Basics of OS Upgrades

Everything you need to prepare for macOS Catalina and iOS 13

Apple OS upgrades are coming. Are you ready?

Exciting new versions of macOS (for Mac) and iOS (for iPhone) are heading to a device near you. Your job is simple. Get these features into the hands of users, all without disrupting workflows or slowing productivity.

As most organizations know, this can often be easier said than done, especially when factoring in the speed at which Apple users like to upgrade. Now for the good news. At Jamf, we've been doing this for more than 17 years, and are here to provide step-by-step guidance for successful Apple upgrades — regardless if it is your first, fifth or 17th OS season.

Why an Apple upgrade is different
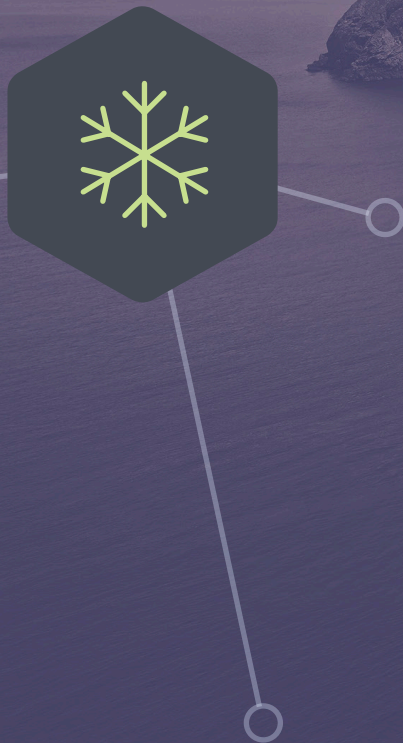
Contrary to other ecosystems, major new versions of Apple's operating systems are released annually. A combination of the simple upgrade path and $0 cost help drive industry-leading adoption rates for consumers.

This trend is further accelerated by Apple's vertical integration of hardware and software: any new Mac, iPad or iPhone will always ship with the latest OS version and can't be downgraded. The same cannot be said for Windows and Android, where hardware and software fragmentation is a major challenge for organizations, IT and users.

When devices are running old software, consistency, security and user experience are all compromised. And this is especially true when organizations attempt to support a variety of devices and OS platforms with a single management solution. Without the complications and cost of licensing, Apple's user-initiated upgrades are easy for end users to carry out autonomously. This is one of the reasons Apple's operating systems have the highest adoption rate of any ecosystem.

End users are so excited to access the new features; yet, you're responsible for maintaining security controls and an accurate systems inventory at all times.

This guide provides you with a thorough understanding of the new operating systems, and ways to carefully prepare for and implement an upgrade. You'll learn how to minimize disruptions and eliminate unplanned downtime, gaining the knowledge to deliver organizational value and walk users through their macOS Catalina and iOS 13 upgrades.
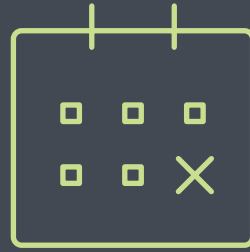
The business value of day-zero upgrades

There are four key reasons organizations should embrace upgrades and empower end users to update their device(s) the day new operating systems are released:

1 Reduce security vulnerabilities

Old versions of software are always less secure. It's in your best interest to empower and encourage users to upgrade to the latest operating systems. This will help ensure your organization doesn't fall prey to data breaches and system vulnerabilities, all because devices are out of date.

2 Keep end users happy

Apple trains users to keep their software up to date. In turn, Apple users expect to be able to successfully update their device(s) the day a new operating system becomes available. Day-zero upgrades ensure this expectation is met.

3 Keep users productive

The latest operating systems introduce new features that support greater efficiency and productivity. When day-zero upgrades are discouraged, users are unable to take advantage of helpful functionality, such as new restrictions, customized Automated MDM Enrollment, or Activation Lock for Mac.

4 Access new IT management features

Gain access to a wealth of new management features. Not only will you have access to new capabilities for Apple ecosystem management, but you can also customize and configure new end-user features based on the unique needs of your environment.

Join the beta party

STEP 1

The best defense is a good offense. Arm yourself with previews of upcoming releases from the Apple Beta Software Program to get an early look at how new OS versions and features will impact your organization.

Apple is regularly updating its operating systems, which means participating in the beta program provides months of testing ahead of an operating system release.

Why Beta?

1 The beta cycle for these operating systems typically occurs in multiple phases. Participating early and submitting feedback to Apple increases the likelihood that the features and issues that impact you most will be addressed.

2 Participating in the beta not only gives you early access to test new features and compatibility, but it also offers a deeper understanding of how the end-user experience will be impacted.

3 Lastly, in addition to new OS settings and features, application, infrastructure and management compatibility testing is critical for continuity with current software offerings in your environment. We recommend you run Apple's betas to test their deployed apps for issues. Reporting any issues to the associated vendors upon discovery will help ensure the apps work upon Apple's official release.

Conduct strategic testing

STEP 2

For best results, be sure to test your entire tech stack

1 Applications

Includes both web and non-web based applications. Prioritization is essential, esp-ecially in resources-strapped organizations. Take inventory of all applications used across your organization and rank them by critical business nature.

2 Management

Includes device deployment and management solutions (MDM, EMM, UEM, etc.). Jamf Now offers the ability to test new restrictions, management capabilities and features.

Upgrading to the new operating systems

In addition to the testing guidance above, macOS Catalina and iOS 13 have differing sets of new features and unique impact on your environment.

Below you will find important information on how to update your operating systems in Jamf Now.

Upgrading to macOS Catalina and iOS 13

In Jamf Now, the Admin will send an MDM command to Macs enrolled in Apple Business Manager or Apple School Manager. Jamf Now allows OS updates for a single device, a group of devices, or every eligible device in an ecosystem. Device updates will begin immediately when you click "Install Updates" and may take up to 15 minutes to complete depending on the number of devices, number of updates, and other processes an individual device might already have running.

STEP 3

Upgrades communications plan

A deep understanding of the new operating systems, careful planning and insight into the potential impact for end users ahead of an upgrade can minimize disruption, help desk calls and unhappy end users. Next, consider the following stakeholders and conversations ahead of your upgrade.

Steps to preparing end users

1 Not every end user is aware of the time it takes to upgrade a Mac. Inform users of the average upgrade time, and provide tips on the best time of day to upgrade.

2 Recommend that your end users back up their device(s) before they update. This applies to localized and iCloud backups.

3 Implement a policy to require end users to update within 30 days, or let them know you will update for them. When it comes to upgrades, err on the side of over communication. Give users plenty of warning and recommendations prior to OS upgrades. They'll thank you for it (or if all goes well, they'll say nothing.)

STEP 4

Go forth and conquer

Apple's upcoming operating systems, macOS Catalina and iOS 13 bring innovative capabilities to all organizations.

A streamlined approach to Apple upgrades ensures security measures are met, accurate system inventory is maintained and downtime is eliminated. A purpose-built Apple ecosystem management solution equips you with the tools you need to take advantage of the latest Apple OSs without negatively impacting end users or putting abundant strain on IT personnel.

Jamf is committed to helping organizations succeed with Apple. We've offered day-zero support for all Apple releases for more than a decade, ensuring organizations can take advantage of new Apple technology as it becomes available.

Let Us Prove It