



ON THE CD
50 must-have
Mac apps
to try

Must-have Mac apps

Take the OS X experience to a whole new level with a collection of essential utilities, life-saving tools and interface-enhancing software. Rob Buckley runs you through the *iCreate* top 50

Utilities are the unsung heroes of the computing world. Everyone goes wild wanting to know what's going to be in the next version of Microsoft Office or when Doom 4 is coming out, but does anyone care about the improvements to Disk Utility in Tiger or if Network Utility's port-scanning facility is ever going to be improved?

Yet, utilities can be the glue that holds your Mac universe together. They can make your programs work better, make you work more efficiently, and let you do things you never could before. They can stop you from sending viruses to your friends and work colleagues. When all the bells and whistles of Microsoft Office stop working, it's a utility that can trace the cause of the problem and let you get back to being productive. And if the worst should happen and bits of your Mac start packing up, it's a utility that helps you fix it and it's a utility that will ensure all your data can be restored from the backup (that you made with potentially another utility).

So this issue, *iCreate* is proud to show off 50 of the best OS X utilities available. While you won't literally not be able to live without them, they all add something special and important to your Mac that will make you wonder how you ever managed without them. So turn over the page and prepare to be educated, informed and impressed as we reveal the must-have apps every Mac user should install.

Lucky dip

A selection of crucial helpers and fixers that don't fit into a category of their own

Top five lucky dip programs

1. VLC
Developer: VideoLAN
URL: www.videolan.org/vlc
Price: Free

QuickTime may have more bells and whistles, but VLC is the Swiss army knife of video: it'll play just about any unencrypted format. It has add-ons aplenty, too

2. Stuffit Standard
Developer: Allume Systems
URL: www.stuffit.com/mac/standard
Price: \$49.99

Not as cheap or as necessary as it used to be, but Stuffit is still the most user-friendly way to compress files and expand virtually any archive on a Mac.

3. GraphicConverter
Developer: Lemke Software
URL: www.lemkesoft.com/en/graphcon.htm
Price: \$30


Supporting more file formats than even Photoshop, GraphicConverter is the best image processing utility out there. Batch-processing, slideshows, editing tools: all this and more.

4. ffmpegX
Developer: Major
URL: <http://homepage.mac.com/major4>
Price: \$15

An all-in-one encoding and manipulation tool for video, ffmpegX can take practically any video format and output it in any other format you care to choose.

5. AirFoil
Developer: rogue amoeba
URL: www.rogueamoeba.com/airfoil
Price: \$25

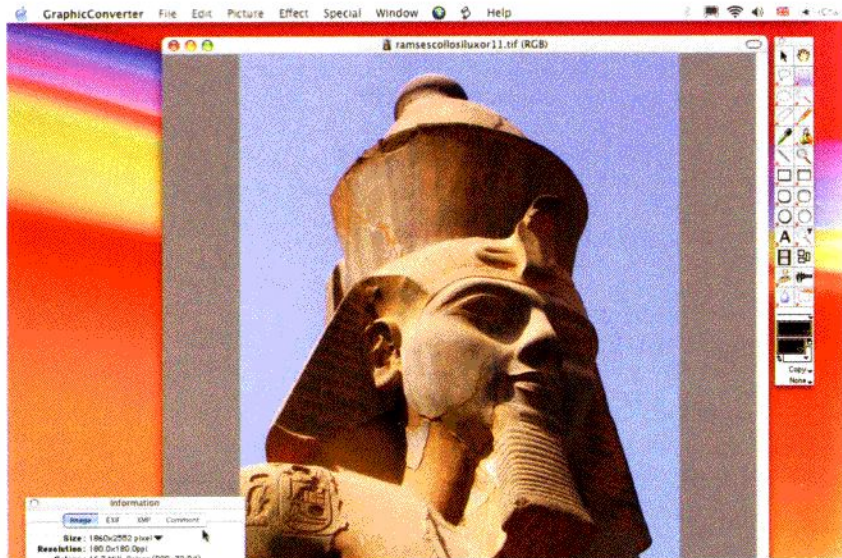
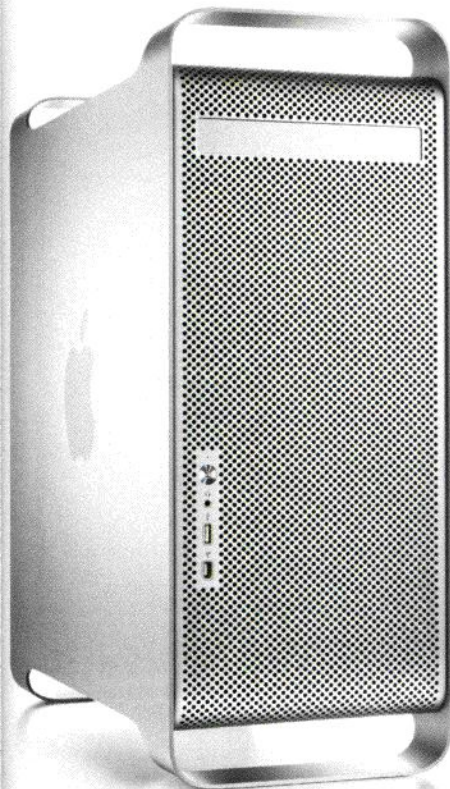
The AirPort Express's AirTunes feature is cool. What would be even cooler is being able to play any Mac application's sound output wirelessly. AirFoil does just that.

