

What can I help you with?

# Talking to Siri®

Mastering the Language of  
Apple's Intelligent Assistant

Erica Sadun     Steve Sande

Third Edition

Includes a new Q&A with the creator of Siri!



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“So you think you know everything that Siri can do? I’ll bet you don’t. What you can accomplish with Siri is amazing if you just know how to ask, and this book is where you will learn what to say and how to say it. With generous illustrations and simple explanations, Erica and Steve will help you get more out of Siri. Much more.”

—Chuck Joiner, MacVoices

“It’s easy to dismiss Siri as a fun novelty that gives amusing answers to ‘Open the pod bay doors, Siri.’ But Siri is a remarkably useful tool. The authors of *Talking to Siri* make it fast and easy to learn how to put it to use, whether that’s the quickest way to call your husband, schedule a reminder (‘When I get home, remind me to...’), or find out the baseball score. The writing is delightful, and the information full of ‘Gosh, how cool!’”

—Esther Schindler, Technology Journalist

“Steve and Erica’s knowledge of Siri is surpassed only by the clarity with which they explain it. I learned several new tricks, even as a long-time Siri user.”

—Dave Caolo, News Editor, *The Unofficial Apple Weblog*

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# Talking to **Siri**<sup>®</sup>

Mastering the Language of  
Apple's Intelligent Assistant

Third Edition

Erica Sadun  
Steve Sande

**QUE**<sup>®</sup>

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Indianapolis, Indiana 46240 USA

# Talking to Siri®

## Mastering the Language of Apple's Intelligent Assistant

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ISBN-13: 978-0-7897-5298-7

ISBN-10: 0-7897-5298-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014931709

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing: March 2014

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# A Quick Q&A with Dag Kittlaus, Cofounder and Former CEO of Siri

## **How much of what we see in Siri today was realized in your original work?**

Steve [Jobs] wanted to focus on everyday use cases for iPhone users, which is what you saw with the original Apple launch. Integrating much deeper in iOS helped the experience. The original start-up version had a few more transactional capabilities and some broader data, such as asking Siri to “send a taxi to my house in an hour,” or “What should I do tonight around downtown Chicago?”

## **How much have Apple and other voice assistant systems like that from Google brought to the table?**

Google seems to be following the Siri path, although I think that in general Virtual Personal Assistants will become a marketplace unto themselves, with user preferences becoming the “filter to the world” as people increasingly navigate and control things through conversation.

## **Did you anticipate users becoming as excited about Siri’s personality as the utility of its technology?**

Yes. You will see Siri become increasingly personable as time goes on.

## **Of all the ways people are using Siri today, what is the single use case that excites you the most and pays off its promise?**

The most exciting use case is the general fact that people by the hundreds of millions make their lives easier by talking to their mobile devices. Personally, I use reminders, sports, text messaging, and restaurant reservations the most often. When the number of things you can do goes from a few dozen to thousands, you will see the entire way we use the Internet change.

**What is something you desperately wanted Siri to be able to do and could not accomplish? Is this something we're likely to see over the next few years? If not, why?**

There was no functionality we wanted to build that we didn't end up making work, and there is no limit to what these types of systems will do in the coming few years.

**What else could you tell us that we'd never even know to ask?**

In the early years, we had different names for our software releases. V1 was "periodically human," V2 was "practically human," V3 was "positively human," and V4 was "kill all humans."



**NOTE**

Want to learn more about how Siri came to be in terms of its original conception and prototyping? Check out this superb video interview with Dag: <http://scobleizer.com/2010/08/10/the-story-behind-the-2010-startup-success-siri-why-its-so-important-to-apples-future/>.

## Preface

With Siri, your spoken wishes are your iPhone's command. Available on the newest iPhones (4S and later), iPads (third generation and later), iPad minis, and iPod touches (fifth generation and later), the voice-operated Siri assistant uses natural-language processing to answer your questions, respond to your commands, and provide helpful action as you need it. With Siri, you can set up meetings, call your mom, ask about your appointments, check your email, find your friends, and do a lot more.

Using Siri is incredibly convenient. You'll find yourself using your device in ways you never did before because Siri makes things so much simpler. "Wake me up at 8:30 a.m." "Tell my spouse I'm on my way home." "Remind me to stop by the dry cleaners when I leave here." "Text my hairdresser." Siri offers virtual concierge services that simplify your life.

This short book introduces you to Siri. You'll learn how to access the voice assistant by using the Home button (or simply lifting your iPhone to your ear) and how to achieve the highest recognition rate as you talk. You'll discover which categories Siri responds to and find out how to make the most of each of these in your conversations. You'll also discover practical how-to guidance mixed with many examples to inspire as well as to instruct.

Tutorials show you how to set up Siri in your settings and how to manage the interactive conversations you have with your voice assistant. You'll learn how to perform tasks by topic: checking the weather, doing math, looking up information on the Web, and many others.

Siri dictation has now made the leap to OS X. Your Mac can listen to what you say and transcribe it in words to nearly any text-ready application. You can dictate letters, create notes, or specify reminder details with your voice. This book shows you how to control dictation—on both OS X and iOS—so you can add punctuation, paragraph breaks, and more.

Ready to get started? Here are all the basics you need for talking to Siri, presented in a simple, easy-to-follow handbook.

## What's New in This Edition

With the arrival of iOS 7, Siri evolved from a beta (in testing) feature to a mature product. Siri now responds to your commands more quickly and offers new capabilities that transform your favorite Apple device into an indispensable part of your life.

This third edition provides all the helpful commonsense how-to that made the first two editions of *Talking to Siri* best sellers. In addition, it covers new features to help both original users and those users who are just starting to work with Siri.

Siri's dictation features are available in the latest OS X, and this book shows how to accurately and quickly enter text into your Mac or iOS device using the power of Siri.

The authors of *Talking to Siri* love to test the limits of what Apple's intelligent assistant can do, and you'll find both hints and ideas to stir your imagination and build your excitement for this fun technology.

When you pick up this book, you'll be sure to learn new tricks and discover what Siri can do to enhance your life.

## Who This Book Is For

This book is written for anyone who has purchased a Siri-enabled iOS device—an iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch—or who owns a Mac running the latest OS X releases and wonders how to make the most of it. If you're looking for tips, tricks, and how-to guidance, you've come to the right place. This book offers friendly, easy-to-read tutorials that show you, with a wealth of examples, the ins and outs of Siri use in real life.

