TAKE CONTROL OF

TEXTEXPANDER

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$10

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of TextExpander, Second Edition,* version 2.0, published in July 2015 by TidBITS Publishing Inc. This book was written by Michael E. Cohen and edited by Kelly Turner.

This book covers how you can use version 5 of Smile's TextExpander text-substitution utility for Mac and TextExpander touch 3 for iOS to make your writing, programming, and editing far more efficient and enjoyable. (TextExpander 3 and 4 users can download an older edition from this ebook's blog; see Ebook Extras.)

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Click here to buy the full 117-page "Take Control of TextExpander" for only $10!

- Read the ebook's blog. You may find new tips or information, as well as a link to an author interview.

If you bought this ebook from the Take Control Web site, it has been added to your account, where you can download it in other formats and access any future updates. If you bought it from Smile (or elsewhere), you can add it to your account manually; see Ebook Extras.

Note: To review basics that might help you understand this book better, such as finding System Preferences and handling contextual menus, read the free *Read Me First: A Take Control Crash Course*.

What's New in This Edition?

This edition covers TextExpander 5, which has been redesigned for (and which requires) OS X 10.10 Yosemite or later. It also covers the latest iOS app, TextExpander touch 3.5 (see Use TextExpander touch).

Here are some the new features in TextExpander 5 and TextExpander touch that this edition covers:

- **Suggestions:** This completely new feature is covered in Use Suggestions.

- **Inline Search:** This recasting of the old Suggest Abbreviations command is described in Search Inline.

- **Cloud syncing:** Learn new ways in which TextExpander can sync with cloud services, including iCloud Drive, in Sync with the Cloud.

- **JavaScript scripting:** Script with JavaScript explains how to add executable script snippets in this language to TextExpander.

- **TextExpander touch keyboard:** This addition to TextExpander touch brings TextExpander snippets into any app; read Use the TextExpander Keyboard to find out about it.

In addition, lots of little bits of new information, too numerous to list, have been incorporated into the book.

Introduction

It's been several years since I first installed TextExpander on my Mac in preparation for writing the first edition of this book. At the time, I liked to run my Mac with as few add-on software utilities as possible, if for no other reason than to understand the experience that most Mac users have.

However, TextExpander has changed my life—at least my working life. I write for a living, and a lot of the stuff I write about is hard to type—weirdly spelled, strangely capitalized—or all too easy to mistype. TextExpander has saved me from much of that: every time I type *ttx* instead of *TextExpander*, or *;js* instead of *JavaScript*, or *awatch* instead of *Apple Watch*, or *tco* instead of *Take Control*, my work flows a little more smoothly, and every time I type *Tonay* instead of *Tonya* when corresponding with my editor (Tonya, you have *no* idea how often my fingers do that against my will), I save myself a heap of embarrassment.

And then there are the emojis and the symbols that I can type without having to bring up the Mac Character Viewer, and the little productivity aids such as the boilerplate fill-in snippet I use when Apple issues its quarterly financial report and I help write the article summarizing the latest results for TidBITS (which, by the way, I can type as *Tidbits*): I can't tell you how much time TextExpander has saved me with all of these things.

Actually, I *can* tell you: TextExpander keeps statistics (click Statistics on the TextExpander window's toolbar), and so I know that I have saved typing over a quarter of a million characters since I first installed the app, which comes out to me having saved more than a full working day of typing time at 80 words per minute. (I can also tell you the most often expanded snippet I have used this month…not surprisingly, it is *ttx* for *TextExpander*.)

Even though I still keep my Mac as free from add-ons as possible, TextExpander is one that I don't want to live without. Revising this book has been a pleasure, since it helped reacquaint me with some TextExpander features I had forgotten (such as the hotkey to convert a text selection into a snippet quickly), as well as introducing me to some new useful ones: inline search, where *have* you been all my life?

If you are an experienced TextExpander user, I hope this book helps you rediscover the great capabilities TextExpander offers that you may have forgotten. And if you are new to TextExpander, I hope this book helps you take full advantage of this delightfully useful app.

There's a good chance that TextExpander can change your life, too.

> **Note:** The first edition of this ebook is still available for folks who are running TextExpander 3 or 4. To download a copy, visit Ebook Extras and look in the Blog area.

TextExpander Quick Start

If you have never used TextExpander, I suggest that you Meet TextExpander and Run the Snippet Creation Assistant. After that, explore how to Create and Use Complex Snippets. Those two chapters should give you a sense of what TextExpander is and what it can do; after that, feel free to read around as your fancy dictates.

If you have used TextExpander before, you might benefit from reviewing Customize Group Settings and Set Expansion Options, and be sure to read Don't Forget These Fine Features!, ahead a page or so. If you're an advanced user, you may find that Script with Snippets can take you even further than you have gone before.

For all readers, I strongly suggest that you learn how to Back Up Your Snippets Automatically.

Preliminary steps:

- For tips on downloading and installing TextExpander, see Get TextExpander.

- If you're curious about what changed between TextExpander 4 and 5, flip back to What's New in This Edition?.

- Get a running start: Run the Snippet Creation Assistant.

- If you're switching to TextExpander from another text-expansion utility, consult Add a Group from a File.

