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REVIEWS

Parallels Toolbox review: Dozens of fun, handy utilities

Parallels Toolbox offers more than 50 tools for video capture, focus, free memory, drive cleaner, clipboard history and more.

By [Cliff Joseph](#) and [Chris Barylick](#)
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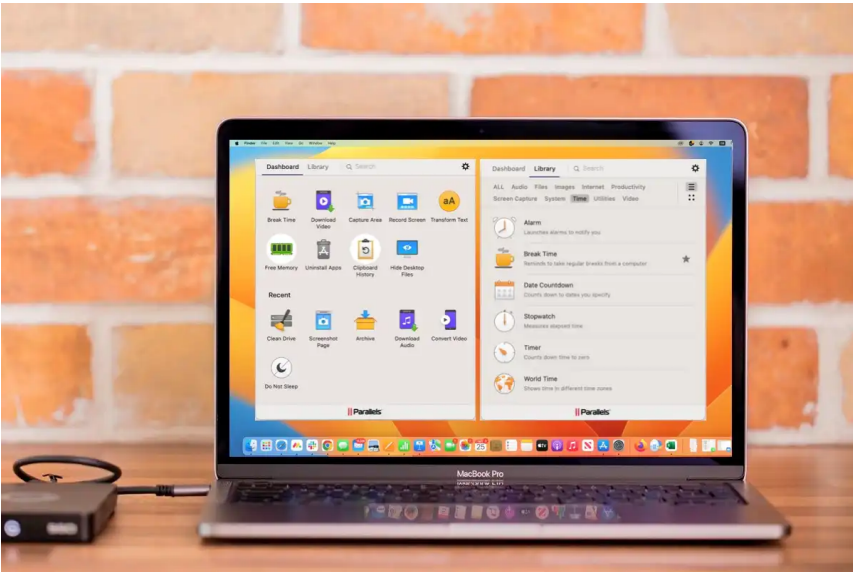


Image: Foundry

At a glance

Expert's Rating

Pros

- More than 50 tools and utilities
- Available for Mac and Windows
- Slick, easy-to-use interface

Cons

- Requires annual subscription
- Few users will need all tools
- Would like to see a backup utility included

Our Verdict

Among the collection of 50+ tools there are some real gems, like the Clipboard History and video download tools. There's also a lot of tools you probably don't need, but someone somewhere does. It's a shame that a Toolbox now requires an annual subscription (unless you get it as part of Parallels Desktop) but you can take advantage of the 7-day trial to see how useful Toolbox will be for you.

Price When Reviewed

\$24.99 per year

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For several years throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, there was the sheer joy of buying a new computer magazine from the rack or getting the new issue in the mail and seeing that a free CD-ROM had come with it. The CD-ROM generally contained various demos, updates, and free utilities to try out, and as you loaded it onto your Mac and copied everything over to try out later, your geeky heart thrilled to the idea of being able to play with some cool new applications and utilities you otherwise might not have come across.

Parallels, makers of the [Parallels desktop virtualization](#)

[software](#), has kept this alive with [Parallels Toolbox](#), which stands at version 7.0.0 as of this writing (version 7 launched in September 2024). What's present in Parallels Toolbox is a giant grab bag of small, cool apps that function somewhat as system widgets, but are still unique in their own right.

Parallels Toolbox is included in our review of the [best cleaner apps for Macs](#), and for good reason, as it includes a number of tools and features that can help you to fully uninstall apps, and clear out old or duplicate files that are taking up unnecessary disk space. However, there's a lot more to Toolbox than that simple handful of features.

Parallels Toolbox applications number more than 50 tools available in the Files, Audio, Images, Photography, Internet, Screen Capture, System, Time, Utilities, and Video categories. The applications arrive as small downloads and are easy to dive into, with pre-loaded utilities like Uninstall, Download Video, Free Memory, and Clean Drive clamoring for your attention while the Library hints at other nifty apps that can be downloaded and explored. Each tool works like a kind of mini-app that performs one specific task – such as the Free Memory tool, which shows how much memory your Mac currently has free, and which apps that you're running are using the most memory.

