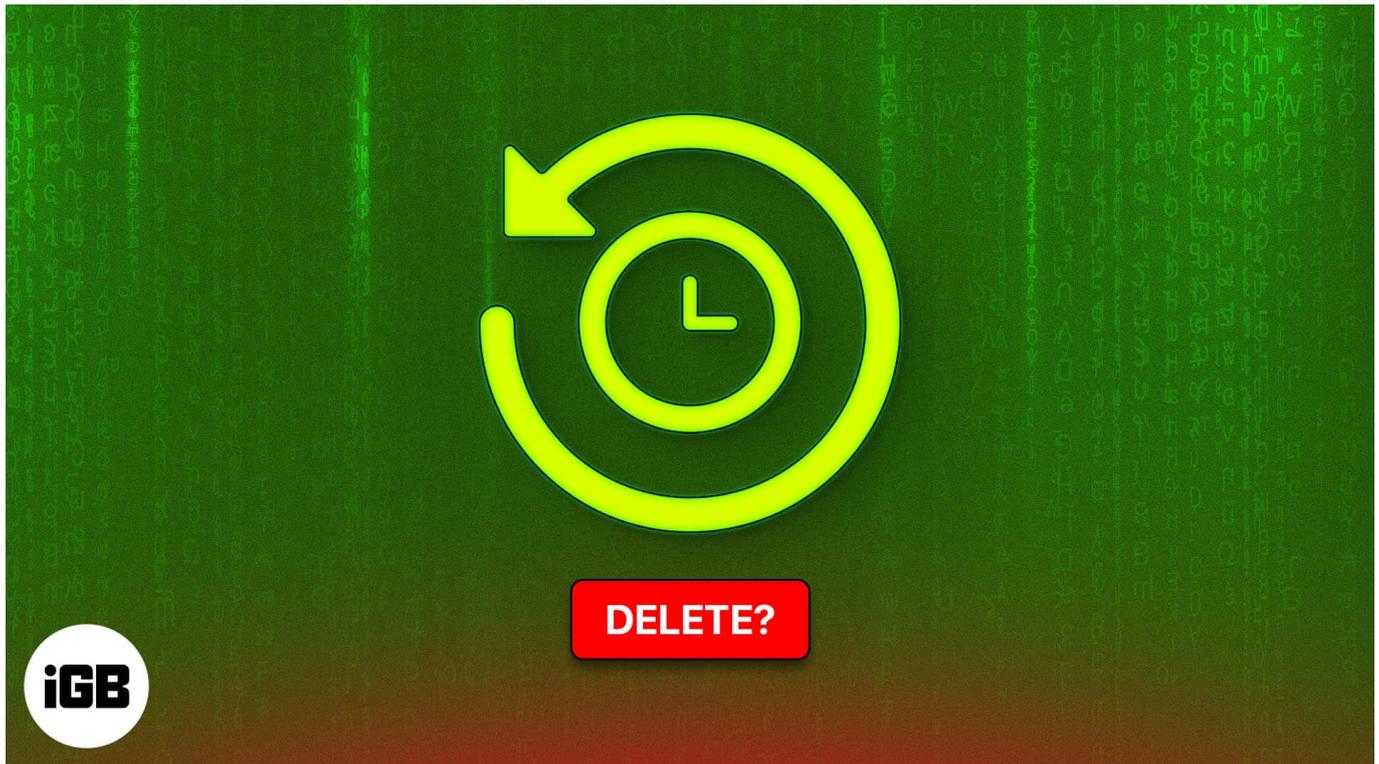


Time Machine backups are essential for protecting your data, but they can take up a significant amount of storage space over time. You might want to delete old backups to free up room on your external drive, remove outdated files you no longer need, avoid confusion between backups, or address issues like corrupted backups.



In this guide, I'll share how to delete Time Machine backups using Finder, Terminal, and other methods.