- To get an overview of TextExpander's two interfaces and start building your first, simple snippet, read Know Your Interfaces and Make and Use a Simple Snippet.

Broaden your horizons:

- To learn about the wide variety of snippets you can make, and to discover what they can do, read Create and Use Complex Snippets.

- To keep your screen uncluttered while having ready access to TextExpander, read Manage Your Interfaces and Use Hotkeys.

- For ways to control when snippets expand, see Customize Group Settings and Set Expansion Options.

- See how to expand your snippet collection when you Save, Add, and Import Groups and Use Suggestions.

Get organized:
- Corral and catalog your snippet collection; read Make Groups and Arrange Them and Organize a Group's Contents.

- Don't get lost in a big snippet collection; read Find Your Snippets.

Cover your assets:
- To protect your snippet collection, see Back Up Your Snippets Automatically.

- Don't keep all your snippets in one basket; read Share and Sync Snippets to see how you can have them in two (or more) places at once.

Flex your scripting muscles:
- Drive other applications from a snippet when you Script with AppleScript.

- Find out how to Script with the Shell to harness the power of Unix.

- Do calculations, text manipulations, and even automate your Mac when you Script with JavaScript.

Go mobile:
- If you have an iPod touch, iPhone, or iPad, visit Use TextExpander touch to see how you can use your snippet collection on the run.

Don't Forget These Fine Features!

TextExpander has many useful features that even experienced users sometimes overlook. The following are among my favorites:

✦ **Enable/Disable TextExpander:** You can make TextExpander ignore your abbreviations temporarily; it's another one of the choices you have when you Use Hotkeys.

✦ **Inline Search:** When you can't quite remember a snippet's abbreviation, just type what you think it is, or type any part of its content, and then press a hotkey to see a search window with a list of matching snippets. See Use Hotkeys and Search Inline.

✦ **Predefined groups:** Smile provides a collection of snippet groups that are really useful, including the compendious TidBITS Auto Correct dictionary, a collection aimed at people who write HTML and CSS, and a compendium of Emojis 😱, among several others. Check these groups out in Add a Predefined Group.

✦ **Auto-capitalization options:** TextExpander can automatically capitalize sentences, and eliminate the common double-capital typo. See Set Auto-capitalization Options.

✦ **Adapt to Case of Abbreviation:** A snippet can be capitalized when you want it, and be lowercase when you want it. Read Assign an Abbreviation.

✦ **Expand When All but Letters & Numbers Precede Abbreviation:** This group setting lets snippets expand after both whitespace and punctuation; if you've ever wanted a snippet to expand after a parenthesis or a quotation mark but not in the middle of a word, this setting is for you. See Customize Group Settings.

✦ **Edit Last Expanded Snippet:** Especially if you use TextExpander snippets to reply to customer queries, you may find that your snippets often need updating as products, policies, and services change, or when you find a better way of explaining something. If you've just inserted a snippet that needs an edit, you can quickly make the change; see Edit the Last Expanded Snippet.

Meet TextExpander

The idea behind TextExpander is simple: it substitutes something you type (usually something short) with something else (usually longer and more complicated) in almost any situation where you can enter text. Although I'll present a simple example in this chapter, TextExpander substitutions, called *snippets,* can be complex and extraordinarily helpful: they can include formatted text, images, the current date or time, fields where you fill in information on the fly, the clipboard contents, and more. They can even move the insertion point and run scripts.

But first, some basics. In this chapter, I tell you how to:

• Get TextExpander in case you don't already have it.

• Run the Snippet Creation Assistant to give you an initial set of customized snippets.

• Know Your Interfaces so you can figure out when to use the TextExpander window and when to use the TextExpander menu bar icon.

• Make and Use a Simple Snippet to give you some hands-on snippet-slinging experience.

• Learn the Types of Snippet Content and their typical uses.

After that, you'll be ready for the next chapter, where you meet the many kinds of snippets you can create, and master how to use them.

Get TextExpander

It should come as no surprise that you'll get the most value from this book if you have a copy of TextExpander installed on your Mac. You can obtain Smile's TextExpander from the company's site.

You can also purchase a Family Pack or Office Pack license from Smile should you need to install TextExpander on multiple machines that are used by more than one person; you can find details about the Family Pack and Office Pack in the TextExpander FAQ.

If you just want to try TextExpander, you can obtain a free trial version from Smile's site.

Installation is nearly effortless: When you obtain TextExpander from Smile by downloading the trial version, you just unzip the downloaded file (if your Mac doesn't do so automatically) and drag the application to your Applications folder. When you launch it, you may see a dialog asking you to give TextExpander permission to access your Contacts. This permission makes it a little easier when you use the Snippet Creation Assistant, described just ahead, but is not mandatory: you can click OK or Don't Allow, as you prefer.

