



EV Nova for macOS 10.15+

(Also known as WineNova)

User Guide by Geek

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Introduction: Escape Velocity Nova

Welcome to Escape Velocity Nova (“EV Nova” for short), the third in a trilogy of classic Mac space sim games, brought to life by Matt Burch (and others), and published over 20 years ago by Ambrosia Software (may they rest in peace). The game was originally released for Classic Mac OS, and ported to Mac OS X and Microsoft Windows. Long since its last update, running this beloved game on its home platform has been impossible since Apple dropped support for 32-bit apps with the release of Mac OS 10.15, or “Catalina.” While the game still runs fairly well in Windows (even Windows 11), running it on modern Macs has been quite challenging. It can be run in a virtual machine, or by running Windows natively in Boot Camp (Intel Macs only). There is also a *third* option: a WINE wrapper of Windows Nova.

What is the “Community Edition” of EV Nova?

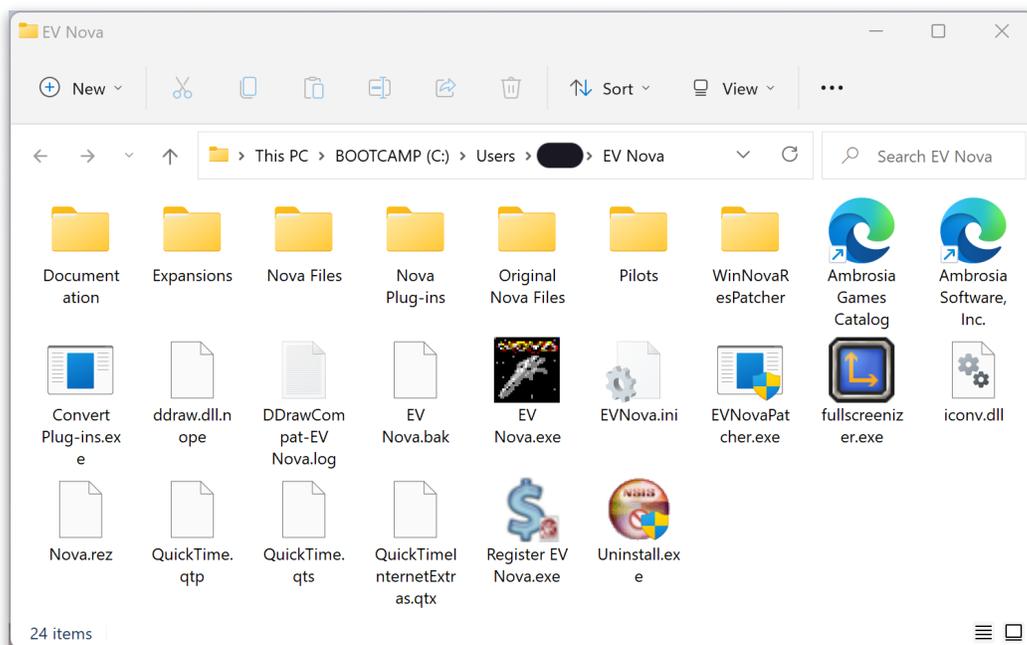
I’m glad you asked. EV Nova has not been supported officially for many years, and has depended on community patches and hacks to continue running on newer operating systems, starting with patches to the Mac version to launch without crashing past Mac OS X 10.10. Meanwhile, Windows developed more compatibility issues with EV Nova with every major OS update. The Community Edition does its best job of setting this right, thanks to the hard work of andrews05 (“Guy”) and FunkyFr3sh. With many performance patches and feature enhancements, the Community Edition is the new modern version of EV Nova, and the core of the WineNova experience as well. Revision 4 comes with some exciting new features, such as launching Nova from any folder using something called a “nplay” file. More on that later.

What is WineNova?

WineNova is an implementation of the Community Edition of EV Nova in WINE, which is a functional Windows environment set up to work on POSIX systems, such as macOS or Linux. To run a 32-bit EXE, more than just basic WINE was needed. Enter Wineskin, an implementation of WINE that uses technology from Crossover Games to preload and run 32-bit code in a 64-bit environment. If that sounds like magic, it basically is. I'm just glad it works. As it turned out, putting EV Nova inside a Wineskin wrapper wasn't hard. Getting it to run stably? A bit challenging. But I wanted *more*. It wasn't enough to get the Windows version of EV Nova working on my Mac, I wanted it to *feel* like the Mac version. No complicated setup needed, just download and play. And I wanted it to run on Intel and Apple Silicon Macs.

