

VersionMapper

User Guide

Two sets. A clearer picture.



Built to help you quickly see which version is newer, what changed, and what went missing — with a super simple native Mac experience.

User Guide

Why I created VersionMapper

I kept running into the same problem: while developing documents, images, and code with AI tools, I would download successive versions into my Downloads folder. Later, I could not always tell which copy contained the latest work, what had actually changed, or whether something useful had disappeared along the way.

I wanted a super simple way to answer those questions: choose two versions, drop them onto an app, and see the differences. I did not want to introduce a complex version-control workflow just to check a pair of downloads.

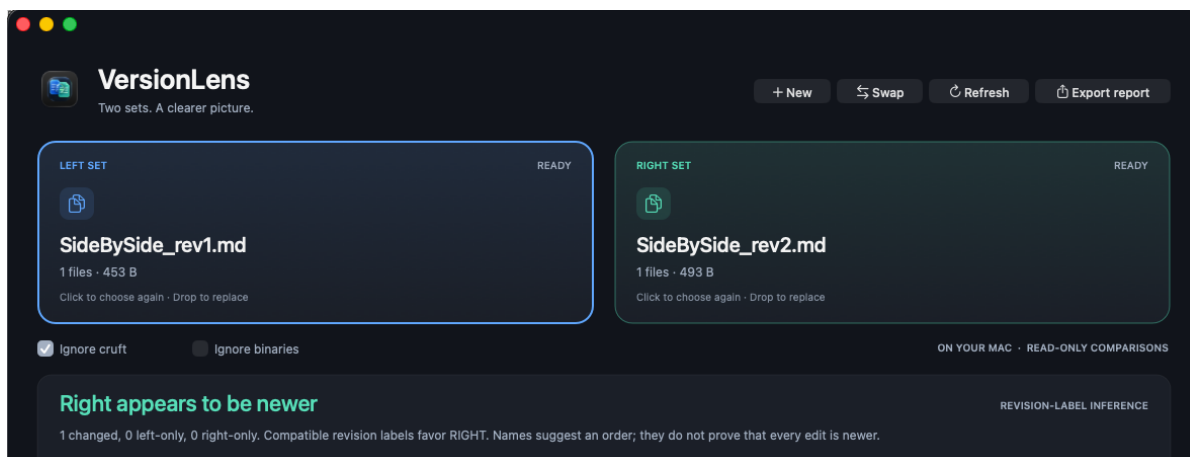
That is why I created VersionMapper. My aim is a clean, uncluttered experience that feels native to the Mac, with obvious controls, local comparisons, and no changes to the original files. The app shows the evidence; you decide which work to keep.

Bruce H. Dean - creator of VersionMapper

Your first comparison

Select two items in Finder. Drag them onto VersionMapper. Select a changed file and click View changes.

Both panels fill automatically. Use **Swap** when you need the other order: Finder's delivered order is not necessarily the order you clicked the items.



Original pre-rename development screenshot; VersionMapper retains this simple side-by-side interface

Compare two versions

One pair, one gesture

Drop two files, two folders, two ZIP archives, or a mixture onto the app. A current project folder on one side and a newly downloaded ZIP on the other is a useful starting point.

You can also click the **Left** panel to choose one version, then click **Right** to choose the other. A single item dropped directly onto a panel replaces only that side.

Put several items on one side

Use that panel's file picker to select a collection. Alternatively, hold **Option** while dropping two items onto a panel to keep them together. Three or more dropped items remain one set; they do not become several separate comparisons.

Keep the app in your Dock

Drop two selected items onto the VersionMapper Dock icon to fill both sides. With separate drops, the first fills Left and the next fills Right. After a completed pair, another Dock drop starts a fresh comparison on Left.

Update or start over

New clears the comparison. **Swap** reverses the two sides. **Refresh** scans the selections again after you edit a file elsewhere. While scanning, the same control lets you stop.

VersionMapper shows a snapshot of the files you selected. It does not watch Downloads in the background or keep a history of your document contents. After quitting, start a new comparison.

Read the result

Contents first. Dates second.

VersionMapper compares file contents instead of assuming that a later download date means newer work. Identical content stays identical even when its name or date has changed.

Result	What it tells you
Changed	A matched pair contains different file contents.
Left only / Right only	An included file has no match on the other side.
Identical	Included file contents match. Filters still apply.
Renamed / moved	A matched pair has different names or locations. A revision number can cause this too.

Changed and **Renamed / moved** can count the same pair; the totals are not mutually exclusive.

Which version is newer?