 In the real world, nothing's particularly neat and tidy and trying to fit the whole range of utilities out there into four categories is next to impossible. Our 'Lucky Dip' category covers everything that doesn't quite fit into the other categories - and there's a lot of good 'uns in our tombola.

First up is VersionTracker Pro (\$49.95/year, VersionTracker, www.versiontracker.com/subscribers/vtp_pro_mac.shtml), a handy little utility for ensuring all your applications, plug-ins and utilities are up to date. VersionTracker Pro will scan your hard drive for all your programs, check what version numbers they're all at, then connect to the VersionTracker Web site to see if there are more up-to-date copies of any of the programs available. If there are, you can download all the updates at once and install them just by clicking a button. It's a little pricey, but the licence covers up to three Macs, so if you are a multiple Mac owner and find it hard to keep everything current, VersionTracker Pro is definitely the way forward.

Staying in sync

Another treat for anyone with more than one Mac - particularly anyone with both a desktop and a laptop - is You Synchronize (\$49.95, You



Anyone who works with images should have a copy of GraphicConverter at hand

Software, www.yousoftware.com/synchronize). This, as the name would suggest, is a tool for synchronising the data on two computers, but as anyone who has ever tried this will tell you, that's far easier said than done. You Synchronize is usually the only program that will ensure that everything stays nicely in sync and nothing gets unexpectedly deleted.

AirStumbler (free, Nexus 9, <http://nexus9.org/main/aplisting.html>) is useful for two kinds of people: people that want to have free WiFi access, and people that want to check up on the security of WiFi networks! Install AirStumbler and as you roam around with your laptop, AirStumbler will try to connect you to any WiFi network you pass. If there's more than one, AirStumbler will run through the list until it finds one you can connect to. For those using it for monitoring, AirStumbler will also log all the access points it encounters, making it useful for any IT support person wondering exactly how many wireless access points naughty employees have added throughout the office without permission.

Microsoft mender

TNEF's Enough (free, Josh Jacob, www.joshjacob.com/macdev/tnef) is one of those utilities that's invaluable if you have a specific problem, but useless otherwise. Anyone who's received 'winmail.dat' or 'application/ms-tnef' files from someone unlucky enough to be using Microsoft's Exchange mail server will have experienced the frustration of being unable to read the



Can't play a movie file? Just about any video format will yield to the power of VLC

attachment the sender enclosed. Stuffit and every other utility under the sun can't open it. You notch up hours upon hours of wasted time going back and forth, trying to find FTP sites or iDisks to load things onto, when all you really needed was TNEF's Enough to decode the attachment. Single use, but invaluable in your hour of need.

Lastly, anybody with any sense has given up publishing their email address because of the spammers that scan Web sites for places to send their time-wasting rubbish. SpamStopper (free, RailHead Design, www.railheaddesign.com/pages/software/spamstopper/spamstopper.html) lets you publish your email address as a clickable link by encoding the characters in the address and using JavaScript to ensure that spam robots can't understand the link but regular browsers can. If you ever want to publish your email address online, get SpamStopper first.

Interface essentials

Enhance the way Mac OS X looks and feels with this smart selection

Top five interface essentials

1. DefaultFolder X
Developer: St. Clair Software
URL: www.stclairsoft.com/DefaultFolderX
Price: \$34.95

This is absolutely the most useful interface add-on available. Almost every useful file and folder tool becomes available directly from Open and Save dialogs and from a Dock or menu item.

2. iClip
Developer: inventive
URL: www.inventive.us/iClip
Price: \$19.95

Not just a replacement for OS 9's scrapbook, iClip can hold onto text, pictures, URLs, movies and more, ready for you to drop into whatever you're working on.