After months of work and lots of testing, I'm happy to share WineNova with the still surprisingly active EV Nova community.

To give an idea of where this started, this was a typical EV Nova folder in Windows.



The folder is littered with tools and scripts trying to get around compatibility issues with modern Windows. Gone are Mac features like the ability to change what folder EV Nova finds data in, making the use of "Total Conversion" (TC) plugins a snap. One has to rename or move the original "Nova Files" folder to load alternate data, and over time, deal with the clutter of files needed for EV Nova to run.

WineNova seeks to restore the classic Mac experience, hiding all that away from sight and presenting just the app with the Nova Data, Plug-ins, and Pilots folders outside. Also present is the "Tools" folder, containing a Log folder, and the original documentation that came with the game. And this manual too. That's there.

Installing WineNova

You're reading this, so you've probably already opened the disk image and installed EV Nova. Congratulations, it has been installed.

Playing WineNova

Just double-click the app icon to play. On initial launch, WineNova installs the WINE wrapper in your User folder, under \$HOME/Library/Application Support/WineNova*. It also generates a preference file containing default settings into your user-level Preferences folder. After that, it should launch in Fullscreen Mode, configured to run at your default screen's resolution. For Retina displays, that would be the apparent scaled resolution your display is currently running.

* Used to be named "EV Nova." This caused conflicts with legacy Nova library folders. Sorry!

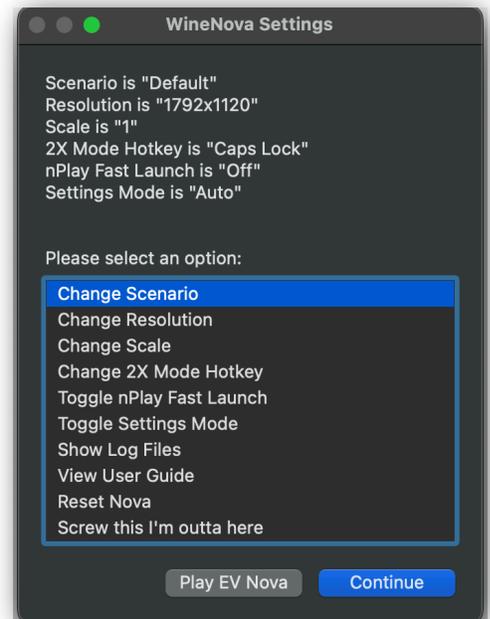
When you want to stop playing EV Nova, use the Windows-style hotkey Option-F4 to quit during gameplay, or press your Escape key to return to the main menu and quit from there. Shutdown could take a few seconds to complete in earlier betas of WineNova, but since 2.5, launch and shutdown times have become much faster.

WineNova has also recently added support for converting legacy EV Nova files for EV Nova for Mac. This includes data and plug-in files, and as of Beta 2.9, *pilot files* also. Do note that as of Revision 3 of the "Community Edition" of EV Nova, Pilot files are unencrypted, so they can be modified if you wish, at your own risk.

See the next section for instructions on changing several of WineNova's special settings, which are changed before the game is run.

Configuring WineNova

When you're ready to try out some of the different features beyond playing the masterfully crafted, utterly perfect beyond all reason, perfectly written and debugged default scenario for EV Nova[†], you may want to change the screen resolution, or load a different scenario. Luckily, the Settings Window is available for your use upon first launching WineNova, and with it you can do the above tasks, and more! Let's walk through each of these options.



[†] *Is Dave gone now? I don't see him. Oh wait, he's right behind me, isn't he?*

Changing the Scenario

Select "Change Scenario," and click Continue (or press Return on your keyboard). You will then be able to choose to load a new folder, or restore the default scenario.

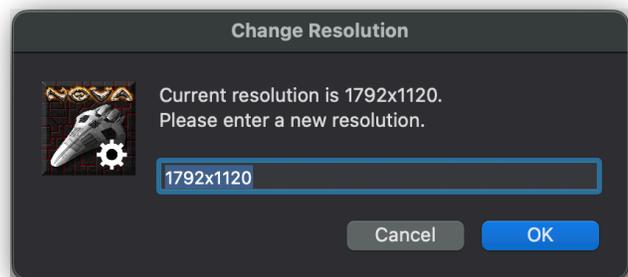
Select "Choose Folder" to continue, and select any folder on your Mac to load. If the folder contains a TC, make sure the files intended to replace Nova's data files are in a folder named "Nova Files," and Plug-ins in a folder named "Nova Plug-ins" (just "Plug-ins" also works). You will also want a folder named "Pilots"; WineNova will create it for you if it is missing (same for "Nova Plug-ins"). These folders will then be linked in a way that the Windows EXE for EV Nova will find them the next time it is launched.