Next you see both the TextExpander app's main window and the Welcome to TextExpander window, as well as the Purchase/ Registration window (**Figure 1**).
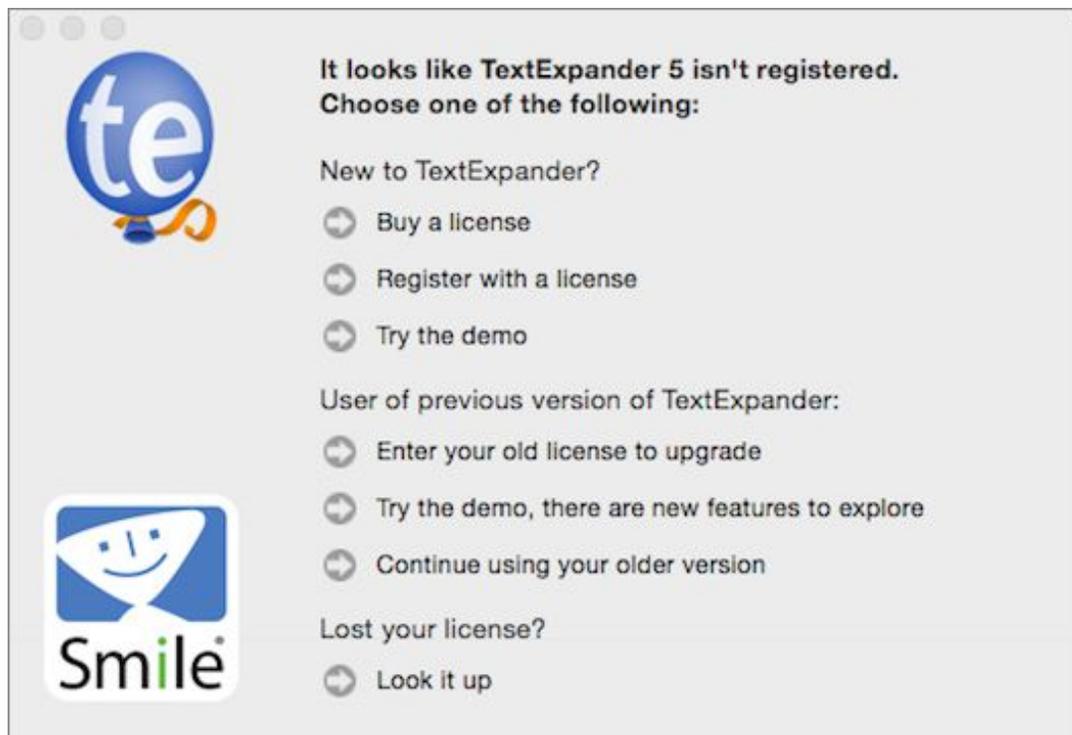

Figure 1: This window appears when you launch a new, unregistered copy of TextExpander.

Create and Use Complex Snippets

TextExpander's capability to substitute a simple text string on the fly for something that you type is well worth the price of admission. But TextExpander snippets can contain more than just simple text, and they can do some cool things.

You can create snippets that include formatted text and images. Moreover, using TextExpander macros, you can make snippets that include clipboard content, move your cursor, and type special keys like Escape and Tab. Snippets can even perform date and time math, combine several snippets into one, and generate fill-in forms.

"Complex," however, does not mean "hard"—complex snippets are easy to create and easy to use.

And the uses, as you might imagine, are plentiful.

Add Formatting and Pictures

As you saw in Learn the Types of Snippet Content a few pages back, one of the four types of snippet content is Formatted Text, Pictures. When you choose this item from the pop-up menu above the snippet Content field, the Formatting pop-up menu beneath the Content field is enabled (**Figure 7**) and the snippet Content field becomes ready to accept images.

Figure 7: The Formatting pop-up menu is available when you create a Formatted Text, Pictures snippet.

Applying Formatting

The two available submenus on the Formatting pop-up menu provide the standard text formatting commands that you probably have seen in many other OS X programs (**Figure 8**).
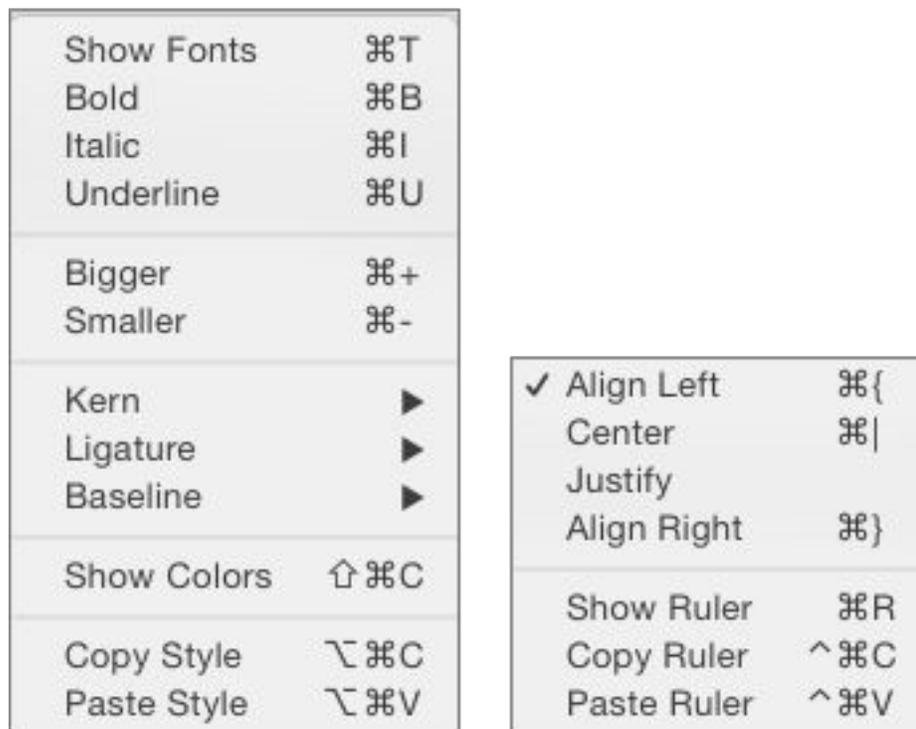

Figure 8: The Font submenu (left) and the Text submenu (right) provide the standard formatting commands for Formatted Text, Pictures snippets.

