

PTSLUG Handout June 2010

Mac Basics: The Finder

(Note: This material can be found in the Finder's Help Menus)

Apple calls the Finder “The Macintosh Desktop Experience”. When you start up your computer, an application called the “Finder” opens, and the desktop appears. You’ll see a menu bar along the top of the screen, and a Dock along the bottom. In between the menu bar and the Dock is the desktop, the area where you do most of your work. In the upper-right corner of your desktop is the icon for your computer’s internal disk, usually named “Macintosh HD.”

The menu bar

At the top of your screen is the menu bar. The leftmost menu is the Apple menu, designated by an Apple icon. When you are in the Finder, you’ll see the Finder menu next to the Apple menu. When you use other applications, their menus may appear here instead.

You can click the desktop at any time to get back to the Finder and see the Finder menu.

The Dock

By default, the Dock is at the bottom of the screen. You can move the Dock to either side of the screen, and customize it in other ways. The Dock contains icons for applications, such as Mail, that you may use frequently. To open an application, click its icon.

If you click the Finder (smiling face) icon in the Dock, a window opens and you see the organization of the folders and files on your computer.

The desktop

Most of the work you do on the desktop is in Finder windows, or in windows for applications you use, such as Mail or the Safari web browser. You can also work directly on the desktop. You can organize and customize windows and the desktop to create a comfortable working environment.

Your computer's internal disk is a storage device that contains the software and information used by your computer. You can organize your disk into partitions, check the amount of storage space you have, and perform other tasks.

To view the contents of your disk, double-click it. It opens as a window on your desktop.

Finder preferences

Preference

Explanation

General

Show these items on the desktop

Deselect items you don't want to see on the desktop. You will still see them in Finder windows.

New Finder windows open

Choose which folder should open whenever you open a new Finder window.

Always open folders in a new window

Select to open a new window each time you open a folder. If this is deselected, when you open a folder in a Finder window that folder's contents replace the current window's contents.

Spring-loaded folders and windows

Select to make folders spring open when you drag items over them. Use the slider to specify how quickly folders spring open.

Labels

Use these label names

Type a descriptive term for each color. For example, type "Immediate" next to the red label. (To assign a label to a file or folder, select the file or folder, and then open the File menu and choose a label.)

Sidebar

Show these items in the sidebar

Select the items you want to appear in the Finder window sidebar. These items also appear in Open and Save dialogs. You can also add other items to the Places section by dragging them there.

Advanced

Show all filename extensions

Select to show filename extensions. An extension, which looks like a dot followed by several letters at the end of a filename (such as .jpg), identifies the type of file. This setting affects most, but not all, filenames. You can show or hide extensions for individual files in their Info windows.

Show warning before changing an extension

Select to display a warning if you accidentally try to change an extension. As a rule, you shouldn't change filename extensions.

Show warning before emptying the Trash

Select to display a warning before deleting items when you empty the Trash.

Empty Trash securely

Select to make sure that items you delete when you empty the Trash can't be recovered using data recovery tools. When this option is selected, the deleted files are overwritten with meaningless data.

When performing a search

Choose a scope for searches you perform using the search field in a Finder window. You can search the entire computer, the folder for the window that you're working in, or the scope you specified the last time you searched using a Finder window. You can change the scope when you perform a search.

Zoom using scroll ball or Zoom using

trackpad (available only if you have a trackpad or a mouse with a scroll ball)

Select to turn on scroll ball or trackpad zooming. When this preference is selected, you can enlarge the screen by pressing the Control key while moving the scroll ball on a mouse or using two fingers to scroll on a trackpad.

All the items on your computer—including your documents, pictures, music files, applications, and more—are organized in folders. As you create documents, install new applications, and do other work on your computer, you can create new folders to keep your information organized.

To create a new folder:

1. Click the desktop (the background area of your screen) if you want to keep the new folder on the desktop; otherwise, open the window where you want to keep the folder.
2. Choose File > New Folder.
If the New Folder command is dimmed, you do not have permission to create a folder in the current location.
3. To give the folder a new name, click to select it and press Return. Then type a name for the folder and press Return again

To move items into folders:

To put an item in a folder, drag its icon to the new folder.

To keep an item in its original location and put a copy in a new folder, hold down the Option key while you drag the item.

To keep an item in its original location and put an alias for it in a new folder, hold down the Command and Option keys while you drag the item.

To make a copy of an item within the same folder, select the item and choose File > Duplicate.

To copy files to a different disk, drag the icons to the disk. To move files to a different disk without copying them, hold down the Command key while you drag the icons.

