

- » Identifying the important parts of your Neo
- » Getting set up
- » Handling your MacBook with care
- » Buying additional stuff you might need

Chapter 1

Hey, It Really Does Have Everything I Need

Most action films have one scene in common: I call it “gearing up,” because the good guys strap on their equipment in preparation for battle. The process usually takes a minute or so all told, with whiplash camera work and stirring martial music in the background.

Well, fellow Mac road warrior, it takes only *two seconds* and *one move* — closing the lid — for you to gear up. Your Neo is a self-contained world, providing virtually all the essentials you’ll find on a desktop Mac. This is indeed another “decade of the laptop,” meshing nicely with your smartphone and that wireless connection at your local coffee shop. Believe me, you’ve selected the right companion for the open road.

Unlike Apple’s other designs, your Neo’s exterior looks much like a PC laptop. But your MacBook holds several pleasant surprises that no PC laptop can offer — and you’ll save pounds and inches from your chassis!

In this chapter, I introduce you to the hardware and all the major parts of the machine. You even find out how to unpack and connect your Neo. And as frosting on the cake, I preview the software of which Apple is so proud, as well as the accessories you should buy now rather than later.

Welcome to your MacBook Neo, good reader. Gear up!

An Overview of Your Mac Laptop

Sure, your MacBook Neo may be about half an inch thin, but a lot of superb design lives inside. You encounter the same parts you'd find in a desktop machine. In the following sections, I discuss those important parts — both the stuff you can see and the stuff that's shoehorned within.

The parts you probably recognize

Every laptop requires some of the same gizmos. Figure 1-1 helps you track them down. Of course, as you'd expect, a computer has a body of sorts in which all the innards and brains are stored, a display screen, a keyboard, a trackpad or other pointing device, and ports for powering and exchanging data with outside toys.

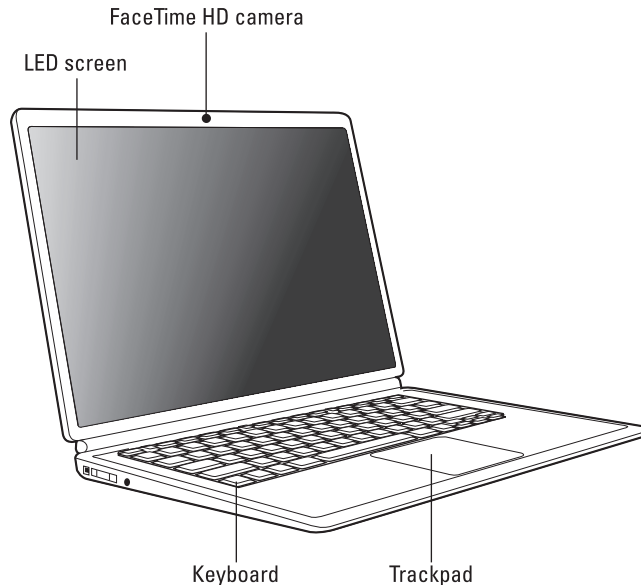


FIGURE 1-1:
The charismatic
form of a typical
Mac laptop.

That magnificent screen

What a view you have! The Neo features a 13-inch LED display. Apple's laptop screens offer a *widescreen* aspect ratio (the screen is considerably wider than it is tall), which augurs well for those who enjoy watching movies.

The keyboard and trackpad

Unlike the external input devices on a standard desktop computer, your Neo has a built-in keyboard and trackpad (which does the job of a mouse). The Neo keyboard is a particular favorite of mine, offering special keys for activating all sorts of features within macOS. The Neo features a great trackpad as well; it's a button-free design that allows you to click any area of the trackpad, as well as perform gestures to control all sorts of macOS functions! (More on gestures later, in Chapter 3.)



REMEMBER

The MacBook Neo doesn't have an internal optical drive. Many third-party manufacturers produce external optical drives for MacBooks that connect through your Neo's USB-C ports.

Food for your ears

A machine this nice had better have great sound, and the Neo doesn't disappoint, with built-in stereo speakers and two microphones. You can also use the built-in headphone jack to connect your Mac's audio to a pair of headphones or a more powerful external speaker system. (Of course, portable USB and Bluetooth speaker systems can provide better-quality digital audio as well.)