## How This Book Is Organized

This book offers topic-by-topic coverage of basic Siri usage. Each chapter groups related tasks together, allowing you to jump directly to the material you're looking for. Here's a rundown of what you'll find in this book's chapters:

- **Chapter 1, “Getting Started with Siri”:** This chapter introduces you to Siri basics. You'll read about setting up the service, launching it, and trying it out. You'll discover how to speak clearly and how to recover from mistakes when Siri misunderstands you. Don't like Siri's voice? You'll find out how to change it.
- **Chapter 2, “Controlling Your Device with Siri”:** The latest incarnation of Siri not only performs your bidding when it comes to finding information and staying in touch but also gives you the power to control many of the settings on your iPhone without ever launching the Settings app.
- **Chapter 3, “Asking Siri for Information”:** Want to check the weather or stocks? Need to search the Web? Eager to find out whether your favorite team is winning? This chapter introduces ways you can check information by conversing with Siri. You'll read about Siri integration with Bing, Google, Wikipedia, and Wolfram Alpha and learn how to ask questions that get you the best possible answers.



- **Chapter 4, “Using Siri to Stay in Touch”:** This chapter shows you how you can use Siri queries to keep in touch with your friends, family, and business contacts. You’ll read about searching for contacts, placing phone calls, checking voicemail and missed calls, returning calls, texting, updating Facebook and Twitter, and sending email. You’ll learn about how Siri relationships work and how you can let Siri know who your spouse, your child, or your parent is.
- **Chapter 5, “Talking to Your Day-Timer”:** When you want to create appointments, take notes, or set reminders, Siri provides the perfect set of tools for organizing your life. Siri enables you to check your daily schedule, jot down important notes, and set short-term timers and alarms. This chapter introduces all the ways you can use Siri to help schedule and organize your life.
- **Chapter 6, “Going Shopping with Siri”:** Whether you’re searching for goods and services, trying to find your way to local businesses, or trying to figure out tax and tip after eating lunch, Siri has the tools you need. In this chapter, you’ll read about using Siri to go shopping. You’ll discover great ways to hunt down the items you need (including turn-by-turn directions!). You’ll also get surprisingly useful tips on having Siri remind you about what you need when you get close to the stores that carry them. Siri is now more useful than ever when you’re searching for restaurants, even to the point of making reservations for you.
- **Chapter 7, “Pushing Limits with Siri”:** The Siri universe continues to expand over time. With a little clever work, you can blog using Siri text messaging and email. This chapter shows you how you can push the Siri envelope.

- **Chapter 8, “Siri Dictation”:** Siri does a lot more than just answer queries. Its built-in dictation support means you can use its natural language-to-text support to speak to applications on iOS or OS X. This chapter discusses all the ins and outs of Siri dictation, providing tips and hints about getting the most accurate responses, and shows how you can produce exactly the text you’re looking to create (punctuation and all).
- **Chapter 9, “Having Fun with Siri”:** In this chapter, you’ll read about having fun with Siri and all the clever ways you can tickle your personal assistant’s funny bone. It’s okay to be silly with Siri. This chapter shows you how. You also find out how to give Siri control of your physical world through a variety of new home automation products.
- **Chapter 10, “Our Top 10 Siri Jokes”:** In addition to being friendly, helpful, loyal, and kind, Siri can bring the sass and the laughs. Before we wrap up this book, we want to leave you with 10 of our favorite Siri wisecracks.
- **Appendix A, “Siri Quick Reference”:** This appendix provides a topic-by-topic list of things you can say to Siri, offering you an overview of this highly capable assistant’s capabilities.

## Contacting the Authors

If you have any comments or questions about this book, please visit <http://sanddunetech.com/contact-us/>. We’re happy to listen to your feedback. Follow us on Twitter (@sanddunebooks) to keep up with our new and updated books.

## About the Authors

**Erica Sadun** writes a lot of books and blogs at TUAW. When not writing, she's a full-time parent of geeks who are brushing up on their world-domination skills. According to her academic dosimeter, she's acquired more education than any self-respecting person might consider wise. She enjoys deep-diving into technology.

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## Acknowledgments

Thanks to everyone at TUAW for all their support and to all the readers and friends who helped with suggestions and feedback. Additional thanks for this edition go out to Aaron Kulbe and Matt Yohe.

None of this would have been possible without the vision and leadership of Apple's late founder and CEO, Steve Jobs. Thank you, Mr. Jobs.

## We Want to Hear from You!

As the reader of this book, you are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we're doing right, what we could do better, what areas you'd like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you're willing to pass our way.

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# 1

## Getting Started with Siri

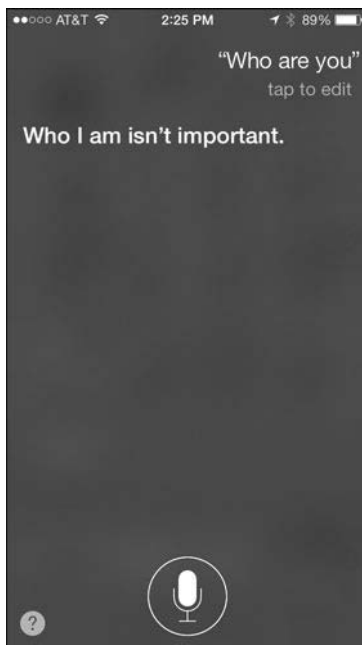
Have you met Siri? Siri is Apple's fabulous hands-free, conversation-based virtual personal assistant. Siri can help manage your life, organize your mobile device, and, as a bonus, provide endless hours of silly fun. If you own a current-generation iOS device, your virtual assistant awaits your command. Siri runs on the iPhone (4S and later), iPod touch (fifth generation and later), iPad (third generation and later), iPad Air, and all versions of the iPad mini.

Siri replaces the dance of your fingers on the glass screen of an iOS device with a conversation like the one shown in Figure 1-1. Siri understands your voice and places what you say in context with the apps that it works with. It even responds with a question if it doesn't understand. Reality has overtaken science fiction. You can now use spoken natural language to interface with a computer.

**NOTE**

This book refers to Siri as *it*, not as *him* or *her*. This is because Siri can be set to use either a male or female voice according to your preferences. Although Siri originally had specific genders in different regions (for example, in the United States, Siri was female, and in the UK, Siri was male), Siri's gender is now universally adjustable.

Siri doesn't stop there. Macintosh computers that run OS X Mavericks and Mountain Lion offer Siri dictation as well. You can speak to dictate emails, create reports with your voice, and more.

**Figure 1-1**

Siri awaits your command.

In this chapter, you'll learn how to get started with Siri: how to enable it, launch the service, and try it out. You'll read about how to speak (slowly and clearly), how to recover from mistakes (by editing errors), and how to access Siri in a variety of ways. By the time you finish reading this chapter, you'll feel at ease talking to (instead of at) Siri.