You can use the commands on these menus to format the text of a snippet in all sorts of sophisticated ways, adjusting text sizes, line layout, styles, kerning, and colors. The formatting menus effectively turn the snippet Content field from a plain text editor into a small but powerful word processor.

For even more formatting control, choose Format > Text > Show Ruler. You can access style, justification, line spacing, list formatting, and tab stops from the ruler that appears (**Figure 9**).

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Organize Your Snippets

The more you use TextExpander, the more ways you figure out to use it—and that usually leads to the creation of more snippets.

The small assortment of snippets that came with TextExpander by default are easy to remember, but sooner or later (sooner if you import some of the standard snippet collections that are available—you'll find out about those in Save, Add, and Import Groups), you may find that you have dozens, or hundreds, or even thousands of snippets, and that your memory isn't up to the task.

Isn't it a lucky coincidence that TextExpander has features that help you organize your snippets?

In this chapter, I explain how to manage your snippets by group, and how to customize certain snippet settings that apply by group.

Make Groups and Arrange Them

In TextExpander, snippets are organized into groups, which appear as folders in the Groups list at the left of the TextExpander window; the same groups also appear in the TextExpander te quick-access menu, in the same order as they appear in the TextExpander window.

Each group can contain an arbitrary number of snippets, from none to many thousands. To show or hide the snippets contained in a group, click the group icon's triangle in the Groups list.

When you first install TextExpander and Run the Snippet Creation Assistant, your snippets appear in a single group in the TextExpander window: My Snippets. This is fine when you can count the number of snippets you have on your fingers, but when you reach the point where you have to take off your shoes to count them, you'll want more groups so you can divide your snippets among them.

Click here to buy the full 117-page "Take Control of TextExpander" for only $10!

Make a Group

TextExpander makes it easy to add new groups to the Groups list. Use whichever one of the following three methods that appeals to you:

- Type Command-Option-N.

- Click the New Group 📁 button in the TextExpander window's toolbar.

- Click the Add ➕ button at the bottom left of the TextExpander window, and then choose New Group from the menu that appears (**Figure 17**).
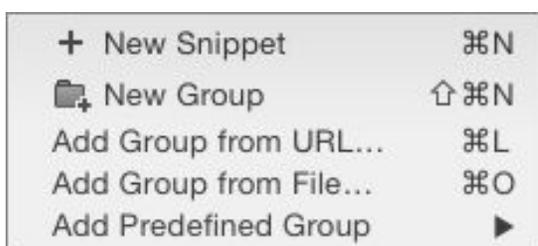

Figure 17: Create a new group from the Add pop-up menu.

When you first create a group, its name is (Untitled), and its group icon appears beneath the last group that you had worked with or had selected in the Groups list.

Rename a Group

It's easy to change the new group's name when you create it, since its default name is selected in the Group Settings pane's Name field (displayed on the right side of the TextExpander window): just type a new name.

You can also rename an existing group, as follows:

1. In the TextExpander window, click a group.

   The Group Settings pane appears in the right half of the window.

2. Edit the text in the Name field.

Note: I discuss the other options in the Group Settings pane later in this chapter, in Customize Group Settings.

Find Your Snippets

It is the nature of snippet collections to grow larger and larger, and it is the nature of the human brain to lose track of what's contained in large collections of stuff: this is why no one really knows what's in the attic/basement/sock drawer/garage/cabinet/self-storage locker.

TextExpander, however, can offer you several kinds of assistance to help you quickly track down the snippet you want, even if you have managed to spawn thousands of the critters.

Browse Your Snippets

It almost goes without saying, but the TextExpander window itself is a good place to start when you want to find a particular snippet and see what it contains. **Figure 22** shows my TextExpander window with one of the snippet groups toggled open to reveal its contents.

Figure 22: Browse your snippets in the TextExpander window with the arrow keys on your keyboard.

As you should know by now, when you select a snippet's label in the Groups list, the right side of the window shows the snippet's contents. While you normally use this feature to edit a snippet, you can also use it to browse your collection quickly: just press the Up and Down arrow keys on your keyboard to move from snippet label to snippet label, revealing the contents of each snippet in the right side of the window. When you arrow to a closed group folder in the Groups list, use the Right arrow key to toggle that folder open (the Left arrow key closes an open group folder).

Note: The Page Up and Page Down keys scroll the Groups list in the window, but do not change what you've selected in that list. Similarly, the Home and End keys, respectively, reveal the top or bottom of the Groups list, but leave your selection unchanged.