The power cable

The Neo uses a USB-C port and the included 20-watt power adapter for charging the battery. (Either port can be used for charging.)



REMEMBER

Many MacBook owners ask me whether they should disconnect the power after the battery is fully charged or leave it connected. I leave the cable connected. It won't cause any damage to your Neo, and you can continue to use your laptop while it's charging.

The power button

Ready for more convenience? Your MacBook Neo actually powers on whenever you open the lid! To turn the Neo off, you press and hold the Touch ID/Lock button on the upper-right corner of the keyboard.

If the lid is already open, you can also turn on your Neo by pressing the Touch ID/Lock button.

The FaceTime HD camera

The Neo features a built-in FaceTime HD camera, which allows you to chat with others in a videoconferencing environment by using the Messages and FaceTime

applications that come with Tahoe. You can even take photos with the camera, using the Photo Booth software that comes with your laptop, or set up a travelin' webcam.



TIP

Note that a green light appears in the Finder menu bar or at the upper right corner of the screen — handy information that could prevent visual embarrassment! (Some companies even offer plastic clips especially designed for covering the lens to guarantee privacy.)

The battery

Apple's current laptop computers don't include user-replaceable batteries. The battery is sealed inside the case and can be replaced only by an Apple technician. But you should get several years of trouble-free operation from your Neo's battery, especially if you maintain it properly (as I show you in Chapter 2).

The holes called ports

The next stop on your tour of Planet Neo is Port Central — those two stellar holes on the side of your laptop. Each port connects a USB-C cable or device, allowing you to easily add all sorts of functionality to your road warrior.

Short for *universal serial bus*, the familiar USB port is the jack-of-all-trades in today's world of computer add-ons. Most external devices you want to connect to your laptop (such as portable drives, scanners, and digital cameras) use a USB-C plug.



TIP

Luckily, you can also buy an adapter for your USB-C ports that allows you to send the video from your Neo to an external VGA, DVI, or HDMI monitor.



TIP

If you need a number of older ports for different legacy hardware (such as the much larger USB-A ports), consider buying a laptop dock that provides multiple ports for your Neo through a single USB-C 3.0 connection. I discuss the laptop dock device in more detail at the end of this chapter.

Don't forget the parts you can't see

When you bought your new digital pride and joy, you probably noticed a number of subtle differences between the MacBook Neo and the pricier MacBook Air and Pro models. I call these differences the *Important Hidden Stuff* (or IHS, if you're addicted to acronyms). They're just as important as the parts and ports you can see.

Internal devices are as follows:

- » **CPU:** The Mac Neo features the Apple A18 Pro CPU, while other MacBooks use the Apple M5 line of CPUs.
- » **Storage:** Today's MacBook models are equipped with solid-state drives that use memory chips. The drive capacities are different across the entire MacBook product line.

You'll find no moving parts in a solid-state drive, and it offers better performance than an "antique" magnetic hard drive. The solid-state drive uses RAM chips rather than magnetic platters to hold your data.

Wireless communications devices include the following:

- » **Wireless Ethernet:** "Look, Ma, no wires!" As mentioned earlier, you can connect your laptop to an existing wireless Ethernet network. With wireless connectivity, you can share documents with another computer in another room, share a single high-speed internet connection between computers, or enjoy wireless printing. Truly *sassy*!

Rest assured, you can use your Neo with any standard 802.11b/g/n/ac/ax wireless network. And yes, PCs and Macs can intermingle on the same wireless network without a hitch. (Scandalous, ain't it?)

- » **Bluetooth:** Although strangely named, Bluetooth is another form of wireless connectivity. This time, however, the standard was designed for accessories such as your keyboard and mouse and devices like wireless headphones and your smartphone. (The Neo includes version 6 Bluetooth hardware.)



TIP

Here's the hidden display device:

- » **Video card:** None necessary! That's because all Apple CPUs handle graphics all by themselves, with no additional hardware. Your MacBook Neo is fine for home and business applications, as well as light gaming.

Whoa! Where's my familiar USB port?

