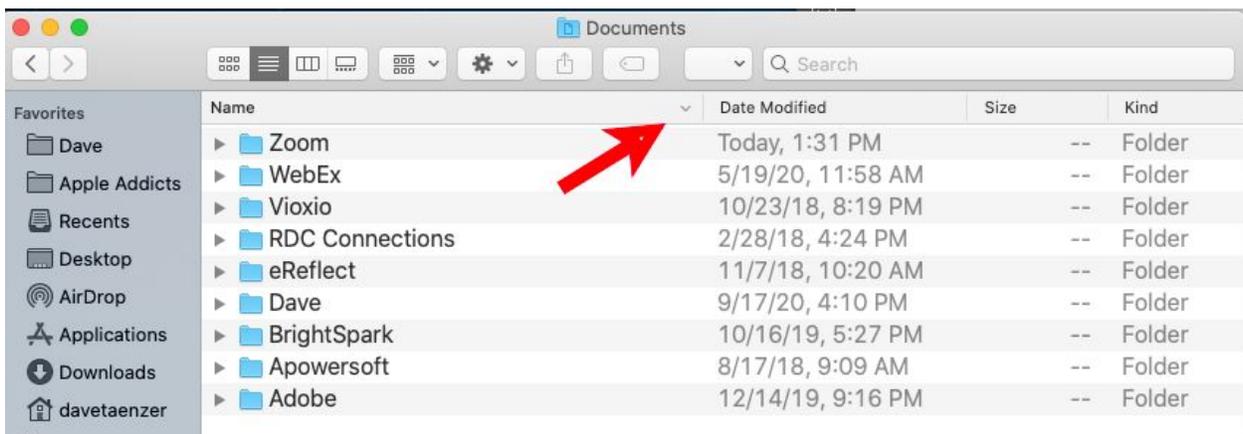
# Organizing Files in Folders

Files are normally moved by dragging them to a different folder.  A simple example of this is opening a Finder window to a specific folder and dragging a file from the desktop to the Finder window.

Dragging is done by moving the cursor over the file and holding down the left (or only) mouse button while moving it to a new location.  On a trackpad, you can hold down the trackpad button with one finger (e.g. your thumb) and move the file with another finger (e.g. your index finger).  You can also put three fingers on the trackpad and drag a file to a new folder.

When you start to drag a file, you will see it move along with the cursor and file name will appear blue to show that it is selected.

There are two main ways to move files from one folder to another.  You can have the current folder open in one window and the destination folder open in another window and drag the file from the source (current) folder to the new (destination) folder:
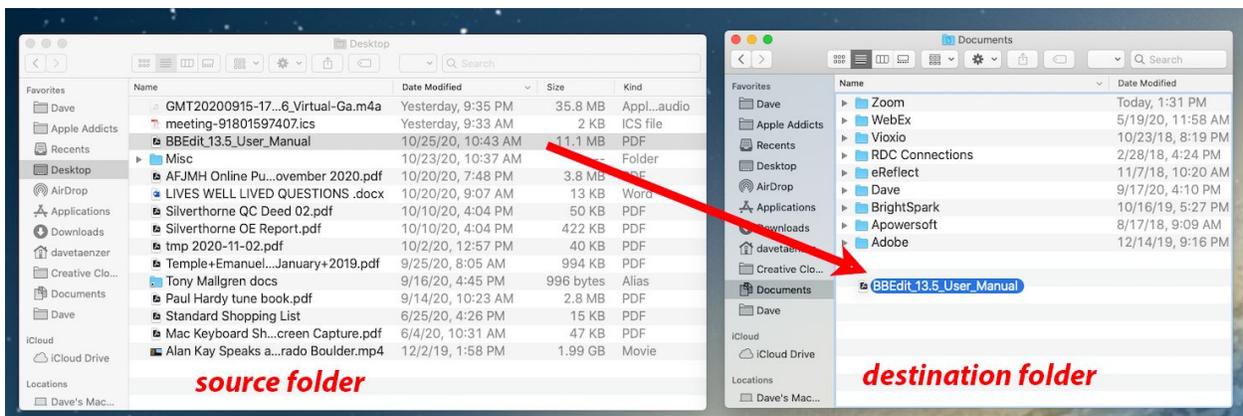


You can even set up multiple destination folders on your desktop and drag files from the source folder to the appropriate destination folder.