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4 Ways to delete Time Machine backup on Mac

Depending on your requirements and level of expertise, you can delete Time Machine backups on a Mac in four ways:

1. Delete backups in the Time Machine app

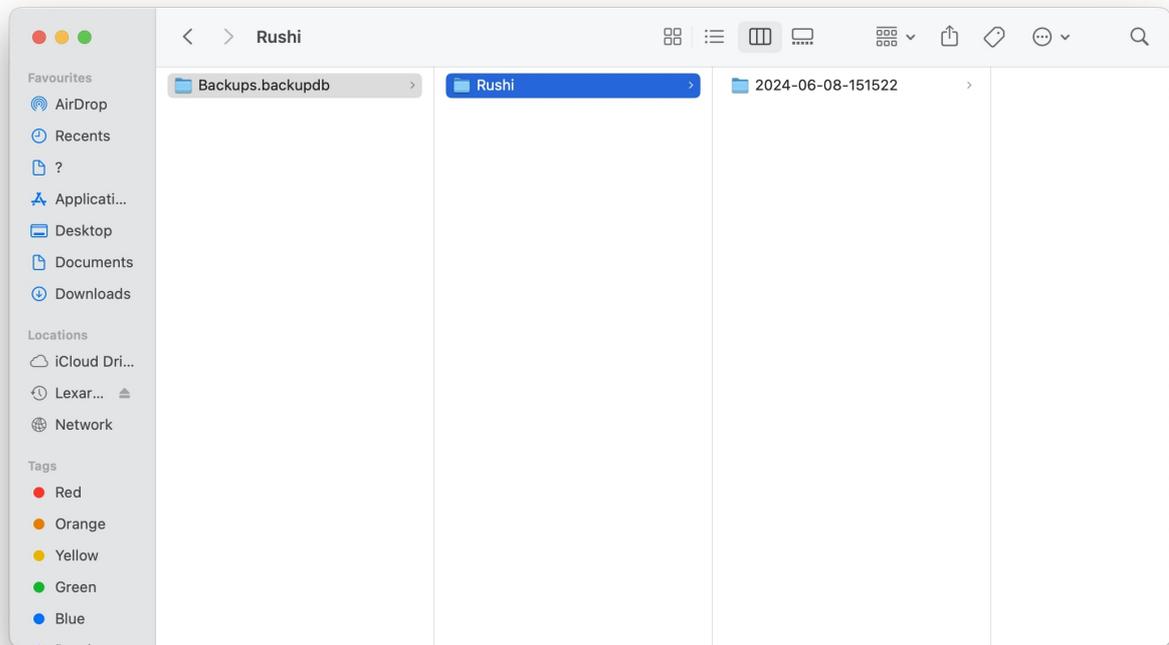
The easiest way to delete Time Machine backups on a Mac is via the Time Machine app. You can quickly scroll through your recent backups and delete them individually.

1. Connect your Time Machine drive to your Mac.
2. Open the **Time Machine** app using Spotlight search. You can access Spotlight by pressing **Command + Space**.
3. Use the arrows to find the backup you want to delete.

2. Erase Time Machine backups through Finder

Time Machine backups are stored in an organized fashion on your Time Machine backup disk for easy access. As a result, you can quickly find your old backups and delete them through Finder. But do bear in mind that this process is risky, and you can corrupt the backup if you aren't careful enough.

1. Connect your Time Machine drive to your Mac.
2. Locate and open **Finder** from the Dock on your Mac.
3. Click the Time Machine drive from the left sidebar.
4. Now, double-click on the **Backups.backupdb** folder to open it.
5. Open the folder labeled with your Mac's name to find the backups.
6. Right-click on a backup you want to delete and select **Move to Trash**.