Furthermore, you don't even have to arrow to a snippet to see its contents. As shown in **Figure 22**, previously, you can hover your pointer over a snippet's label in the Group's list to see a help tag that displays the snippet's entire contents.

You can also create print the snippets in any collection along with their abbreviations. Simply select the group folder, or any snippet in the group, and choose File > Print Group "*group-name*" (Command-P). This command prints a list showing each snippet's abbreviation, followed by its contents, for the selected group. You can also print out your entire snippet collection by choosing File > Print All Groups (Option-Command-P), although this might churn through a ream of paper if you have many hundreds or thousands of snippets.

Note: If you have chosen to hide the TextExpander icon in the dock (see Manage Your Interfaces), you can find the printing commands in the TextExpander window's Tool ⚙⌄ pop-up menu.

Tip: Use the PDF button in the OS X Print dialog to print your snippet collections to a PDF. You'll save paper, and, with Apple's Preview or a third-party PDF utility like Smile's PDFpen application, you can also search the PDF.

Set TextExpander Options

In the best of all possible worlds envisioned by Dr. Pangloss, all software would be so perfectly designed that every program would satisfy every user without any need for modification or customization. In our less-than-Panglossian world, however, different people have different needs, expectations, and tastes. That's why most Mac apps have a Preferences command on the app's menu.

With TextExpander's preferences you can, among other things, adjust the application's appearance, its text-expansion and correction behavior, and whether it backs up your snippets automatically.

Manage Your Interfaces

Unlike most applications that are right in your face as you use them, TextExpander does its job behind the scenes while you're working with another application. Although there are times when you want to interact directly with TextExpander (and much of this book describes how, when, and why you do), usually when you're using TextExpander you don't need to see it—and probably don't *want* to see it.

TextExpander by default shows its icon in the Dock when it's running and appears in the list of running applications when you Command-Tab between them. But since it also provides an omnipresent quick-access menu, you can choose the extent to which TextExpander takes up space in your Dock and your list of active applications:

1. Choose TextExpander > Preferences > Appearance.

2. In the Appearance pane, optionally (but recommended) select Show TextExpander in Menu Bar (**Figure 26**).
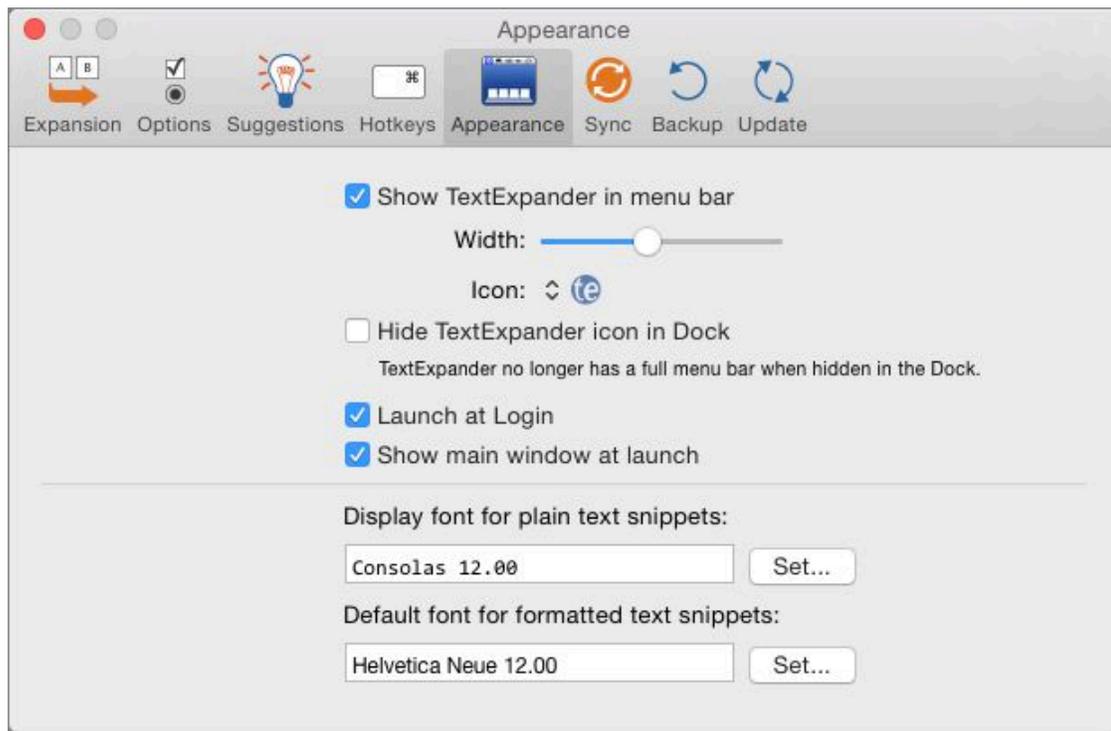
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Figure 26: Here's where you can give TextExpander an appearance makeover.

This setting, which is enabled by default, shows or hides the TextExpander icon in the right half of the menu bar. As described in Know Your Interfaces, this menu provides an alternative way to get at your snippets and other TextExpander commands, even when the application is in the background.

