Copy-pasting has become so deeply integrated into our interactions with desktop devices that we use it instinctively. I'd even argue that it's the most used feature on Mac — no, on any desktop computer.

So it's a huge hassle when your Mac suddenly stops letting you copy and paste items. It usually enables you to do the action, but it doesn't seem to "stick" and transfer to your desired location.

Below are some potential reasons why copy and paste isn't working on your Mac and things you can do to get it to work again.

Why is copy and paste not working on Mac?

There are many reasons why copying and pasting on Mac is suddenly not working. Here are the most common:

- OS bugs and glitches
- Third-party apps or utilities interfering with the keyboard shortcut
- Clipboard malfunction
- Lack of permission to copy

- Compatibility errors
- Rogue apps and malware
- Software conflict
- Because of "[Sorry, No manipulation with clipboard allowed](#)" error

7 Ways to fix copy paste not working on Mac

Here are several problem-solving strategies aimed at addressing a range of potential issues that could be interfering with the copy-paste feature on your Mac.

1. Force quit the app

The copy-paste issue may be limited to an app you currently use. If that's the case, try force quitting the app by hitting **Cmd + Q** and relaunching it afterward. This refreshes the app and possibly restores the copy-and-paste functionality within the app.

If you find that this issue is only present in a specific app, you might want to try updating (if there's an update available) or deleting and reinstalling the app.

2. Reboot your Mac

If force-quitting the app doesn't work, a quick restart might. Go to **Apple menu** → Hit **Restart** → Click **Restart** again to confirm.

In most cases, booting your Mac resets all the memory in the RAM, which helps get your Mac's clipboard back up and running.

3. Restart your clipboard

If the issue persists and is present across other apps, you can restart the clipboard.

Via the Activity Monitor:

1. Go to **Finder** → Click **Go** in the menu bar.
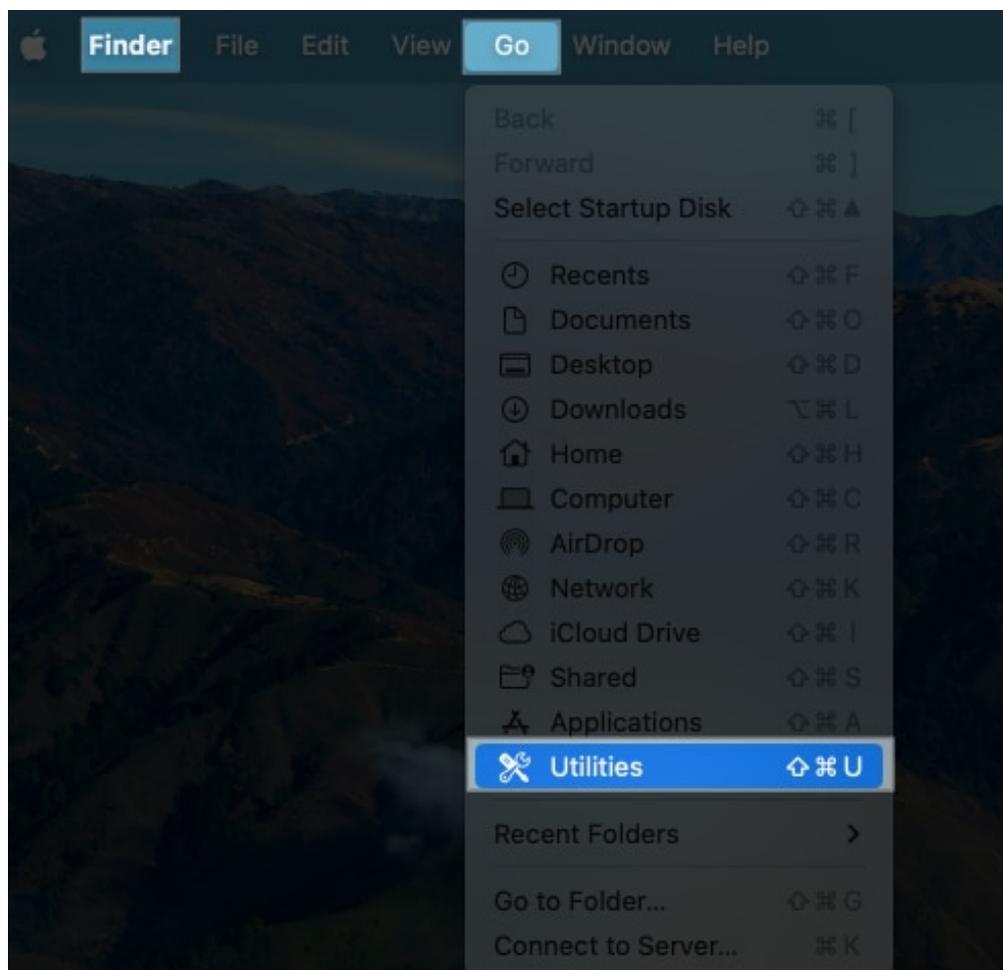
2. Select **Utilities → Activity Monitor**.
   Alternatively, you can do a ***Spotlight*** *search and look for* ***Activity Monitor****.*
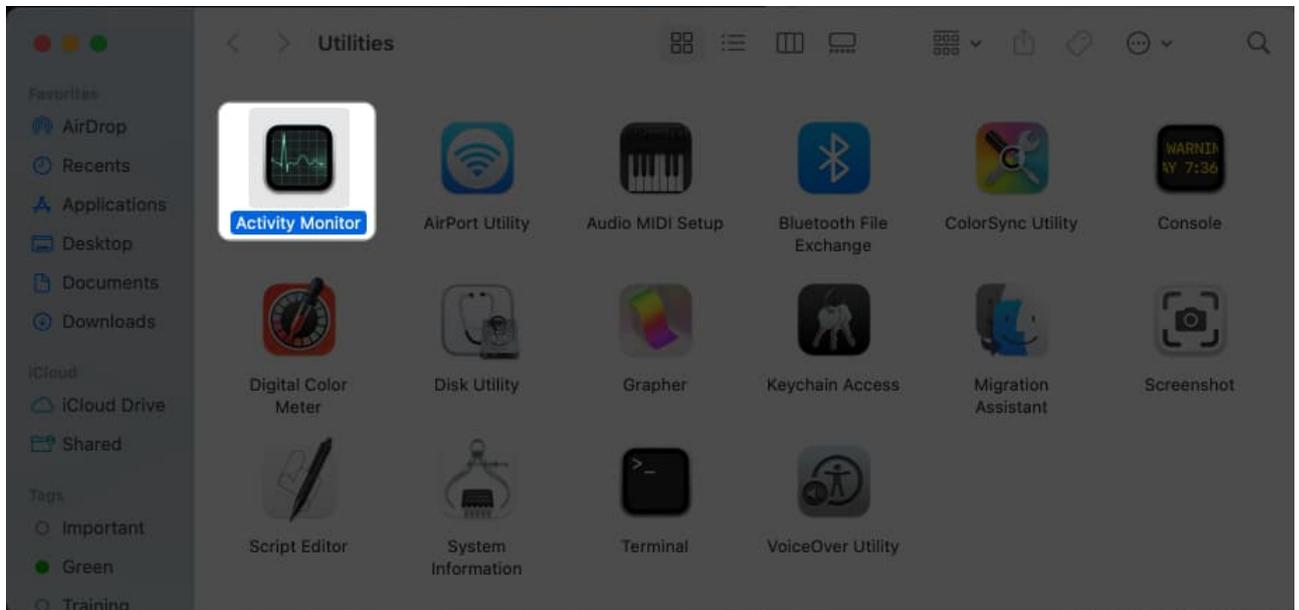
3. Enter **pboard** in the search field found in the upper right corner of the Activity Monitor window.
