

The Apple Guide

By Scott Dansereau

Welcome

I don't expect you to go through all of it in one sitting, but keep this email handy for future reference, and hopefully you get through all of the stuff to see why you got your mac. Its gonna be long, but please at least read "Getting around in your mac" cause it is the most important. So here we go...

Getting around in your mac

The Mac Philosophy

The start menu does not exist here, you are given 2 things in its place, the blue apple at the top left of the screen, and the dock, which defaults to the bottom of the screen. The Apple, known as the apple menu, is where you re-start, find preferences, recent documents, etc. In this way, it is a lot like the start menu. The Dock is a place to leave shortcuts to your favorite programs. You can add, re-order and change the size of items in the dock. I only use this for the most common programs, and you should feel free to change it as the way you use the computer changes (using adobe a lot, add them there, find yourself not using them for a while, get rid of them and put the space to better use, etc).

You can also add folder locations that you use a lot, these go on the right side of the dock, anywhere to the right of the dashed white line that you will see there. There is a command key (most call the apple key, which I refer to as Ap+XXX to indicate a shortcut in the email here) an option key (same function as alt key in windows) and a control key. You will use the apple key for most shortcuts, but will likely use the option and apple key for some shortcuts, apple and shift is another common modifier.

A great thing to keep in mind is that with very few exceptions **EVERYTHING IN OSX IS DRAG AND DROP-ABLE**. Try it first when you need to do something, it is remarkable how much control you have over stuff, and 3rd party programs carry this through to a large degree, making stuff a lot simpler. A good example is when you want to open a file, you use the open dialog, like any other OS. But you can drag a file to that open window, and it will shoot you to that location, so you don't have to browse for it. Also, you can just drag the file to the icon of the program and it will pop the program open (most useful if you want to use a particular program to open a file which is not the default) This means when I want to open a PDF, adobe is the default, but its pretty slow compared to preview, the built in PDF reader on every mac. So I just drag the pdf to the preview icon (icon next to finders in the dock) and the program launches, nearly instantly too. You can drag a handful of images, pdfs, almost any graphics file to preview and it will display them in one window with multiple pages. It even works with PSD and AI files. Awesome.

How do I find my files?

The easy answer is Finder, the mac version of windows explorer. This is the blue icon that always lives to the far left of the dock. This has a sidebar that is populated with items already, which you can drag around, add more things, again, I customize this often as the projects I work on change. I always like to keep a good folder structure for my files, but using the sidebar shortcuts, you can make sure you are never more than 2-3 clicks from any file on your computer, and do that with only 4-5 sidebar items that you add. You can choose whatever view you want, but I would recommend the 3-column view (Ap+3 is the shortcut. Ap+2 and Ap+1 will give you the others. Cover flow is Ap+4). The column view gives you the path to the file for quick backtracking, and allows you to preview your files.

Shutting Down

Why am I including shutting down? Cause you never have to do it. Well, not entirely true, however the OSX is based on unix, which is what servers and supercomputers run on, and as you might expect, those computers don't want to shut down very often for practical reasons. This means the computer actually checks itself and fixes things on the fly, instead of windows which needs to restart to reset caches and other common files used through daily, well, use. What this means is that your mac can be put to sleep by shutting the lid, and will start back up right where you were in a second. Try it, its that awesome. I regularly leave my computer running for a month or more. Yes. So the only time I restart is when software asks me to (always listen to the software) or if things get kinda funky

(yes, still happens on macs). Putting your mac to sleep is ok for traveling with your comp, cause the stuff is written to disk, then everything shuts off, so you don't have to worry about messing things up as you move around with your mac. SLEEP not shutdown. Please, it will change your computing experience, cause now you are super mobile. You know its asleep when the front light goes from solid for on, to pulsing or "breathing" when asleep.

How applications Run

In a PC each window you see is a program running. In the mac world, a program runs, but may not display any windows, you know a program is active by looking at the top menu bar, where you will see the programs name next to the apple menu. This is awesome for a couple reasons. You can open multiple windows when using most programs, and this flexibility allows you to decide where things go on your screen, and quickly allows you to manage them (tile, cascade, hide all, etc). Also, do not be afraid to run many programs at once. You have a remarkably powerful computer, one of the fastest in terms of hardware...in the world, for real.

