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1

Introduction

Mac computers are renowned for their ease-of-use, stability and security, with good reason.

They are an excellent option for anyone, particularly senior users, since they usually do exactly what is required of them, in a fun, effective way too.

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Life and Times of Apple

Apple, the makers of Mac computers, was founded in California in 1976 by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne. Originally called Apple Computer the initial emphasis of the company was very much on personal computers. After some innovative early machines, Steve Jobs decided that the next Apple computer had to have a Graphical User Interface (GUI). This is a computer that can be controlled by the user with a device such as a mouse or a joystick. In many ways this was the breakthrough that has shaped the modern face of personal computing.

The first Macintosh computer, using a GUI, was released in 1984. The sales of the first Mac were good, particularly because of its strength using graphics and for desktop publishing. However, shortly afterwards Steve Jobs left Apple which was the beginning of a downturn for the company. Although the introduction of the first PowerBook was a success, the increasing development of Microsoft Windows and IBM-compatible PCs became a real threat to the existence of Apple.

The rise of the iMac

During the 1990s, Apple experienced several commercial setbacks and the company was in trouble. However, shortly afterwards Steve Jobs returned to Apple and in 1998, the iMac was launched. Apple had always been known for its stylish design but the iMac took this to a new level. With its all-in-one design and bright, translucent colors it transformed people's attitudes towards personal computers.

The iMac got Apple back on its commercial feet and this was followed in 2001 by the iPod, a portable digital music player. Like the iMac this caught the public's imagination and Apple have exploited this with dramatic effect with the addition of products such as iTunes, iPhone, iPad and their OS X operating system. The death of Steve Jobs in October 2011 created a potential challenge for Apple but his legacy, in terms of the range of innovative products that he introduced, has left it strongly positioned in the market.

Don't forget



Mac users are usually very devoted to the Apple brand and support it with very enthusiastic fervor.

Choosing a Mac

As with most things in the world of technology there is a wide range of choice when it comes to buying a Mac computer. This includes the top of the range Mac Pro, which is a very powerful desktop computer, to the MacBook Air, which is a laptop that is thin enough to fit into an envelope (if required!). In between these two extremes are a variety of desktops and laptops that can match most people's computing needs. For the senior user some of the best options are:

Desktop

As a good, all-purpose, desktop computer the iMac is hard to beat. This is the machine that helped to turn around Apple's fortunes in the 1990s and it remains one of their most popular computers.

The iMac is a self-contained computer which means the hard drive and the monitor are housed together as a single unit. There are a variety of models that offer different levels of computing power and different monitor sizes. At the time of writing, all models have a DVD writer and come with wireless connectivity for connection to the Internet.

Another desktop option is the Mac Mini, which is a smaller, cheaper, computer that consists of just the hard drive. This means that you have to buy the mouse, keyboard and monitor separately. This is a reasonable option if your computing needs are mainly email, the Internet and word processing. For anything more, the iMac is a better option.

Laptop

More and more people are using laptops these days, as mobile computing takes over from static desktops. In the Mac range, the MacBook is probably the best all-round option. Although not as powerful as the iMac, it has enough computing power for most people's needs. The MacBook Pro comes in a standard model and also a Retina Display screen version with a higher resolution screen. The MacBook Air is ultra-thin and a great option for when travelling.

Don't forget



All new Macs come with the latest Mac operating system pre-installed. At the time of writing this is OS X (pronounced 10), or 10.8 to be precise, known as Mountain Lion (see next page for details).

Don't forget



If you plan on traveling a lot with a laptop, the MacBook Air may feel a bit too slight due to its very thin design. However, it is surprisingly robust.

The Mac Operating System

The Mac operating system (the software that is the foundation of how the computer works) is known as OS X (pronounced 10). This is now on version 10.8, which is more commonly known as Mountain Lion.

