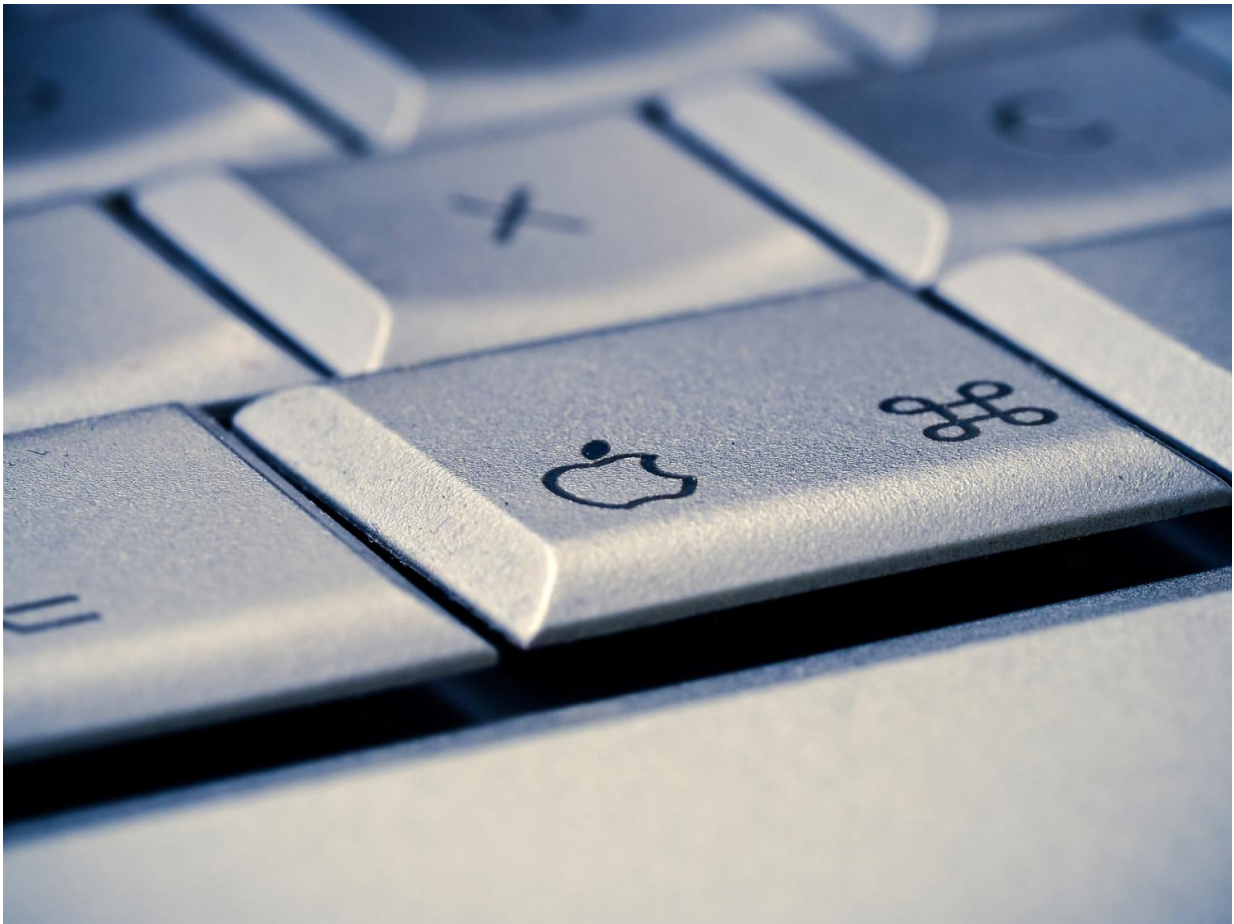


# Apple Beta program lets anyone install early versions of Mac OS, iOS

July 14 2017, by Jim Rossman, The Dallas Morning News

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Some of us are just destined to be explorers.

When new software comes out, especially operating systems, there are people who will install it as soon as they can and those who will wait for the explorers to find all the bugs.

Being in the IT business, it's always been my job to be the explorer. When Apple releases the newest version of the Mac OS or iOS, I install it as soon as I can and do some testing because I know there are a few hundred people at work who will be asking me whether it's OK to upgrade their computers (both at work and at home) and iPhones.

Apple has taken to announcing its new operating systems at its World Wide Developer Conference held each year in June.

It shows off the latest and greatest features and then tells people that they will be available in a few months - unless you want to be an explorer and install the early "work in progress" version, called the beta.

Traditionally, beta access was very controlled - limited to the developers and a small group of beta testers.

A few years ago, Apple decided to let the public in on [beta testing](#) to get a better handle on bugs and to get a larger base of beta users who are just itching for [new features](#). These users are willing to take the time to do some testing and bug reporting.

So how can you get in on the fun?

First, you need to be willing to take some risk.

Beta testing involves trying out software that's still buggy. It will crash while you're using it. Some of your programs will not run on the new version of OS.

You have to be OK with things not being stable for a few months. Also, Apple releases updated beta versions every few weeks that you'll want to keep up with, because those updated versions include fixes for bugs found in the previous [version](#).

I would not recommend putting beta software on your iPhone or Macintosh unless you do not rely on it for work or vital communications.

I have an iPad Air 2 at home that largely sits around unused, so it's the perfect candidate for loading the iOS beta so I can get an early peek at new features.

Likewise, if I wanted to put the beta on my Mac, I'd find an [external hard drive](#) and install the entire operating system on it so I could boot from that external drive when I wanted to try the beta and disconnect it when it's time to go to work.

Don't put your personal data at risk.

So how do you get Apple's beta software?

Go to [beta.apple.com](#) and sign up. If you want to install the beta of iOS on an iPhone or iPad, you'll want to go there from the browser on that device.

Of course you should have a recent backup of your device should things go really wrong for you.

You'll need to sign up for the beta testing program using your Apple ID and password.

You'll be prompted to install a small profile updater on your phone that talks to the software update servers to initiate the beta install.

I've been noodling around with iOS 11 on my iPad for a few days. I really like the new dock and filing system. You can finally save files into folders of your own choosing, either on the iPad or on a cloud storage service.

If you fancy yourself an explorer, the Apple Beta program can be a lot of fun.

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