3. DockFun!
Developer: Donelleschi
URL: www.donelleschi.com/dockfun
Price: \$19.95

Claiming 10 features in one utility, DockFun!'s main selling point is that it gives you multiple Docks and hotkeys to launch applications and documents. Recommended for busy people.

4. WorkStrip
Developer: Softchaos
URL: www.softchaos.com/products/ws3/ove.html
Price: £22.95

If anything's worth the title of 'Dock on Steroids', WorkStrip is it. It makes every hard-working icon an unparalleled file-management utility, complete with preview.

5. Salling Clicker
Developer: Salling Software
URL: <http://homepage.mac.com/jonassalling/Shareware/Clicker>
Price: \$19.95

Turn all sorts of Bluetooth-equipped devices into remote controls for your Mac. Great for when you want to change your iTunes track from another room.

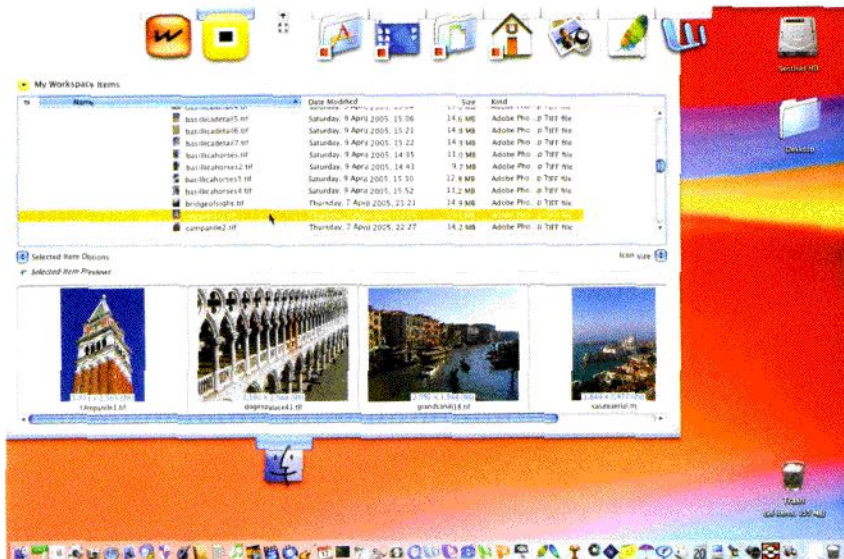
OS X is not only beautiful, it's the most user-friendly OS ever made. That we can all agree on. But it's not all things to all people. People work in different ways. They may want certain information available at the touch of a button when others will never need it in their lives. Others may just not like certain colours, icons or even mouse arrows.

This is where interface utilities come in. They allow you to customise the Mac's interface so that it does what you want it to. Don't like the brushed metal look in Panther or the pinstripes in Jaguar? Then download a copy of Shapeshifter (\$20, Unsanity, www.unsanity.com/haxies/shapeshifter) and before you know it, everything will be sky-blue or whatever tasteful colour your palate prefers.

Plugging the gaps

There are many things missing from OS X and other utilities can fill these holes. Anyone old enough to have used OS 9 when it was the only thing on the block for Mac users will have fond memories of having the Trash on the Desktop. A plethora of utilities that provide trashcans for the Desktop were some of the first things to emerge from developers' imaginations when OS X first came out. Of them all, iCan (\$10, Kanzu, www.kanzu.com) offers the most, not only plonking one of many themed Trashes on the Desktop, but providing access to useful force-delete commands, and an auto delete for when your Trash gets too full.

A number of other OS 9 nostalgia add-ons are available for providing window shading, tabbing windows, labels (for Jaguar users) and other features, but as more people have got used to the OS X way of working, these are no longer as necessary as they once were.



WorkStrip is a great way of managing and using your files without having to wade your way through stacks of folders

The Dock is also another contentious issue. For many, it is no replacement for the OS 9 Apple menu and application switcher. This is why utilities that can customise the Dock or provide alternatives abound. DragThing (\$29, James Thomson, www.dragthing.com) is a must-have for the most highly productive users. It replaces the Dock with multiple docks that can be tabbed and offer more options than most applications' built-in dock menus provide.