3. Clear Time Machine backups using Terminal

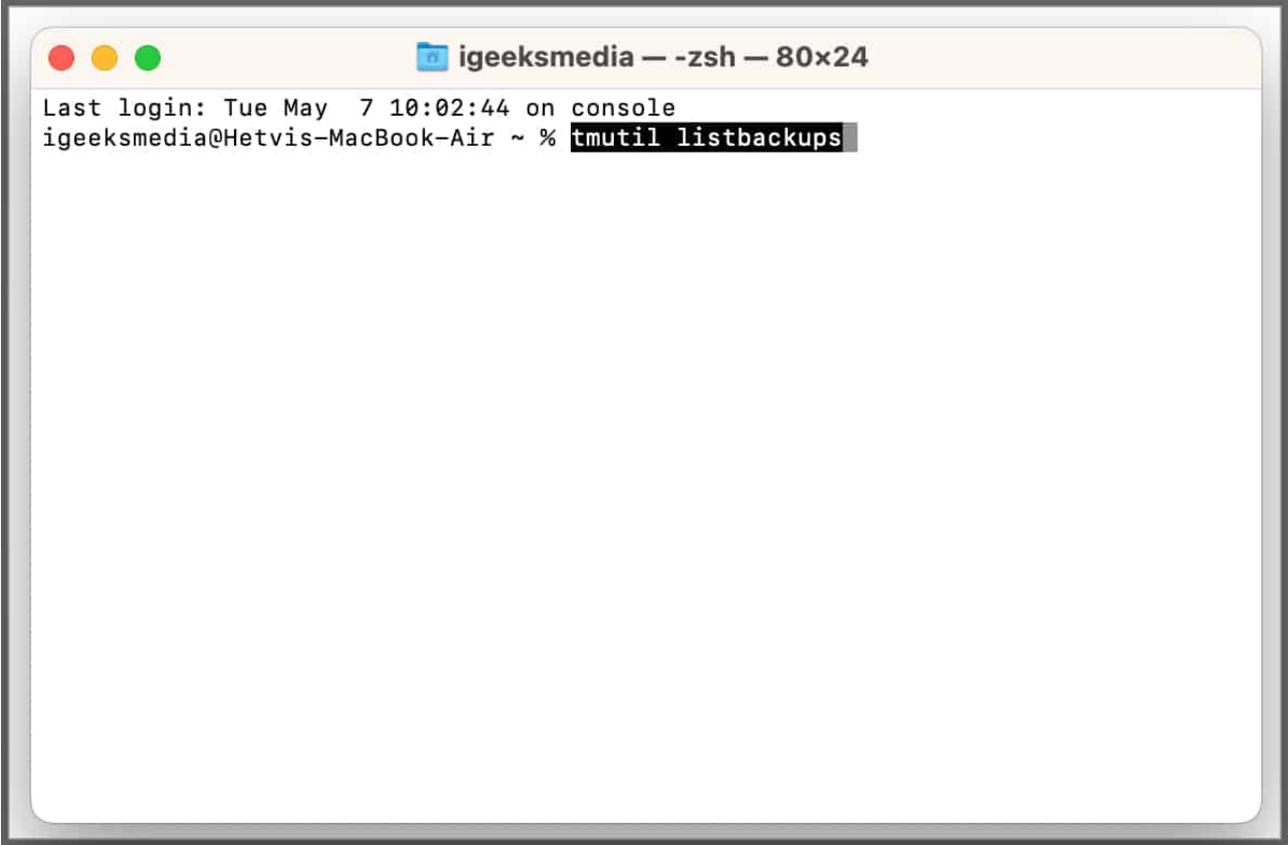
In addition to the methods we've listed so far, you can also [use Terminal commands](#) to view and delete all the Time Machine backups stored on your external backup disk.

Note

Terminal requires full disk access to delete your Time Machine backups. to do this, you'll need to open **System Settings**, and go to **Security & Privacy** → **Full Disk Access**. Then, you must **enable or add Terminal** to the list of apps.