This coupled with OSX means you can run every adobe program at the same time and have no noticeable performance hit. This happens because when a program is not current (name in top menu bar) it is not given resources by the OS. So you don't have programs trying to run and take up processor power in the background. There are some that will, but generally speaking, you can leave a ton running without any trouble. I always have iCal, itunes, Mail, safari, and typically leave dreamweaver and photoshop open along with a few other 3rd party applications. Doing this will also change the way you use your computer, cause everything is at your fingertips, no need to wait for things to start up, you just switch over and get to work, seamlessly. Awesome. You will typically find preferences in the program menu (the one to the right of the apple menu) along with quit and hide and some other stuff. Otherwise, the menus function as you expect from your windows past.

Awesome Mac-Only stuff that kicks ass

Expose

In your preferences, you will see something called expose, it is the greatest productivity tool to come to personal computers. Since we only have a small screen with our computers, and we typically have a lot of stuff to see in them, it can be tedious to find the right window you want to work with in Windows. On the mac, you can set keyboard shortcuts, or use the corners to activate expose. This will instantly shrink the windows and present them all to you in one view so you can choose which window you want. You can choose which things it shows you in the prefs, I use the hot corners, and the actions they do are: bottom left-all application windows; top left-all program windows; top right-desktop; bottom right-start screensaver. All windows will show you every open window in every application, all application windows will show you all windows for the active application, so if you have 5 safari windows open, you see just those. Macs are so cool you can run video, activate expose and watch the video continue to play. Awesome. Set this up and use it, trust me.

Spotlight

In the top right corner of your screen you have a magnifying glass. You can click it or type `Ap+spacebar` to activate it, try hitting both with your thumb, it's the best way to get to it quickly. No matter what program you are in, Spotlight will be the active typing field, presenting a search bar. It will search as you type, so every letter refines the search.. This means that you can often find anything within 3-5 keystrokes once you activate Spotlight. You can use this to launch programs quickly, find files, bookmarks, contacts, emails, EVERYTHING ON YOUR COMPUTER IS SEARCHABLE. It will index every word in every file it can read, meaning every word doc, all pdfs with text (not OCR scans of text) and any number of other things and allow you to bring that file up based on the words you search for. This happens almost instantly too, so you can usually find stuff faster than you can get a finder window open and begin to browse for the file. USE SPOTLIGHT, GET USED TO IT, IT IS REVOLUTIONARY. I don't use finder that much for most of my computing cause its just more work than typing a few letters.

Zooming

There might be an option like this on PCs but definitely not with the quality you will find in OSX. Your trackpad is capable of scrolling when you use two fingers on the trackpad (turn it on in prefs-> mouse and keyboard). This is cool cause it will scroll in circles, any direction your fingers move. More impressively, if you hold control and scroll (fingers or with scroll-wheel) the entire screen will zoom in. This is useful for watching videos online that are small and wont let you go full screen, or zooming in on small images online when they aren't offered larger. The image will be crisp and you can navigate the view by moving the mouse (change settings in prefs-> universal access). This works because everything you see on screen is actually a PDF. OSX draws the screen as PDFs, so everything is vector and scalable with minimal to no loss in quality. For the same reason, in nearly every print dialog you can save as PDF, cause it is already a PDF to the computer, it just needs to be saved as a file somewhere. This is also a great feature because PDFs are generally smaller and a lot easier to share info with other people.

Speech

Your computer is ready to take commands from you, via voice. Sure, it isn't the most efficient tool, but it is really powerful and damn good at understanding people. You turn it on in the prefs panel, and it will use the built in mic (bluetooth headsets work much better for noisy environments) and you can set custom actions, so for instance, you could tell it to open a website by just saying its name, useful for common websites. You can have it open applications, it can perform a number of tasks, take a few minutes to check it out and realize how cool it is. Also, your computer will read any text to you with use of a shortcut key and its pretty natural-sounding synthetic voice, David. Set the shortcut key, select some text (maybe even from this email) and sit back and listen. Pretty cool.

Automator

This is a program that ties in with tons of the programs included with your mac, and there are tons of plugins and additional "actions" available online. This program, as you might expect, will automate common tasks that are generally tedious or time consuming. You can have it move all files of a certain type to a location of your choosing, you can have it rename files, folders, etc, lots of stuff. I will confess, I don't use it a lot, but when I need it, it kicks a lot of ass. Read up on it online to see what it can really do (<http://www.tuaw.com/search/?q=automator&searchsubmit=>) because I hardly did it justice here. It can be hugely powerful for getting things done.

