GENERAL

how to find ip address on mac

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Introduction

Whether you're troubleshooting a network connection, setting up a home server, or simply curious about how your Mac communicates with the internet, knowing how to find the IP address on a Mac is a fundamental skill. The IP address is the unique identifier that allows devices to locate each other on a network, and macOS offers several built in tools to reveal it quickly and accurately. In this guide, we'll walk through the most common methods for locating both your local (private) IP address and your public IP address on any Mac, from the latest macOS Monterey to older versions like Catalina and Big Sur.

Why Knowing Your IP Address on a Mac Matters

IP addresses serve as the digital equivalent of a street address. They let your computer join a local network, access shared resources, and connect to servers on the broader internet. Understanding your IP address is useful for:

- Diagnosing connectivity problems.
- Configuring routers, firewalls, or VPNs.
- Setting up port forwarding for gaming or remote desktop.
- Verifying that your network is working correctly after a system update.
- Ensuring privacy by checking whether your device is exposing its local address to the outside world.

Because macOS bundles several utilities that can display this information, you'll never need to resort to external tools unless you prefer a graphical interface or advanced network diagnostics.

Methods to Find Your IP Address on a Mac

Using System Preferences (now called System Settings in macOS Ventura and later)

1. Click the Apple menu in the top left corner and select System Settings (or System Preferences on older macOS releases).
2. Choose Network from the sidebar.
3. Select the active network interface on the left (Wi Fi, Ethernet, Thunderbolt Bridge, etc.).
4. On the right pane, you'll see a status bar that reads "Connected" followed by your local IP address under the "IP Address" label.
5. For Ethernet, the address will look like 192.168.1.12 or 10.0.0.5. For Wi Fi, it's the same format.
6. If you need more detailed information, click the Advanced… button and then the TCP/IP tab. This displays both the IPv4 address and the IPv6 address, along with the router's IP and subnet mask.

Using the Network Utility App (Deprecated in macOS Ventura)

Older macOS versions (pre Ventura) include a handy **Network Utility** application. While it's no longer bundled in the newest releases, you can still download it from Apple's support site or use it if you're on an older system.

1. Open Applications !' Utilities !' Network Utility.
2. Switch to the Info tab.
3. Select your network interface from the dropdown menu.

4. The Local IP field will display your current IP address.

Using the Terminal

The Terminal provides several commands that reveal network information quickly. Open **Terminal** from **Applications** !**Utilities** or by searching with Spotlight.

1. Type ifconfig and press Enter.
2. Scroll through the output until you find the active interface (commonly en0 for Ethernet or en1 for Wi Fi).
3. Look for the inet line. The number following it is your IPv4 address. For example: inet 192.168.1.12 netmask 0xffffff00 broadcast 192.168.1.255.
4. For IPv6, look for the inet6 line.

This command offers a more concise output tailored to network services.

1. Run networksetup -getinfo Wi-Fi (replace “Wi Fi” with “Ethernet” if you’re wired).
2. The result will list the IP address, subnet mask, router, and DNS servers.
3. Example output: IP address: 192.168.1.12.

For a single line of output, use:

```
ipconfig getifaddr en0  # for Ethernet
ipconfig getifaddr en1  # for Wi  Fi
```

This prints only the IP address, making it ideal for scripting.

To discover the IP address that external servers see, you can query an online service:

1. Run curl ifconfig.me or curl icanhazip.com.
2. The command returns your public IPv4 address, e.g., 203.0.113.45.
3. For IPv6, use curl -6 ifconfig.co.

Using the Menu Bar Wi Fi Icon

If you’re connected to a Wi Fi network, you can quickly view your IP address directly from the menu bar:

1. Click the Wi Fi icon in the menu bar.
2. Hover over your network name; a tooltip will appear showing the IP address.
3. Alternatively, hold Option and click the Wi Fi icon to open a detailed menu that lists the IP address, subnet mask, router, and more.

Using Apple Menu > About This Mac > System Report

1. Click the Apple menu and choose About This Mac.
2. Click System Report….
3. In the sidebar, navigate to Network !’ Wi Fi (or Ethernet).
4. In the right pane, you’ll see “IP Address” and other details.

Using Third Party Apps

For users who prefer a dedicated GUI, several third party utilities can display IP information, such as:

- iStat Menus – a comprehensive system monitor that shows network stats in the menu bar.
- NetSpot – primarily a Wi Fi analysis tool, but it also lists your device’s IP address.
- Network Radar – a lightweight utility that provides real time network data.

These apps are useful if you need to monitor bandwidth or run advanced diagnostics.

Understanding IPv4 vs IPv6 Addresses

When you look up your IP address, you'll often see two versions:

- IPv4 – the traditional 32 bit address format (e.g., 192.168.1.12). It's still the most common form used in home networks.
- IPv6 – a newer 128 bit format designed to solve IPv4 address exhaustion (e.g., fe80::1c2b:3ff:fe4a:5b6c). Many modern routers and ISPs support IPv6, but it may not be enabled by default.

Both versions can coexist on the same interface. macOS typically displays the IPv4 address first, but you can always check the IPv6 address in System Settings or Terminal.

Common Issues and Troubleshooting

IP Address Not Showing or Incorrect

- Make sure your network interface is connected (check the status icon).
- Restart the network service: sudo ifconfig en0 down; sudo ifconfig en0 up (replace en0 as needed).
- Reset network settings by deleting the com.apple.airport.preferences.plist file and restarting your Mac.

Multiple IP Addresses on One Interface

Virtual machines, VPNs, or Docker containers may assign additional IPs to your Mac's interface. Use ifconfig or networksetup -listallhardwareports to identify all active addresses.

Public IP Address Changing Frequently

- Dynamic DNS services can map a changing public IP to a stable domain name.
- Check with your ISP; some providers assign dynamic IPs that rotate every few hours.
- For a static public IP, you may need to request it from your ISP or use a VPN service.

Privacy Concerns

Knowing your public IP helps you understand what information is visible to websites and services. If you're concerned about privacy, consider:

- Using a reputable VPN to mask your IP.
- Enabling Do Not Track in Safari.
- Regularly checking your Firewall settings in System Settings !' Security & Privacy.

Tips for Secure and Private IP Management

- Enable the built in Firewall to restrict incoming connections.
- Use Bonjour only for devices you trust; disable it if you're on a public network.

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