You can also use options beneath this setting to specify a different icon for the menu (if you've upgraded from an older version of TextExpander, you may prefer to see a familiar icon from bygone days) and to set the width of the menu: a wider menu means a wider Search Snippets field, which can be easier to read if you have a long search string (see Search and Filter Your Snippets). A wider menu also widens the snippet group submenus, making it easier to see each snippet's contents.

3. Select Hide TextExpander Icon in Dock.

    This is the big setting: when you check this box, TextExpander no longer appears when you press Command-Tab to switch between applications, and its icon no longer shows up in the Dock (unless you have manually put its icon in the Dock, and, even then, the icon

Create Snippets as You Go

You've seen how to use the normal TextExpander application interface, complete with Dock icon and menu bar, and you've seen how to use the TextExpander ⓣ quick-access menu interface, which offers most of TextExpander's features and capabilities from a single icon menu.

With OS X services and TextExpander hotkeys, however, you don't even need to clutter your menu bar or Dock with TextExpander icons if you don't want them: you can get much of the TextExpander functionality you need right from your keyboard.

This chapter tells you how to set up OS X services to enable the snippet creation and editing commands on the TextExpander ⓣ quick-access menu. It explains how those commands work, and it shows you how to set up hotkeys so you can use those commands—and others—without reaching for your mouse or trackpad at all.

Set Up Your Services

Pardon me while I make a brief excursion into OS X geekery. Trust me, I'll be brief, and you don't have to understand why you need to do what I'm going to tell you to do in this short section. In fact, you can skip the next paragraph of background information if it makes your head spin: just follow the steps that follow it, and all will be well.

TextExpander's ⓣ quick-access menu provides commands for creating new snippets, including Create Snippet from Selection. This command makes a snippet from text that you've selected in another application, such as a phrase in a word processor or a passage on a Web page. TextExpander uses an OS X system service to communicate between the app in which you've selected the text and TextExpander's snippet creation feature. TextExpander installs this system service the first time you run TextExpander. However, before you can use the

Create Snippet from Selection command, you must enable the service; while TextExpander can install the service, it can't enable it on its own.

Before you can use the Create Snippet from Selection command, do the following (if you don't, you'll see the dialog in **Figure 33**):
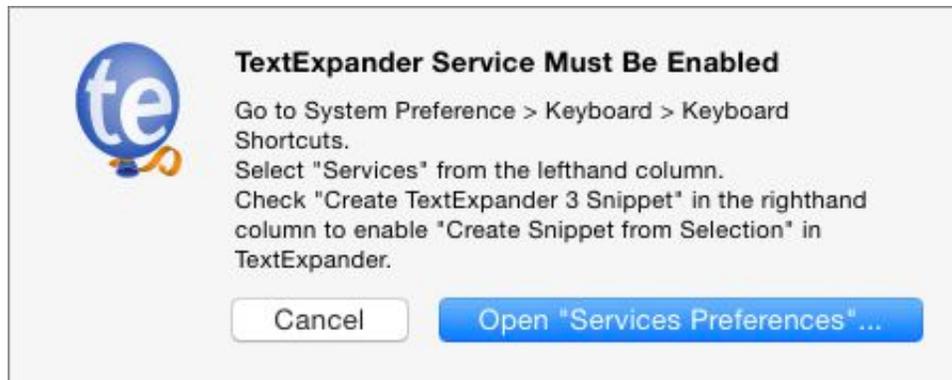

Figure 33: This dialog appears the first time you attempt to create a snippet from a selection, if you haven't yet turned on the required service.

1. Choose Apple > System Preferences > Keyboard > Shortcuts.

2. In the column on the left, click Services.

3. In the column on the right, scroll down to the Text group of services, click the triangle to open the group if it is closed, and then enable the Create TextExpander 3 Snippet service. (In case you're wondering, the dialog and the Services list say "Create TextExpander 3 Snippet" because that service was developed for TextExpander 3 and it remains the same for TextExpander 5.)

4. Close the Keyboard preferences window.

From now on, you can use the useful Create Snippet from Selection command with impunity.

Use Hotkeys

As you have seen in other parts of this book, with TextExpander's quick-access menu you can access all of your snippets, create new ones, search them, and more. However, using the menu interface

Share and Sync Snippets

Some of us can remember a time when it was a radical idea to imagine that an ordinary person could own a computer. Now, though, many people not only own one computer, but several, both stationary and mobile; for example, a desktop computer, a laptop, a tablet, a phone, and maybe even a few others (your author blushingly admits to having a half dozen computers of various kinds around his home as well as a few other retired machines stashed in his Vault of Antiquity—they seem to reproduce like tribbles).

If you use multiple smart devices, and you employ TextExpander regularly on more than one of them, you might find it useful to share a master snippet collection among them. If so, read this chapter.

Export Your Snippets

You read earlier, in Save a Copy of a Group, how easy it is to save a file containing a snippet group. Although there's no equally easy way to save your entire snippet collection, you can certainly save the most important snippet groups to put on another of your machines—especially if you have a relatively small number of important snippet groups.

Getting your snippet groups into TextExpander on a different Mac is also simple, and it is described in Add a Group from a File and in Add a Group from a URL. If you have access to a file server or a Web server that your computers can access, saving the groups that you need from one computer and adding them to another is certainly a viable way to spread your snippets among your machines.