Since it first launched as a small collection of utilities that were—and still are—included free of charge along with [Parallels Desktop](#). The app has continued to grow and is now available as a standalone product for both Mac and Windows, with an annual subscription fee of \$24.99/£20.99 a year. There's also a 7-day free trial available so that you can try it out before deciding if you want to buy the full version.

Parallels Toolbox tools

You can set Parallels Toolbox to run automatically when you start your Mac, and the Toolbox icon will then be displayed on the Mac's main Menu bar—alongside Time, Volume and other standard Mac controls. This allows you to open a pull-down

menu that has two tabs for displaying tools. The Dashboard tab shows some of the most popular tools to help you get started, as well as the tools that you've used most recently.

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There's also a Library tab that displays the entire list of tools that are available, with additional sub-tabs that sort tools into related groups, such as Video Tools or System Tools. You can tag your favourite tools so that they are added to the Dashboard view for quick access, but many tools can also be placed with their own icons in the Menu bar as well, and there's also an option to create your own keyboard shortcuts to launch individual tools as well.

Find the tool you need for the job in Parallels Toolbox.

Image: Foundry

A collection of more than 50 tools means that there's a lot to take in when first getting started but, as mentioned, Toolbox can sort tools into groups to help you find the tools you need. If you're looking for cleaner tools that can help you to reclaim disk space or fine-tune your Mac's performance then the Clean Drive tool can locate unnecessary files that are taking up space on your Mac, and also find duplicate files that you may no longer need. Another tool can fully uninstall Mac apps, along with any related files that may be scattered around your Mac's drive. It can also highlight large files that are taking up a lot of space, such as games that you may not need anymore.

Other groups of tools include Video Tools, with options such as Download Video, which can help you to [download videos from YouTube](#) and other websites, while Convert Video can

convert your video files into different formats for use on an iPhone or iPad, or even into the AVI or WMV formats for Windows devices. The video tools also include options for creating screen recordings and animated GIFs, and there's a useful Download Audio tool, which lets you just grab the audio track from video files that you find online.

Here's an overview of some of the most useful tools we found:

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- [How does Parallels Toolbox compare to other duplicate file finders?](#)
- [How does Parallels Toolbox compare to other Mac cleaner software?](#)
- [Will using Parallels Toolbox help me free up space on my Mac?](#)
- [What is the value of Parallels Toolbox compared to other Mac cleaning tools?](#)

A.I. Search

The **Uninstall** app works as well as can be expected, and while this definitely isn't completely original on the Mac in this day and age, it allows you to go through a list of installed applications on your Mac, pick and choose what to remove, and reliably strip out both the app and its support files, which comes in handy.

Where **Download Video** is concerned, this actually functions more as a web browser extension than a standalone app, but it's simple, to the point, and allows you to easily save Internet-based video as well as offers an option for whether or not to save a video's subtitles. Yes, [4K Video Download](#) offers more options, such as isolating audio and video for download, but this offers something simple and handy and worth trying out.

Image: Foundry

Clean Drive: Once again, this feels a bit typical/in line with similar utilities being developed by other companies these days, but it offers easy notifications and access as to what's eating drive space (i.e., log files, cache files, trash, browser data, mail cache, mobile apps, iTunes temp files, iOS device backups, and old updates) and offers a nice level of control as to clearing them out. Clean Drive also offers quick access to the macOS Storage pane, which tends to be overlooked, and allows you to adjust your storage preferences on the fly.

Free Memory: Similar to other memory cleaners on the market, this notifies you as to where your Mac's RAM/Unified Memory is going, which applications are munching up the majority of it, and allows you to mark the amount of free memory in macOS' Menu Bar, which can be useful.

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Parallels Toolbox will free up memory on your Mac.

