

Distill

User Manual — Version 0.1

Distill is a macOS app for AI-powered file renaming. Drop files or folders into the app — Distill extracts text from PDFs, images (OCR), Office documents, emails and media files. The AI identifies date, category, description and sender, and the configurable NameBuilder generates consistent, structured file names. All suggestions are shown in a diff preview before renaming.

Key Features

- **5 AI providers** — Claude, OpenAI, Gemini, Ollama and Apple Intelligence
- **8 file processors** — PDF, Image (OCR), Office, Email, HTML, RTF, Media, Generic
- **Configurable rules** — templates, date format, casing, separator, regex
- **Folder watching** — auto-rename new files in watched directories
- **REST API & MCP** — 15 HTTP endpoints and 10 MCP tools
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Download as PDF

Handbuch (Deutsch)

Manual (English)

Getting Started

Installation

Download the DMG file and drag Distill to your Applications folder. On first launch the onboarding assistant opens.

System requirements: macOS 15.0 (Sequoia) or later, Apple Silicon or Intel.

Onboarding

The onboarding assistant walks you through the setup:

1. Choose an AI provider (Claude, OpenAI, Gemini, Ollama or Apple Intelligence)
2. Enter your API key (not required for Ollama and Apple Intelligence)
3. Done – you can start renaming files immediately

You can skip onboarding and configure the provider later under Settings → AI.

Your First Rename

1. Drag one or more files into the drop zone
2. Distill analyzes the files and shows suggestions in the diff preview
3. Review the suggestions – names can be edited before renaming
4. Click **Rename** to apply the changes

Folders are processed recursively. Previously renamed files are skipped automatically.



Renaming Files

Drag & Drop

Drag files or folders into the main window drop zone. Folders are scanned recursively – all supported files are queued for processing. Alternatively, use the **Files** or **Folder** buttons to open the file dialog.

Up to 4 files are processed concurrently. For larger batches a progress indicator shows the current state.

Preview Diff

For each file, Distill displays the original and suggested name side by side. Changes are color-highlighted. The AI analysis confidence is shown as a percentage.

Click the suggested name to edit it before renaming.

Supported File Types

Processor	File Types	Extraction
PDF	.pdf	Text, metadata, optional OCR via PCS
Image	.jpg, .png, .tiff, .heic	OCR text recognition, EXIF data
Office	.docx, .xlsx, .pptx	Text content and document properties
Email	.eml, .msg	Subject, sender, date, body
HTML	.html, .htm	Page content and title
RTF	.rtf	Formatted text content
Media	.mp3, .mp4, .mov, ...	EXIF data, ID3 tags
Generic	all others	Filename, size, creation date



Conflict Resolution

If a file with the suggested name already exists, Distill appends a sequential number (e.g. `Filename (2).pdf`). File timestamps are preserved if the option is enabled in settings.

AI Providers

Provider Overview

Provider	API Key	Local	Description
Claude	Yes	No	Anthropic's Claude models, high analysis quality
OpenAI	Yes	No	GPT-4o and other models
Gemini	Yes	No	Google's Gemini models
Ollama	No	Yes	Local LLMs (Llama, Mistral, etc.)
Apple Intelligence	No	Yes	On-device ML, no data leaves your Mac

Setup

Open **Settings** → **AI**. Select the desired provider from the list. For cloud providers, enter your API key — keys are stored securely in the macOS Keychain.

For **Ollama**, Ollama must be installed locally with a loaded model. Configure the endpoint (default: `http://localhost:11434`) and the desired model.

Apple Intelligence requires no configuration — it uses the system ML framework.

Switching Providers



You can switch providers at any time. API keys remain in the Keychain, so switching does not require re-entering them. The provider can also be switched programmatically via the REST API.

Rules & Templates

NameBuilder Rules

After AI analysis, the NameBuilder applies a chain of rules to the file name. The order is fixed: template substitution → date normalization → casing → prefix/suffix → umlauts → separator → sanitization → regex rules.