It is indeed a bit disconcerting to encounter *anything* electronic these days that doesn't sport a USB 3.0 port, from a smart speaker in your kitchen to your printer in your office. However, don't be hesitant about the USB-C ports on your new Neo: They are versatile performers! Heck, you can do just about everything better and faster with your USB-C ports, including charging your MacBook, connecting an external monitor, joining a wired Ethernet network, or connecting a superfast external drive!

If you do need to connect to an older legacy port — a USB 3.0 device, wired Ethernet port, or a VGA or HDMI display — you will have to invest in the correct USB-C adapter. The entire lineup of Apple connection adapters is available from the Apple website, or you can easily order a third-party adapter online. And rest assured that more and more USB-C devices are on the way, so that external drive you buy in the future will likely use USB-C anyway! These adapters are required only for older technology.



REMEMBER

You can use any third-party USB-C DVD drive that's compatible with Apple's laptops and macOS Tahoe.

Location, Location, Location!

If you choose the wrong spot to park your new Neo, I *guarantee* you'll regret it. Some domiciles and office cubicles don't offer a choice. You have one desk at work, for example, and nobody will hand over another one. But if you can select a home for your MacBook, consider the important placement points in this section:

- » **Keep things cool.** Your Neo is silent, but that super-fast A18 Pro processor generates heat. Make sure that the location you choose is far from heating vents and shielded from direct sunlight. I also recommend a laptop cooling pad, which elevates the base of your laptop to allow air to circulate underneath.
- » **Outlets are key!** Your Neo needs at least one nearby outlet and perhaps as many as two:
 - **A standard AC outlet** (using a current adapter if you're traveling abroad, if necessary)
 - **A nearby Ethernet jack** (if you use a wired Ethernet network)



TIP

- If you prefer to send your data over the airwaves, consider wireless networking for your Mac. I discuss everything you need to know in Chapter 10.
- » **Don't forget the lighting.** Let me act as your mom. (I know that's *quite* a stretch, but bear with me.) She'd say, "You can't possibly expect to work without decent lighting! You'll go blind!" She's right, you know. You need a desk lamp or floor lamp at minimum if you need to refer to books or documents often in your work. And you do want to look your best during FaceTime calls, right?
 - » **Plan to expand.** If your Neo hangs out on a desk, allow an additional foot of space on each side. That way, you have room for external peripherals, more powerful speakers, and an external keyboard and mouse.



TIP

If you want to keep an external keyboard handy, consider using a laptop shelf. These Plexiglas or metal stands elevate your laptop several inches above the desk, putting the screen in a better ergonomic position and allowing you to park your keyboard and external mouse below.

Unpacking and Connecting Your MacBook Neo

You'll love the following sections. They're short and sweet because parking a laptop on your desktop is a piece of cake. (Sorry about the cliché overload, but this really *is* easy.)

Unpacking for the road warrior

Follow these guidelines when unpacking your system:



TIP

- » **Check for damage.** I've never had a box arrive from Apple with shipping damage, but I've heard horror stories from others (who claim that King Kong must have been working for That Shipping Company).

Check all sides of the box before you open it. If you find significant damage, take a photograph (just in case).

- » **Search for all the parts.** When you're removing those chunks o' foam, make certain that you've checked all sides of each foam block for parts snuggled therein or taped for shipment.

- » **Keep all packing materials.** Do *not* put the box and packing materials in the trash. Keep the box and all packing materials for at least a year, until the standard Apple warranty runs out. If you have to ship your Neo to an Apple service center, the box and the original packing are the only way for your machine to fly.

And now, a dramatic Mark's Maxim about cardboard containers:



MARK'S
MAXIM

Smart computer owners keep their boxes far longer than a year. If you sell your Neo or move across the country, for example, you'll want that box. Trust me on this one.

- » **Store the invoice for safekeeping.** Your invoice is a valuable piece of paper.



REMEMBER

Save your original invoice in a plastic bag, along with your computer's documentation. Keep the bag on a shelf or stored safely in your desk, and enjoy a little peace of mind.