If you hold the Option key down when dragging the file a copy is put into

Another way of doing this is to use one window with two or more tabs.  You open the destination folder in the left tab and the source folder in the right tab and drag files up to the destination folder tab and let go of the mouse to move the file to that folder.
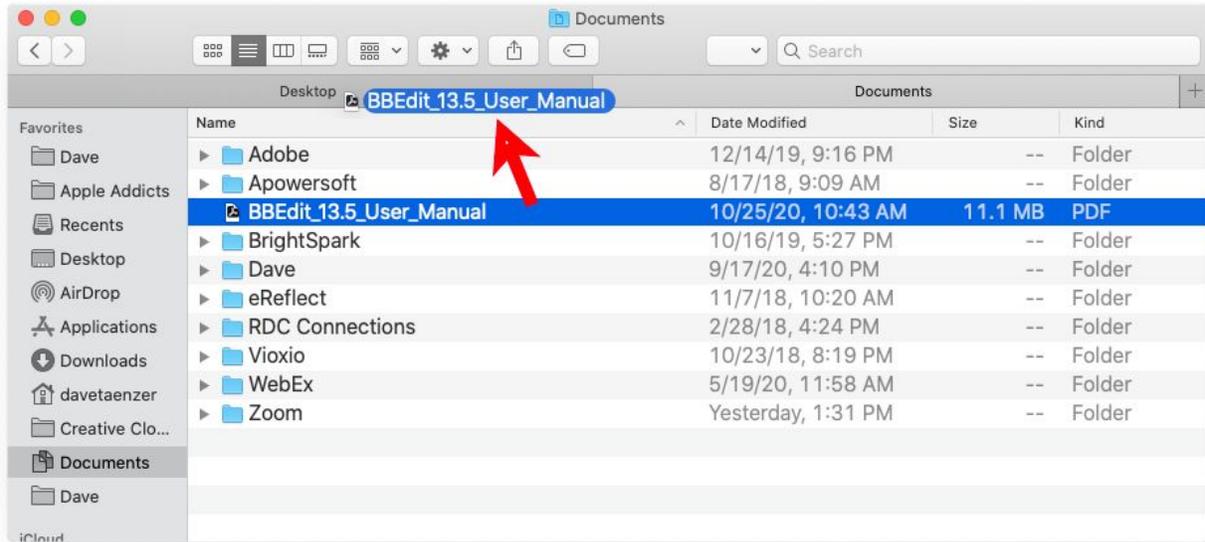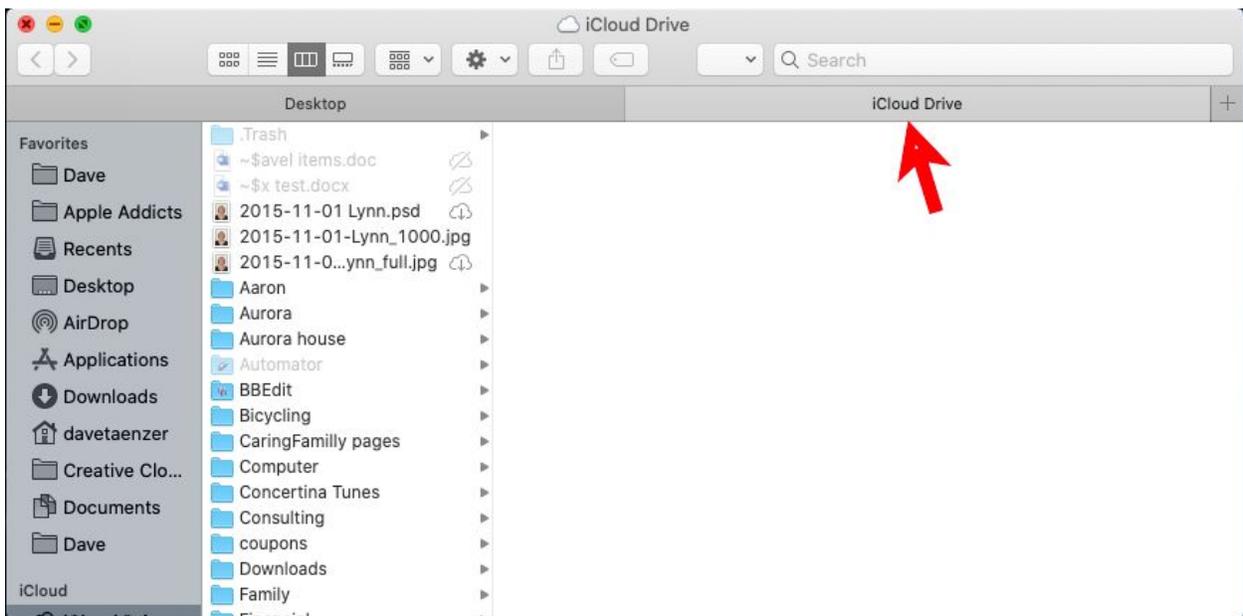