4. Select **pboard** from the results → Click the **Stop (X) icon** at the top.
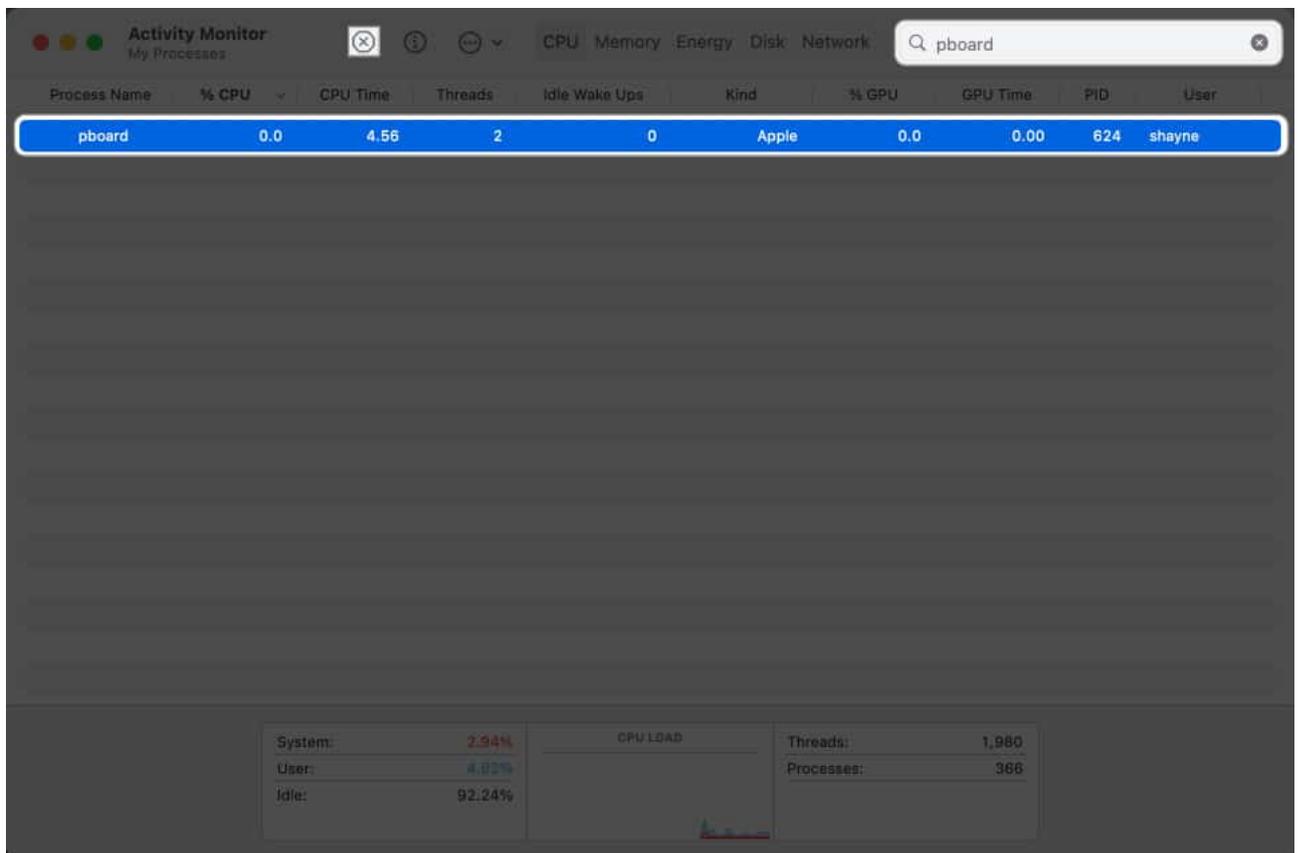
5. Click **Force Quit**.
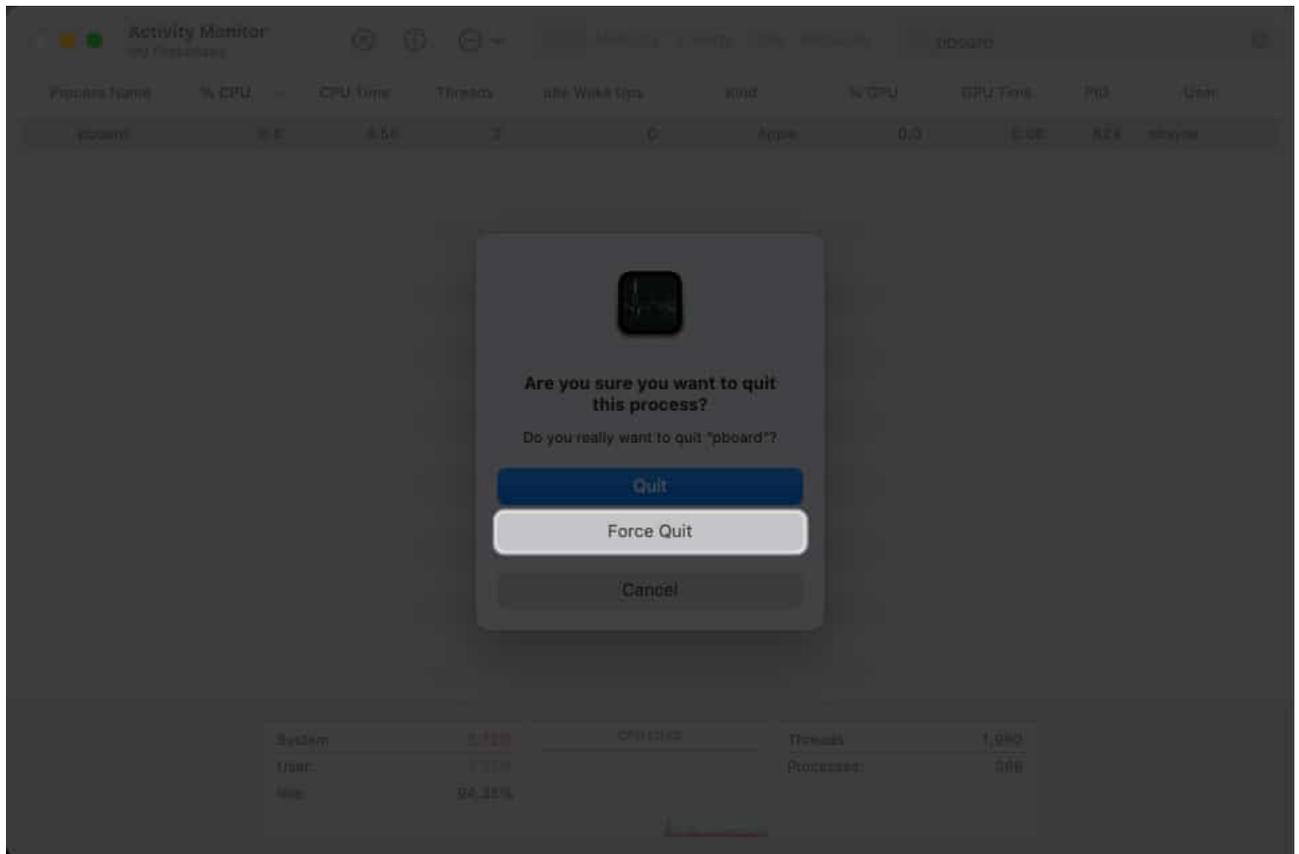
This force quits the process automatically. Close Activity Monitor and check if the copy-paste function is back to normal.

