macOS Terminal

macOS ships a BSD-flavoured Unix userland, so the usual `cd`, `ls`, and `grep` all work. This sheet focuses on the commands that are unique to macOS — the ones worth knowing beyond generic Linux.

macOS-only Commands

Command	Action
`open .`	open the current folder in Finder
`open file.pdf`	open a file with its default app
`open -a Safari url`	open with a specific app
`pbcopy < file`	copy a file's contents to the clipboard
`pbpaste > file`	paste the clipboard into a file
`cmd	pbcopy`
`mdfind name`	Spotlight search from the terminal
`say 'done'`	speak text aloud
`caffeinate -d`	keep the Mac awake until you Ctrl-C
`sw_vers`	show the macOS version

Homebrew

Command	Action
`brew install <pkg>`	install a formula
`brew install --cask <app>`	install a GUI app
`brew update && brew upgrade`	update Homebrew, then all packages
`brew list`	list installed packages
`brew search <term>`	search for a formula/cask
`brew uninstall <pkg>`	remove a package
`brew services start <svc>`	run a background service
`brew doctor`	diagnose common problems
`brew cleanup`	delete old versions and caches

System & Defaults

Command	Action
`softwareupdate -l`	list available OS updates
`defaults read <domain>`	read an app's preferences
`defaults write <domain> <key> <val>`	change a hidden setting
`killall Finder`	restart Finder (after defaults changes)
`launchctl list`	list launchd (background) jobs
`pmset -g`	show power-management settings
`diskutil list`	list disks and volumes

> **defaults write can break apps.** Undocumented `defaults` keys are unsupported and can leave an app in a weird state. Note the current value with `defaults read` first so you can put it back.

Networking

Command	Action
`ifconfig`	show network interfaces (BSD-style)
`ipconfig getifaddr en0`	your current Wi-Fi IP address
`networksetup -listallnetworkservices`	list network services
`scutil --dns`	show the resolver / DNS configuration
`ping -c 4 host`	send 4 probes
`arp -a`	show the local ARP cache