

## Primer Review - Copy & Move Finder Files, 05-16-2021

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*Note: This discussion is based on macOS, 10.14.6 (Mojave). Some illustrations may differ when using other versions of macOS or OS X. Most illustrations are from screenshots on my iMac.*

There are lots of ways to copy and move files (folders and apps, too) in the Finder. This presentation will focus on several methods.

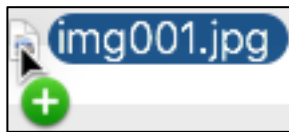
**Drag and Drop.** Using the mouse to move files around in the Finder has been with us since the Mac was introduced decades ago:

- Have the **Source Location** Finder window (where your file is located) open. In this window, you may need to have the appropriate folder open as well so that your file is displayed.
- Have the **Target Location** Finder window (where your file will be moved or copied, might also be the Source folder) open so that you can easily drag the file from the Source location to the Target location. As with the Source, you may need to have the appropriate folder open as well.
- To **Move** the file, use your mouse pointer to **drag** the file from the Source location to the Target location and release the mouse button to complete the move.

If the Target folder isn't already open, continue to hold down the mouse after dragging onto the folder to open it. Then release the mouse button to complete the Move.

*Note: This method applies only if the new location is on the same storage volume. If the new location is on another storage device, the item is **copied** instead.*

- To **Copy** the file, first hold down the **Option** key and then use your mouse pointer to **drag** the file from the Source location to the Target location. A large "badge" (**green circle** enclosing a **+** symbol, see illustration below), will be added to the image of the item being dragged to indicate that the item is being copied, not moved. As with a Move, if the folder isn't already open, holding down the mouse will open it.



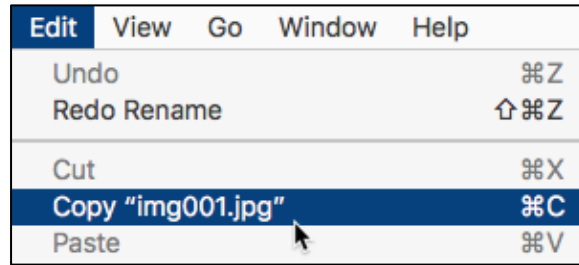
**Finder – Copy “Badge”**

*Note:* When doing a Drag and Drop that the **Esc** key and the **Undo** command (**Command + Z**) can be handy when moving and copying files.

- *If you make a mistake while dragging a file, and before you release the mouse, you can use the **Esc** key to cancel the operation.*
- *If you’ve moved a file to the wrong location and catch the mistake immediately, use the **Undo** command to go back.*

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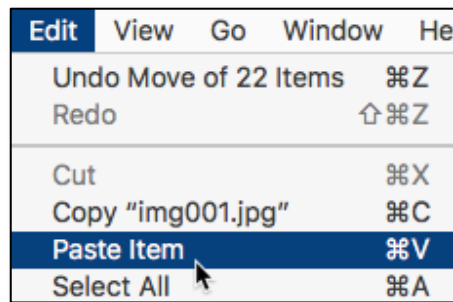
**Copy Using the Finder's Edit Menu.** Instead of dragging an item in the Finder, you can use the Copy and Paste menu items under the Finder's Edit menu. First, select an item from the Source location. Then choose **Edit > Copy file/folder name**:



Finder – "Copy"

You can also use the familiar Copy keyboard shortcut, **Command + C**.

Now, move to and open the Target window/folder where you want to leave a copy of the item and choose **Edit > Paste item** or use the Paste keyboard shortcut, **Command + V**:

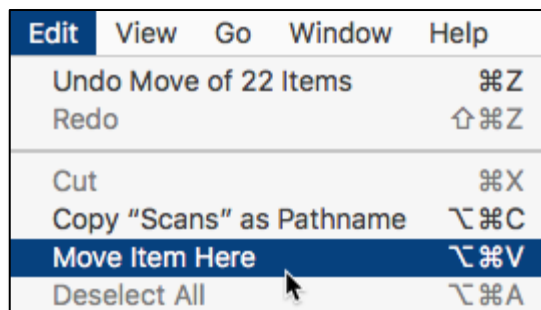


Finder – "Paste Item"

**Move Using the Finder's Edit Menu.** To **Move** an item to a new location, the process is the same as for copying: Select an item from the Source location. Then choose **Edit > Copy file/folder name**, or use the keyboard shortcut, **Command + C**. Next, go to and open the Target location where you want to Move the file.