Apple is renowned for designing operating systems that are easy to use, robust and more secure than their Windows-based PC counterparts. The OS X operating system is based on UNIX, a system that is both secure and has stood the test of time.

OS X is not only easy to use it also has a very attractive graphical interface. This is created by a technology known as Quartz and the interface itself is known as Aqua, which is a set of graphics based on the theme of water.

The OS X Mountain Lion interface is immediately eye-catching as soon as any Mac is turned on:

Don't forget



The design of the OS X interface means that some elements, such as menus, allow the background behind them to show through.

Hot tip



To find out more about your current operating system, click on the Apple symbol at the top left of the screen and click on About This Mac.



Ports and Slots Explained

Every Mac computer has a number of ports and slots for different functions to be performed or additional devices to be attached.

DVD/CD slot

This is the slot into which DVDs or CDs can be inserted to play their content. It can also be used to burn content onto blank DVDs or CDs. This slot is at the side or front of the computer, depending on the type and model of the Mac.

USB ports

These are the ports that are used to connect a variety of external devices such as digital cameras, memory card readers, pen drives or external hard drives. On most Macs there are a minimum of two USB ports.



Firewire ports

These are similar to USB ports but they are generally used for devices that are required to transfer larger amounts of data. One of the most common uses for Firewire is the transfer of digital video. Firewire ports look similar to USB ones except they are slightly chunkier.



Thunderbolt

This is a port for transferring data at high speeds, up to 12 times faster than Firewire. It can also be used to connect a Thunderbolt screen to a MacBook.



Ethernet

This is for the connection of an Ethernet cable for a cable or broadband Internet connection.



Beware



The MacBook Air and MacBook Retina Display do not have an internal CD/DVD drive, but an external USB one can be attached.

Don't forget



USB stands for Universal Serial Bus.

Don't forget

The On button for the MacBook Air and MacBook Retina Display are located on the keyboard itself, rather than in the top-right corner. On an iMac the On button is at the back of the display.

The Mac Desktop

The first thing to do with your new Mac is to turn it on. This is done by pressing this button once (this is for a standard MacBook).



The first thing you will see is the Mac desktop. This is the default layout and, as we will see in the next few pages, this can be customized to your own preferences.

Some of the specific elements of the desktop are:

Apple Menu

Finder Menu bars

Don't forget

If the Finder is not showing, click on this icon on the Dock. The Dock is the collection of icons at the bottom of the screen.



Dock

The Finder

Background

Customizing Your Mac

All of us have different ideas about the way we want our computers set up, in terms of layout, colors, size and graphics. Macs allow a great deal of customization so that you can personalize it to genuinely make it feel like your own computer.

The customization features are contained within the System Preferences. To access these:

- 1 Click here on the Dock (the full workings of the Dock will be covered in detail in Chapter Two)



- 2 The System Preferences folder contains a variety of functions that can be used to customize your Mac (see following pages for details)



Hot tip



Click on the Show All button at the top of the System Preferences folder to show all of the items in the folder, regardless of which element you are currently using.

Changing the Background

Background imagery is an important way to add your own personal touch to your Mac. (This is the graphical element upon which all other items on your computer sit.) There are a range of background options that can be used. To select your own background:

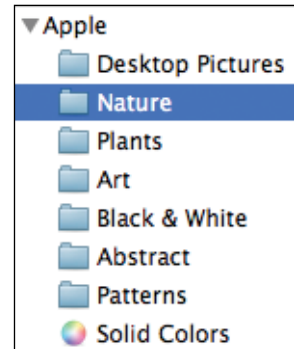
- 1 Click on this icon in the System Preferences folder



- 2 Click on the Desktop tab



- 3 Select a location from where you want to select a background



- 4 Click on one of the available backgrounds



- 5 The background is applied as the desktop background imagery

Don't forget

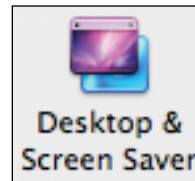


You can select your own photographs as your desktop background, once you have loaded them onto your Mac. To do this, select the Pictures Folder in Step 3, and browse to the photograph you want.