Via the Terminal:

You can also force quit the clipboard process from the Terminal.

1. Go to **Finder** → Click **Go** in the menu bar → Select **Utilities**.
2. Launch **Terminal**.
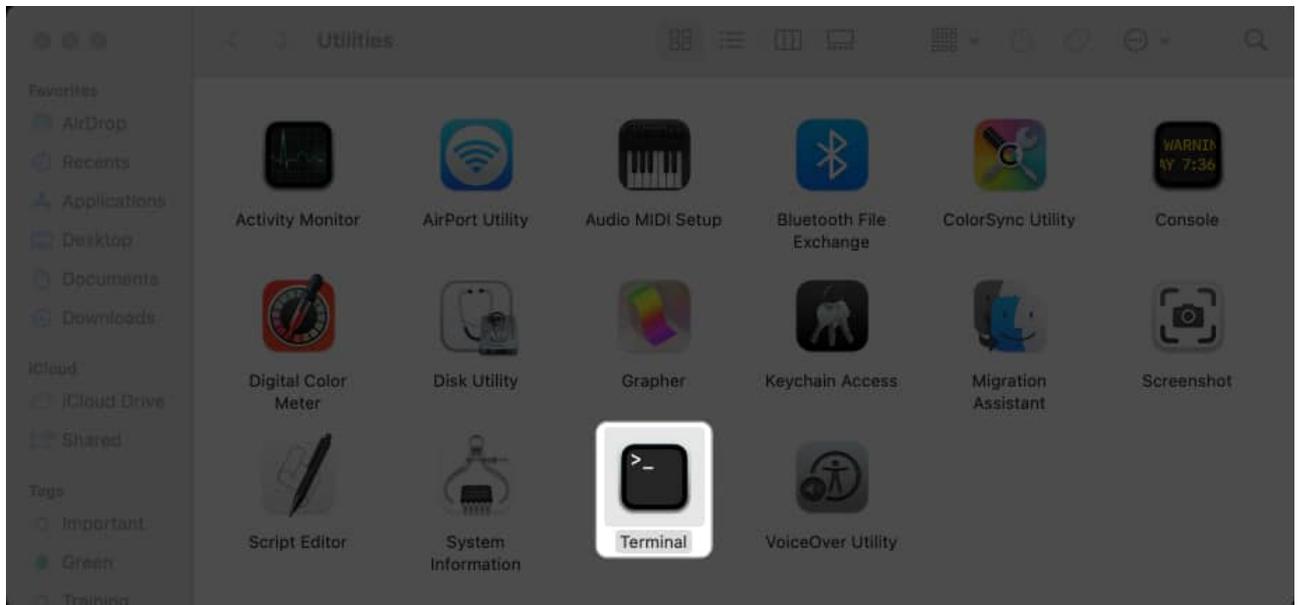
3. Type **sudo killall pboard**.
4. Enter your **password**.