- » **Read the manual.** "Hey, wait a minute, Mark. Why do I have to read the manual from Apple along with this tome?" Good question, and here's the answer: The documentation from Apple for the latest version of the Neo may contain new and updated instructions that override what I tell you here. (Say, "*Never* cut the red wire. Cut the blue wire instead." Or something to that effect.) Besides, Apple manuals are rarely thicker than a restaurant menu.

Connecting Cables 101

Your MacBook makes all its connections simple, but your computer depends on you to get the outside wires and thingamabobs where they go.

The absolutely essential connection

After your new Neo is resting comfortably in its assigned spot (I assume that's a desktop or a lap), you need to make just one required connection: the power cable. First, plug the cable into the corresponding USB-C port on the MacBook; and then plug 'er into that handy AC outlet. After your battery is completely charged, you can go mobile at a moment's notice.

Adding the internet to the mix

If you have high-speed wired internet service, or if you're in an office or school with a wired network, you can probably connect by using an Ethernet adapter with your USB-C port. You make two connections:

1. **Plug one end of the Ethernet cable into the USB-C-to-Ethernet adapter on your Neo (or a handy laptop dock).**
2. **Plug the other end of the Ethernet cable into the Ethernet port from your network.**

Your network port is probably one of the following: an Ethernet wall jack, an Ethernet hub or switch, or a cable, fiber, or DSL internet router (or sharing device).



TIP

Will you be joining a wireless network? If so, you can find the information you need about configuring Tahoe for wireless networking in Chapter 10.

Great — a Lecture about Handling My Neo

Proper handling of your Neo is important, so take a moment to read the Rules of Proper Laptop Deportment. Okay, perhaps I'm lecturing a bit, but a little common sense goes a **long** way when you're handling *any* computer equipment, and your MacBook is no different. (Scolding mode off.)

Keep these rules in mind while opening and carrying your Neo:

- » **The cover is your friend.** Open your laptop's lid slowly, without jerking or bending it.
- » **Close it before you move it.** By closing your laptop, you put your macOS operating system into sleep mode. The laptop is still on; it will spring back to life when you open the lid.
- » **Don't stack stuff on your laptop.** You'd be surprised how many horror stories I've heard about laptop owners piling a stack of books or other heavy stuff on their computers. Remember that LED display? Made of glass?
- » **Be nice to your keyboard.** Don't press those keys too hard! Use the same amount of pressure you use on a desktop computer's keyboard. (And use an external keyboard whenever possible.)
- » **Keep food and drinks far away.** Care to turn your MacBook into an expensive doorstop? Go ahead and park your soda next to it. (Oh, and crumbs are perfect if you're interested in buying replacement keyboards.)

An Overview of Mac Software Goodness

The following sections answer the most common novice computer question: "What the heck will I *do* with this thing?" You find additional details and exciting factoids about the software you get for free, software you'll want to buy, and stuff you can do on the internet.

What comes with my Neo?

Currently, Apple laptops ship with the following major software applications installed and ready to use:

- » **macOS Tahoe:** Naturally, your MacBook comes preloaded with Tahoe.

» **Apple's digital lifestyle suite:** You know you want these applications! They turn your Mac into a digital hub for practically all kinds of high-tech devices, including camcorders, digital cameras, tablets, portable music players, and smartphones.

Chapters 12 and 13 focus on the major applications that will appeal to MacBook owners: Music, TV and Photos.

» **Apple's digital productivity suite:** Owners of new MacBooks can download all three of Apple's great productivity applications — Pages, Numbers, and Keynote — for free in the App Store. Pages is a desktop publishing jewel, Numbers is a great spreadsheet tool, and Keynote is a superb slideshow/presentation application. Chapters 14 through 16 are your guides to the basic functions of all three applications. 'Nuff said.



REMEMBER

The installed software on your Neo may change as new programs become available.

Connecting to the internet from your lap

What's a modern laptop without the internet? Apple gives you great tools to take full advantage of every road sign and off ramp on the Information Superhighway right out of the box:

» **Web surfing:** I use Apple's Safari web browser every day. It's fast and well designed, with features such as tabbed browsing and a customizable Start page.

If *tabbed browsing* sounds like ancient Aztec to you, don't worry. Chapter 7 is devoted to Safari.

