

Launch Services | Apple Developer Documentation

Archived: 2026-04-02 11:24:33 UTC

- [Core Services](#)
- Launch Services

Launch and open documents in other apps from your current app process.

[Overview](#)

macOS Launch Services is an API that enables a running app to open other apps or their document files, similar to the Finder or the Dock. Using Launch Services, an app can perform such tasks as:

- Open (launch or activate) another app
- Open a document or a URL in another app
- Identify the preferred app for opening a document or URL
- Register information about the kinds of document files and URLs an app can open
- Obtain information for displaying a file or URL on the screen, such as its icon, display name, and kind string
- Maintain and update the contents of the Recent Items menu

Launch Services eliminates apps having to query the Finder to open an app, document, or URL for them. The macOS Finder itself uses Launch Services to perform such tasks. Because the Finder performs no additional processing beyond calling Launch Services, any client using Launch Services for these purposes behaves identically to the Finder.

[Topics](#)

[Locating an App](#)

The functions in this section locate and test the preferred app for opening an item or a family of items, or the app that matches a set of defining characteristics.

[Opening Items](#)

The functions in this section open a designated item or a collection of items, or launch or activate a designated app.

`struct LSLaunchURLSpec`

The specification for launching an app, opening items, or both, along with related information.

Registering an App

The functions in this section register an app in the Launch Services database.

Working with Role Handlers

The functions in this section get and set bundle identifiers for handlers of specified content types and URL schemes.

`struct LSRolesMask`

The specification that sets the desired role or roles for an app to claim for an item or a family of items.

Constants

This section describes the constants in the Launch Services API.

Result Codes

This section lists the most common result codes that Launch Services functions return.

Current page is Launch Services

Source: https://developer.apple.com/documentation/coreservices/launch_services