iCloud tabs not syncing

Morac · Nov 8, 2020 · Sort by reaction score

iOS 14

meanbits
macrumors newbie

May 26, 2021 #1,126

The key to the fix is removing the rogue device from iCloud account completely *not* just signing out of iCloud. Just signing out of iCloud did not fix the issue for me but removing the rogue device did.

gank41
macrumors 603

May 26, 2021 #1,127

> meanbits said:
> The key to the fix is removing the rogue device from iCloud account completely *not* just signing out of iCloud. Just signing out of iCloud did not fix the issue for me but removing the rogue device did.

For me what fixed it was restoring my iPhone from a backup done just before the restore. Once the phone was set up again, I opened Safari on my iPhone and ALL of those erroneous iCloud Tabs that my Mac was saying my iPhone had open, were there. I closed each tab and THEN they showed as being closed on my Mac.

I think the reason there's no real "fix" for this from Apple is because this issue is so sporadic and .. odd.. It's not the same for everyone, and doing one thing for one person doesn't necessarily help another. FWIW, I'm still golden after my issue's been resolved. But now knowing how random this could potentially happen, I'm looking forward to iOS 15 and macOS 12...

StumpyBloke
macrumors 603

May 26, 2021 #1,128

> gank41 said:
> For me what fixed it was restoring my iPhone from a backup done just before the restore. Once the phone was set up again, I opened Safari on my iPhone and ALL of those erroneous iCloud Tabs that my Mac was saying my iPhone had open, were there. I closed
> Click to expand...

Did you try signing out of iCloud on the "rogue" device and removing said device from your Apple account? Or did you go straight to a full restore?

gank41
macrumors 603

May 26, 2021 #1,129

> StumpyBloke said:
> Did you try signing out of iCloud on the "rogue" device and removing said device from your Apple account? Or did you go straight to a full restore?

To me, from my own experiences, signing out of iCloud on either/both my iPhone or M1 MBP, has caused more issues than it's fixed. As I noted above, from doing that I've had missing files and pictures and just more bad news.

In my case to fix my iCloud Tabs issue, I just did an online backup (and did another immediately just in case), and then erase and restore on the phone itself. I had tried searching desperately online for a "fix" for this but found nothing helpful but this thread. I've commented earlier about what specifically I did.

Madness837
macrumors newbie

May 26, 2021 #1,130

> meanbits said:
> The key to the fix is removing the rogue device from iCloud account completely *not* just signing out of iCloud. Just signing out of iCloud did not fix the issue for me but removing the rogue device did.

By the time that I can remove the device, it already has disappeared from the devices list. I tried just removing the device from the list and this hasn't solved my issue.

The tabs used to sync, albeit with a lot of problems and phantom tabs, prior to doing a very specific reset method as guided by an Apple Employee. Ever since no tabs show up at all.. I've tried pretty much everything I could have done.

Everything else about Safari sync does seem to work well. The history sync usually takes up to 20 mins, but the bookmarks/favourites sync within 10 seconds most of the time.

I've given up and went back to using Firefox. Not only is it faster, it also uses less resources than Safari 14..

Phantom iCloud tabs
macrumors 6502

May 26, 2021 #1,131

I recently reached out, yet again, to the Tier II support person with whom I've been in contact, and they responded that they have several other active cases related to the iCloud tabs issue--which, at this point, should really be referred to as TabGate. The support person also informed me that the engineers have continued to tell them that they are working on fixing the issue (with, of course, no specific time frame for a solution).

Wackery and gank41

Morac
macrumors 68030 Original poster

May 26, 2021 #1,132

I've noticed something new recently which could explain some of the problems.

In the past I could just swipe to delete tabs from other devices and they would disappear regardless if they got removed from the other device or not.

Lately swiping to delete a tab will result in the tab immediately coming back. The tab will get removed from the other device though. Once that syncs back to the initial device the tab disappears.

I don't know why this was changed, but it also means if you don't own the device you are deleting the tab from or it is offline, you can't remove the tabs from the list.

