Macs have a high price so it's understandable that many Mac users will want to put off replacing them for as long as they can. But just how long should you expect a Mac to last?

You may also be considering buying a secondhand Mac and wondering how old is too old? For example, is that 2013 iMac for £300 a good deal, or would you be better off spending a bit more on a newer model?

One factor to consider is the age at which most Macs start to experience issues, such as random shutdowns and degraded batteries that no longer hold their charge. Unfortunately, at one point repairing your Mac or MacBook will no longer be a viable option and you will need to look for a replacement.

Another issue with ageing Macs is that the software you need may not run on it. You may also find that Apple no longer supports the operating system software that runs on that Mac - which could leave you open to malware and security vulnerabilities.

In this article we will address the above, as well as give advice about which Macs are still supported by Apple, the Macs that can still be repaired if required (Apple stops providing the required parts after a number of years), and the Macs that Apple considers obsolete and vintage.

The mid 2012 model of the 13-inch MacBook Pro will be joining Apple's list of vintage products as of 31 January 2022. This is because Apple stopped selling the model in October 2016, which more than five years ago. This is the last Mac Apple sold with a
CD/DVD drive. This model will no longer be supported with software as of autumn of 2022 as it can only run macOS Catalina, which will be dropped when macOS 13 arrives.

**Apple has also added the 2015 MacBook to the vintage list**, so the list of unsupported products is growing.

**What about the move to Apple Silicon?**

Before we begin, Apple made a big announcement at WWDC in June 2020: it is transitioning all Macs from Intel processors to its own processors (which are based on ARM) and intends to complete the transition within two years. Many Macs have already transitioned to Apple’s M1 chips, while others are powered by the M1 Pro or M1 Max. The M2 is expected soon. Read: Which Mac processor? Apple processor comparison: M1 vs Intel.

This means that by the end of 2022 there should be no more Intel Macs sold by Apple. The good news is that these Apple processors have proven themselves to be very powerful and hopes are high that the transition will be a good one. Read: Should I buy an M1 Mac?

However there will be people who are concerned about the move from Intel. If you want to know if this means that buying a new Intel Mac now is a bad idea read this: Should I buy an Intel Mac?

The reason we mention this here is that it will potentially have two effects: people may keep hold of their Intel-powered Macs for longer because they don’t wish to update to Apple’s M-series chips. Alternatively, Apple may be more quick to drop support for Intel Macs.

**When do I need to replace my Mac?**

There are a few indicators that your Mac has reached the end of its useful life:

- Apple no longer supports the latest version of the software it runs (which could leave you vulnerable).
- The apps you need to use no longer run on it.
- The Mac struggles to perform the tasks you need it to - especially if you can’t update the RAM or any other components.
- Something breaks and is too expensive to fix or the parts aren’t available.
- The Mac is becoming unreliable. Unexpected shutdowns are becoming commonplace and you’ve tried everything to fix the problem to no avail.
Which Macs are supported by macOS updates?

Apple usually maintains the last three versions of the macOS with bug fixes and important security updates, ensuring that the latest version of Safari will run, and that Apple Services, such as iCloud, are fully supported.

This means that Apple will currently provide support for these versions of macOS: macOS Monterey (macOS 12), macOS Big Sur (macOS 11), and macOS Catalina (10.15).

If your Mac is running one of these versions of macOS you should be able to be confident that Apple will keep an eye on any security vulnerabilities and other problems with these operating systems.

However, if your Mac is running an older version of the operating system - macOS Mojave (10.14) or earlier - you may also find yourself out in the cold when it comes to essential updates to Apple's software.

If the software is too old you may also find that your other Apple products aren’t compatible with your Mac. For example, if you want to sync your iPad or iPhone with your Mac (rather than using iCloud) you need to run macOS and the required version of iTunes (as of Catalina iTunes is no more and the Finder looks after syncing). If you aren’t running iTunes 12.8 and at least Mac OS X 10.11.6 (El Capitan) your Mac will not recognise your iPhone or iPad.
It's not just a case of updating your Mac to the latest version of macOS though. Each time Apple updates the Mac operating system more Macs fall off the list of those supported.