However, keep in mind the following caveats:

- Snippet groups that you add from URLs cannot be modified unless you duplicate the group, and groups added from files can be modified only if you import them as local copies.

- Any changes that you make to the snippets on one machine won't appear on any of the other machines, so unless you make changes only on one master machine, and replace the shared groups with updated copies when you do, your snippet groups will quickly fall out of sync.

All told, saving and adding groups is best when you have a set of snippets that don't change. It's also a great way to distribute a common working set of snippets among coworkers.

However, to be sure that all of your devices have the same set of snippets, saving and adding groups is not the best way to go. Instead, what you really want to do is sync your snippets using a cloud service.

> **Tip:** If you need to use text expansion in a Windows environment and would like to sync with your TextExpander snippets, check out Breevy from 16 Software.

Sync with the Cloud

Cloud services for file sharing, such as iCloud Drive, Dropbox, and Google Drive, have become extremely popular, and it's only common sense to use one of them to share your snippets among multiple devices. TextExpander understands common sense: you can sync your snippets from just about any cloud service that you can reach from your Mac.

> **Note:** Dropbox and iCloud Drive are the only two cloud services that currently work with TextExpander touch (see Use TextExpander touch).

Here's how TextExpander's cloud syncing works: you point TextExpander at a folder on your chosen service, TextExpander copies your Settings.textexpander file to that folder, and, from that point on, TextExpander uses that file as your TextExpander settings file instead of the one found in `~/Library/Application Support/TextExpander/` `Settings.textexpander`.

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Script with Snippets

Your snippets don't have to come from another planet or be bitten by a radioactive spider to acquire super powers. If you know how to write AppleScript, JavaScript, or Unix shell scripts, you can harness the power of those technologies in your snippets.

TextExpander provides AppleScript snippets, JavaScript snippets, and Shell Script snippets. You just have to provide the code.

> **Skip Previews for Script Snippets**
>
> Although you can preview any snippet (see Preview Your Snippets), you should close the preview pane before viewing or editing a script snippet, as the act of previewing it can execute the script it contains. This could have unfortunate side effects when you view scripts that perform any automation in OS X.

Script with AppleScript

AppleScript has been a part of the Macintosh experience since the days of System 7 (System 7.1.1 to be precise). AppleScript allows you to automate a number of tasks that would otherwise require the manipulation of menus, buttons, and other elements of the Mac's graphical user interface.

If you know how to use AppleScript, you can leverage its power with TextExpander: put a script into a snippet and then invoke the script by typing the snippet's abbreviation.

Here are the steps to follow for creating an AppleScript snippet:

1. In TextExpander, create a new snippet.

2. Click the pop-up menu above the snippet Content field and choose AppleScript. TextExpander may insert a sample script into the field; if so, just delete it.

3. Type or paste your AppleScript code into the Content field.

4. Assign the snippet an abbreviation and, optionally, a label.

Figure 40 depicts a short, but useful, AppleScript snippet. It assumes that iTunes is open. When the snippet's abbreviation is typed, it tells iTunes to play the current track if it is paused or to pause if the current track is playing. If there is no current track queued up, the script does nothing.
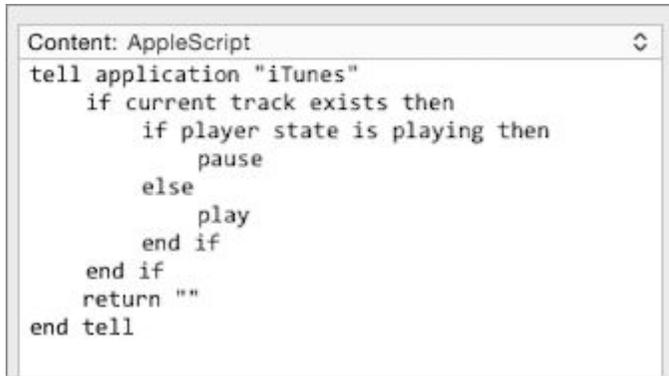
```
Content: AppleScript
tell application "iTunes"
    if current track exists then
        if player state is playing then
            pause
        else
            play
        end if
    end if
    return ""
end tell
```

Figure 40: An AppleScript snippet tells iTunes to play or pause.

It's a trivial script, sure, and not really necessary if your keyboard has a play/pause button on it. On the other hand, if you're in the middle of typing, say, an email while listening to music, and the phone rings, all you have to do is type the snippet's abbreviation and iTunes pauses. Furthermore, since the script returns an empty string, TextExpander replaces the abbreviation you typed with it, which effectively erases the abbreviation from the email.

> **Tip:** If you don't know AppleScript, you can pick up the rudiments at the Mac OS X Automation site.

Keep the following points in mind when you use AppleScript snippets:

- **TextExpander does not debug:** TextExpander can run AppleScripts, but it does not provide any debugging or formatting capabilities. Before you create an AppleScript snippet, you should develop and debug the script in another environment, such as the Script Editor application, located in `/Applications/Utilities`. Once the script is developed, it's easy to copy and paste it into a snippet.

