

How to Reverse Mouse Scroll Direction on Mac

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Quick answer

To reverse mouse scroll direction on a Mac, open System Settings, click Mouse in the sidebar, and turn off the Natural scrolling toggle. The change takes effect immediately with no restart needed, switching your scroll wheel to the traditional Windows-style direction where scrolling down moves the page down.

If you've just switched from Windows to macOS, the scroll direction is probably the first thing that throws you off. Your mouse wheel feels backwards - and that's not you. Apple's default Natural scrolling makes content follow the direction of your fingers, which works beautifully on a trackpad but feels completely wrong on a physical mouse wheel. The good news: it's a one-step fix built right into macOS.

How to Reverse Mouse Scroll Direction on a Mac

Apple's own Mouse settings guide confirms that the Natural scrolling toggle is exactly what you're looking for. Turn it off, and your scroll wheel immediately starts behaving like it would on a Windows PC.

Here's the full step-by-step:

1. Open System Settings. Click the Apple menu in the top-left corner of your screen and select System Settings . On older macOS versions, this appears as System Preferences - same place, just a different name.
2. Click Mouse in the sidebar. If you're not seeing the full Mouse menu, your mouse may not be recognized yet. macOS only shows all mouse options when a mouse is actively connected.
3. Find the Natural scrolling toggle. On newer macOS versions it's labeled Natural scrolling . On older versions you might see it as Scroll direction: natural instead.
4. Turn Natural scrolling off. The change takes effect immediately - no restart needed.
5. Test it out. Open Safari, Finder, or any long page and scroll. Your mouse wheel should now move the page in the direction you'd expect from Windows.

If the direction feels right but the speed still seems off, Apple's pointer speed settings documentation points to Accessibility as the place to fine-tune scroll speed separately. It's easy to miss, but it makes a noticeable difference when you're trying to get everything feeling just right.

What Does Natural Scrolling Actually Mean?

Apple doesn't call it "reverse scroll" because - from their design perspective - it isn't reversed. Natural scrolling mirrors what happens on a touchscreen: swipe up, content moves up. The logic is consistent across devices, which makes sense in theory.

On a trackpad, it genuinely does feel natural. On a mouse wheel? That's a different story. A wheel and a touch surface aren't the same input device, and most people coming from Windows find the default behavior immediately disorienting. Turning it off is a completely reasonable choice.

If you want to understand how Apple thinks about this across its full range of input devices, their Multi-Touch gestures article explains how scrolling fits into the broader gesture system on MacBooks and Magic Mouse devices.

System Preferences vs. System Settings - What's the Difference?

If you're following an older tutorial that mentions System Preferences, it's not wrong - it's just outdated. Apple renamed it to System Settings with macOS Ventura, as noted in their macOS Ventura announcement. The layout changed, the name changed, but the actual setting didn't.

So if your screen doesn't match an older guide's screenshots, that's the reason - not a missing feature.

Can You Change Scroll Direction on a Mac Trackpad Too?

Yes, and it's worth doing separately. If you use both a trackpad and a mouse, macOS lets you control each independently. For a MacBook trackpad or Magic Trackpad, head to System Settings -> Trackpad -> Scroll & Zoom. Apple covers this in their Trackpad settings on Mac guide.

Plenty of people prefer Natural scrolling on the trackpad but not on the mouse - so it's worth checking both sections and setting each one the way that feels right to you.

Does This Work on iMac Too, or Just MacBooks?

It works on every Mac. iMac, Mac mini, Mac Studio, Mac Pro, MacBook Air, MacBook Pro - the steps are identical across all of them. As long as a mouse is connected, you'll find the Natural scrolling toggle in Mouse settings.

Is This Setting Still Available on the Latest macOS?

Yes. The wording and menu layout have shifted slightly across versions, but the toggle itself has been a consistent part of macOS for years. Older versions call it Scroll direction: natural; newer ones say Natural scrolling. Either way, it's there - and turning it off works the same way on recent macOS releases just as it did on older ones.

What If the Natural Scrolling Toggle Isn't Showing Up?

The most common reason is that macOS hasn't recognized your mouse as connected. Apple specifically notes that some mouse options only appear when a mouse is active. If the toggle is missing, try these steps:

- Restart your mouse using its power switch.
- If it's Bluetooth, go to System Settings -> Bluetooth and reconnect it from there.
- If it uses a USB receiver, unplug it and plug it back in, then wait a moment for macOS to detect it.
- Once the mouse is properly recognized, reopen Mouse settings - the full options should appear.

And if scrolling still doesn't feel quite right after flipping the toggle, don't stop there. Adjusting tracking speed and scroll speed can make a bigger difference than most people expect - especially if you're trying to get your Mac feeling as close to your old Windows setup as possible. Check out Apple's options for mice that work well with Mac if you're also thinking about upgrading your hardware.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I reverse the scroll direction on a Mac?

Go to System Settings -> Mouse and turn off the Natural scrolling toggle. The change takes effect immediately - no restart required. If you're on an older macOS version, look for Scroll direction: natural in System Preferences instead.

Why does my Mac scroll in the wrong direction?

Mac uses a feature called Natural scrolling by default, which makes content move in the same direction as your finger movement on a touchscreen or trackpad. If you're coming from Windows, this feels backwards. Turning off Natural scrolling in Mouse settings restores the direction you're used to.

Can I set different scroll directions for the mouse and trackpad on Mac?

Yes. macOS lets you control these independently. Change the mouse scroll direction in System Settings -> Mouse, and the trackpad direction in System Settings -> Trackpad -> Scroll & Zoom. You can have Natural scrolling on the trackpad and traditional scrolling on the mouse at the same time.

Do I need any software to reverse scroll direction on Mac?

No third-party software is needed. macOS has this setting built in. Just open System Settings, navigate to Mouse, and toggle off Natural scrolling. It's a native feature available on all Mac models running any recent version of macOS.

Why can't I see the Natural scrolling option in my Mouse settings?

macOS only shows the full Mouse settings when a mouse is actively connected. If the option isn't there, check that your mouse is properly paired over Bluetooth or that your USB receiver is securely plugged in. Once macOS recognizes the mouse, the settings will appear.

Does reversing scroll direction on Mac work on all Mac models?

Yes - this works the same way on iMac, MacBook Air, MacBook Pro, Mac mini, Mac Studio, and Mac Pro. The Natural scrolling toggle is available on every Mac model as long as a mouse is connected. The steps are identical regardless of which Mac you're using.

References

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