## NOTE

An independent start-up founded by the Stanford Research Institute's Artificial Intelligence Center created Siri's recognition technology in 2007 (hence the name Siri). Apple acquired the Siri company in 2010 and first debuted the technology with iOS 5 on the iPhone 4S.

## Enabling Siri on iOS

Like many other services on iOS, you can enable or disable Siri as desired. To ensure that the Siri service has been enabled, navigate to Settings, General, Siri or launch Siri and tell it to "Open Siri settings." You now see the screen of options shown in Figure 1-2. These options let you control how Siri works. Use this screen to adjust the way Siri is set up and responds to you.



**Figure 1-2**

From the Siri settings page, you choose a primary language, select either a male or female voice, set when you want the service to respond to you, and enable or disable the handy Raise to Speak option. Some options vary by iOS device. For example, only the iPhone supports Raise to Speak, which relies on the iPhone's built-in proximity sensor. Other devices do not offer proximity sensors, so they cannot provide this option.

Tap the Siri toggle switch to On (green) to activate the Siri service. On the iPhone, when the service is disabled, the older iOS Voice Control feature still enables you to place hands-free calls and request music. Siri is much more powerful than Voice Control, offering a wider range of voice-directed actions.

Disabling Siri is not a step you take lightly. Doing so actually removes your information from Apple servers. You'll lose all the personalization and customization you have built up over time. You can re-enable Siri later, but reestablishing that personal profile—specifically how Siri learns your accent and speech patterns—will take time (see Figure 1-3).

The settings page includes some other options:

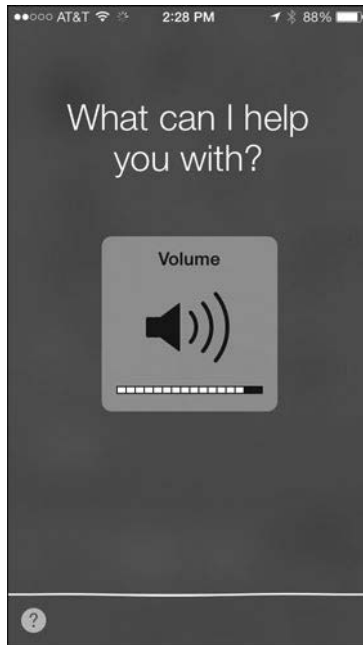
- **Language:** Select the language and region you want Siri to use for interpreting your interaction. In early 2014, Siri speaks Cantonese Chinese, Mandarin Chinese with mainland and Taiwan dialects, English (Australian, Canadian, UK, and U.S. dialects), French (Canadian, French, and Swiss dialects), German (German and Swiss dialects), Italian (Italian and Swiss dialects), Japanese, Korean, and Spanish (Mexican, Spanish, and U.S. dialects). Apple is rolling out more languages and dialects over time. You can ask Siri, "What languages do you speak?" to see them listed.
- **Voice Gender:** In its original release, Siri used a default gender of female in the United States and male in the United Kingdom, with similar gender discrepancies in other countries. Now you can select between male and female in many of the supported languages. Siri cannot change that gender for you. If you ask, it directs you to make the change yourself in the Siri settings page.
- **Voice Feedback:** Siri can respond to you with voice as well as text responses. Choose to always enable this feature (Always) or to support it only for hands-free operation (Handsfree Only) when used with a headset of some sort.

If you choose Always, remember that Siri uses a volume control system that's separate from your main iOS device's voice control (see Figure 1-4). Lowering the volume of your music playback won't affect Siri and vice versa. If you enable voice feedback and forget to lower the Siri volume, you could encounter embarrassing situations. Imagine being in a meeting and activating the service by accident. You set Siri's volume by opening the assistant (press and hold the Home button or raise the unit to your ear if you enabled Raise to Speak) and then adjusting the device's volume toggles on the side of the phone.



**Figure 1-3**

Disabling Siri deletes information stored on Apple's servers. Siri must relearn your personal style when you re-enable it in the future.



**Figure 1-4**

Siri has its own volume controls. Adjusting the volume when Siri is displayed does not affect normal iOS system volume and vice versa.

- **My Info:** This sets the default contact for your identity from your personal address book. Choosing a contact lets Siri know where “home” is, what your name is, and so forth. It also allows Siri to associate relationships with your contacts, such as “my spouse” or “my boss” or “my doctor.” Make sure this option points to the right contact so that when Siri tries to help you, it’s working with the right person.
- **Raise to Speak:** When this setting is enabled, Siri activates using the iPhone proximity sensor. As the device nears your ear, Siri detects that you’re ready to speak and enters listening

mode. Switch this setting to On, and you can start a Siri session by raising the iPhone to your ear. You generally want to leave this option enabled. It offers the simplest and most discrete way to activate Siri from your handset. This feature is not available on iPod touch, iPad, or iPad mini—only on iPhone.



## NOTE

Muting your iOS device and lowering the speaker volume to zero does not directly affect Siri chimes for either dictation or voice assistance. If you hold the Home button for too long or your finger brushes across the microphone in the keyboard, you could trigger a Siri-based beep. This can be quite embarrassing in boardroom or classroom situations. That's because Siri has its own volume control (refer to Figure 1-4), which you access only when the assistant is shown onscreen.

To adjust Siri's volume setting, summon your personal assistant and then adjust the volume control when the wavy line appears onscreen. You can silence Siri here to ensure that your Siri-enabled device stays quiet even when you accidentally open the assistant screen. This tweak doesn't affect the chime Siri plays (just to you) when you hold a phone to your ear.

## Universal Access

Siri works with VoiceOver, the screen reader built into iOS. VoiceOver offers a way for visually impaired users to listen to their *graphical user interface (GUI)*. VoiceOver converts an application's visual presentation to an audio description.

VoiceOver can speak any text displayed on your iOS screen, including Siri responses. VoiceOver speech can also interpret as speech certain graphical elements presented by Siri. These include weather forecasts, the text of emails, answers from Wolfram Alpha, and so forth.

You enable VoiceOver in Settings, General, Accessibility, VoiceOver. Be sure to set the Triple-Click Home option to On so that you can enable and disable VoiceOver with a simple shortcut.

When using VoiceOver, you use the iPhone GUI with your fingers and ears rather than with your eyes. VoiceOver uses an entire language of touches, with a challenging learning curve. Consult documentation on Apple's website for details about using VoiceOver features both in general and with Siri.