Wackery and srbNYC

xxray
macrumors 68040

May 26, 2021 #1,133

> StumpyBloke said:
> Just a quick update. I followed a post from above which suggested signing out of iCloud on the rogue device, removing said device from account and then signing back in again. This worked for me, which I have to admit I am gobsmacked. Thanks to whoever posted that suggestion above.

Thank you for this. I never had a problem with iCloud tabs until I had the "Ask Apps Not to Track" greyed out bug throughout the iOS 14.5 betas and first version. Some people fixed it by signing out of their iCloud and then signing back in. This worked for me temporarily, but then the bug came back, AND my iCloud tabs got all hosed. Both my iPad and my MacBook became "rogue" with super long lists of old tabs on my iPhone.

This fixed the problem. Thank you.

StumpyBloke

srbNYC
macrumors 68020

May 27, 2021 #1,134

Apologies but I'm still confused! I have 3 devices: MacBook Air, iPhone XS, early iPad Pro. My MBA and my iPad show all current iCloud tabs correctly. My iPhone shows lots of phantom tabs for my MBA.

So would you recommend I sign out and remove my iPhone (whose tabs show correctly on the other two devices but which shows phantom tabs for my MBA), or my MBA (whose tabs are correctly shown on my iPad but incorrectly on my iPhone)?

gank41
macrumors 603

May 27, 2021 #1,135

> srbNYC said:
> Apologies but I'm still confused! I have 3 devices: MacBook Air, iPhone XS, early iPad Pro. My MBA and my iPad show all current iCloud tabs correctly. My iPhone shows lots of phantom tabs for my MBA.
> Click to expand...

I had a similar situation as you accept that my MBP was showing the phantom tabs for both my iPhone & iPad. What I had done to fix it was to restore both my iPhone & iPad, and as soon as I opened Safari on either of those devices, it showed those phantom tabs and I was then able to close them. Everything's reflected correctly across the board since.

But again, this looks to be one of those YMMV situations. We're on Page 46 of this thread and some things that seem to have worked for some aren't working for others.

meanbits
macrumors newbie

May 27, 2021 #1,136

> srbNYC said:
> Apologies but I'm still confused! I have 3 devices: MacBook Air, iPhone XS, early iPad Pro. My MBA and my iPad show all current iCloud tabs correctly. My iPhone shows lots of phantom tabs for my MBA.
> Click to expand...

I'd sign out *and* remove the MBA. However, I don't have 3 devices. It's weird that one device shows the tabs correctly and another doesn't.

srbNYC

StumpyBloke
macrumors 603

May 27, 2021 #1,137

> srbNYC said:
> Apologies but I'm still confused! I have 3 devices: MacBook Air, iPhone XS, early iPad Pro. My MBA and my iPad show all current iCloud tabs correctly. My iPhone shows lots of phantom tabs for my MBA.
> Click to expand...

You would sign out and remove the MacBook Air from your account.

When I set up my new iPad, only that device showed rogue tabs for my existing iPhone. My other devices were fine. But as noted above, once I removed the iPhone from my account and re-added it it sorted it. Fingers crossed it's a permanent fix.

jigg, gank41 and srbNYC

StumpyBloke
macrumors 603

May 27, 2021 #1,138

> gank41 said:
> But again, this looks to be one of those YMMV situations. We're on Page 46 of this thread and some things that seem to have worked for some aren't working for others.

Exactly this, it seems there is not a one fix for all approach unfortunately. Apple really have dropped a bollock with this. And in my opinion they will never fix it for everyone because they don't know what to do.

gank41

gank41
macrumors 603

May 27, 2021 #1,139

> StumpyBloke said:
> Exactly this, it seems there is not a one fix for all approach unfortunately. Apple really have dropped a bollock with this. And in my opinion they will never fix it for everyone because they don't know what to do.