» **Instant messaging and video chat:** *Messages* lets you use your Neo to chat with others around the world for free on the internet. You can also use the FaceTime application to video-chat with folks who have an iPhone or iPad, as well as another Mac. Chapter 11 introduces you to both Messages and FaceTime.

Always wear a shirt when videoconferencing.

» **Email:** Soldier, Apple has you covered. The Apple Mail application is a full-featured email system complete with defenses against the torrent of junk mail awaiting you. Send pictures and attached files to everyone on the planet, and look doggone good doing it.



REMEMBER

Applications that rock

Dozens of small applications are also supplied with macOS Tahoe. I mention many of them in later chapters, but here are three good examples to whet your appetite:

- » **Calendar:** Regulate your days throughout the year with this fully featured calendar application. (And yes, you can share your calendar events with others.)
- » **Contacts:** Throw away that well-thumbed collection of fading addresses on paper. Use the Tahoe Contacts application to store, search, and recall just about any piece of information on your friends, family, and acquaintances.
- » **Chess:** This isn't the chessboard your dad used! Play the game of kings against a tough (and configurable) opponent — your Neo — on a beautiful 3D board. Heck, your Mac even narrates the game by speaking the moves!



TIP

You can use the data you store in your Contacts in other Apple applications included with Tahoe, such as Apple Mail and Messages.

Other Stuff That Nearly Everyone Wants

No man is an island, and no computer is either. I always recommend the same set of stuff for new Windows and Mac laptop owners. These extras help keep your new MacBook clean and healthy (and some make sure *you're* happy as well):

- » **A laptop sleeve or case:** Most laptop owners eschew the traditional bulky laptop bag because a bag broadcasts the fact that you're carrying a valuable laptop (and adds yet another item to carry on your trip). On the other hand, if you pack your MacBook in a briefcase, book bag, or backpack, you need to provide protection from bumps and scratches. (Make sure that any sleeve or case you buy provides padding around the entire computer, not just on the top surface.) That's where a laptop sleeve or thin case comes in.
- » **An external camera:** Your Neo has a built-in FaceTime camera, but many folks prefer a standalone external camera that they can pan, tilt, and point where they like (especially moviemakers or podcasters who need high-resolution video clips of whatever's happening around them). With the Continuity Camera feature in macOS, you can even use your iPhone as an external camera! (See Chapter 11 for more details on Continuity Camera.)



» **Surge suppressor:** Even an all-in-one computer like your laptop can fall prey to a power surge. I recommend using one of these:

- **A basic surge suppressor** with a fuse can help protect your MacBook from an overload.
- **A UPS (uninterruptible power supply)** costs a little more but does a better job of filtering your AC line voltage to prevent brownouts or line interference from reaching your computer.

Your Neo's battery immediately kicks in if you experience a blackout, of course, so a UPS is less important for your MacBook. But a UPS can also provide backup power for external devices that *don't* have a battery.

» **A laptop docking station:** Will your MacBook Neo often do double duty as both a desktop computer *and* a mobile powerhouse? If so, a laptop docking station will prevent you from disconnecting USB-C cables each time you hit the road. In essence, you need to unplug only one connection between your Neo and the docking station. *All* your external desktop peripherals — monitor, backup drive, USB trackball, and such — remain blissfully in place. When your Neo returns to the desktop, you simply reconnect that one USB-C cable, and you're back in business. Most docking stations also sport a wired Ethernet port, an HDMI port and at least one or two USB-A ports, so you won't need to use adapters to make these connections.

» **Screen wipes:** Invest in a box of premoistened screen wipes to keep your screen pristine. Your MacBook's screen can pick up dirt, fingerprints, and other unmentionables faster than you think.

» **Cables:** Depending on the external devices and wired network connectivity you'll be using, these are:

- **A standard Ethernet cable** (for wired networks or high-speed internet)
- **USB-C cables and adapters** for devices you already have

» **Wrist rest:** You may have many reasons to buy a new Mac Neo, but I know that a bad case of carpal tunnel syndrome isn't one of them. Take care of your wrists by carrying a keyboard wrist rest in your laptop bag or backpack.