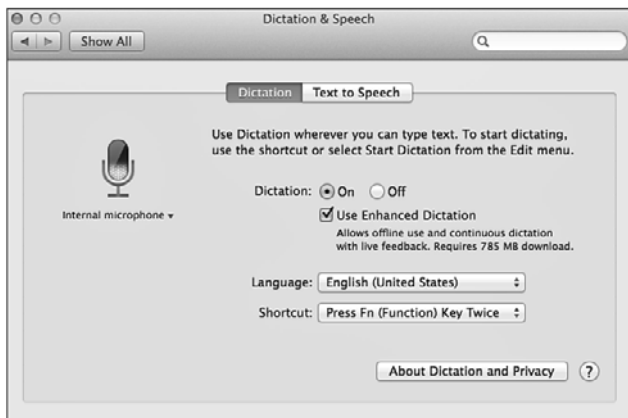
## Enabling Dictation on OS X

Starting with OS X Mountain Lion, you can use Siri-style dictation on your Macintosh. You enable this feature in the System Preferences Dictation & Speech pane (see Figure 1-5). Setting the Dictation option to On activates dictation services on your computer. These services enable you to speak text wherever you would normally type it.

The Shortcut pop-up menu lets you choose how to begin dictation. In Figure 1-5, this shortcut is set to Press Function (Fn) Key Twice. Other preset options enable you to press the right Command key twice, the left Command key twice, or either Command key twice.

If you'd rather use a nonstandard key choice, choose Customize from the pop-up menu and type a different key or key combination. For example, you might use Shift-F6 or Control-Shift-D. Choose the key combination that best fits your personal workflow.

Select the dictation language and region from the Language pop-up menu. OS X Mavericks currently supports English, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish, in a number of regional dialects (see Figure 1-6). This set will almost certainly grow over time.

**Figure 1-5**

OS X's Dictation & Speech settings pane enables you to activate dictation on your Macintosh.

**Figure 1-6**

OS X dictation currently supports a number of languages and regions.

**NOTE**

Many Siri services are country and region specific. Some features, such as dictation, are available practically worldwide. Others, such as maps and directions, have been rolled out on a far more limited basis. Check Apple's website to see if specific Siri features are available in your area.

## Privacy

Apple collects data on your Siri usage. Information sent to Apple includes your contacts in the address book, your name and contact information, songs and playlists from your media library, audio recordings of you speaking, transcripts of what you have said, and operating system information/performance statistics. If you use Siri, a lot of your personal information goes to Apple.

What's more, this information may be shared with Apple's partners—but only for dictation-related services. Apple states that it doesn't share the info with other third parties. You cannot opt out of data collection, but you can opt out of Siri entirely by not using the feature and disabling it in Settings or System Preferences.

If you don't mind having Apple collect information on you but you'd rather not have your children's information divulged to Apple, you can separately control access to dictation in the Parental Controls pane on OS X. There you will find and can check the Disable Use of Dictation option for your child's account. On iOS, use the General, Restrictions settings to disable Siri access.

For more about Siri privacy issues, tap the About Siri and Privacy link in the iOS Siri settings page or the About Dictation and Privacy link in the OS X Dictation & Speech pane. Figure 1-7 shows the privacy disclosure screens for iOS and OS X.





When you use Dictation, you can choose to have either your Mac or Apple’s servers perform the speech recognition for you. If you use Mac-based Dictation, your computer will convert what you say into text without sending your dictated speech to Apple.

If you use server-based Dictation, the things you dictate will be recorded and sent to Apple to convert what you say into text and your computer will also send Apple other information, such as your name and nickname; and the names, nicknames, and relationship with you (for example, “my dad”) of your address book contacts (collectively, your “User Data”). All of this data is used to help the dictation feature understand you better and recognize what you say. It is not linked to other data that Apple may have from your use of other Apple services.

Information collected by Apple will be treated in accordance with Apple’s Privacy Policy, which can be found at [www.apple.com/privacy](http://www.apple.com/privacy).

You can choose to turn off or change your preferences for Dictation at any time by going to the Dictation & Speech pane within System Preferences. If you turn off Dictation, or switch from using server-based Dictation to Mac-based Dictation, Apple will delete your User Data, as well as your recent voice input data, from Apple’s servers. Older voice input data that has been disassociated from you may be retained for a period of time to generally improve Dictation and Siri functionality in Apple products and services. This voice input data may include audio files and transcripts of what you said and related diagnostic data, such as hardware and operating system specifications and performance statistics.

You can restrict access to the Dictation feature on your computer in the Parental Controls pane of System Preferences.

**Figure 1-7**

Apple collects a lot of information when you use Siri.

## Launching Siri on iOS

On iOS, Siri lets you use your voice instead of your fingers to send messages, schedule meetings, choose music, and more. You use Siri conversationally. You talk to your device, and your device talks right back to you.

Access Siri in several ways:

- Press and hold the Home button for a couple seconds.
- Raise your iPhone to your ear. (Not available on iPod touch or iPad.)
- On your wired (iPhone earbud style) or wireless (Bluetooth) headset, squeeze or press the control button. Siri also works with many car kits. A small blue speaker icon appears in Siri's display when you connect through Bluetooth.
- Press the Siri Eyes Free button on your car steering wheel. A growing number of cars now support Siri Eyes Free, providing a fast and safe way to engage Siri while driving.

A chime tells you that Siri is listening and ready to follow your commands. Make sure Siri is enabled and that you have a good Internet connection. If so, you are ready to take off and start exploring this innovative voice-driven service.

## Saying Hello to Siri

Are you ready to start talking to Siri? Siri uses several chimes to let you know whether it's listening to you. These audio cues help you know Siri's state. Higher chimes start a session, and lower ones cancel it. To hear this on the iPhone, enable Raise to Speak, raise your phone (turned on, of course) to your ear, and then place it back on a table. The high chimes mean Siri is listening; the low chimes mean it has stopped listening. On the iPod touch or iPad,

press and hold the Home button (high chimes) and then tap the Siri microphone (low chimes).

Try the following to start a Siri session. Either raise the phone to your ear or press and hold the Home button. If Siri is already displayed, tap the Siri microphone button.

Say “Hello” and then pause. Siri uses pause detection to know when you’ve stopped speaking. You now hear a second set of chimes—higher-pitched chimes of acknowledgment, in this case—but this time you hear them without moving the phone away from your ear or having to tap the microphone button.

If you have a good Internet connection—a requirement for working with Siri—you’ll hear it respond to you. Siri responds with “Hi” or “Hello,” perhaps adding your name (see Figure 1-8). As you talk, Siri creates a scrolling list of responses so you can review the conversation to date. By default, Siri automatically scrolls up to the most recent response, but to see what has already transpired, pull down on the list.

