



WWDC25

26

UNIVERSAL DESIGN



Apple just held WWDC25, their annual developer conference where we get to see what software updates are coming to their project range in the next year. Sometimes they also drop a new product, but this was not the case this time. This was all about the software, and, although there has been a lot of debate around Apple falling behind with regards to AI - Siri was only mentioned twice in the entire event. I think it's actually quite refreshing for a show to not be just about AI.

Despite it being the year 2025, the number 26 is of utmost importance, as Apple are unifying all operating systems across the project range. No macOS 15, iOS18, watchOS 11. All Apple apps will all be named 26: iOS 26, iPadOS26, watchOS 26, macOS 26 Tahoe etc, and for the first time (in quite a while) the design is going to tally across the entire product range. The main element that brings everything together is a material Apple are calling 'Liquid Glass'. Elements across the entire interface will be rendered in this glass like material - buttons, switches, sliders, text and media controls, as well as larger elements, like tab bars and side bars. The Liquid Glass elements are translucent and refract surrounding content, whilst also dynamically changing to bring greater focus on content, reacting to movement and including specular highlights to give it that real glass look. The redesign is complete, extending to the Lock Screen, Home Screen, notifications, Control

Centre, Dock and much more.

Experiences within Apple's apps have also been updated with Liquid Glass. Controls now act as a new functional layer sitting above apps and dynamically morph as users require more functions. Tabs and sidebars shrink and move out of the way, allowing the content to be the focus, whilst being instantly accessible, if required. Scrolling back up brings tabs into view. Apps that see these updates include Camera, Photos, FaceTime, Safari, Apple Music, Apple News, and Apple Podcasts.

On Home screen and desktop, app icons and widgets are also crafted from Liquid Glass and allow for a range of personalisation options. Whereas old icons were designed for rectangular screens, the new icons are rounded fitting with more of the modern displays and app windows. In macOS 26 Tahoe, users will be able to edit app and widget icons with a clear look, as well as a range of light and dark tint options.

Keen to keep the design consistent, Apple are also providing third party developers with the tools they need to make their apps fit with the new design language across the Apple ecosystem. New API's within SwiftUI, UIKit and AppKit will be available to aid developers to create new app icons, and controls.

The new versions of the apps will roll out later this year, but let's take a deeper look at each of the new operating systems.



GAME

ON



Apple have been trying to improve gaming for many years now, with the introduction of Apple Arcade many years back, and performance-wise, Apple's M chips have been improving with each generation, and further improvements in Metal (more on that later), this year might be Apple's best yet for gaming. A much healthier roster of games is on the way and they also unveiled a new 'Games' app.

The 'Games' app brings together players' game libraries from across platforms, whether that be iPhone, iPad or macOS. Apple Arcade has been added to the Games app, as well as adding a new social layer and challenges so players can compete with their friends, even in single player games. New games will be recommended based on what you have played or friends have previously played, or explore editorial collections that recommend the latest. Apple Arcade subscribers will see curated collections.

Finally, developers will gain new tools to help keep their playerbases in the loop with updates or live events.

Liquid Glass is prevalent throughout macOS 26 Tahoe, with the menu bar now being translucent, making the desktop feel a little more expansive than it was previously. The menu bar, along with Control Centre, is also more customisable than ever before, with more options for what controls can be added, as well as the layout. Users will now be able to add colours to their folders, as well as a symbol or emoji to give their folders more identity.

Continuity has been expanded with the new 'Phone' app and Live Activities. The Phone app allows users to route calls and access Recents, Contacts and Voicemails, as well as more recent features like Call Screening and Hold Assist. Live Activities running on a nearby iPhone will appear in the menu bar of macOS, like an upcoming Uber or the score of a football match, and clicking on a Live Activity opens the app in iPhone Mirroring.

Spotlight sees it's biggest update yet. Search results now include files, folders, apps, messages and more, and it will even go as far as looking through documents on third party cloud drives. Not only is Spotlight better at searching, but users will be able to take action from it. Send an email; create a note; or play a podcast. All and more are possible without having to switch apps. Users can even carry out shortcuts and action in their favourite apps from Spotlight, and it will learn user's routines across the system.

macOS Tahoe 26 launches later this year with these features and many more!

TAHOE





WatchOS 26 gives Apple Watch a fresh new

look,. Apple Intelligence comes to Fitness with a new 'Workout Buddy', a more proactive Smart Stack and a more convenient way to deal with notifications.