Appears newer means revision labels favor one side. **Later edit dates** means changed matched files have consistently later dates on that side. When clues disagree, the app shows a mixed, conflicting, or uncertain result rather than inventing an order.

A name such as `report_rev2.md` suggests a later revision than `report_rev1.md`; it does not prove that the document is better or complete. Both versions may contain work worth keeping.

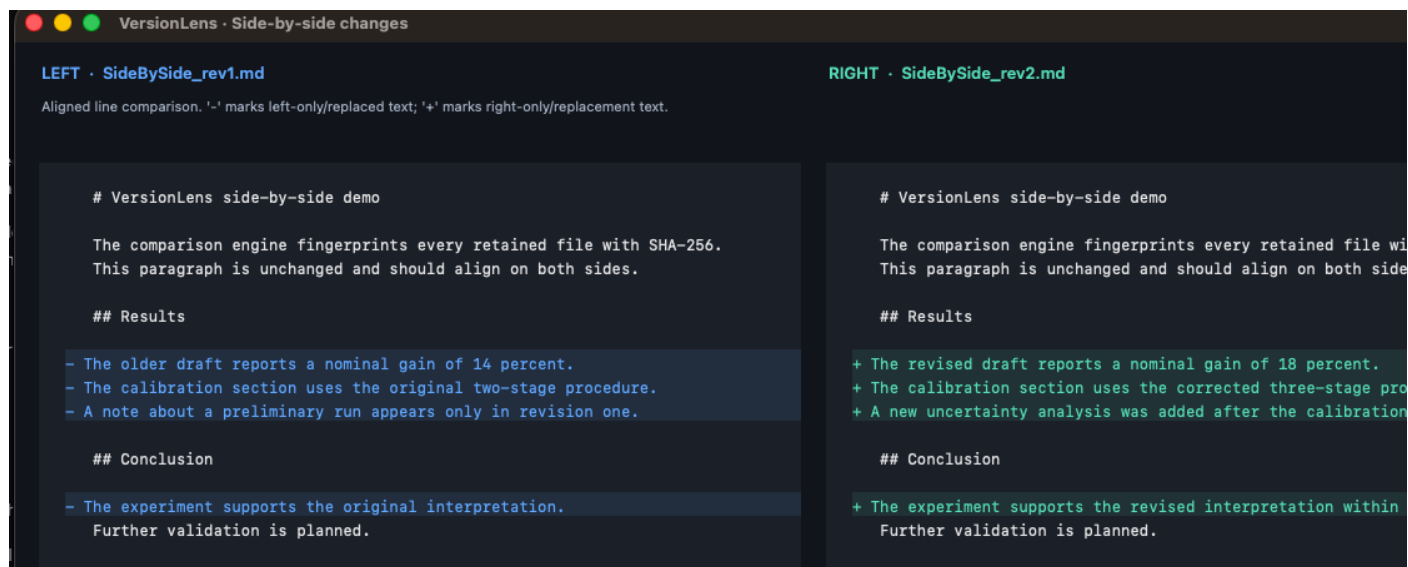
An incomplete scan is not a complete comparison. **Scan notes** explains unreadable or excluded items. A newer-looking result is never an instruction to discard the other copy.

Use **Differences**, **All files**, and the filename search field to control the list you see.

Make small edits unmistakable

Read the actual wording

Select a matched result and click **View changes**, or double-click the row. The two versions appear in aligned columns.



Original development screenshot of the text viewer; changed lines and smaller edits are highlighted

Blue minus lines show left-side text that was removed or replaced. Mint plus lines show right-side additions or replacements. **Stronger shading and underlining** draw attention to changed words, numbers, and punctuation inside paired changed lines.

For example, **14** changing to **18** stands out within an otherwise similar sentence. The highlighting identifies a change, not which number is correct. Very long or complicated lines may use a broader highlighted span.

Stay oriented

Vertical scrolling is linked. Each column scrolls horizontally for long lines. Select and copy text as needed; the viewer does not edit or merge the originals.

Opening the same pair again brings its existing window forward. A refreshed scan is a new snapshot. When a file has no text preview, use **Details** to inspect its paths, dates, sizes, and fingerprints.

What went missing?

Check a replacement against a reference

Before replacing a working copy, click **What went missing?** Choose **Use Left** or **Use Right** to identify the reference: the version whose files and wording you want to check for in the other version. This does not decide which version is newer.