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Record Screen: This turned out to be both cool and handy, and after assigning it permission in the Screen & System Audio pane, it allows you to record what's on screen as a QuickTime movie file and save it to the desktop. You'll need to tinker with its options to get it exactly how you want it, but it's impressive nonetheless.

Break Time: The Break Time tool tracks time reminds you to

get away from your computer every now and then. It is fairly customizable to boot. It's easy to add your work calendar, customize notification sounds, and tell it to block your screen during breaks, thereby forcing you to actually relax and yank yourself away from a device for once in your life, and that's appreciated. Yes, it could be a bit more customizable and offer an option to enter more specific numerical times for work and break cycles, but this is off to a good start and succeeds in reminding you to pull yourself away from your Mac throughout the day.

Unit Converter: Just a nifty widget that can take just about any numerical unit and convert it into distances, monetary units, or about anything you can imagine on the fly. Yes, other widgets do this as well, but this is easy to pull up and work with and fun to boot.

Transform Text: This got me truly into Parallels Toolbox and made me a fan, offering a quick and easy set of text settings that can be readily copied over to other apps and pasted in as desired. Yes, being able to create backwards and upside-down text to send along to friends may seem a bit silly, but this is a fun tool that makes you want to see what else you can come up with.



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Encrypt: The cool on-the-fly encryption application Hollywood promised but no one ever actually delivered. This allows you to drag and drop files and folders in, and quickly encrypts everything to the .pboxz format, which can be locked to the password of your choice. It's quick, it's speedy in both its encryption and decryption functions, and you can designate where the file is saved to as well as save your passwords to the macOS keychain for easy retrieval.

Eject Volumes: This ejects all the external volumes mounted on your Mac at once, which can be incredibly convenient, or at least easier than telling a friend or family member to remember to drag a volume to the trash or tell them to click an icon and use Command-E to eject it, which is a conversation I've had dozens of times over the years that never got less frustrating.

Clipboard History: One of the biggest groups of tools is time-saving Productivity Tools. My personal favourite—which has earned its own spot on my iMac’s Menu bar—is Clipboard History, which can store multiple text and graphics items that you have copied into the clipboard, going back as far as the last 30 days. This is really useful for me when writing and editing articles as it allows me to quickly look back and retrieve text or graphics that I may need to use again.

Image: Foundry

Focus On: I also like the ability to quickly launch an entire group of apps or files with one click—such as Pages and Photoshop Elements when I’m working on screenshots for reviews—and the Focus On Window tool that reduces distractions by dimming the entire screen apart from the window or app that I’m currently using.

Image: Foundry

There's also a useful set of time-management tools, including a countdown timer, and a calendar countdown that counts the days until a specific date. A stop-watch, and the ability to create multiple alarms (which I find much simpler than Apple's own Reminders app).

Not all of these tools will seem essential. The tools for reading and creating barcodes will probably only appeal to a rather niche audience, while the tools for creating screenshots and screen recordings largely seem to reproduce the features that are already built into the macOS itself.

In spite of a few things that could be added to the apps in order to improve them, I see this as a playground of interesting utilities that's easy to play with, enjoy, and dive into. Yes, you can find Apple widgets within macOS and Web-based applications across the Internet that perform similar

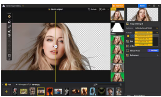
functions, but this is a well-consolidated library, and it’s fun to watch this grow and evolve over time.

Verdict

It’s a shame that a relatively modest piece of software such as Toolbox now requires an annual subscription, as that will probably deter quite a few potential users. I do find Toolbox useful—but I get it included with my copy of Parallels Desktop, so I don’t need to pay an additional subscription fee for it. And, incidentally, Parallels Desktop still provides an option to buy that as a one-time purchase without an annual subscription, so it’s disappointing that Toolbox itself is now subscription-only. And, of course, there are many utilities available from other developers that provide similar features. But at least you can download the free trial and see how useful Toolbox is for your own personal work set-up before buying.

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