Workout Buddy takes a user's workout data and fitness history (taking cues from heart rate data, pace, distance, Activity Rings, milestones and more) and provides motivational insights as you workout. An example provided by Apple speaks to a run where Workout Buddy reminds the user of their progress for the week against their activity goals: "Way to get out for your run this Wednesday morning. You're 18 minutes away from closing your Exercise ring. So far this week, you've run 6 kilometres. You're going to add to that today." At the end of a workout, it recaps stats and congratulates achievements. Workout Buddy requires a pair of bluetooth headphones, and an Apple Intelligence capable iPhone nearby.

Smart Stacks feature improved prediction algorithms by incorporating data sets like routine, sensor data, and contextual data. This equates to more useful hints and actionable suggestions that appear on the display as a handy prompt. Dismissing notifications has been something Apple have tried to get right on Apple Watch since launch, but they may have finally cracked it. A simple flick of the wrist is all that will be required to dismiss notifications, calls, silence timers or alarms and more!

watchOS 26 is launching later this year.

Apple's most exciting announcement (at least for me) was the changes coming to iPadOS 26. Of course, Liquid Glass is a large part of it's update, but it's the changes that bring it closer to macOS that are the most welcome, especially those around multi-tasking, and working with files, video and audio.

iPadOS features a proper windowing system now, complete with controls for closing, minimising and maximising that any macOS user will be familiar with. Users can place windows anywhere they want, with tiling that's been designed specifically for iPad. Previously resized apps open back up in the same size and position they were in previously, and, with Exposé, users can quickly spread out and easily switch between apps with ease. It also works great

with Stage Manager and those using external displays.

Enhancing the experience further, there is also a new Mac like menu bar that is available with a quick swipe down from the top of the display, or moving the new cursor to the top. The menu bar works similarly to how it does on a Mac and provides controls specific to that app. There is also dedicated access to files on iPad, perhaps the most welcome change of all. This, combined with an enhanced and more powerful files app, gets iPad closer to a real computer than it's ever been before. An updated list view provides a better view of files and folders, as well details and folders being more customisable, with custom colours, icons and emojis that sync across devices, and for quicker access, users will be able to drag folders to the Dock.

The Preview app is also coming

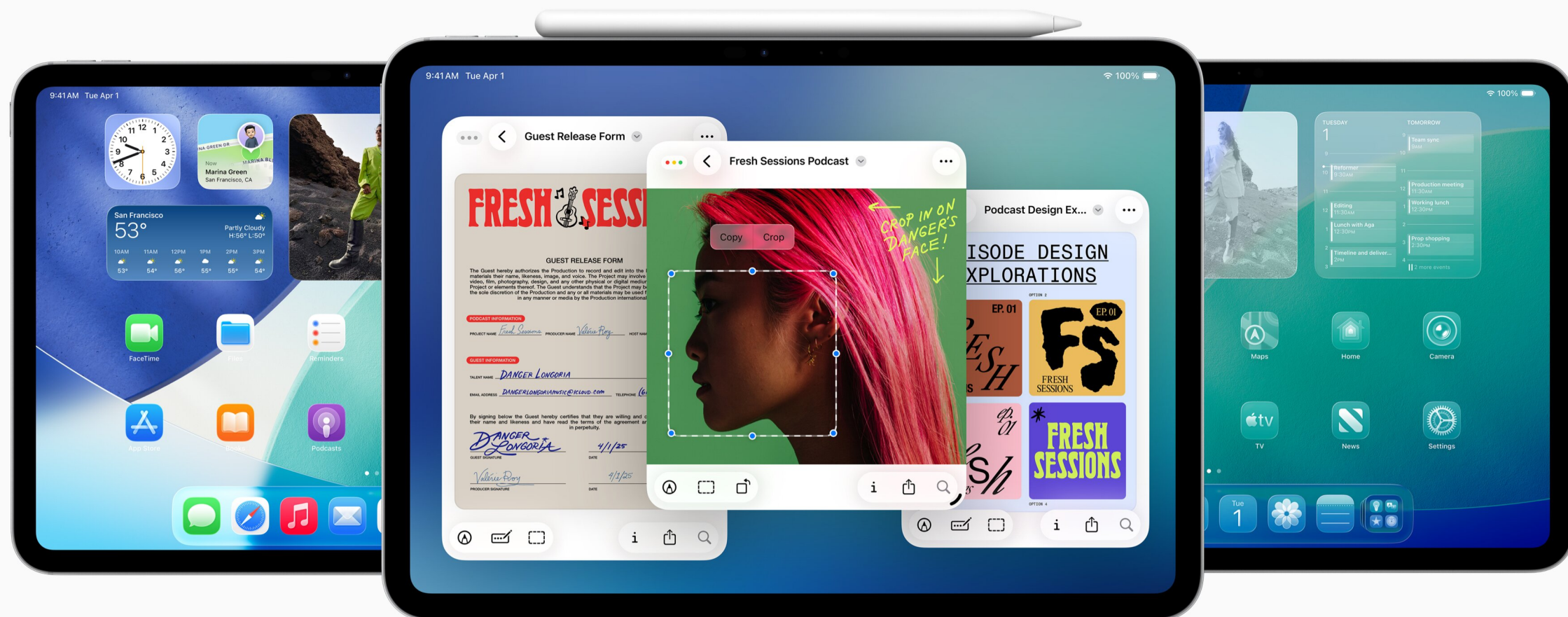
to iPadOS, allowing users to view, edit and markup PDFs and images, or draw a quick sketch with Apple Pencil or their finger.