How your computer is organized

Mac OS X organizes items on your computer in folders. Your internal disk, which is named “Macintosh HD,” contains many important folders. To view the folders, double-click the Macintosh HD icon. Some of the folders are described below. **IMPORTANT:** It is best not to rename or move the folders that came with your computer. Many of these folders have special uses and are necessary for your computer to function correctly. Do not attempt to rename your home folder.

Applications

This folder contains applications, including Mail, iCal, Safari, and many others.

Library

This folder contains fonts, Internet plug-ins, and other items used by applications that are available to all users of your computer. Don’t use this folder to store files and folders you create; instead, use the Documents folder or desktop.

System

This folder contains the Mac OS X operating system. You should not change the name or location of the System folder or the items within it.

Users

This folder contains the home folders of all the people who have user accounts on your computer. When you're logged in, the icon for your home folder looks like a house, and the other home folders have folder icons. If you log out and someone else logs in, that person's home folder changes to a house icon.

This folder also contains the Shared folder. Items in the Shared folder are available to anyone who has an account on the computer.

Home

Your home folder has the same name as your user account, and is represented by a house icon when you are logged in to your account. It contains folders that hold your personal files, including Desktop (which includes anything you keep on your desktop), Documents, Pictures, and more. These folders may also appear in the Finder window sidebar, if you choose to keep them there.

Your home folder has its own Library folder containing data specific to your account (such as Mail account information or certain preference settings). It also contains a Public folder for items you want to share with others.

Pictures, Music, and other folders

These folders, which are located in your home folder, make it easy to organize your files. The applications that came with your computer are set up to use these folders. For example, iTunes keeps any music files you add to your computer in the Music folder.

You can create additional levels of folders to organize information as needed. If you can't create a folder, you may not have permission to do so. If you can't modify a folder, it may be protected. Talk to your administrator or the person who owns the folder.

Opening menus

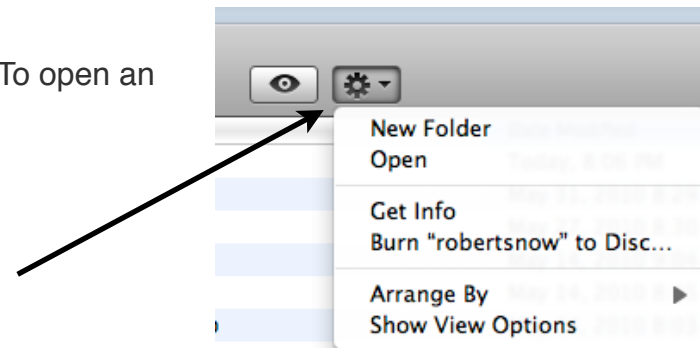
To open a menu in the menu bar across the top of the screen, click its name.

To open a menu in a dialog or other window, click the menu itself.

To open a shortcut (or contextual) menu, hold down the Control key and click an icon, window, toolbar, desktop, or other item. If you're not sure a shortcut menu is available for an item, try Control-clicking it.

The options in shortcut menus depend on the context. For example, Control-click a folder in the Finder and choose Get Info to see details about the folder. In a TextEdit document, Control-click a word and choose "Look Up in Dictionary" to view a definition.

Many applications have an Action menu, designated by a gear icon. To open an Action menu, click the icon.



Choosing menu options

Click the option you want to use.

If the option has a triangle next to it, it has a submenu with additional options.

If the option has an ellipsis (...) next to it, a dialog opens where you can make additional choices or provide any necessary information.

If an option is dimmed, it is not available. For example, the Copy command may be dimmed unless you have selected some text.

Some commands may have keyboard shortcuts listed next to them. You can press the keys shown to instantly perform the action without opening a menu.

The menu bar

The menu bar runs along the top of the screen.

On the left end of the menu bar are the application menus. The name of the application you are currently using appears in bold next to the Apple menu. There are several other application menus, often with standard names such as “File,” “Edit,” “Format,” “Window,” and “Help.”

On the right end of the menu bar are menus represented by icons. These menus show the status of your computer or give you quick access to certain features.

You can add some icons to the right end of the menu bar. For example, in the Sound pane of System Preferences, you can select a checkbox to show a volume slider in the menu bar. Some applications let you add an icon to the menu bar during installation.

To rearrange the menu bar icons on the right end of the menu bar, hold down the Command key while dragging the icons. To remove them, hold down the Command key and drag them out of the menu bar.

You can't rearrange the application menus on the left.