I've got my fingers crossed. Every year around this time just before WWDC I start noticing oddball issues like Mail not coming in or going offline, iMessages not coming in timely.. Just oddball connection "server side" related issues. Last year on iOS 13 and Catalina it was the Mail App not updating.. Now for ME, the whole iCloud Tabs issue started shortly after one of the initial releases of macOS 11 & iOS 14. Initial troubleshooting getting me nowhere and restoring ALL 3 of my devices wouldn't fix it. But at some point erasing/restoring DID fix it? But someone else doing the same thing doesn't?

I had a NUMBER of issues completely fixed for me as soon as I started on iOS 14 beta 1, and only a small amount of issues crop up since. With iPadOS sounding like it'll get more attention this year, and Apple seemingly very happy with macOS 11, I'm hoping a number of leftover bugs will be resolved with iOS 15 beta 1 and macOS 12. But again, I'm always the optimist.

meanbits
macrumors newbie

May 27, 2021 #1,140

Cloud services is one of Apple's weaknesses and Google's strengths. I wish they kept in mind that the foundation is reliability. One of my old annoyances was that text replacements wouldn't sync quickly.

gank41

gank41
macrumors 603

May 27, 2021 #1,141

> meanbits said:
> Cloud services is one of Apple's weaknesses and Google's strengths. I wish they kept in mind that the foundation is reliability. One of my old annoyances was that text replacements wouldn't sync quickly.

iCloud text Copy/Paste not working accurately is one of the issues I've been having with Big Sur and iOS 14, too.

I remember reading some years ago from someone on Twitter that Apple stages their backend servers on different OS's, too? Something like that. Like, for a period of about 2 or so months, they start updating their back end servers and most sync issues aren't "resolved" until everything's done and inline with each other. Could impact different services depending on what's being updated, and they just call it scheduled downtime or something similar.

Luke240
macrumors newbie

May 27, 2021 #1,142

With MacOS 11.4 and iOS 11.6 this issue seems to be resolved for me. I have iCloud tabs back on my Mac for the first time in a long time!

srbNYC

Edmundovic
macrumors newbie

May 27, 2021 #1,143

> Luke240 said:
> With MacOS 11.4 and iOS 11.6 this issue seems to be resolved for me. I have iCloud tabs back on my Mac for the first time in a long time!

In my case it's still unresolved 11.4+11.6. Now trying to remove old apple devices from iCloud (ATV3 and MBP 2011) and see what happens

PS: still nothing. From time to time MBA shows 'phantom tabs', but if I try to open the link all iCloud tabs disappears. Mystery made by Apple.

Last edited: May 30, 2021

iStorm
macrumors 68020

May 27, 2021 #1,144

Oh man, I fixed it!! I posted earlier I had phantom tabs showing up on my new iPad Pro from my three existing / "rogue" devices. I wasn't quite up for the task of signing out of iCloud and removing them from my Apple ID since I would have needed to do it for each of those three devices. Plus, I didn't want to run the risk of potentially introducing new issues, or setting up my cards in Apple Pay again, among other things.

Searching the web about this issue indicates that an Apple support page apparently used to state "If you can't access the device that shared the tab, **the tab will automatically be cleared from the list after 14 days if the tab isn't updated.**"

I was going to wait a couple weeks to see if they would disappear on their own even though I still had my devices, but then I thought what *if I just change the date on my iPad to the future?* So I did just that. I set my iPad Pro to July 1st, opened Safari, and BOOM...the phantom tabs were gone! I set the date back to the current date, they're still gone and the correct ones are still showing/working.

Obviously YMMV, but this may be another/simpler option to try rather than signing out of iCloud if you have phantom tabs (or just wait a couple weeks). I do realize some people don't like changing the date, but I've never had any implications from having done that several times in the past for other reasons. I figured this was worth a shot before trying other things that would have been a bit more involved.

techguy82, ShiyAlpha, pierafeu and 12 others

davidlanl
macrumors newbie

May 28, 2021 #1,145

Hi all,

I was on the phone with a few Apple support reps last Thursday into Saturday. It took some patience, but they opened a ticket for me and are having the engineers look into the issue. No updates yet as far as I can tell.