Rule	Description	Example
Date Format	Format of the detected date	YYYYMMDD, DD.MM.YYYY
Casing	Letter casing	Original, lowercase, UPPERCASE, Title Case
Separator	Separator between name parts	Space, underscore, hyphen
Umlauts	Keep or replace umlauts	ä → ae, ö → oe, ü → ue
Prefix/Suffix	Text before or after the name	Prefix: SCAN_
Regex Rules	Regular expressions for find/replace	\s+ → _

Templates

Templates define the file name structure using placeholders. Available tokens:

Token	Description
{date}	Detected date in configured format
{category}	Document category (invoice, contract, etc.)
{description}	Description of document content
{sender}	Sender or issuer



Token	Description
{amount}	Amount (for invoices)

Example: {date} {category} {sender} {description} produces e.g. 20260401 Invoice Telekom Mobile.pdf

Regex Rules

Regular expressions are applied after all other rules. Each rule consists of a search pattern and replacement text. Rules are executed in the configured order. The preview shows the effect of each rule on the file name.

Folder Watching

Adding Folders

Switch to **Folders** in the sidebar and click **Add Folder**. Choose a directory for Distill to watch. New files in this folder are detected automatically.

Queue

Detected files are added to a queue. The number of pending files is shown next to the folder. The queue can be paused and resumed.

Auto-Rename

When **Auto-Rename** is enabled for a folder, new files are automatically analyzed and renamed without manual confirmation. Renaming uses the currently configured rules and the active AI provider.

Auto-rename is especially useful for scan folders or download directories where new documents arrive regularly.



History

Rename History

Every rename is saved with timestamp, original name, new name and the AI provider used (SwiftData). The history is accessible from the sidebar.

Search and Filter

The search field searches both original and new file names. The filter lets you show or hide reverted renames.

Reverting

Click **Revert** on a history entry to rename the file back to its original name. The entry is marked as reverted. This feature is also available via the REST API.

Export

The history can be exported as CSV or JSON.



API & Automation

REST API

Distill provides a local REST API on port 43821 (configurable). Enable the API server under **Settings** → **API**. Optional token authentication.

Method	Endpoint	Description
GET	/v1/health	Server status
GET	/v1/version	App version
GET	/v1/providers	Available AI providers
POST	/v1/providers	Switch provider
POST	/v1/suggest	Generate name suggestions
POST	/v1/rename	Rename files
GET	/v1/history	Rename history
POST	/v1/revert	Revert rename
GET/POST	/v1/rules	Read/set rules
GET/POST	/v1/settings	Read/set settings
GET/POST	/v1/watch	Manage folder watching
GET/POST	/v1/templates	Manage templates

MCP Server

The MCP server (`distill-mcp-server`) enables AI assistants like Claude to control Distill. It ships inside the app bundle and communicates with the app via REST.

10 MCP tools: `rename_files`, `suggest_names`, `revert_rename`, `get_rename_history`, `watch_folder`, `app_status`, `set_provider`, `get_rules`, `set_rules`



Finder Extension

The FinderSync extension adds a **“Rename with Distill”** entry to the Finder context menu. Selected files are passed directly to Distill. The extension must be enabled in System Settings under Extensions.

Settings

General

- **Show menu bar icon** — Quick access via the menu bar with drag & drop
- **Preserve file timestamps** — Creation and modification dates are kept after renaming
- **Auto-rename on folder watch** — Rename new files in watched folders directly

AI Settings

Under **Settings** → **AI** you choose the active provider and configure API key and model. API keys are stored securely in the macOS Keychain.

API Settings

Under **Settings** → **API** you can enable the REST API server, configure the port (default: 43821) and set an optional authentication token.

PCS Integration

If PDF Content Search is installed, Distill can use its OCR engine for improved text recognition on PDFs and images. Enable the integration and enter the PCS token. Connection status is shown live.



FAQ

▼ Which file types are supported?

PDF, images (JPEG, PNG, TIFF, HEIC), Office documents (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), emails (EML, MSG), HTML, RTF and media files (EXIF, ID3 tags). Unrecognized files are handled by the generic processor.

▶ Are my files uploaded to the cloud?

▶ Can I undo a rename?

▶ How much does Distill cost?

▶ Do I need an API key?

▶ Can Distill watch folders automatically?