Here are the steps for the same:

1. Open the **Terminal** app on your Mac.
2. Type **tmutil listbackups** into the Terminal and press **Return**.



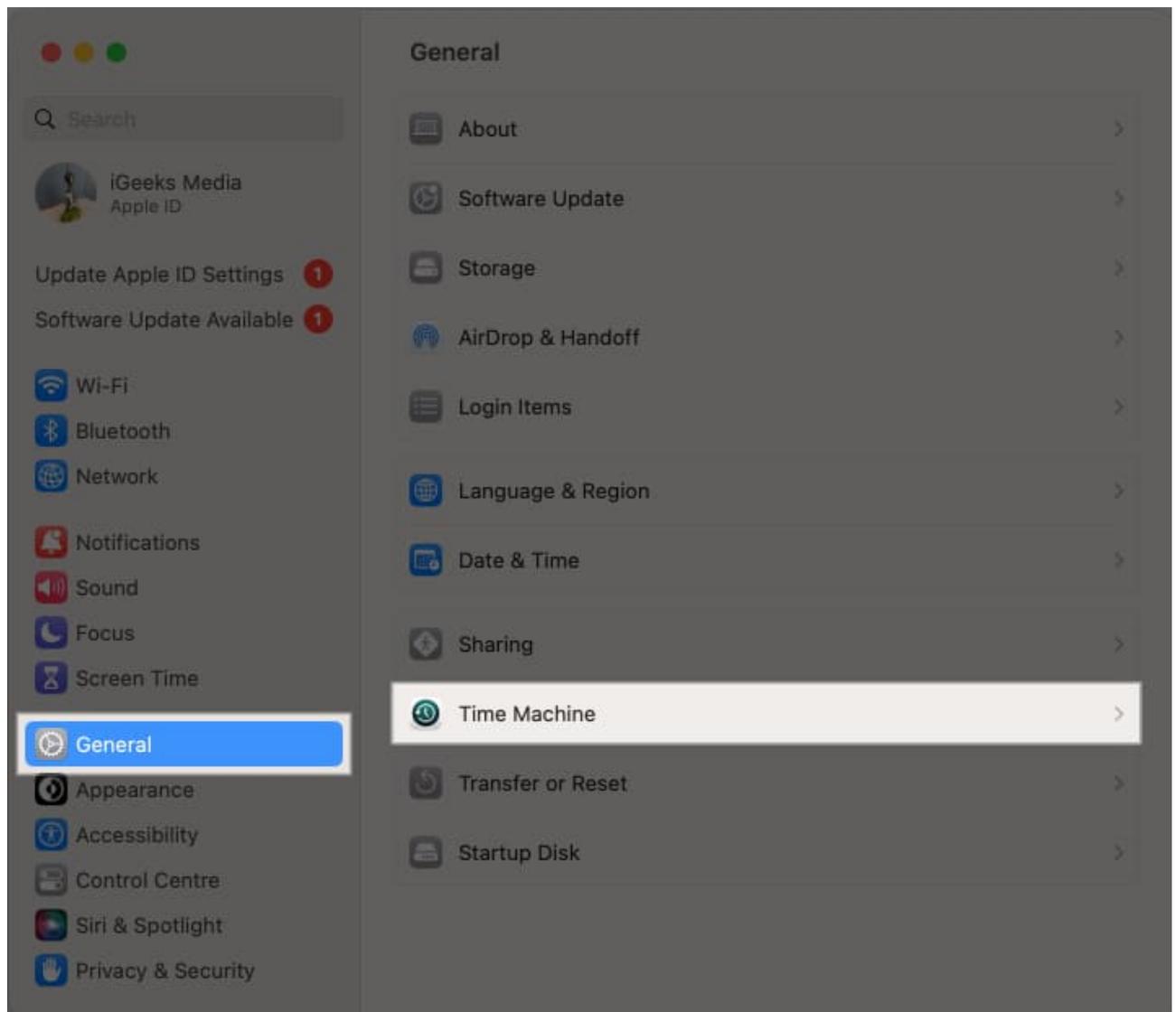
```
igeeksmidia — -zsh — 80x24
Last login: Tue May 7 10:02:44 on console
igeeksmidia@Hetvis-MacBook-Air ~ % tmutil listbackups
```

3. Copy the path of the Time Machine backup you want to remove.
4. Type **sudo tmutil delete [backup path]** and press the **Return** key.
5. Enter your Mac's password and press **Return** to erase the backup.