Intensive Background Tasks, like rendering a video in Final Cut, will appear as Live Activities in iPadOS so users can see what's going on as they do other things, and Apple is providing an updated Background Tasks API to developers so they can incorporate it into their own apps.

New audio features will enable users to take greater control over their inputs, enabling a choice of microphones for each app, and with voice isolation, voices remain clear, blocking background noise.

These are just some of the updates coming to iPadOS 26 later this year, and it's probably the biggest update iPadOS has ever had!

iPAD OS26



ios26



iOS 26 introduces a broader and more refined suite of features, focusing on intelligence, seamless connectivity, and daily convenience.

Apple Intelligence receives a major upgrade that enhance user interaction. Live Translation supports real-time translation of both text and audio in key communication apps including Messages, FaceTime, and Phone. With everything processed directly on-device, your private conversations stay secure. Visual Intelligence deepens contextual understanding of what's on your screen. Users can now ask ChatGPT about any content they're viewing—from documents to images—search for similar visuals or products using integrated platforms like Google or Etsy, and quickly add recognised events to their calendar without switching apps. Apple Intelligence also enhances e-commerce interactions by scanning messages and emails for order-related information. It extracts shipping updates, delivery details, and tracking numbers from both Apple Pay and non-Apple Pay purchases, summarising them in a single, easy-to-access view.

The Phone app has been redesigned with Favourites, Recents, and Voicemails now live in a single, simplified tab for quicker access. Call Screening adds an extra layer of protection by showing context about incoming callers, while Hold Assist monitors calls placed on hold and alerts you the moment an agent joins the line.

The Messages app gains more intelligent organisation and user customisation options. Messages from unknown senders are sorted into a dedicated folder, making it easier to manage spam or

unknown contacts. Users can personalise their conversations with custom backgrounds, and Apple Intelligence can suggest creating a poll when group discussions call for it.

Group chats now show typing indicators, giving real-time feedback about who's composing a message. Meanwhile, Apple Cash is now better integrated, letting users send, request, or receive payments directly within chats. (Note: regional availability for Apple Cash is still being expanded.)

Apple Music becomes more immersive with Lyric Translation, allowing listeners to understand lyrics in other languages. Lyrics Pronunciation, helping users sing along accurately, even with unfamiliar songs. AutoMix, an AI-powered feature that mixes tracks together with smooth transitions using beat matching and time stretching.

Apple Maps introduces a new ****Visited Places**** feature, giving users a visual log of recently visited restaurants, shops, and landmarks. This makes it easier to revisit favourite spots or discover new ones. Apple Intelligence also boosts navigation, providing alternate routes during commutes when traffic disruptions are detected.

Apple Wallet is more versatile: Apple Pay Instalments now allow users to divide in-store payments into smaller, manageable parts. Boarding Passes integrate with Live Activities, providing real-time updates on flight times, gates, and delays. Enhanced airport navigation via Maps integration makes traveling more seamless, offering walking directions within terminals.

All this and more comes to iPhone later this year!