Start by opening a window with the destination folder, in this case the Desktop:
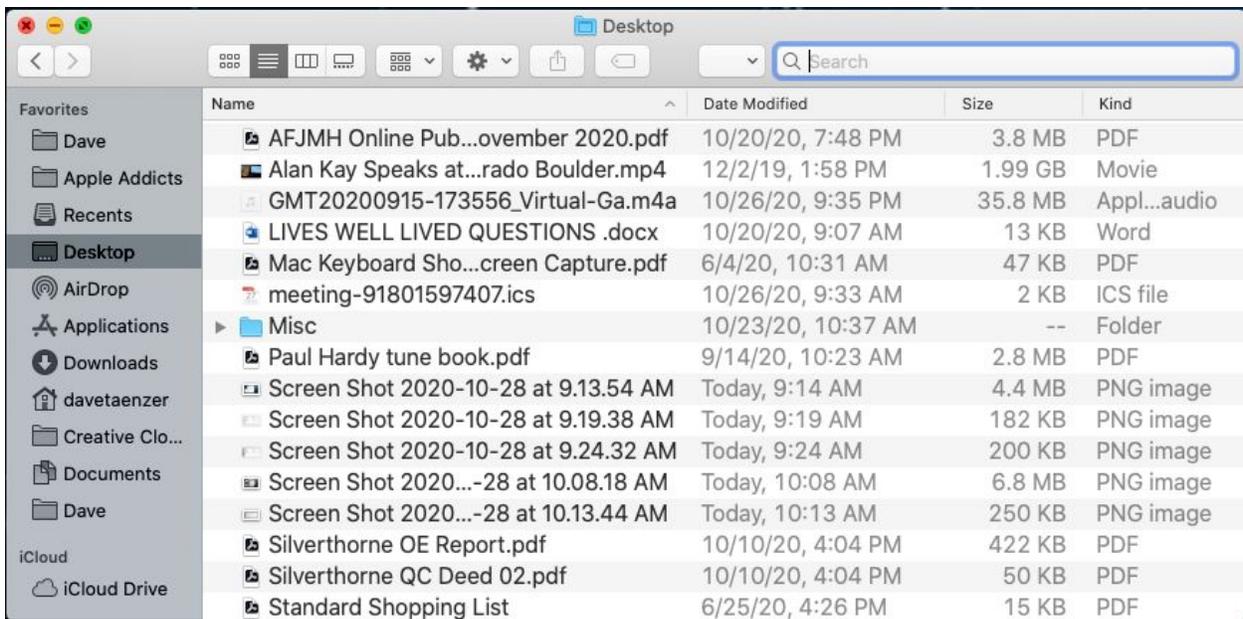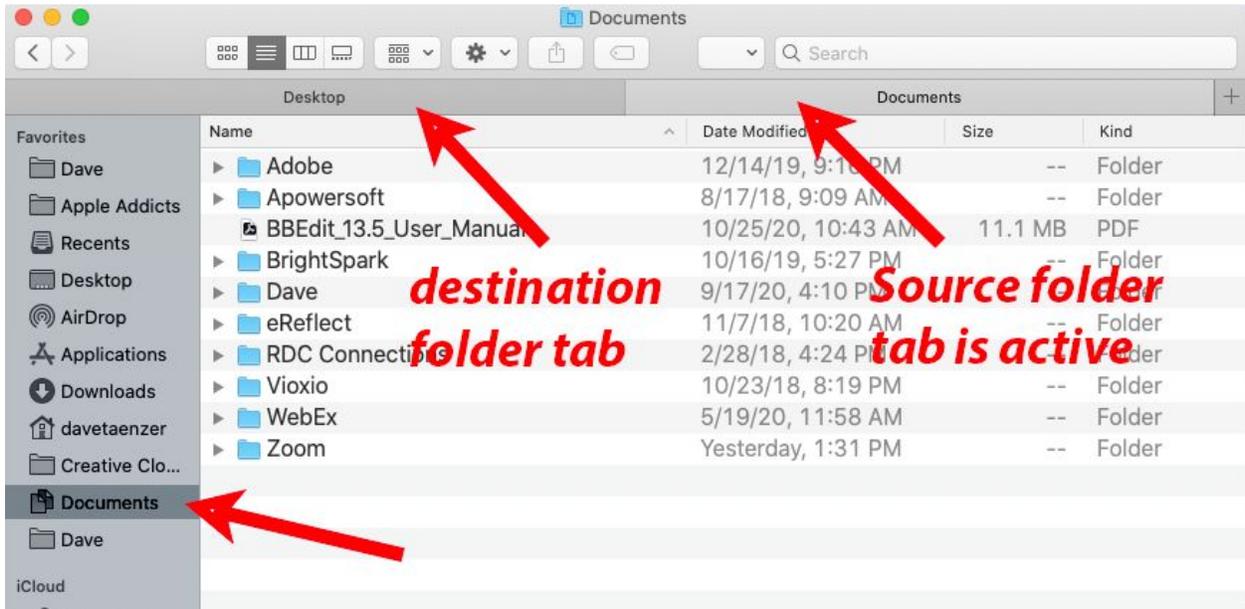