If your Mac isn't in the list below it won't receive software updates:

**Macs supported by macOS Monterey**

2021's macOS Monterey supports the following Macs:

- MacBook models from 2016 or later
- MacBook Air models from 2015 or later
- MacBook Pro models from 2015 or later
- Mac mini models from 2014 or later
- iMac models from autumn 2015 or later
- iMac Pro (all models)
- Mac Pro models from 2013 or later

**Macs supported by macOS Big Sur**

Big Sur, which launched in 2020 supports the following Macs:

- MacBook models from early 2015 or later
- MacBook Air models from 2013 or later
- MacBook Pro models from 2013 or later
- Mac mini models from 2014 or later
- iMac models from 2014 or later
- iMac Pro (all models)
- Mac Pro models from 2013 or later

**Macs supported by macOS Catalina**
Catalina launched in 2019 and supported the following Macs:

- MacBook (early 2015 or later)
- MacBook Air (mid 2012 or later)
- MacBook Pro (mid 2012 or later)
- Mac mini (late 2012 or later)
- iMac (late 2012 or later)
- iMac Pro (2017 or later)
- Mac Pro (late 2013 or later)

This means that no Macs sold before 2012 are supported by Apple right now. Does this mean that Macs last ten years? Unfortunately not.

By the autumn of 2022, when Apple introduces the next version of macOS, all these 2012 Macs will no longer be supported.

**Which Macs aren’t supported by macOS?**

With the advent of Monterey in 2021 Apple stopped supporting Mojave (which launched in 2018). This meant that Apple dropped support for a couple of Macs that were previously supported in software updates:

- iMac (late 2009 or later)
- Mac Pro (2010/2012 machines with a Metal-capable GPU)

All other Macs that pre-date those mentioned above are no longer supported by Apple’s software updates.

**Does it matter if my Mac won’t run a supported macOS?**

Aside from being vulnerable to security breaches, you may find that important software won’t run on your Mac.

Apple and other companies frequently stop supporting older versions of the applications they make, so there could be issues with the versions of the software you are running. If you are experiencing random shutdowns, for example, it could be due to problems with an app you are running - problems that will not be addressed by the developer because that app is no longer supported.

If you want to run fully supported software then you will need to update to a newer version of macOS - and that may mean that you need to update your Mac.

**When do Macs become obsolete?**

Based on operating system support, the limit is between eight and ten years - after which time Apple will not support the software and it’s probably a good time to replace your Mac.
But it's not just software updates that are important. It's also a question of whether it will be possible to fix your Mac should something go wrong with the hardware.

If you look at Apple's list of obsolete Macs - those being the Macs that Apple will no longer provide spare parts for - you will see that the company doesn't provide parts for Macs that it hasn't sold for more than seven years. In fact, the company may not even provide parts for Macs that haven't been manufactured for more than five years (considered vintage by the company).

This could mean that you won't be able to get a faulty Mac fixed because the parts aren't available.

**Obsolete Macs**

Obsolete Macs are generally Macs that Apple stopped selling more than seven years ago. Once a Mac is in Apple's obsolete list you have little chance of getting it repaired if something does go wrong. You might be able to find spare parts yourself, but Apple won't provide them.

Apple considered the following Macs obsolete:

- 27in iMac (late 2012 and older)
- 21.5in iMac (late 2012 and older)
- MacBook Air, 13in and 11in (mid 2013 and older)
- 13in MacBook Pro (2011 and older)
- 15in MacBook Pro (2012 and older)
- Mac mini (2011 and older)
- Mac Pro (2010 and older)
- All pre-Intel Macs are obsolete
**Vintage Macs**

Apple also has a list of Vintage Macs. These are Macs that Apple stopped selling between five and seven years ago. (If you live in France where a law means you can get support for spare parts for up to seven years after Apple stops selling a Mac).

Apple Authorized Service Providers will repair vintage products for up to seven years, as long as parts are available.

Apple lists the following products as being vintage:

- 21.5in iMac (2013 and mid 2014)
- 27in iMac (2013, 2014 and 2015)
- 12in MacBook (2015)
- 11in MacBook Air (2014)
- 13in MacBook Air (2013)
- 15in MacBook Pro (2013 and 2014)
- Mac mini (2012)
- Mac Pro (2012)

There are some Macs in that list that you might consider quite 'new', such as the 2015 MacBook or the 27in iMac from the same year.

The mid 2012 model of the 13-inch MacBook Pro joins Apple's list of vintage products as of 31 January 2022. This is because Apple stopped selling the model in October 2016, which more than five years ago. This is the last Mac Apple sold with a CD/DVD drive. This model will no longer be supported with software as of autumn of 2022 as it can only run macOS Catalina, which will be dropped when macOS 13 arrives.