Imaginative accessories

Other things aren't so much missing in action as just never enlisted. A long-standing class of Mac utilities has added menubar items to provide functions and information unavailable without a

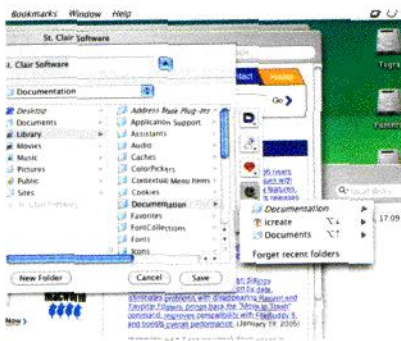
separate application. dotMac menu (donationware, Infinite Nexus, www.infinitenexus.com/dmm) makes you wonder why Apple hasn't developed its own version. Split into several sections, the menu provides a set of links to each of the .Mac online tools, instant launch capabilities for Apple's iSync and Backup tools, and a meter that tells you how much space you have on your iDisk and how much you're using.

You Control (\$29.95, You Software, www.yousoftware.com/control) is the best of the menubar addition utilities, providing multiple menus and multiple items to add to each menu as well as items that improve on existing menubar items.

Step-by-step DefaultFolder X Get to the folders you actually use



1. Wherever, whenever
 DefaultFolder X's hierarchical menus let you navigate through your Mac's directory structure with the greatest of ease.



2. A sense of history
 The program helpfully remembers all your most recently used folders, assigning them shortcuts for easier access.



3. Open and shut case
 There's also a menu for folders that are open in the Finder. You can use that or click the open window to take the dialog box straight there.



Application add-ons

Power up your Mac's applications with these vital third party accessories

Top five application add-ons

1. SchubertIt Browser Plugins (Word and PDF)

Developer: Manfred Schubert
URL: www.schubert-it.com
Price: Free for personal use

Anyone who doesn't have Acrobat 7 Reader or who prefers a browser other than Safari will love Schubert's PDF plug-in. The Word plug-in is an added bonus for everyone.

2. SafariKeywords

Developer: Open source project
URL: http://safarikeywords.sourceforge.net
Price: Free

Annoyed that Safari's Google toolbar only searches the US Google? Or that Google's your only option? SafariKeywords reconfigures Safari to use it for all kinds of searches.

3. Sync Entourage-AddressBook/iCal

Developer: Paul Berkowitz
URL: http://homepage.mac.com/berkowitz28
Price: \$19 each

AppleScript genius Paul Berkowitz has filled in the staggering blanks left by Apple and Microsoft, offering a nifty way to sync the data in Entourage with iCal and the Address Book.

4. UK Shopping Channels (Sherlock)

Developer: Barney Hilken
URL: http://homepage.ntlworld.com/b.hilken/pages/UKShopping.html
Price: Free

One of the very few things that make Sherlock worthwhile to UK users, Barney's UK Shopping Channels let you compare prices and availability at all the major UK online stores.

5. Streetmap UK Address Book plug-in

Developer: fourByTwoFlat
URL: www.fourbytwoflat.com/content/applications/streetmap.html
Price: Free

The MapQuest maps used by Address Book to show UK addresses leave a little to be desired (like accuracy). Use Streetmap.co.uk maps instead with this plug-in.



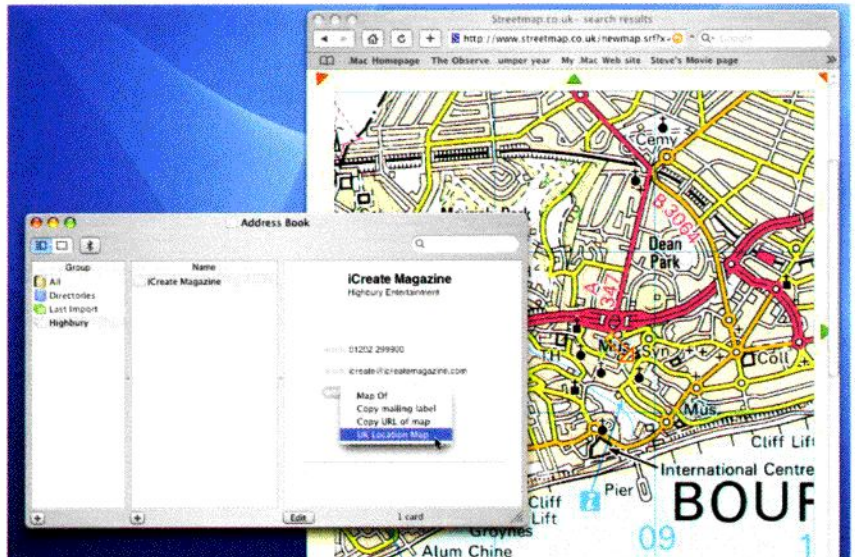
Admit it. There are a few things about your trusty OS X apps that you might like to change, which is where application add-ons come in. These utilities don't really do anything by themselves, but they add all sorts of capabilities to existing applications or even the system itself.

