EV Nova for macOS 10.15+

(Also known as WineNova)

User Guide by Geek

Introduction

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 WineNova?

WineNova is an implementation of the Windows version 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 is 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 abili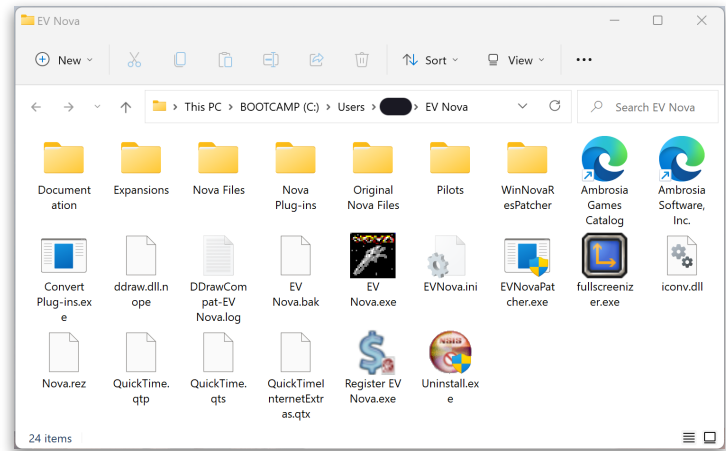ty to change what folder EV Nova finds data in, making the use of "Total Conversion" (TC) plugins a snap. One has to rename or move the original "Nova Files" folder to load alternate data, and over time, deal with the clutter of files needed for EV Nova to run.

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.

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.

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* New folder name!

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.
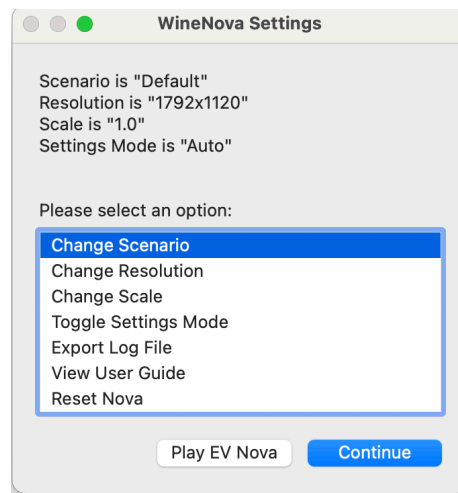
Changing the Scenario

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.

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

[‡] *Shout-out to DocFiveMinusMinus. Great work!*

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.
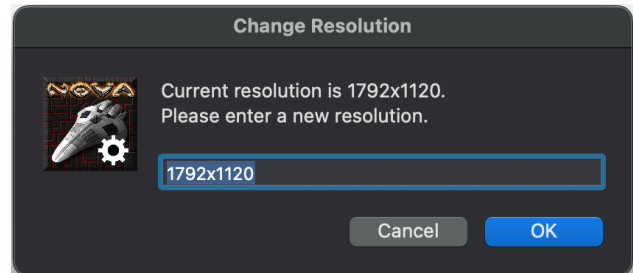
In the settings window, select "Change Resolution." A new resolution should be entered in the format "(Width)x(Height)" as shown in the above screenshot. Don't worry if you enter it wrong, you'll get more chances.   If you want to run in Windowed mode, _you must set the resolution of the game to be smaller 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

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[§] _Special thanks to croc, Guy, and FunkyFr3sh_

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.

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.

EV Nova's PilotLog and DebugLog

The remaining options in the Settings window are for debug and troubleshooting purposes. First is the "Export Log File" tool. EV Nova ships with the ability to report save file and debug info into two separate text files, named "pilotlog.txt" and "debuglog.txt." These files have to be inside the same folder as the Nova EXE for it to write to them. This would mean that to access one (perhaps to share with others in the community to solve a problem), one would need to find them. This tool saves you the trouble. When you run it, a text file will appear inside the "EV Nova/Tools/Logs" folder containing the contents of both Nova log files, with a timestamped title.** The Logs folder will open automatically in Finder, for your convenience.

*** Sorry if the format is weird, I picked it up from work. Makes sense to me, deal with it. :P*

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.'
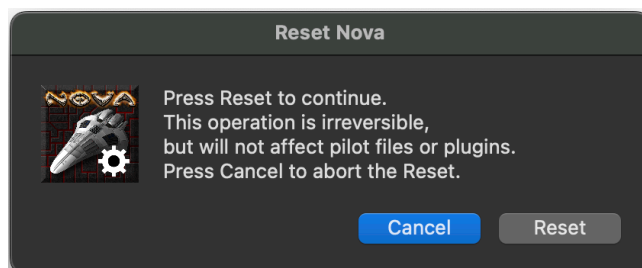
Cheating in WineNova???

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+Shit+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

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†† *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
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
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.

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!

Historically, this may have happened on Apple Silicon due to Rosetta 2 caching issues, or possibly due to lingering WINE processes from a previous launch still running in the background, not quitting properly. I've done everything I can to fix the second issue (the more likely one), so I'm not expecting this issue to be very common nowadays. However, there can still be issues with WineNova running, perhaps due to Gatekeeper hiccups, or nonstandard file systems (like multiple volumes and such). I cannot officially offer support in these cases (this isn't my job), but thanks to the new logging added in Beta 2.8.2, you may be able to find some insight into what is happening. Check the "WineNovaLastRun.txt" file in EV Nova/Tools/Logs. If you find something interesting, feel free to contact me (Geek). See the Contact section of this manual. I can be found on Discord or the new Ambrosia community web boards.

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 since the most recent updates, 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.

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.

I downloaded a TC from Guy's EV Stuff, and the launcher doesn't work.

Those launchers were designed for the Mac version of EV Nova. Support for those launchers has been added to WineNova, but the launchers need to be patched to launch WineNova if installed. Soon, I hope.

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

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

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

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 there as well.