5. Hit **return** on your keyboard.

4. Kill the WindowServer process

Another fix would be to restart the WindowServer process.

This process is responsible for the communication between the apps and the displays and processes the graphical elements you see on your screen. It's possible that the copy and paste on Mac is not working because an app window isn't being rendered properly.

To restart it:

1. Open **Activity Monitor** → Type **windowserver** in the search bar.
2. Select it and click the **Stop (X) icon**.
3. Choose **Quit**.

5. Update macOS

Software glitches and bugs are common in the first versions of major macOS updates.

It's not uncommon to see forums flooding with complaints of glitches after updating to a newly released major update. If this is your case, you can downgrade your Mac or wait for Apple to release an update that fixes these.

6. Boot Mac in Safe Mode

[Booting your Mac in Safe Mode](#) loads only the necessary files and apps for it to run. If you can copy and paste with no problem in Safe Mode, you know that the culprit is something you've added, like an extension, plug-in, or new app.

7. Use a third-party clipboard app

While this doesn't really solve the issue, using a [third-party clipboard app](#) can temporarily substitute the copy-paste functionality of your Mac, enabling you to carry out necessary tasks.

In the meantime, if you're already using one and realize that you cannot use the built-in copy-paste functions of your Mac, consider uninstalling the third-party clipboard app. It may be creating the conflict that obstructs your Mac's native functions.

Contact Apple Support

When nothing else seems to work, it's best to visit the nearest Apple Store for professional assistance. They may be able to diagnose the issue and fix or even replace your Mac if it's [still within warranty](#).

Different ways of copy-pasting on Mac

Now that I have discussed the troubleshoots, it would be good to discuss how copy and paste functions work on Macs quickly.

- The most commonly used way to copy-paste on Mac is using the keyboard shortcuts **Cmd + C** for **Copy** and **Cmd + V** for **Paste**.
- The next method would be to **highlight a text or file** with your mouse or cursor and double-clicking or **control-clicking them** to access the contextual menu, where you can find the **Copy** and **Paste** options.
- Another is the **Edit** toolbar which you can find on the menu bar. Just highlight or select the item you want to copy, click **Edit**, and look for **Copy**, then go to the specified location and click **Paste** from the same menu.
- **Copy-pasting** also works across Apple devices with [Universal Clipboard](#). So if your issue involves problems with copying on iPhone and pasting on Mac, then your issue is with the Universal Clipboard. Read our article about [quick fixes for Universal Clipboard not working](#) to solve this issue.

Wrapping up…

The copy-paste function is deeply embedded into every user's use of their desktop devices, and any issue affecting it becomes a significant inconvenience. Fingers crossed, one of those fixes I've mentioned will have your Mac's copy-paste back in action in no time!

Read more:

- [How to copy and paste from iPhone to Mac, PC, and vice versa](#)
- [How to copy and paste on Mac and between Apple devices](#)
- [8 Best clipboard manager apps for iPhone and iPad](#)