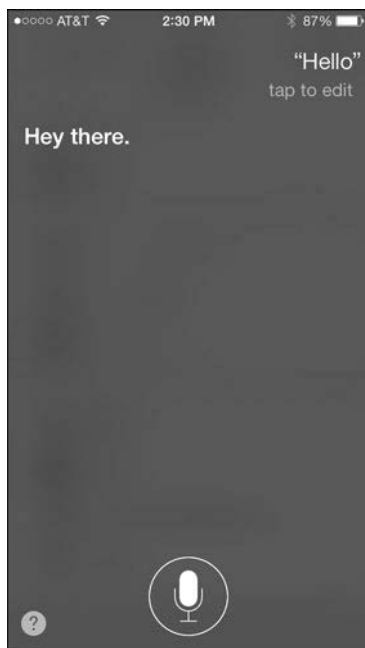
To summarize, you start talking to Siri in these ways:

- Pressing and holding the Home button for 1 to 2 seconds
- Pressing and holding the control button on a wired or wireless headset
- Pressing the Siri Eyes Free button on your car steering wheel
- Raising a phone to your ear with Raise to Speak enabled
- Tapping the Siri microphone button

Siri plays chimes that indicate the state of your interaction. By listening for these chimes, you’ll know how Siri is responding to you:

- Its higher-pitched “listening” chime (the musically inclined will recognize a C4) lets you know Siri’s ready for you to speak.

- To finish talking, you can either pause or tap the microphone button. Siri plays a high-pitched “done listening” chime (a higher A♭4).
- If Siri does not hear any input, it stops listening and plays a lower-pitched “cancellation” chime (a lower A♭3).



**Figure 1-8**  
Saying hello to Siri.

## Cancelling Siri

If you ever need to stop whatever Siri is doing, just say “Cancel” and then either tap the microphone button or press the Home button.

Because Siri remembers your ongoing thread of conversation, you might need to reset your current conversation at times. Say “Start over” or “Restart” to begin a new dialogue. Siri responds with a response such as, “Okay, Erica, what’s next?” or “What can I help you with?”

## Repeating Siri

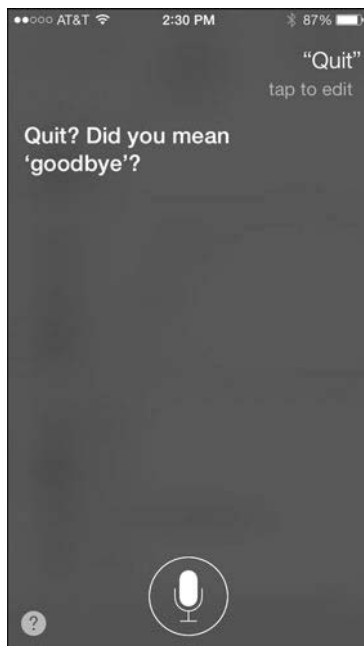
When you did not quite catch what Siri last said, say “Say it again.” Siri repeats its last response. This feature gives you a second chance for comprehension or offers you the possibility to repeat a particularly clever punch line to share with others.

## Quitting Siri

Leave Siri mode by pressing the Home button or saying “Good-bye.” This returns you to your normal iOS home screen. If you say “Quit,” Siri responds, “Did I say something wrong? If you really want me to go away, at least say ‘goodbye.’” and “Quit? Did you mean ‘goodbye?’” (see Figure 1-9).

Asking Siri to “go away” or “leave” won’t work, but you can say any of the following to exit Siri mode:

- “Goodbye”
- “Bye”
- “Bye-bye”
- “So long”
- “Adios”
- “See you later”
- “See you”



**Figure 1-9**

To leave Siri mode by voice, say “Goodbye.” Telling Siri “Quit” or “Go away” does not end your Siri interaction.

## Getting Help

If you say “Help me” or “What can you do?” Siri provides suggestions on what to say. Siri displays a list of categories, such as Phone, Music, Messages, and Calendar, along with a sample phrase for each topic, as shown in Figure 1-10. Tap on any category to view an extended list of sample phrases for just that category.

**Figure 1-10**

Not sure what to say to Siri? Siri can offer suggestions. Just say “Help” or “What can you do?” A tiny question mark appears at the left of Siri’s microphone whenever you invoke it. Tap this question mark at any time to request this help screen.

For example, if you’re interested in something about a calendar, tap Calendar “Set up a meeting at 9.” Siri then offers examples for adding, changing, or asking about events. They provide a range of functions that showcase how you can interactively ask about your upcoming schedule. Here are examples:

- “Set up a meeting at 9.”
- “Meet with Emily at noon.”
- “Set up a meeting about hiring tomorrow at 9 a.m.”

- "Schedule a planning meeting at 8:30 today in the boardroom."
- "Reschedule my appointment with Dr. Patrick to next Monday at 9 a.m."
- "Add Emily to my meeting with Brian."
- "Cancel the budget review meeting."
- "What does the rest of my day look like?"
- "What's on my calendar for Friday?"
- "When am I meeting with Jimmy?"
- "Where is my next meeting?"

This onboard help system lets you know the kinds of interactions that Siri supports. The options inspire you to expand your Siri vocabulary and use the assistant system more flexibly.



#### **NOTE**

If you're just starting out with Siri and don't really know what to try, consider saying to Siri "Speak to me," "Let's talk," or "Tell me a joke." These are great ways to produce interesting responses.

## **Siri Listens**

As Siri listens to you speaking, look at the bottom of the screen (see Figure 1-11, left). A moving "wave" provides you with volume feedback as you speak and lets you know that Siri is in listening mode. If you do not respond after a few seconds, Siri stops listening and plays the end-of-listening chime.

To finish speaking, either pause and wait for Siri or tap the wave. Siri listens and then enters thinking mode. During this time, a rotating circle appears, letting you know that Siri is contacting



Apple's data centers for speech interpretation and processing (see Figure 1-11, right).

Siri works with both 3G and Wi-Fi Internet connections, so you can use it wherever you are. The data demands are fairly minimal, so you probably do not need to worry about depleting your monthly allocation if you use Siri a lot.



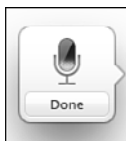
**Figure 1-11**

Left: Siri's feedback wave rises and falls with your speech. Right: A circle rotates as Siri contacts its servers to interpret your speech and respond to you.

If Siri is able to process your statement, it tries to interpret it and provide some kind of response for you. If Siri cannot call home to its Apple data processing center, it informs you about the situation, saying something like, “I’m sorry, I’m having difficulty accessing the network.” Try moving to a location with a better Internet signal or try again later.

## Listening on OS X

On OS X, Siri provides feedback in the shape of a microphone. As Figure 1-12 shows, the microphone acts as a level meter, and an animated dot presentation shows that the computer is actively contacting servers for speech interpretation. OS X does not use pause detection, so you must either click Done or press Return to finish your dictation.



