

Using OS X

If you are a Mac user a current question is whether to start using OS X, Apple's newest operating system. If you don't have a G4 or G3 the easy answer is that you can't. With the G3 support for your old scanners, printers, etc., is questionable, at least I'm seeing a lot of questions and problems on getting support on the discussion lists. One of my machines is a 2 year old bottom of the line G4 400 MHZ, but with 1.4 GB (1400 MB) of RAM. I've decided to experiment using OS X on this machine. Listening to expert opinion I partitioned my 20 GB drive into 3 partitions, 2.5 GB for OS X, 2.5 GB for backups and emergency copies, about 14 GB for my own stuff including a very stable version of OS 9.1. Since OS X prefers to put all your programs and most of your current files on its partition it might be easier to give it about 10 GB. You can override the default, but if its organization makes sense to you why not use it?

OS X is actually OS 10.1.3 and OS 9.2.1(or 9.2.2). The OS 9 runs your older programs, that will not run in OS X, this is the Classic environment and will run virtually any program you have currently running on your Mac, but doesn't do well printing from these programs. Or if you have an offbeat program you can boot from your present system, in my case OS 9.1,printing works well. OS X itself will run only programs currently modified (said to be carbonized) for OS X.

Carbonized programs I'm using currently under OS X are Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Entourage, Outlook), both Internet Explorer, and Netscape have special versions which run fine under OS X. Final Cut 3 and AppleWorks 6 run well. In fact all the applications mentioned have an impressive look and feel.

Apple has also made available a number of new free programs iPhoto, iTunes, iTools, etc., which are specialized for working with a Mac, multimedia and the Internet. ITools gives you access to a free website with 20 MB available. You can easily create a number of pages available for your [photos](#), music, video clips etc. It is easy to use but periodically very slow.

My overall impression is that if you are primarily using the applications listed above OS X is a great way to go. It looks good and after personalizing it has a great feel.

In particular I find the column view very useful.



Fig. 1 Column view

As shown above you can start at any drive or partition at the left and keep clicking on folders, which open automatically to the right until you get to your target. In this case, it is a clip from a movie I made for reading a buret. You're seeing an actual mini player, which will play this iMovie clip, a QuickTime movie, a Flash movie, show a picture if it is a picture file, or play a sound, etc., I love it. It is also a great way to find where the system puts things away. Luckily in most cases I find the files in a logical place, but the column view provides a very effective tool for searching among lots of similar files. Just click on a file and look, there is no waiting for an application to open. It will frequently show the first few lines of text files, this is a real time saver.

If you look at the upper left of Fig. 1, you'll see there are 3 views with the last, the column view highlighted. The other views are also useful. Just click and the view immediately changes. The various icons along the top can be personalized so you have tools or folders you use always available. Or you can make the top disappear as a default.

Another somewhat new feature is the dock. Actually you could have something close to the dock since OS 8, but the new dock has much more built into it and is far more useful. It is very controversial but very customizable.

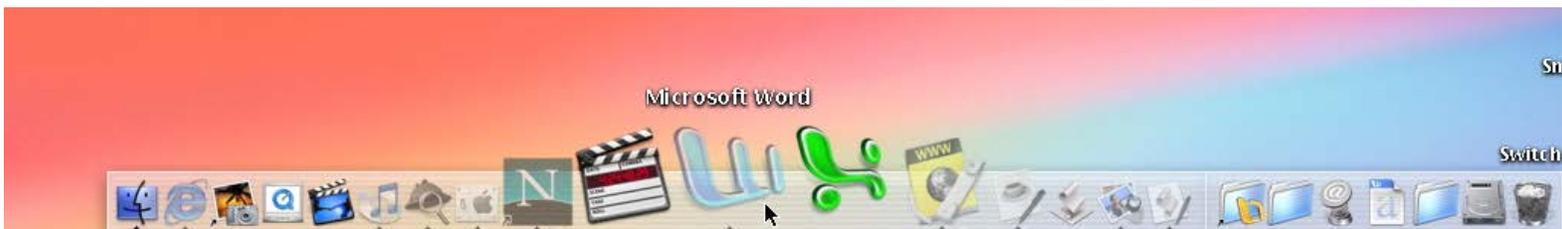


Fig. 2 The dock, notice the cursor below Microsoft Word icon and how this icon is now labeled, it and adjacent icons are much larger. This is called magnification and the amount is adjustable as are most

things for the dock including whether you see it or not.

