Parallels Desktop 16 adds Big Sur support, 3D Metal support, and more



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- Parallels Desktop 16’s Control Center under macOS Big Sur.
- Big Sur is also supported as a virtual machine, of course.
- Pro users will be able to name custom networks.
- There’s a developer menu to make some tasks easier.
- You can compress and export virtual machines.

Parallels Desktop 16 launched on the Mac today. It’s the latest major release of the software used by developers and others to run Windows, Linux, and macOS applications and

virtual machines under macOS. Its most notable offering is full support for macOS Big Sur.

According to the Parallels representatives Ars spoke with, Big Sur support was no small task: Big Sur ended support for the third-party kernel extensions that Parallels built on. That meant an enormous amount of work was required to play nice with Big Sur—25 human-years of engineering work, they claimed.

In addition to supporting Big Sur for both host machines and virtual machines, Parallels Desktop 16 has a slightly different look to fit the different appearance Apple has gone with in Big Sur.

While Big Sur support is the flagship feature here, there's a laundry list of small improvements in this release. For example, Parallels Desktop 16 supports 3D in Metal applications when running a macOS Big Sur virtual machine on a macOS Big Sur host.

Printers can be shared between host and virtual machines across operating systems, and support has been added for zoom and rotate gestures on multitouch trackpads for Windows apps that have zoom/rotation functionality. Parallels Desktop 16 also promises faster performance than the previous version; it claims to launch twice as fast and offer a 20 percent improvement in DirectX performance, as well as 75 percent faster "git status" in Linux virtual machines. Support for newer versions of OpenGL has expanded which Windows apps will run in a virtual machine via Parallels.

Pro Edition users can now name their custom networks, and they can export virtual machines in a compressed format that Parallels claims are a fraction their precompression size. Also, Parallels has launched a plug-in for Microsoft Visual Studio to simplify testing on different OSes.

We asked about any plans for supporting Windows on Apple Silicon in Big Sur, but Parallels reps declined to talk about

that, saying they would discuss it at a later date.

Parallels Desktop 16 will be available starting today. The standard edition is a one-time purchase at $99.99, while the Pro and Business Editions require a $99.99 per year subscription. Upgrading from Parallels Desktop 14 or 15 to the new version costs $49.99 once for the standard edition.

That package includes Parallels Toolbox, which was recently updated with new tools and features as well. Those include a screen-break tracker, a unit converter, and show desktop and window manager options for Macs.

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