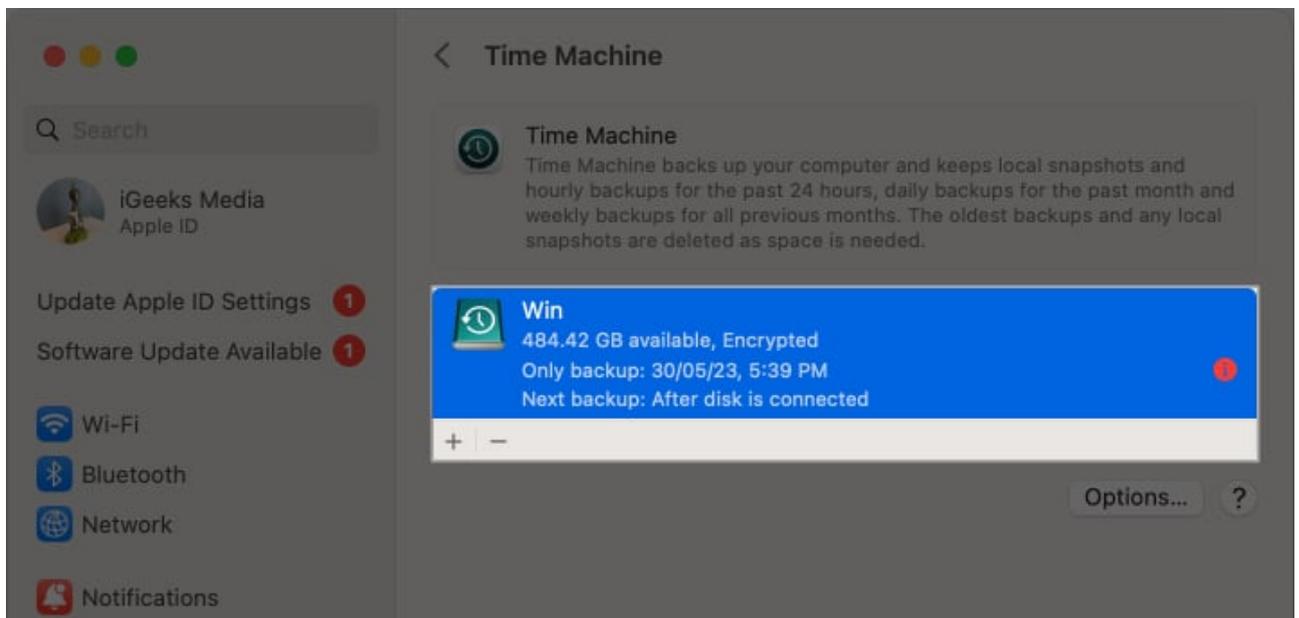
4. Clear all backups using System Settings and Disk Utility on Mac

The previous methods offer a way to delete individual backups, but what if you need to delete all backups so you can use your drive to store other files? In that case, you can deselect your drive as a backup destination and reformat it.