What about a folder that just contains Plug-ins, like "Brave New Void"?† That works too. If WineNova can't find a "Nova Files" folder, it will use the default one instead.

Whatever folder is chosen, will be launched by EV Nova until you change this setting, or reset Nova's settings using the tool.

Changing the Resolution

Mac Nova didn't really have a setting for game resolution. It was designed to fit your display. Windows Nova could only have one resolution. To change it, scripts have been written to edit the code in the EXE directly. At least until the very recent release of the "Community Edition" of EV Nova for Windows, which allows this process to be easily automated and adjusted without rewriting EXE code.



† Shout-out to DocFiveMinusMinus. Great work!

In the settings window, select “Change Resolution.” A new resolution should be entered in the format “(Width)x(Height)” as shown in the above screenshot. Don’t worry if you enter it wrong, you’ll get more chances. If you want to run in Windowed mode, you must set the resolution of the game to be smaller than your system default. Windowed mode is accessible in game with the hotkey **Option-F**, or by toggling the in-game setting (no restart needed).

Changing the Scale

By default, the GUI and text are scaled as EV Nova was originally shipped. This is fine for low resolution screens of the time, but can make text hard to read on modern screens. Thanks to the insane hacking skills of the community[§], it is now possible to play at a larger scale! For most Mac Retina displays, the ideal scale factor is 1.3, but are free to experiment as you please. The latest updates to the Nova EXE have made this feature far more stable than originally, but shoot Guy a message if you have an issue. We are not responsible for GUI elements covering the screen and glitching out. Please use this feature responsibly.

2X Mode Hotkey

A brand new addition to WineNova thanks to updates to the Community Edition of EV Nova. Have you ever wished you could use a key other than Caps Lock to double the game speed? Me neither, but here you go. Using this option, you will be presented with seven alternative keys you can use instead of Caps Lock, so pick one that doesn’t conflict with your preferred gameplay key binds. If however none of those are to your liking, you may also choose “Custom” to enter your own Windows Virtual Key Code,

[§] Special thanks to *croc*, *Guy*, and *FunkyFr3sh*

and assign a label. Don't know the code? Click the Help button to view Microsoft's guide in your default Web browser. Internet connection needed.

Settings Mode

In older versions of WineNova, the Settings window was designed to mimic the behavior of EV Nova for Mac, where holding down Shift before Launching EV Nova would show the option to load a different scenario folder than default. I received multiple reports that this was unintuitive for some.

So now, the Settings window will appear automatically on launch. If you prefer the original behavior of Shift-launch, the "Toggle Settings Mode" option is for you. The summary text at the top of the settings window will display "Manual" for the mode when Shift-Launch is chosen, or "Automatic" for the new default behavior.

nPlay Fast Launch

What is this? As another addition to the Community Edition of EV Nova, it is now possible to launch any folder as Nova's data source by launching from a file with the extension ".nplay". If the Fast Launch setting is On, launching WineNova from an .nplay file will skip the Settings screen and launch your scenario in EV Nova without changing any of WineNova's settings. If Fast Launch is off, then you will be able to adjust some settings before launch, if you choose. You still need to either hold Shift down, or have the Settings mode at "Automatic."

Log Files

Logging is an important feature to aid in troubleshooting issues. EV Nova by default saves two useful logs, the "Pilot Log," and the "Debug Log." These files are stored

inside the WINE wrapper with the EV Nova EXE, because that's the only way the game can find and update them. For your convenience, both files are combined by WineNova, and saved as "NovaLog.txt" every time you run WineNova. The original location for these logs was in the Tools > Logs folder inside your EV Nova install folder. However, as part of a fix for a recently discovered issue with folder permissions, the folder has been moved into ~/Library/Application Support/WineNova. A shortcut to that folder replaces the old Logs folder. This is provided as a convenience for those used to finding the Logs in the previous location, while WineNova itself will automatically direct you to the new location from the Settings window.

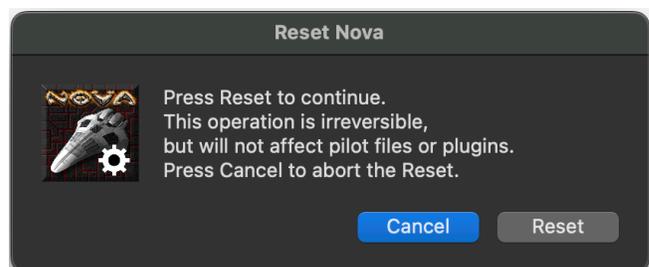
Open the User Manual (you're here now!)