**Figure 1-12**

The microphone on OS X works as a level meter. The height of the purple bar in the microphone reflects the current volume of your speech.

## Siri Responds

Siri responds to both direct commands and random statements. If Siri can't interpret what you've said as a request, it searches the Web for your statement. For example, Figure 1-13 shows how Siri responds to you when you say “platypuses.” Siri uses your word or phrase for a web search using its built-in set of helper sites: Bing, Wikipedia, and Wolfram Alpha.

**Figure 1-13**

Siri displays web searches for any words or phrases it doesn't immediately recognize.

**NOTE**

Siri learns your accent and voice characteristics over time. As long as you keep Siri enabled in your iPhone settings, your Siri account remains on Apple's servers, and your recognition rates improve over time. Siri uses voice-recognition algorithms to categorize your voice into its database of regional dialects and accents. This database continues to evolve and will keep improving as Siri collects more data and evaluates its interpretation successes. Siri also uses information from your iPhone. Data from your contacts, music library, calendar, and reminders helps fuel its recognition vocabulary.

To reset your Siri information, switch Siri off and then back on in Settings, General, Siri. When you do this, you dispose of all personalized settings Siri has collected from you over time (not including any general metrics it studies and adds to its primary database) and returns Siri to a fresh install, ready to learn your quirks again.

## Correcting Siri

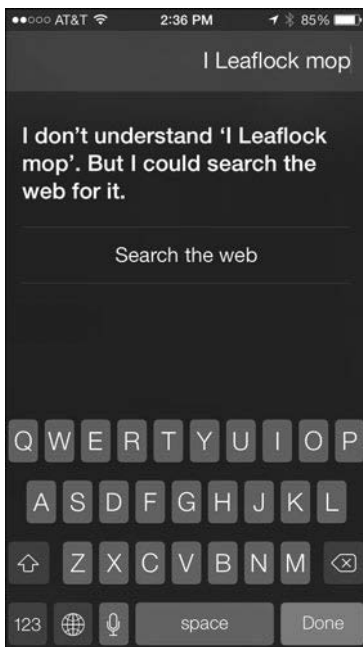
Siri always gives you a second chance. To fix what you said or correct Siri's interpretation of your speech, just tap the words that represent what you said (see Figure 1-14). Siri reinforces this capability by showing the words *tap to edit* underneath your most recent query. (You don't see this in Figure 1-14 because the words have already been tapped and Siri is in Edit mode.) When you tap, an edit cursor and the system keyboard appear, enabling you to make changes. At this point, edit your request directly or tap the microphone button on the keyboard to add words or redictate your request. Tap the blue Done key on the keyboard to finish.

Sometimes Siri's dictation processor adds a blue line under a word in the text you have spoken. When you tap that word, iOS presents alternative interpretations of your speech. Either dictate a replacement or select the correction you want to use or edit.

You can also speak to correct text messages or emails that you have composed. The following statements let Siri know that you're not satisfied with what you've said. Notice how you can change the contents completely, add new material, and more:

- "Change it to: Let's meet at 3:00 p.m."
- "Add: Can't wait exclamation point." (You can use "Add" to extend items, even if Siri doesn't mention it explicitly as an option.)

- “No, send it to Megs.”
- “No.” (This keeps the message without sending it.)
- “Cancel.”



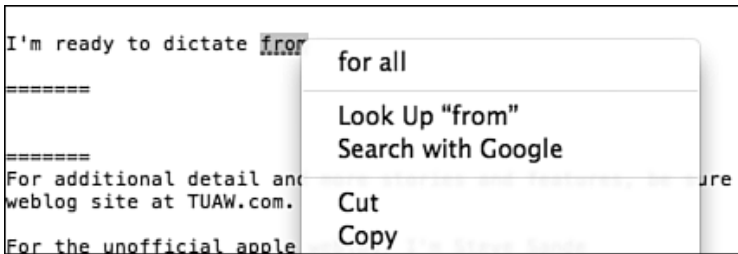
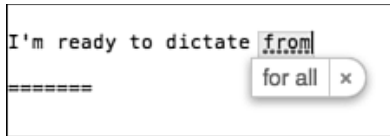
**Figure 1-14**

Tap your interpreted speech to edit it directly or dictate your statement.

Before you send a text message on its way, have Siri read it back to you. Say “Read it to me” or “Read it back to me.” As with the Add feature, Siri does not tell you about this option. When you are satisfied with your text, tweet, or email message, say something like “Yes, send it” to send it off.

## Correcting Speech on OS X

The same dashed underlines appear on OS X as on iOS. Because OS X is centered on the mouse, not the touch, the methods for accessing variant spellings differ. Figure 1-15 shows the result of saying “I’m ready to dictate for all.” Siri has misinterpreted the last word as *from* but flagged it with possible variations. It shows this flag by underlining the word with a dashed blue line.



**Figure 1-15**

With OS X, you can either left-click just to the right of an underlined word (top) or right-click the underlined word (bottom).

If you move the cursor to the very right of the word in question and left-click, OS X presents a list of alternative interpretations. In Figure 1-15, it suggests *for all*. Tap that word or phrase to choose it. OS X replaces the word with your selection and removes the underline.

You can also right-click (Control-click) the underlined word to bring up the contextual menu you see in Figure 1-15 (bottom). The alternate interpretation is listed at the top of the menu. Select it to confirm and replace, look up the word “from” in the dictionary, or search the word’s meaning on the Web with your default search engine.

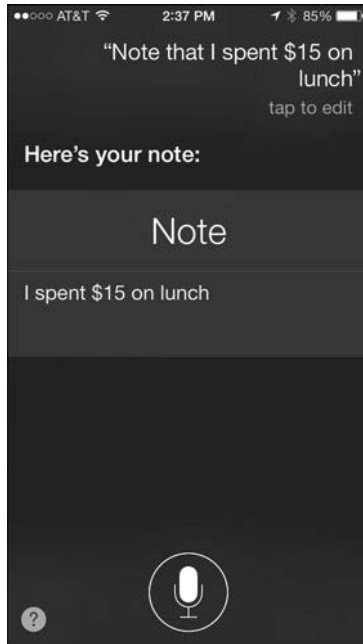
Alternatively, you can simply type to correct the text. Dictating and then correcting by hand offers a robust workflow for both OS X and iOS.

## Enhancing Your Speech Recognition

On iOS, Siri responds to commands by creating appointments, setting timers, placing phone calls, and more. To see this in action, try using Siri to create a new note on your iOS device. Say “Note that I spent \$15 on lunch.” Speak steadily but do not draaaaaag ooooooout what you’re saying. Siri should reply “Noted” or “Got it!” or something like that (see Figure 1-16). On OS X, you use the same approach: Use steady, clear sentences.