I have experienced a few of the problems you are describing, including:

- Bookmarks syncing but 0 history sync and delayed/outdated tabs sync.
- Stuck tabs despite many attempts at removing them from all of my iCloud devices.

It might be better to temporarily turn off the feature for now until a fix is in place unless you actively use bookmark syncing for work. I just decided to update and manage my bookmarks on my MacBook and turned safari sync off on both my phone and laptop for the time being. With Big Sur, it seems to drain the battery dramatically (and sporadically) when polling the servers for iCloud updates in Safari.

Phantom iCloud tabs

unkno
macrumors newbie

May 29, 2021 #1,146

Hi again, it has been some time I visited this thread since my tabs were syncing, that is, until we took a week off. When I was back I had these phantom tabs. The solution to fixing it is very easy (I just noticed the date fix-up, which would be easier, anyway).

The reason the 'phantom tabs' appear is due to the fact that there is a local database of tabs, kept in the library folder. If you delete this file, it won't be able to 'merge' when you enable cloud tabs.

Disclaimer: This might break something although should be safe, follow the instructions at your own risk.

So the steps to the fix are:

1. Quit Safari
2. Turn off iCloud sync for Safari from Preferences -> Apple ID -> iCloud -> Safari
3. Make a backup folder for the files : `mkdir ~/Documents/iCloudTabsBackup`
4. Go to your Safari folder, it should contain files such as CloudTabs.db : `cd ~/Library/Safari`
5. Move all the related files into the backup folder `mv CloudTabs.* ~/Documents/iCloudTabsBackup/`
6. Turn on iCloud sync from Preferences -> Apple ID -> iCloud -> Safari
7. Open Safari

Following this I was finally free of my 'phantom tabs', when you enable the sync, it will tell you that it will merge, as there is nothing to merge, they are finally cleared and gone.

srbNYC
macrumors 68020

May 30, 2021 #1,147

Interesting, @unkno. So if my MBA and my iPad show all current iCloud tabs correctly, but my iPhone shows phantom tabs for my MBA, which device would I do this for? My MBA's tabs are correct on my iPad but incorrectly on my iPhone.

gank41

Edmundovic
macrumors newbie

May 30, 2021 #1,148

> unkno said:
> Hi again, it has been some time I visited this thread since my tabs were syncing, that is, until we took a week off. When I was back I had these phantom tabs. The solution to fixing it is very easy (I just noticed the date fix-up, which would be easier
> Click to expand...

no more 'phantom tabs', but still iCloud tabs not syncing as expected. My guess it might be related to how old is iCloud account, in my case it's over 10 years old. Have read that if you create new iCloud account it works as expected, but don't like idea to move to new account as all apps and a lot of pictures is in the cloud. This whole photos library sync process will take way too long (600GB). Waiting for next Apple update(s) with the hope that it will fix finally iCloud tabs.

srbNYC and Phantom iCloud tabs

Phantom iCloud tabs
macrumors 6502

May 30, 2021 #1,149

> Edmundovic said:
> no more 'phantom tabs', but still iCloud tabs not syncing as expected. My guess it might be related to how old is iCloud account, in my case it's over 10 years old. Have read that if you create new iCloud account it works as expected, but don't like idea to
> Click to expand...

I'm in the same boat. My iCloud account is over ten years old, too, and I have also heard that just creating a new account fixes the issue. But why should loyal, long-time Apple users be punished like that?

Edmundovic and srbNYC

gank41
macrumors 603

May 30, 2021 #1,150

> Phantom iCloud tabs said:
> I'm in the same boat. My iCloud account is over ten years old, too, and I have also heard that just creating a new account fixes the issue. But why should loyal, long-time Apple users be punished like that?

I've also got an old .Mac account and was able to fix my issues restoring both iDevices. I don't think it has anything to do with how old the account is.

Edmundovic

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iOS 14

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