If you have had difficulty finding this manual before, this option in the Settings window is for you.

Resetting Nova

At the end of the day, this is a Windows program from twenty years ago, running in WINE. If that conjures up any particular words, I doubt the word "stability" makes it to the "Top 100" list. I've done my best,

but something could break. Maybe a link gets messed up after an abrupt shutdown, or somehow the settings file is corrupted. Not to worry. If Nova fails to launch, run the "Reset Nova" tool. This will reinstall the WINE wrapper from a snapshot, and regenerate the .plist file that stores scenario folder data. After the reset is complete, you will be able to adjust settings if you want before launching Nova.



Quitting WineNova

If you have ever wanted to be able to quit the app from the settings window without having to launch the game, join my club. I've wanted that from day one, but AppleScript list boxes don't let me customize the buttons beyond name, and I can't add a third one. So I finally added a silly option at the bottom of the list just for quitting. I hope that's helpful.

Cheating in WineNova???

What? No, of course not! We call it "debugging," but I suppose when you see what this newly discovered and enabled feature can do, you might start to believe you have omnipotent powers while playing EV Nova.



Read on to learn how this works, and please enjoy.

Turn it on, and back off again

Command	Hotkey	Mac laptop version
Enable Debug Mode	Alt+Home	Option-Fn-Left
Disable Debug Mode	End	Option-Fn-Right

Money Money Money

Command	Hotkey	Mac laptop version
Get 50,000 Credits	Shift+4	Shift-4
Lose 10,000 Credits	Alt+Shift+4	Option+Shift+4

I Cast "Create Ship!"**

Command	Hotkey	Mac laptop version
Spawn random ship	Insert	fn-Return
Spawn fleet #129 (Feds)	Alt-Insert	Option-fn-Return
Spawn fleet #135 (Pirates)	Alt-Control-Insert	Option-Control-fn-Return
Spawn fleet #149 (Rebellion)	Alt-Shift-Insert	Option-Shift-fn-Return
Spawn përs 641 (Hannah Chick)	Control-Insert	Control-fn-Return

I am a god, you dull creature!††

Command	Hotkey	Mac laptop version
Cycle player ship Up	Page Up	Option-fn-Up
Cycle player ship Down	Page Down	Option-fn-Down
Reset player stats (and gain hypergate access or Rank 147)	F6	F6
Same as above, but with no fuel	Alt-F6	Option-F6
Show target's info	Hold Control	Hold Control
Despawn target	Backspace	fn-Delete
Make target hostile	F7	F7

** The fleet and përs spawns are based on EV Nova's default data. The result will vary if a different scenario is playing.

†† Function Keys may require an additional keypress of fn if your Mac function keys or touch bar are mapped to system functions.

Command	Hotkey	Mac laptop version
Make target neutral, and leave system	Alt-F7	Option-F7
Disable target	F8	F8
Assign Target as hired escort	Alt-F8	Option-F8
Destroy Target	F9	F9
Destroy Target (with legal status change)	Shift-F9	Shift-F9
Disable player	Alt-F9	Option-F9
Explore entire map	F10	F10
Unexplore entire map	Alt-F10	Option-F10
Complete Jump instantly	Delete	Delete
Instantly restart after dying (works even with Debug off)	Home	Fn-Left
Evaluate NCB Test Expression	Alt-9	Option-9
Execute NCB Test Expression	Alt-0	Option-0

Additionally, be aware that while Debug Mode is active, you will have unlimited afterburner, 50x faster armor regeneration, capture odds are ignored, and combat rating is not evaluated when you attempt to dominate a planet. Special thanks to Guy's hard work in discovering and configuring this, and for his patience with my Mac laptop keyboard's inability to reproduce some of the original hotkeys.

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Troubleshooting WineNova

This section is mostly a collection of specific issues and solutions found during testing. If the issue you are trying to solve is not here, please feel free to report it.

WineNova won't launch!

There are a few reasons this may happen, and most are related to what I suspect was a recent silent update to Gatekeeper settings^{##}, at least in macOS Sonoma and Sequoia. After WineNova Beta 2.10.1 came out, I received reports of crashes when launching from nPlay, and I soon reproduced them on my system as well. It was found that if a scenario was in an iCloud-synced folder like Desktop or Downloads, and/or if WineNova itself was placed there, then the app would crash. Script Editor showed errors such as "read-only file system" or "operation not permitted" for actions like updating a log file or creating a symlink. Even stranger, no errors occurred if launching WineNova from the Terminal.