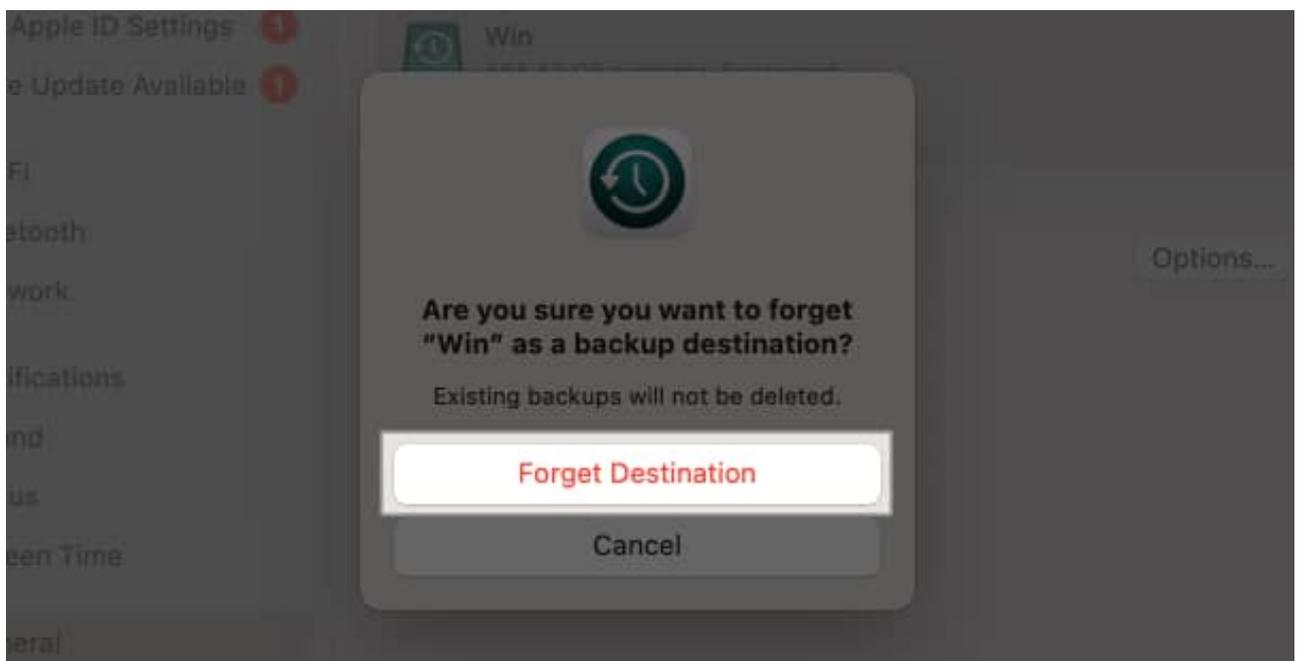
1. Connect the Time Machine backup drive or NAS to your Mac.
2. Click the Apple logo in the menu bar and select **System Settings**.
3. Now, go to **General** from the sidebar and select **Time Machine**.