You'll find more details about the exact models on Apple's dedicated page, but the lists above will give you a general idea.

This certainly suggests that if your Mac is from before 2013 (and in some cases 2015) it's definitely time to look for a new one. And if you see a 2013 or earlier Mac on sale it's probably not sensible to buy it. Read: Why you shouldn't buy a second hand Mac.

**Should I fix my Mac or buy a new one?**

If your Mac is in the obsolete category above and something goes wrong with it then you are going to struggle to get the necessary parts if you wanted to attempt to get it fixed as Apple won’t provide the parts.

You might be able to buy an old Mac on eBay or similar and scrap if for the parts, but we'd suggest that it really wouldn't be worth the effort.
If your Mac is in the vintage list then Apple might be able to provide the parts but there is no guarantee. If you are lucky enough to get the part an Apple service provider might even be able to fix the Mac for you - but the cost of the work is likely to be prohibitive.

You might find that the Mac was included in part of a recall due to the issue you are experiencing, in that case it might be worth enlisting in a repair program. However, if the time period in which Apple was offering the repairs has passed then you will still have to find the money for the repair, which again might be prohibitive.

**Apple repair programs**

Apple’s current repair programs include:

- A recall for 15in MacBook Pro units from due to a battery fault 2015-2017
- Keyboard services for some Mac laptops bought since 2016
- A MacBook Pro backlit service program for models from 2016-2018
- A SSD service program for 13in MacBook Pro models from 2017-2018
- A battery replacement program for 13in MacBook Pros from 2016-2017

We have more information about Apple's product recalls and repair programs here. Plus, visit this page for more information on the above repair programs.

Assuming your fault isn't one of those listed above, you may be faced with a pricy repair bill. We suggest that if your Mac is older than five years then repairing it will not be worth it - unless of course there are important documents or photos on it that you want to retrieve in which case it might be worth looking at how to recover these files.

**Should I update my Mac or buy a new one?**
This is a similar question to the one above in as much as you will be weighing up whether spending money to improve your Mac might be more savvy than buying a new Mac.

There are various ways you might be able to improve your existing Mac including adding more RAM or changing from a hard drive to a SSD. If you are able to upgrade the components inside your Mac you may be able to speed it up and make it more capable of doing what you need.

However, many Macs can't be upgraded at all. In recent years Apple has taken to soldering RAM in place and hiding components away to make access impossible (or at least impossible if you don't want to completely destroy your Mac attempting to get to them).

If you decide to buy a new Mac check out our round ups of the best Mac deals you can get:

![Mac memory upgrade](image)

**Can I update the RAM in my Mac?**

If you have one of the following Macs you might be able to update the RAM:

- MacBook (2008 to 2011 models)
- MacBook Pro (2009-2012 13in, 2008-2012 15in, all 17in models)
- iMac: The RAM can be updated in the majority of iMacs except for the 21.5in models from Mid-2014 and Late-2015, which had their RAM soldered into place.
- Mac mini: (2010-2012 and the 2018 model)
- Mac Pro: (all models)
- iMac Pro: RAM isn't user-accessible but can be update at an Apple Store or Apple Authorized Service Provider.

You can't update the RAM in any MacBook Air models.
We explain which Macs have accessible RAM in this article and also look at how to update the RAM.

**What can I update in my Mac?**

It may be possible to update other components, including the SSD, hard drive, battery, logic board, hard drive, but this is only possible for a few Macs and the process is only for the expert. If you’d like to try read: How to upgrade a Mac.

If you are up for pulling your Mac apart and attempting to upgrade its components then by all means try, but make sure you back it up first and be prepared to admit defeat if it doesn't go as planned.

As for whether it is worth upgrading your Mac's RAM or any other component - assuming you can get the parts - rather than buying a new Mac? Perhaps it will buy you a few more years of use. However, we'd be inclined to suggest that if your Mac is older than seven years it really isn't worth it (and, you'll notice, the MacBooks that can have their RAM upgraded tend to be older than that).

**How long do Macs last?**

So, in answer to the question: How long do Macs last? We'd say five to eight years, but beware that you probably won't be able to replace any faulty parts in a Mac when more than five years has passed since Apple last sold it.

Before you buy a new Mac, read our article about the best time to buy a Mac or MacBook.

You may also want to read our Best Mac Buying Guide for help deciding which Mac to buy.

Wondering how long Apple supports iPhones for? Read How long do iPhones last.