Spaces

While I would not recommend using them right now, spaces is a way to set up multiple desktops. Imagine the screen area you see multiplied by however many spaces you have, all tiled out so they are edge to edge. By using commands on the keyboard, you can move from one to the next. What's the point? Well, if you are doing a sketchup model and setting up a board you will have SU open, indesign and photoshop open and maybe a few safari windows as you browse around for stuff. You will still have mail and ical open maybe, cause you never need to shut programs down. Spaces allow you to put photoshop and indesign in the same desktop or "space" and keep your safari windows in another space, while you let all your "administration tools" (mail, etc) running in their own space. This frees you up to have a single desktop for SU. This way you can show the windows you need in a way that makes sense, and not have to constantly rearrange things to get the space you need on screen. The reason I don't recommend it is because I find it a bit flaky at the moment, and can lead to some system instability depending on options you set. For now, I would say you should know what it is and does, but not use it until a later release comes out.

Software that you need

Super Duper

This is the best backup I have found for the mac. Its only \$30 and will give you all the piece of mind you can image. I will help you set it up if you need, then you can have an exact copy of your whole computer, and even boot from your external using any mac you find. [Direct Download Link](#)

VLC

This is a great Free video player that will play tons of types of video that quicktime may not be able to play. [Direct Download Link](#)

mPlayer

This is the other side of the video equation. This Free player will play lots of media types, but is my choice for WMV, aka windows media videos. [Direct Download Link](#)

Open Office

If you want/need an office suite other than MS Office, you can use open office. It is a great suite of programs that give you similar features to MS for Free. [Download OpenOffice.org](#)

Sketch-Up

You know you need it. [SketchUp 6 Free Version](#)

Google Earth

Another necessity. [Download Google Earth 4.3](#)

Firefox

I keep a copy on my computer, but use Safari for all my actual web use. It can be useful because of the extensions, but other than that, safari is generally considered faster and is better integrated with the rest of the OS. Get a copy and decide for yourself. [Firefox for mac](#)

Shortcuts to use all that cool stuff

These are some common shortcuts that will work in most programs, along with some specific ones for certain applications. ap= apple key; opt=option; ctrl=control

General stuff

Ap+tab will cycle between open applications (similar to alt+tab in windows) you can also use arrow keys to switch back and forth, also you can use your mouse to select. When the application bar is up, you can also quit the selected application by hitting Ap+q, see below.

Ap+w will close the current window

Ap+m will minimize the window and put it in the dock

Ap+h will hide all application windows and the application pallets themselves

Ap+` (the key above tab) will switch between windows in the active application

Ap+q will quit the current application

Ap+s will save the current document

Ap+shift+s will generally save-as

Ap+delete will send the highlighted finder item to the trash

Ap+x, Ap+c, Ap+p will cut, copy and paste, respectively

Ap+z, respectively+y will undo and redo, respectively (redo is in most applications, not all)

Ap+n opens a new window/document in the current application

Spacebar will play audio in itunes, and generally will play video in most video applications.

Ap+left arrow will take you to the beginning of the line

Ap+right arrow will take you to the end of the line

Safari

Ap+l will highlight the address bar

Ap+opt+f will take you directly to the search bar in safari

opt+clicking a link will download the file linked to (PDF, MOV, etc. will even DL the page if it's a regular link)

Ap+clicking a link will open that link in a new tab (when tabbed browsing turned on in safari prefs, highly recommended)

Ap+up arrow will take you to the top of the page, down arrow will take you to the bottom

Finder

Ap+1 is icon view

Ap+2 is detail view

Ap+3 is list view

Ap+4 is cover-flow view

ap+shift+n will make a new folder within the current folder

Spotlight

ap+spacebar activates search field

enter after searching will open the "top hit" automatically

arrow keys down to select items, enter to open (the goal here is to not use the mouse at all)

I think thats enough for now; if you made it this far, go pat yourself on the back and grab another beer, because if you read all that, you must have already been drinking....

Let me be among the first to welcome you to the Mac family.

Scott

Some Additional Links and Cool Mac Things

I have included a number of links that will be very useful as you transition, to understand how things that you know from windows are done on the mac, some awesome tools you cant get anywhere but in a mac that will make life a lot easier, and some places to get programs you will want to round things out.