When talking to Siri, remain conversational. Try to speak with normal tones and inflections, although you’ll want to slow down slightly. Enunciate a bit more than you’re used to, like a pedantic teacher. The key to Siri is holding on to your standard speech patterns while emphasizing any words that help Siri understand you better.

Don’t be afraid to ask questions (with your voice rising at the end), make statements (with your voice dropping), or otherwise speak sentences as you normally do, including emphasizing words inside sentences (for example, “What does *intransigent* mean?”). Do not try to be robotic or lose normal sentence inflections. Your recognition rate will plummet if you do.



**Figure 1-16**

Siri can take notes to help you keep track of your expenses.

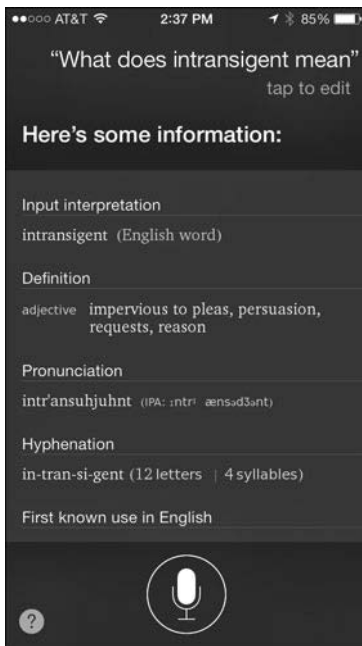
On iOS, this particular query should load up a definition, as shown in Figure 1-17. It's actually a little hard to speak this request coherently and in a way that Siri understands, so it makes a good exercise to test out your speaking-with-Siri skills.

## Clarity

Siri likes to hear you speak slowly and clearly and prefers to have you e-nun-ci-ate your words, especially with word-ending consonants. This helps Siri differentiate between, for example, *me* and *mean*. This is an important distinction when defining words, as in this example with *intransigent*, because asking Siri "What does



*intransigent* me?” won’t load the dictionary definition you’re looking for—but asking “What does *intransigent* mean?” does.



**Figure 1-17**

Use slow, careful speech to increase Siri's recognition rate, as in this word-definition request.

Don't be afraid to add a little extra pause between words so that Siri can tell the difference between “Mike Rose” and “micros,” or “Mike Rose’s phone” and “microphone.”

If you add too long a pause, Siri stops listening, but that does not happen accidentally. A good deal of usable range exists between your normal speaking speed and the extreme at which Siri thinks you're not talking anymore. Explore that range and test longer pauses to see how you can improve your recognition.

## Fumbles

Everybody fumbles words sometimes. If you find yourself stumbling over a tongue twister, the best thing to do is just tap the wave at the bottom of the display and let Siri attempt to figure out what you meant to say. If Siri's choice is completely wrong, edit your current entry by tapping the text to edit. Sometimes it's easier to just tap the microphone icon that appears and make your request again. On OS X, either click Done or press the designated key to show that you've completed dictation, then start over again.

Never worry about starting your request over. Siri doesn't care, and you can save a lot of time that you'd otherwise waste editing or waiting on interpretations of flubbed speech that are bound to go wrong. Siri is a *virtual* assistant and does not judge you.

## Viewing Items You Create

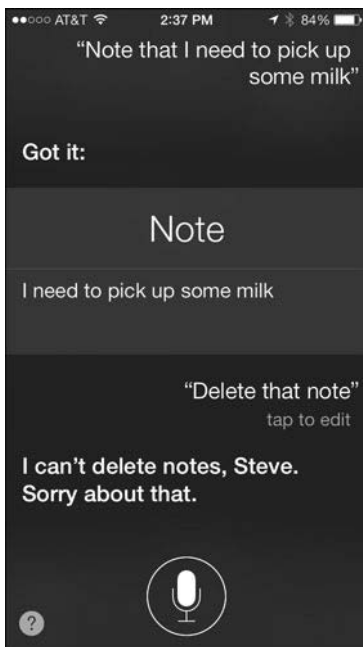
Earlier, you read about how you might create a note using Siri. You can jump from Siri to the Notes application with a single tap. Just tap any yellow Siri note item. That is also where you need to go if you want to delete a note you just created. Siri does not enable you to delete notes directly by speaking your command, as you can see in Figure 1-18. That's because, as an assistant, Siri focuses on creating new requests (notes, appointments, phone calls, dictation, weather checks) and not on editing or application control in general. Siri is not a full voice interface.



### NOTE

Siri is meant to enable you to accomplish simple creation and checking tasks hands free while on the go. But that's where Siri's capabilities end. Don't expect to navigate through menus, search for information within documents, or otherwise treat Siri as a full artificially intelligent user interface. Knowing what Siri can and cannot do helps limit your expectations while using this tool.

This tapping trick works with most Siri items, not just notes: Tap on contacts to view them in the Contacts app, tap on text messages in Messages, and so on. Siri often gives you items to choose from and actions to perform as well; tap on these choices to select a contact or perform web searches. You can also instruct Siri by voice, specifying how you want to proceed.



**Figure 1-18**  
Siri can create notes but cannot delete them.

## Multilingual Siri

Unfortunately, the Siri voice assistant cannot directly switch languages. The only way to change from English to French, for

example, is to hop out, edit your preferences (Settings, General, Siri, Language or just say “Open Siri Settings” and tap Language), and hop back in.

A workaround for multilanguage dictation exists, however. The Settings, General, International, Keyboards preferences allow you to add keyboards and enable the globe button, which lets you toggle directly between keyboard languages. You’ll find it between the number toggle (123) and the microphone dictation button on the keyboard when you’ve enabled more than one language on your device.

A simple tap takes you to the next language setting, including dictation. By tapping, you move, for example, from French to English and back as you dictate into any text-entry element on your iPhone. Hopefully, Siri will support “Speak to me in [some language]” requests in a future update.

Siri recognizes each language using specific dialects and accents. Native speakers will experience higher recognition accuracy.

## New in Siri

Siri is an evolving system. Apple continues to add new and exciting technologies to Siri, and it rolls them out over time. For example, during its first two years, Siri’s voice was rather slow and robotic sounding. With the release of iOS 7, Apple provided more realistic-sounding voices speaking at a much faster rate. This fluidity enhances your understanding of Siri’s responses.