Then either type a T with the command key pressed down or choose the New Tab option on the file menu:
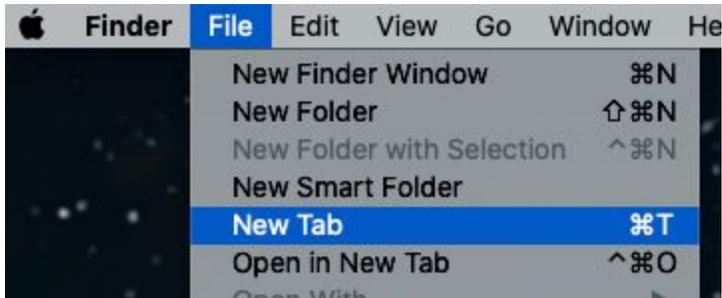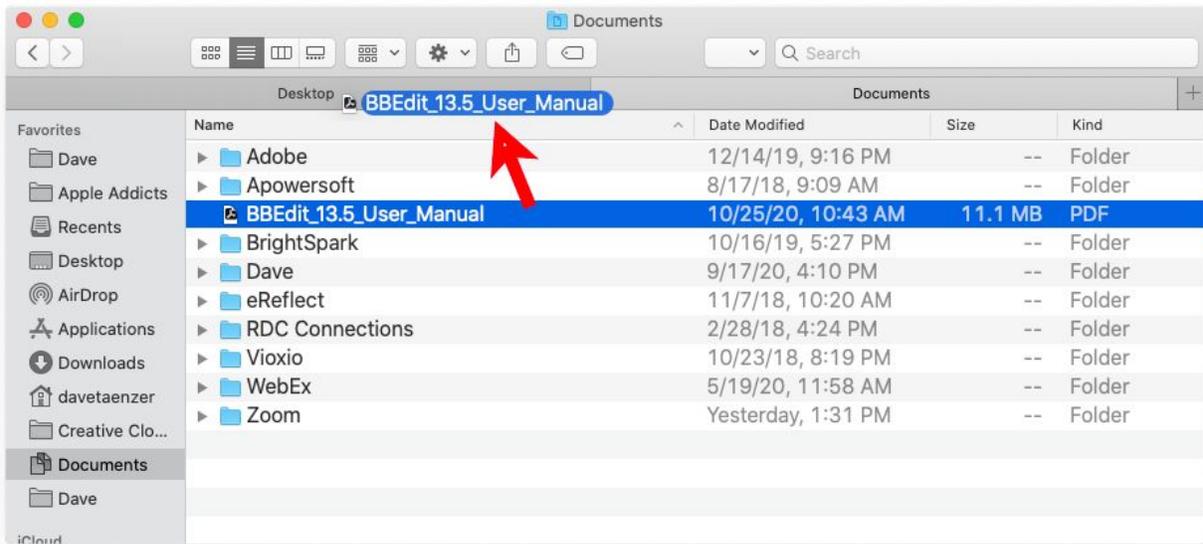