Changing the Screen Saver

A screen saver is the element that appears when the Mac has not been used for a specified period of time. Originally this was designed to avoid screen burn (caused by items being at the same position on the screen for an extended period of time) but now they largely consist of a graphical element. To select your own screen saver:

- 1 Click on this button in the System Preferences folder



- 2 Click on the Screen Saver tab



- 3 Select an option here for a slideshow screen saver, or



- 4 Scroll down to access other screen saver options



- 5 Click the Screen Saver Options... button to select options for the way the screen saver operates

Don't forget



The slideshow screen saver consists of different images that appear as tiles on the screen.

Changing the Screen Size

For most computer users the size at which items are displayed on the screen is a crucial issue: if items are too small this can make them hard to read and lead to eye strain; too large and you have to spend a lot of time scrolling around to see everything.

The size of items on the screen is controlled by the screen's resolution, i.e. the number of colored dots displayed in an area of the screen. The higher the resolution the smaller the items on the screen, the lower the resolution the larger the items. To change the screen resolution:

Don't forget



A higher resolution makes items appear sharper on the screen, even though they appear physically smaller.

1 Click on this button in the System Preferences folder



2 Click on the Display tab

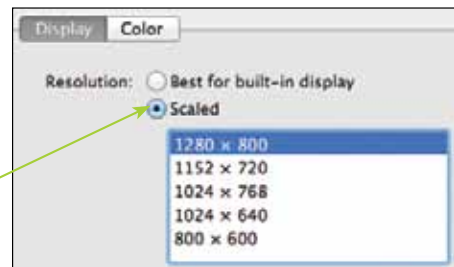
Display

3 Click on the Best for built-in display button to let your Mac select the most appropriate resolution



4 Drag this slider to change the screen brightness. Check on the box to have this done automatically

5 Click on the Scaled button and select a resolution setting to change the overall screen resolution



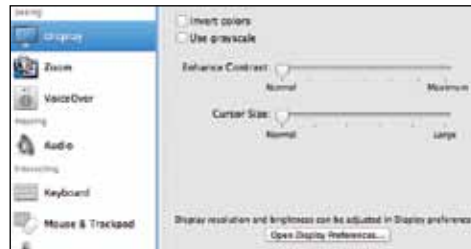
Making Things Accessible

In all areas of computing it is important to give as many people access to the system as possible. This includes users with visual impairments and also people who have problems using the mouse and keyboard. In OS X this is achieved through the functions of the Accessibility System Preferences. To use these:

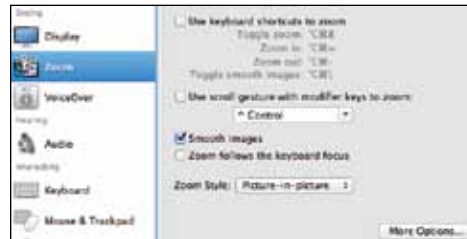
- 1 Click on this button in the System Preferences folder



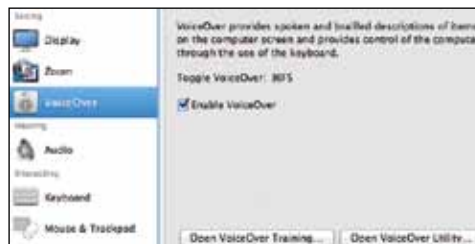
- 2 Click on the Display button for options for changing the display colors, contrast and increasing the cursor size



- 3 Click on the Zoom button for options to zoom in on the screen



- 4 Click on the VoiceOver button to enable VoiceOver which provides a spoken description of what is on the screen



Don't forget



Experiment with the VoiceOver function if only to see how it operates. This will give you a better idea of how visually impaired users access information on a computer.