Review candidate	What it means
File has no match	A reference file has no included match on the other side. It may be missing, renamed beyond recognition, or outside the scan's scope.
Original text not found	A removal-only text block was not found verbatim elsewhere in the matched file. Rewording or moving text to another file can still explain it.
Heading changed / absent	A Markdown heading was not found with the same wording. It may have been renamed; this does not prove the section is missing.

Follow the evidence

Select a candidate to read the reference path, line numbers, and original text. Click **View pair** to inspect its comparison; an unmatched file opens its details. Review windows preserve the scan they came from. After Refresh, run the review again for the new snapshot.

The coverage note reports skipped or limited text reviews. Filters still apply. Some large or unsupported files cannot be reviewed as text; PDF review covers extracted text, not page layout or artwork.

No candidates is not proof that nothing important was lost. The review is a local, rule-based aid, not an AI opinion, a semantic completeness test, or permission to delete either version. Ordinary wording replacements are shown in View changes rather than declared missing.

Choose what to include

Two filters, two purposes

Ignore cruft starts on. It hides common temporary, generated, and repository-support files inside folders and ZIPs. **Ignore binaries** starts off. Leave it off when images, PDFs, or other assets matter; turn it on to focus on detected text files. These choices, the other Comparison menu options, and the main window size and position are remembered when you quit and reopen VersionMapper.

Input	Comparison and preview
Text, Markdown, source code	File-content comparison and readable text changes when a complete supported preview is available.
Ordinary text-based PDF	File comparison and extracted text. No visual page-layout comparison.
Image, Word, other binary	Reports whether contents differ. No pixel viewer or Word-specific text extraction.
Folder	Compares included files throughout the folder.
Directly chosen ZIP	Reads included entries without creating an extracted folder.

Scanned PDFs may contain no extractable text. A PDF inside a ZIP receives byte-level comparison only. Large files may exceed preview limits while still receiving a full file-content comparison.

A ZIP encountered inside a folder is treated as one file; choose it directly to compare its entries. A directly selected ordinary file is compared even if a folder filter would exclude it.

Filters narrow the question. Identical means the included files match, not that every item or every piece of filesystem metadata is identical. Empty folders, permissions, and all extra metadata are not compared.

Your files remain yours

Local comparisons. Unchanged originals.

VersionMapper does not upload the files you compare or require a separate VersionMapper account. It processes your selections on your Mac. A file stored only in iCloud or another file service may first be downloaded by macOS or that service so it can be read.

Save a comparison record

Click **Export report** to save a Markdown summary where you choose. It includes file paths, results, fingerprints, filters, and scan notes. It does not replace either original. The separate What went missing? evidence list is currently viewed in the app, not included in this report.

Before sharing a report, check it: filenames and paths can reveal personal or project information. Reports you save belong to you and are not removed by the app's data cleanup.

Close or quit

Close a comparison window when finished. Choose **VersionMapper > Quit VersionMapper** to end the session. No document contents are saved as an automatic comparison history.

Removing VersionMapper

To remove VersionMapper, quit the app and use the normal macOS method: remove **VersionMapper.app** from Applications using Finder or the system's app-management controls. No separate uninstaller is needed.

If you also want to clear VersionMapper preferences and its app-owned cache/support folders, choose **VersionMapper > Clear VersionMapper Data...** *before* removing the app. This optional step does not remove your compared documents, downloads or exported reports. macOS may retain its own container structure or diagnostic records.

Open this guide again

Make VersionMapper the active app and choose **Help > User Guide** in the menu bar at the top of your screen. The guide is included with the app and opens in your PDF viewer, without an internet connection.

At a glance

The controls you will use most

Control	Use it to
Left / Right panel	Choose or replace one side.
New / Swap	Start again or reverse the sides.
Refresh / Stop	Read the selected files again or stop scanning.
View changes	Read the selected pair with small edits emphasized.
What went missing?	Choose a reference and review omission candidates.
Details / Scan notes	Inspect file information or scan limitations.
Export report	Save a Markdown comparison summary.

Keyboard shortcuts

Command-O: choose Left. **Shift-Command-O:** choose Right. **Command-N:** new comparison. **Command-R:** refresh or stop. **Command-T:** swap. **Command-I:** details. **Command-E:** export. **Command-W:** close the active window. **Command-Q:** quit.

Three things to remember

A later date is a clue, not proof. Copying and packaging can change dates without changing useful content.

A missing preview is not a failed comparison. File contents may still be compared even when their text cannot be displayed.

Refresh after editing. The app shows the snapshot it scanned, not a continuously updated view.

VersionMapper is designed for Apple Silicon Macs. Two sets. A clearer picture. You decide what to keep.