Starting from the right is the Trash which is always visible, the next four are folder or drive locations, all the rest are applications which can be opened with a single click or if they have a small black triangle beneath them they are already open and clicking brings them to the foreground. Programs you are using frequently can be dragged from their folder onto the dock and will remain there until you drag them off. Other programs will appear on the dock as you open them, but will not be there after a restart. It is the same with folders and files. The dock is a very handy location for all the material you need for your current projects. Start your computer and your projects are ready to go. Click on a folder while holding down Control key and a totally navigable menu opens. If you want some of the programs to open automatically when you start just drag a copy to the Login under system preferences.

OS X comes with a 33-page introduction, which is a great way to begin to explore. If you want further details and ideas for using all the great new stuff, as well as clear directions on how use OS X, additional resources are needed. I've been using three books. All three are available from the Amazon links below at about 30% discount.

[Mac OS X The Missing Manual](#) by David Pogue. Pogue is computer columnist for the New York Times and it shows. Over the years I've read many an informative article by Pogue and I was pleased to find this book to be first rate. He makes many connections between how to use OS X effectively and your work.

I found it very effective to read the first 3 chapters in some detail, then browse through the rest stopping when a topic looked interesting. As Pogue says, '...It is a rock-solid, gorgeous operating system.' Highly recommended.

[Macworld Mac OS X Bible](#) by Lon Poole and Dennis R. Cohen. Both authors are experienced Mac users and professional writers. I found this book useful as a second source when Pogue's coverage was incomplete. This book is less fun to read. Recommended.

'Upgrading & Troubleshooting Your Mac- OS X' by Gene Steinberg. I have yet to find anything useful in this book.

The new OS X is set up so you can use it just when you want. I find myself using an increasing number of programs under it. For the most part it is stable, occasionally a program will quit, or you have to force it to shut down. It also seems to slow down when I have over a dozen programs running, or when the Classic environment is open.

You can save your work as PDF files. It is somewhat roundabout in all the programs I checked, Word, AppleWorks, Netscape and Explorer. You choose print, when the dialog box comes up choose Preview. In Preview, choose file from the menu bar, then Save As and finally you have the option of saving your work as a PDF file. Whew! This is only for those times when I really need to control the formatting.

The default for graphics is TIFF, which is a bit map. If you double click a graphic to open it in Preview, under File then Export you have many choices including JPEG, plus an array of options for each choice. It is easy to save a much smaller file for Internet use. When you save a document or graphic the same Column View is available so you can easily check that the file is going where you want. This is good to do since similar groups of folders (library, documents, applications, etc.) are used by the system at various levels.

Whenever you are in a program such as Preview, or QuickTime, etc., it is amazing how many choices and options are available under Export. This includes the ability to use vastly different compression techniques.

For more control over your desktop look and feel you can download the freeware [TinkerTool](#). You can opt to have windows that have up and down scroll arrows at both ends of the scrollbars, I find this very handy for scrolling through documents with figures. I can scroll back and forth without taking my eyes off the article, since switching between up and down is so close together. This and a number of other useful controls are made available with TinkerTool. >

For still more access to applications and folders [MaxMenus](#) <(\$30, but the download is free to try) puts small clickable spot in each corner of the screen to give you pull down menus which are completely configurable. You can access directly or navigate through five levels of folders. Interesting but the corner spots are small targets and hard to hit. You can also make hot keys to show your customized menus, which seems more useful to me. No manual came with my download, but one is available at the site above.

Another improved OS X utility is QuickTime 5, available for both Macs and PC's. [QuickTime](#) is a free download. The free version is good but to enjoy the full range of control, and it is a very wide range of control, Apple charges \$30. They then send you a key that unlocks all the power of QuickTime. Combined with the free [iMovie](#) 2 included with recent Macs (also a free download) you may not need anything else for most video work.

Pogue has many suggestions for making changes in OS X if you want to. You can burrow down to the UNIX core easily, but not safely. Experimenting here can erase your hard drive if you leave out a space or a / at the wrong time. Still it's a very powerful area but needs to be used carefully.

Lest you think it is perfect, watch out for printing from a Classic program. To be frank most won't print. After trying for help from Epson for new drivers, program developers and Apple for any kind of help, I finally changed my startup system to my solid OS 9.1 and older programs worked fine. Changing back to OS X as startup drive was a bit challenging since the

Startup control panel kept freezing the machine. No problem at all from printing from OS X programs once you have the correct drivers.

Summary: I have Two Macs on my desk one with OS X and the other customized over the years just like I want it. The OS X machine is getting more and more use.