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Use TextExpander touch

When you hit the road armed with your iPhone, iPod touch, or iPad, you don't have to leave TextExpander behind. An iOS app from Smile, TextExpander touch, is available from the iTunes App Store for $4.99. The app provides much of the capability of the Mac application, but with its features tailored for the iOS fingertip environment.

Naturally, the app can't do everything that the Mac version can do: just as an iOS device doesn't replicate all the capabilities of a traditional computer, the iOS version of TextExpander doesn't replicate all the capabilities of its Mac sibling. But it can do a *lot*, and, with Apple's addition of custom third-party keyboards in recent versions of iOS, you can expand your snippets in almost any iOS app that allows typing by using the TextExpander touch keyboard.

This appendix provides a brief look at how to Manage Your Groups, Use the TextExpander Keyboard, Make and Edit Snippets, and Exchange Snippets among Devices, as well as how to Work in the App to use its note writing and other capabilities.

Manage Your Groups

Like its Mac sibling, TextExpander touch collects its snippets in groups, where you can arrange them and apply group-specific settings. To see your groups, click Group at the top of the TextExpander touch screen (**Figure 44**).
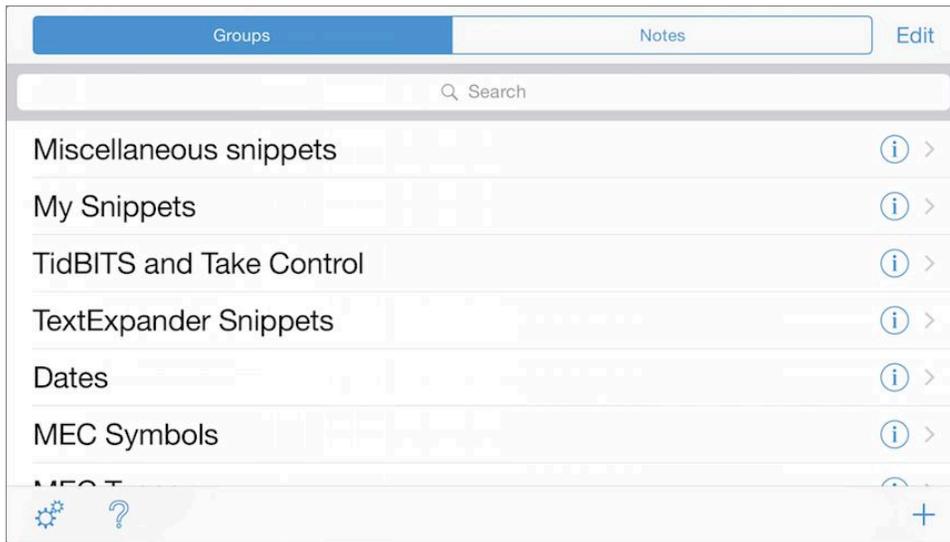
Figure 44: TextExpander touch provides separate views for Groups and Notes.

You can do the following from the Groups list:

- **See the snippets in a group:** Tap the name of any group to see the snippets that it contains. You can then Make and Edit Snippets in that group.

- **Arrange the groups in the list:** Tap Edit at the top of the Groups list. Then, to move a group in the list, drag the Move ☰ icon at the right of a group's name up or down. To delete a group, tap the group's Delete 🚫 icon and then tap Delete to confirm. Tap Done at the top of the screen when you have finished arranging your groups.

- **Add a new group:** Click the Add ➕ button below the Groups list and then tap the kind of group to add. Aside from a new empty group, you can add one from a group shared over the local network, from a predefined group, or from a URL (see Add a Group and Share over a Local Network).

- **Edit a group's settings:** Tap the group's information ⓘ icon to see and alter a group's settings (**Figure 45**). Tap Done on the settings screen to return to the Groups list.

Click here to buy the full 117-page "Take Control of TextExpander" for only $10!

Learn More

You can learn more about TextExpander from Smile:

- Smile's TextExpander FAQ: Worth consulting.

- The Smile blog: In the Category list on the side of this page, the entries about TextExpander are the ones to click.

- Video tutorials: Video tutorials showing TextExpander in action are available here.

- Smile support: Smile provides fast and friendly support. Submit your questions, feature suggestions, clever snippets, and other pointers here.

Good places to go to learn more about advanced snippet techniques (and get some pretty advanced snippets, too):

- BrettTerpstra.com: The blog entries tagged with "TextExpander" on Brett Terpstra's site are cool and also very instructive. Brett also maintains a page with his collection of TextExpander tools.

- And now it's all this: Dr. Drang's blog has a number of fascinating entries about script snippets; type `TextExpander` in the search field on the main page to see a list of entries.

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About the Author

Michael E. Cohen has been using a Mac since the days when it came packaged inside an Apple Lisa and called itself Macintosh XL. Over the years, he has taught English composition, worked as a programmer for NASA's Deep Space Network, helped to develop [the first commercial ebooks](#) at the Voyager Company (no relation to NASA's Voyager, by the way), co-founded a major university's Humanities computing center, written a number of books, taught a number of people, and played with a lot of technology.

He currently lives in Santa Monica, California, where he participates in the production of Take Control Books and *TidBITS* at the opposite end of the continent from TidBITS Command Central.

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Shameless Plug

In addition to this book (buy two—buy a dozen!) you might also find these three books useful and entertaining:

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