My best guess is that now only code-signed apps are allowed to interact fully with cloud synced folders (also verified the behavior with Dropbox), even if System Settings show the app as having "full disk access" or specific access to Desktop or Downloads. I haven't yet made the plunge to officially code-sign WineNova, as I would rather do so when I have the app in a format where I can distribute only my code, and allow the app to download the wrapper and game data (code I do not own) separately.

As a result of these findings, a lot of WineNova's scripts were tweaked under the hood to use workarounds I found by trial and error. For example, launching from nPlay with Fast Launch off no longer updates WineNova's symlinks, and if broken symlinks to the wrapper are found, the game switches to using the nPlay launch process as a fallback. I hope any issues like this are fully resolved as of Beta 2.10.2, but please send feedback if this is not the case. ~~But no rush or anything, I could use a little rest.~~

^{##} Thanks, Apple!

I just downloaded a TC, and tried to launch the nplay file. It didn't work.

This is related to the above issue with accessing the Downloads or Desktop folders. If you move the TC folder somewhere else it should work. Also you can try manually removing all of the "EV Nova" app's access permissions in System Settings, and trying again. This has resolved the issue on some systems. Finally, try using WineNova's settings to link to the folder manually, as this seems to trigger macOS into allowing the app to use that folder without issue. If this works, you can switch WineNova's manual link back to what it was before, and try the nplay again.

In summary, WineNova has issues relating to accessing the Downloads or Desktop folders, and while I've done my best to fix them, you may still need to mess with your system's file access permissions settings for the app before it will function as desired. Sorry, but until I get a code-signed setup working, these issues won't easily go away for good. ~~I blame Apple.~~

The "Open Pilot" window isn't working, and the game is stuck.

The first time you use "Open Pilot," you may get a prompt from macOS asking permission for Nova to access files. On Apple Silicon, this prompt might appear *behind* the game, and it may seem to freeze. You may be able to access it by accessing Mission Control and switching to Finder. If not, you might have to force quit Nova. If you have this issue on Apple Silicon, please switch to Windowed Mode using Option-F first, to make sure the prompt is accessible. It should work fine after that. This issue has not been seen for a while, but I left this section in just in case.

The "Open Pilot" window doesn't show my pilot files.

This one seems rare. But if you either find the folder you want first, or reset Nova's settings, it should be finding the correct Pilots folder from then on. It will also switch

automatically if you use the built in tools to load a different data folder. nPlay should likewise be opening the correct Pilots folder.

Can I disable the Hyperspace flash?

As of Beta 2.9, yes! Just uncheck "Hyperspace effects" in the in-game settings.

The launch music sounds crackly.

This is caused by the Windows version of EV Nova having very particular needs for how the "Nova Music.mp3" file is encoded. Nova's default file works fine, and all of the music files found in "Plug-ins for WineNova" have been fixed as well. If you install a plug-in from a different source, it may or may not have a correctly encoded mp3 file. The encoding needed is "160kbps CBR."

The color looks weird.

No it doesn't. That was fixed. WineNova now displays colors like Mac Nova did, despite the Windows version displaying certain colors slightly differently by default.

There are no asteroids.

This shouldn't be happening anymore, Guy patched the EXE to resolve this. If somehow this happens, try loading a new pilot before you go to "Guy's EV Stuff" down in Resources. You can try the asteroid fix plugins available there as a last resort.

The text is hard to read.

Try changing the Scale factor, or lowering resolution.

How do I create a .nplay launcher file?

You just need a file with that extension. The file can be blank, or contain whatever.

You can use a text editor or the Terminal if you like.

Example Terminal command:

```
echo "" > "/path/to/folder/Play my epic TC.nplay"
```

.....

Resources

EV Nova Discord Server: <https://discord.gg/sDJBUcwFVH>

EV Nova Forum: <https://community.ambrosia.garden/>

Plug-ins for WineNova: <https://mega.nz/folder/>

[lvMRGBJJ#14gAc64SjkRP25prXC1uBg](https://mega.nz/folder/lvMRGBJJ#14gAc64SjkRP25prXC1uBg)

More downloads: <https://escape-velocity.games/>

Guy's EV Stuff: <https://andrews05.github.io/evstuff/>

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Contact

For questions and concerns, please visit the EV Nova Discord Server, and contact myself at @633k. For technical issues with Apple Silicon specifically, you may also wish to contact "Guy" via @andrews050. To fanboy or rage at one of EV Nova's original dev team, contact Dave as @pipeline.

You can also visit the new forum, and find most of us there as well. The Discord server is still the best option, it's definitely the most active.