This opens a second tab on the right hand part of the tab bar:

You then navigate to the source folder (the desktop in this case):



You can then drag files from the source folder to the destination folder tab above them and let go of the mouse to move the file(s)
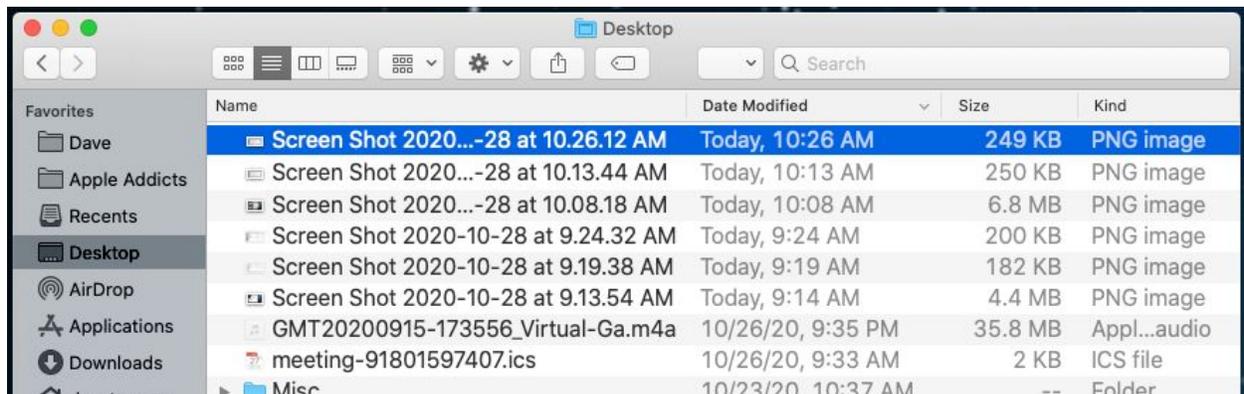


Some people find this technique easier than dragging files between windows.
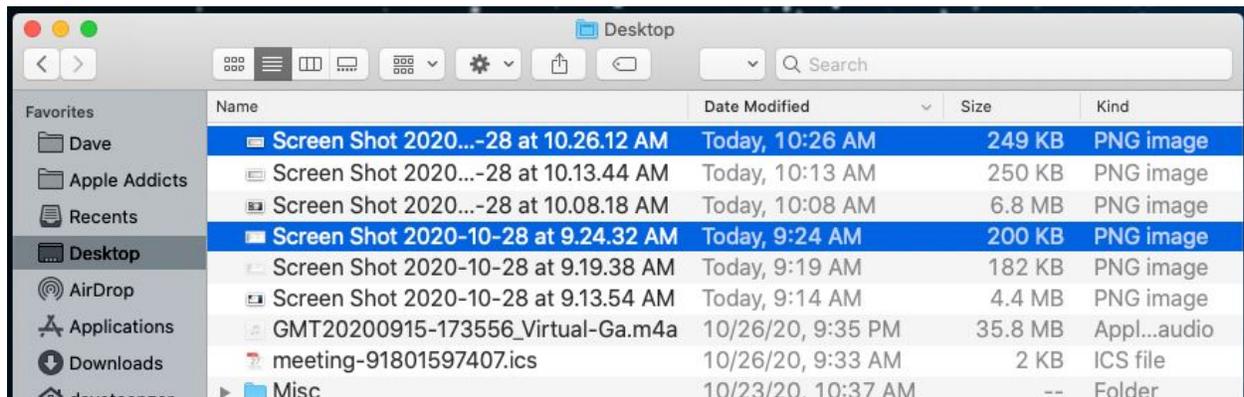
# Moving Multiple Files

You can select as many files as you want and move them together.