*Note: You might assume at this point that you can then paste the item there, but that's not the case. As we just discussed, that will Copy the item there, not Move it.*

Instead, hold down the **Option** key. The Finder's menu item will change to **Move Item Here (Edit > Move Item Here)**. Click this modified menu item to complete the move, or use the keyboard shortcut, **Option + Command + V**:



Finder – "Move Item Here" Menu Item

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**Drag and Drop (Special Case: Using Finder Tabs).** If you have a Finder window organized using **Tabs**, the Drag and Drop process likely changes because you're probably using a full screen window to maximize the space available for multiple tabs.

You no longer have Source and Target windows to work with, just one large window with multiple tabs. *Drag and Drop will now require some additional dexterity.* Moving or Copying a file is much the same as previously discussed when working with Finder windows except the drag must be done from one tab to another.

- To **Move** a file, first go the **Source tab** and drag the file to the **Target tab**. If you just want Move the file to the Target (and not in a sub-folder), then go ahead and release the mouse.
- If you want to move the file to a folder in the Target tab, continue to hold down the mouse pointer until the Target tab opens to display its contents. Once the Target tab opens, drag the file to the desired folder, and release the mouse to move the file there. You can also hold the mouse down on the folder and wait until it opens to complete the move.
- You can continue this process to drag to a folder within a folder, and so on.
- The process to **Copy** a file is similar except that the **Option** key must be held down before starting the drag.

**Copy and Move Using the Finder's Edit Menu (Special Case: Using Finder Tabs).** Again, moving or copying a file is much the same as previously discussed when working with Finder windows (using the Copy and Paste menu items under the Finder's Edit menu) except the action must be done from one tab to another.

- To **Copy** a file, first go the **Source tab**, and select an item. Then choose **Edit > Copy file/folder name**. You can also use the Copy keyboard shortcut, **Command + C**.  
Click on the Target tab where you want to leave a copy of the item and choose **Edit > Paste item** or use the Paste keyboard shortcut, **Command + V**, to complete the Copy.
- If you wish, you can hold down on the Target tab to open it and then use the **Paste Item** menu item or its keyboard shortcut.
- You can also extend this process after selecting the Target tab by selecting and opening a folder within the tab and then using the **Paste Item** menu item or its keyboard shortcut. This process can be extended to a folder within a folder, etc., before using the Paste keyboard shortcut
- Again, the process to **Move** a file is similar except that the **Option** key must be held down. Then the **Paste** menu item becomes **Move Item Here**.

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### **Summary**

Drag and Drop. We've been using the mouse to move files around ("Drag & Drop") in the Finder since the Mac was introduced. Many prefer to work with multiple windows, and folder within those folders, to Copy and Move files between them. Moving a file is a simple matter of dragging from one location (the Source) to another (the Target). Copying a file just requires the use of the Option key to change the operation from Move to Copy.

Finder Edit Menu Commands. The Finder's Edit menu also has Copy and Paste menu items (and also their keyboard shortcuts). Selecting an item for copying or moving always starts with the Copy command in the Source window (or folder within it). Then go to the Target window (or folder within it) and choose Paste Item to copy the file there. In order to Move an item, you must first hold down the Option key. (Note: This use of the Option key is the opposite of how it's used during a drag and drop.) Then go to the target folder (or a folder within) and click the mouse to move the file.

Finder Tabs. If you're using the Finder with Tabs, the process for Drag and Drop and also using the Finder's Edit menu commands (Copy and Paste, also their keyboard shortcuts) is similar. However, you need to adapt your actions to working with tabs since you're likely working with one full-screen window containing multiple tabs. Drag and Drop involves dragging an item from the Source tab to the Target tab (and also folders within those tabs). Finder Edit commands also requires selecting from the Source tab and then opening the Target tab.

### **Next Presentation**

For the next presentation, we'll explore another Mac Basics topic.

Have a favorite Mac Tip or utility? Please feel free to pass it along, and I'll see if I can work it into a future presentation.

If you have any suggestions for presentation topics, including macOS utilities, please contact me at [slp4668@gmail.com](mailto:slp4668@gmail.com).

*-Steve Parker*