4. Select a Time Machine backup disk and click the + icon.



5. Click **Forget Destination** to stop using the drive for backups.



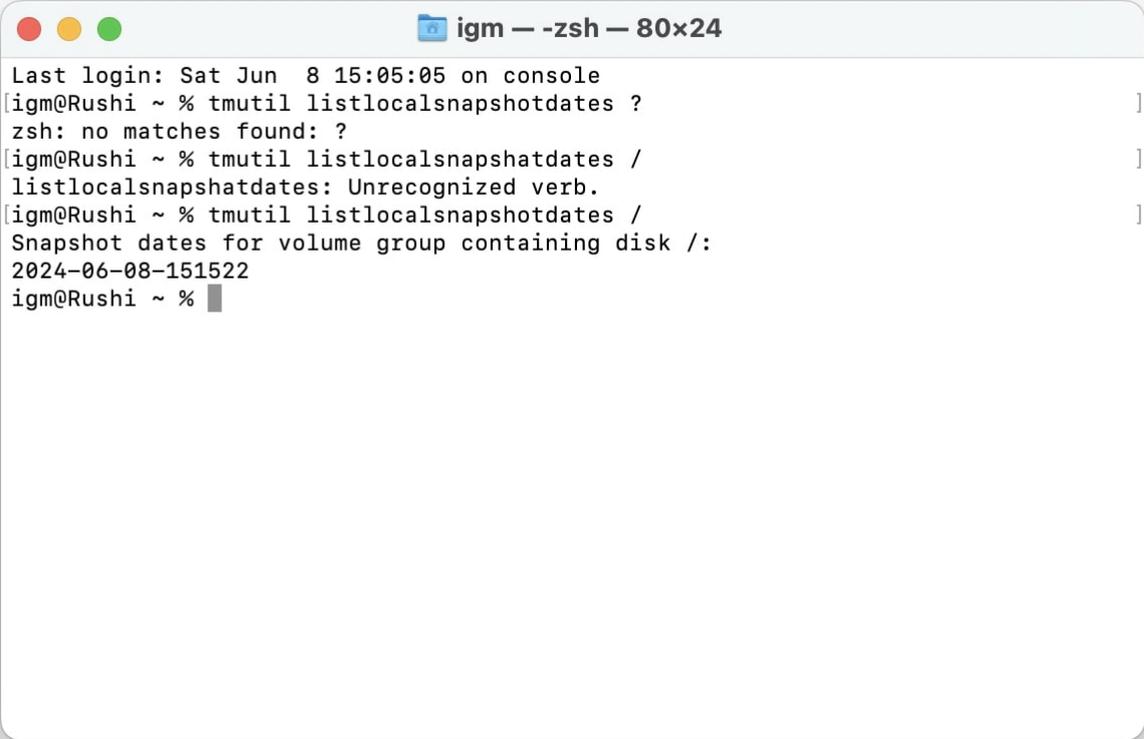
After you deselect your Time Machine drive as a backup destination in System Settings, you must [format the drive](#) using Disk Utility on your Mac before you can use the disk to store your other files.

How to delete Time Machine snapshots on Mac

Besides creating backups that live on a separate disk, your Mac also stores temporary backup images locally on its internal drive. This ensures you can restore files even when the backup disk isn't connected to your Mac.

Follow these steps to delete local Time Machine snapshots on your Mac:

1. Open **Terminal** on your Mac.
2. Type **tmutil listlocalsnapshotdates /** and press **Return**.
3. Copy the date of the Time Machine backup that you want to remove.
4. Type **tmutil deletelocalsnapshots [backup date]** and press **Return**.
5. Enter your Mac's password and hit **Return** to remove the local snapshot.

A screenshot of a macOS Terminal window. The title bar shows 'igm -- -zsh -- 80x24'. The terminal text is as follows:

```
Last login: Sat Jun  8 15:05:05 on console
[igm@Rushi ~ % tmutil listlocalsnapshotdates ?
zsh: no matches found: ?
[igm@Rushi ~ % tmutil listlocalsnapshatdates /
listlocalsnapshatdates: Unrecognized verb.
[igm@Rushi ~ % tmutil listlocalsnapshotdates /
Snapshot dates for volume group containing disk /:
2024-06-08-151522
igm@Rushi ~ % █
```

Wrapping up...

Those are all the ways you can delete Time Machine backups on your Mac. Regardless of the method you choose, deleting Time Machine backups can ensure your backup drive has ample storage space for new backups. You can even delete all backups to use the hard drive for other purposes.

FAQs

How long does Time Machine keep files?

There's no fixed time period for how long Time Machine keeps your files; the length of time that files are retained depends on the storage capacity of the disk you're using to create backups. The Time Machine app automatically deletes older backups to make space for new ones whenever the backup drive fills up.

Where are my Time Machine backups stored?

All Time Machine backups are automatically stored in a **Backups.backupdb** folder. You can find this folder on your backup disk or network-attached storage that you selected when creating a Time Machine backup for the first time.

What happens if I delete a Time Machine backup?

Time Machine maintains a series of incremental backups, each representing the state of your Mac at different points in time. When you delete a specific backup, you're only removing a particular snapshot from the backup history. The remaining backups will remain intact, and you'll still be able to browse and restore files for your entire system from your existing Time Machine backups.

More things to explore:

- [Migration Assistant not working on Mac? 8 Ways to fix it!](#)
- [How to fix a corrupted hard drive and recover data on your Mac](#)
- [How to eject an external drive on your Mac](#)