There are two ways of doing this.  You can start by clicking on one file to select it:
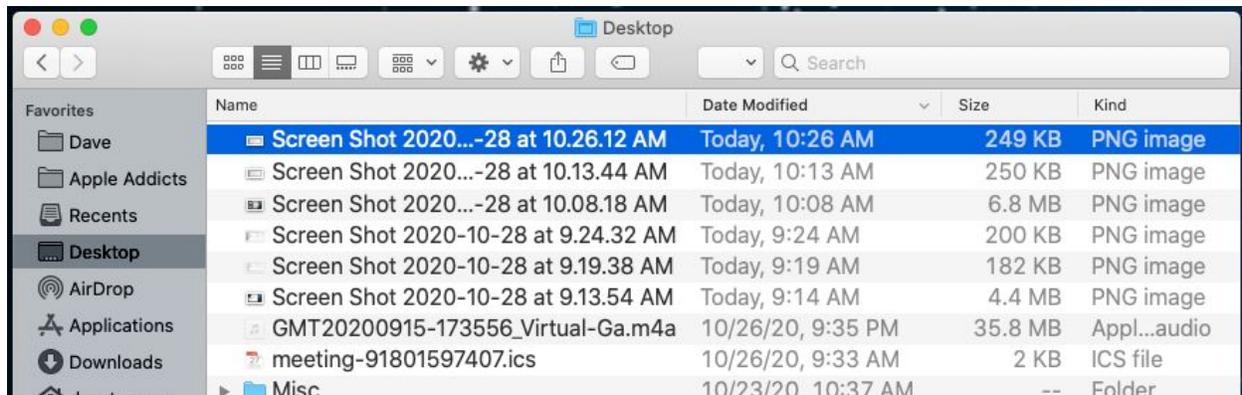


You can then hold down the Command key (the one to the left of the shift key) and click on other files:



You click on as many files as you like as long as you keep the Command key pressed down.  This technique is good for selecting files that are not next to each other.

If you have a set of files that are together in the file list, you can click on the first file:



Then move your cursor to the last file and hold down the shift key to select all the files from the selected file to the one you are over:
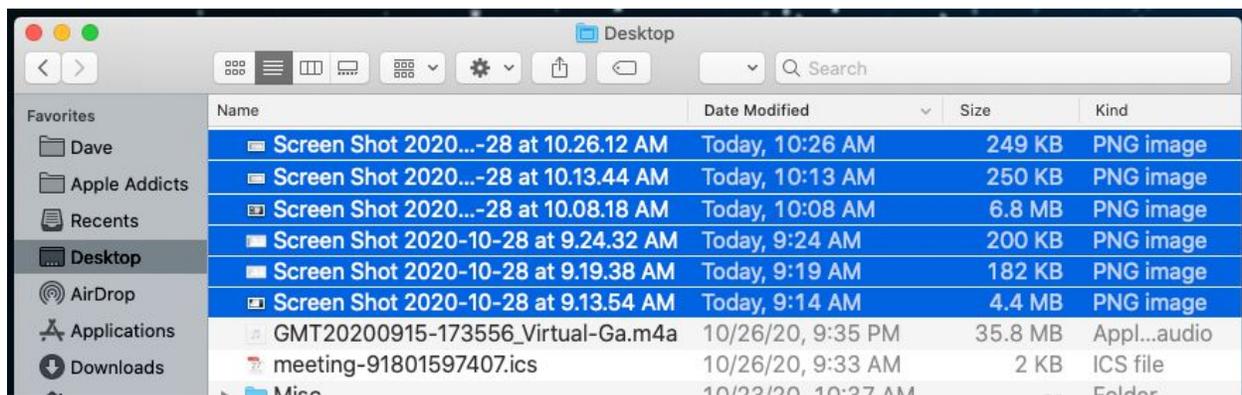


This is the fastest way to select a series of files that are listed together. You can also do this by selecting the last file and holding down the shift key and clicking on the first file.

Finally, if you want to make a new copy of a file or set of files in the destination folder, you can do this by holding down the Option key on the keyboard while you are dragging the file(s). This is not normally done because if you change one copy of the file it does not change the other one.