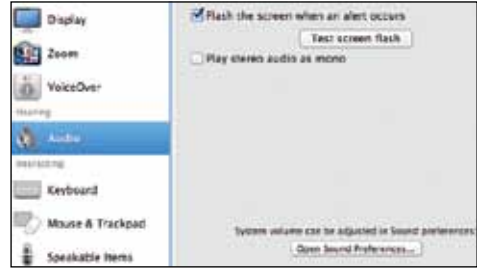
Don't forget



The Audio, Keyboard and Mouse & Trackpad accessibility options have links to additional options within their own System Preferences.

...cont'd

- 5 Click on the Audio button to select an on-screen flash for alerts and how sound is played



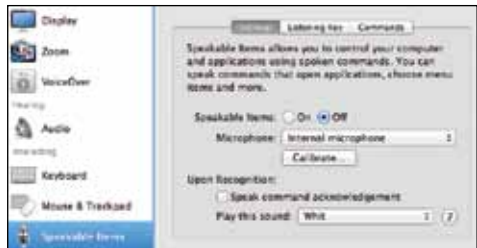
- 6 Click on the Keyboard button to access options for customizing the keyboard



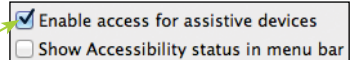
- 7 Click on the Mouse & Trackpad button to access options for customizing these devices



- 8 Click on the Speakable Items button to select options for using spoken commands



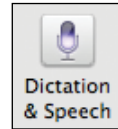
- 9 Check on this button to enable assistive technology such as screen readers



The Spoken Word

Mountain Lion not only has numerous options for adding text to documents, emails and messages; it also has a dictation function so that you can speak what you want to appear on screen. To set up and use the dictation feature:

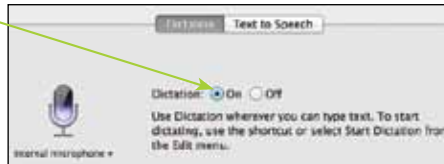
- 1 Click on this button in the System Preferences folder



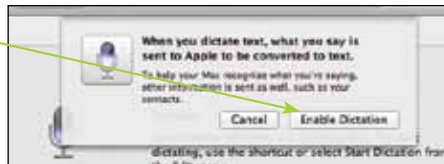
- 2 By default, Dictation is Off



- 3 Check on the On button to enable dictation



- 4 Click on the Enable Dictation button



- 5 Once Dictation has been turned On, it can be accessed in relevant apps by selecting Edit>Start Dictation from the menu bar



- 6 Start talking when the microphone icon appears. Click Done when you have finished recording your text



- 7 Click on the Text to Speech tab to make selections for dictation



Hot tip



Punctuation can be added with the dictation function, by speaking commands such as 'comma' or 'question mark'. These will then be converted into the appropriate symbols.

Shutting Down and Sleeping

When you are not using your Mac you will want to either shut it down or put it to sleep. If you shut it down this may close all of your applications and open files. This is the best option if you are not going to be returning to your Mac for a reasonable length of time (say, more than one day).

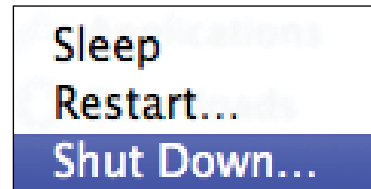
If you put the Mac to sleep, it will retain your current work session so that you can continue when you wake up the Mac. This option is useful if you know you will be returning to your Mac within a few hours.

The process for shutting down or sleeping a Mac is very similar in both cases:

1 Click on this icon on the main Menu bar



2 Click on either Sleep or Shut Down...



3 If you are shutting down, a window appears asking you to confirm your request



4 Click on the Shut Down button

Shut Down

Hot tip



Check on the 'Reopen windows when logging back in' box when you shut down. This ensures that the next time you turn on your Mac, it will resume at the place where you closed it i.e. all open apps and files will appear in their previous state.