Siri is now faster at returning responses, particularly on Wi-Fi or fast mobile networks. It is now adept at working with more sources of information to get those answers, by adding Bing, Wikipedia, and even Twitter to its list of sources. Many of its responses now appear inline with your questions. Previously, Siri launched other applications like Safari to display answers. Keeping the

answers within Siri's interface allows you to view those responses much faster, in a clean inline presentation.

Apple launched iTunes Radio—a streaming Internet radio service—in the Music app with iOS7. At the same time, it updated Siri to provide a way to control iTunes Radio with your voice. Tell Siri to “Play iTunes Radio” or “Play my Led Zeppelin station,” and you'll soon be rockin' to the radio. Don't like one of the station choices? Just say “Don't play this song again,” and you'll be saved from hearing *Bohemian Rhapsody* for the seventh time that day. (If you ask Siri to “Scaramouche, Scaramouche, will you do the Fandango?” at this time, it mostly returns YouTube videos.)

On an iPhone, Siri can now return calls or play your voicemail. Ask “Do I have any missed calls?” to retrieve a spoken summary of how many calls you missed, at what time, and from what contacts. To listen to your voicemail, ask “Do I have any new voicemail?” Siri produces a spoken list of those items. Ask Siri to play a specific voicemail back to you; say, for example, “Play the voicemail from Trina.”

Voicemail isn't the only form of communication that Siri now handles. Previously, you could just send emails; now asking Siri to “Check email” lets you hear what has come into your inbox lately. Have that email read to you by asking “Read my latest email,” and when Siri is done, it will ask “Do you want to reply?”

As Figure 1-19 shows, Siri is also getting better at pronouncing names. When Siri mispronounces a name in your contact list, say “That's not how you pronounce her name” (or something similar). Siri will thank you and then ask how you pronounce the name. After listening to you, Siri presents you with a list of possible pronunciations. Tap each option to listen to it and then select the pronunciation that is closest to correct.



**Figure 1-19**

When Siri mispronounces the name of a contact, you can now teach it the correct pronunciation.

Many of us receive our news of what's going on in the world through Twitter instead of traditional sources, so it's not surprising that Siri now keeps an eye on Twitter trends. Just ask "What's happening on Twitter?" and Siri shows you what is currently trending (see Figure 1-20).

**Figure 1-20**

Siri keeps an eye on what's trending on Twitter.

Ask Siri "What are people saying about [a topic or a person]?" to see what kind of tweets are being sent out on a topic or about a celebrity. Want to track what a friend or coworker is saying on Twitter? For example, "What's Mike T. Rose saying?" produced the list of tweets shown in Figure 1-21.

Twitter isn't the only one to have made friends with Siri; Facebook is now just a conversation away as well. At this time, it's only possible to use Siri to post on your wall. For example, "Write on my wall just saw an amazing Denver Broncos game and they won 45 to 21" gets the word out to your Facebook pals at the speed of light.



**Figure 1-21**

Siri can produce a list of recent tweets from any of your friends.

Siri helps you connect with your friends, coworkers, and loved ones as well through new integration with FaceTime, Apple's video calling app. Just say something like "Make a FaceTime call to Susan" or even "FaceTime Susan," and before you know it, you're chatting face-to-face.

Apple has given some of Siri's old tricks a new spin. Siri has always used Yelp ratings to help determine whether a given restaurant is good or bad; now it can even show you individual reviews for a place. Likewise, asking for movie reviews brings up a list of reviews from online movie source Rotten Tomatoes.



One surprisingly useful new feature is the ability to change or check the settings of your iOS device. There are so many options available that we cover them separately in Chapter 2, “Controlling Your Device with Siri.”

## Living with Siri’s Limitations

Although Siri is now a mature product, you can still expect that the voice-interpretation system will be subject to mistakes. After all, even humans misunderstand things all the time. With the best of intentions and the best of interpretations, Siri will never be able to provide 100% accuracy.

Sometimes the mistakes are laughably funny, but other times you may become frustrated. Rather than get mad, just work within the limitations and use Siri more often instead of less. Siri used to have a really hard time differentiating between Pachelbel (as in the famous canon) and Taco Bell. It was pretty hilarious. These days, Apple has updated the service to better distinguish between the two—and many other similar-sounding pairs.

The more you use Siri, the better it understands you. Over time, Siri learns your regional accent and characterizes your voice into a specific dialect. This helps it improve its interpretation over time. What’s more, Siri uses information from your device, including your contacts, your music, your calendar, and your reminders, to better match what you’re saying to what you mean.

## Summary

Siri provides a new and natural way to interact with a computer, enabling you to speak and be understood. On iOS, Siri listens to your commands and then performs your bidding, responding through speech or a visual answer on the device screen.

On OS X, Siri enables you to dictate into any application that normally offers text input. Take away these key points from this chapter:

- Think carefully about the information you are sending to Apple when you agree to enable Siri. It means trusting Apple with a lot of personal information. Most people won't be bothered by this, but you should make an informed choice, nonetheless.
- If you don't know what to say to Siri, say "Help me" or tap the small question mark that appears on the bottom left of the Siri display. Siri is always happy to provide a list of categories and sample phrases.
- You access Siri by pressing and holding the Home button, raising your iPhone to your ear with Raise to Speak enabled, squeezing or pressing the control button on a wired or wireless headset, or pressing the Siri Eyes Free button on your car's steering wheel. On OS X, you customize how to trigger dictation through the Dictation & Speech settings pane in System Preferences.
- Talk slowly and clearly to Siri. Siri works best when you enunciate deliberately.
- Remember that Siri is more about creating items than editing them. Build new appointments, create new notes, and write emails. Don't expect to use Siri to cancel, delete, undo, or modify those items.
- Siri responses typically lead to more actions, enabling you to jump into associated apps such as the Notes app for notes or the Contacts apps for addresses.
- Don't be afraid of making mistakes with Siri. You can always reset your conversation or edit what you say. Siri is designed to assist you, not to put obstacles in your way. Siri lets you add new text and edit the text you've already spoken, or you can

restart your dictation from scratch. Use these tools to achieve the highest possible recognition rate.

- Siri uses a separate audio volume system. So if you're at a movie or a conference, make sure you mute your system audio *and* lower Siri's volume control. To do that, invoke Siri and use the volume toggles on the side of the phone to lower the Siri sound level.
- Siri simplifies your life. Whether it's setting alarms ("Wake me at 7:15"), finding a friend ("Where is Barbara Sande?"), or updating your family ("Send Dad a message that I'm on the way"), Siri is there to help you become more productive with less work. The more you learn about using Siri, the simpler these tasks become over time. For many of these items, the issue isn't whether Siri can handle the tasks; it's whether you know that they're there to use. If this book helps you add a few essential ideas into your day-to-day Siri use, then we've proudly done our jobs.

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