The most long-standing application booster has been fax software. Until Panther came along, OS X couldn't natively send and receive faxes: you had to install something like PageSender (\$29.95, SmileOnMyMac, www.smileonmy.com/page sender). Even with the advent of built-in faxing, PageSender remains an essential application booster because it adds many features to OS X's fax capabilities, including the ability to use Internet fax services and to use address books other than OS X's.

Safari specials

Web browsers have had a long-standing need for application boosters in the form of plug-ins for different media types. But Safari has begun to build up a collection of plug-ins that extend its abilities in other ways. Top of the Safari pops is PithHelm 0.7.x (Free, Mike Solomon, <http://hiredgoons.com/software/PithHelm/PithHelm.php>), an extremely useful add-on for anyone who hates ads, since it removes them from Web pages. The paid-for version, 2.x, costing \$10, also has a built-in cookie editor and policy-setter for the truly security conscious, but the free version is more useful to most people.

Mail, too, has begun to acquire an exciting range of plug-ins, from basic add-ons that automatically report Spam to SpamCop, to more fully featured products. MailPriority (Free, David Frank, <http://home.tiscalinet.ch/david.frank/mailpriority>) gives Mail a few extra features,



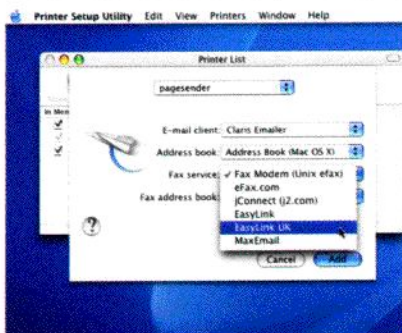
Get some decent maps for contacts with UK addresses by using the Streetmap.co.uk plug-in with Address Book

including the ability to give messages priorities, make them request return receipts and colour-code messages for easy sorting. Httpmail (free, open source project, <http://sourceforge.net/projects/httpmail-plugin>) is a useful feature for Mail-using Hotmail users who envy the ability of Microsoft Office users to download their Webmail in Entourage. Just install it and instantly you'll be able to add Hotmail to your list of accounts, although since Hotmail has starting charging certain users for the privilege, it's not as automatically appealing as it used to be.

With spam a big issue for all email users - an issue that looks like it's only going to get bigger - almost all mail applications, including Entourage and Mail, have their own built-in

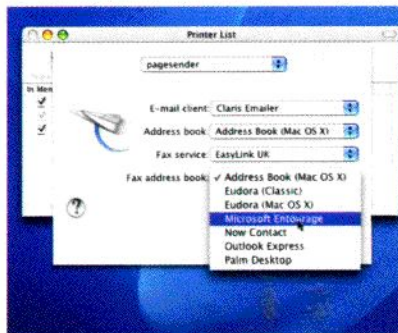
spam filters. Some are better than others but almost all can be improved on. SpamSieve (\$25, Michael Tsai, <http://c-command.com/spamsieve>) builds on the Bayesian filtering system of Mail's junk filters to produce an even more effective spam filter. After a bit of training, false positives and negatives tend to go away, leaving you with an Inbox untainted by herbal Viagra and requests to confirm your Bank of Washington security settings. Since Tsai updates the product frequently, SpamSieve is often ahead of the built-in junk filters and in keeping up with spammers' latest techniques. Better still, it gives junk filtering abilities to email programs that never had the ability to spot junk mail, such as Outlook Express and Claris Mailer.

Step-by-step PageSender Smart faxing



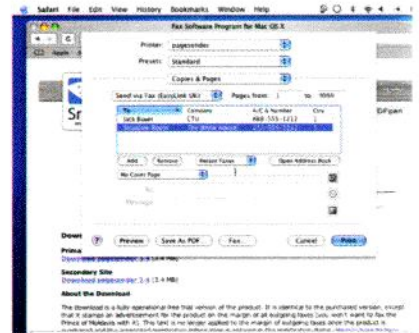
1. At your service

In addition to being able to fax using your modem, PageSender can use various online services to send your fax.



2. Got your number

PageSender can use almost any program's address book, making it easy to ensure you have all your fax numbers to hand.



3. Spread the word

With your new fax printer set up, you can send faxes to multiple recipients, using the address book of your choice and the fax service of your choice.

Power user tools

Make your Mac work for you, not the other way round with these techie tools

Many utilities are for regular, ordinary people, but there is a certain class of utility that appeals directly to the power user. These assume you already know a fair bit about computers and want to tinker with the workings more than standard tools will allow. And the good news is that since OS X is based on Unix, there's a fair amount you can tinker with if you so desire.

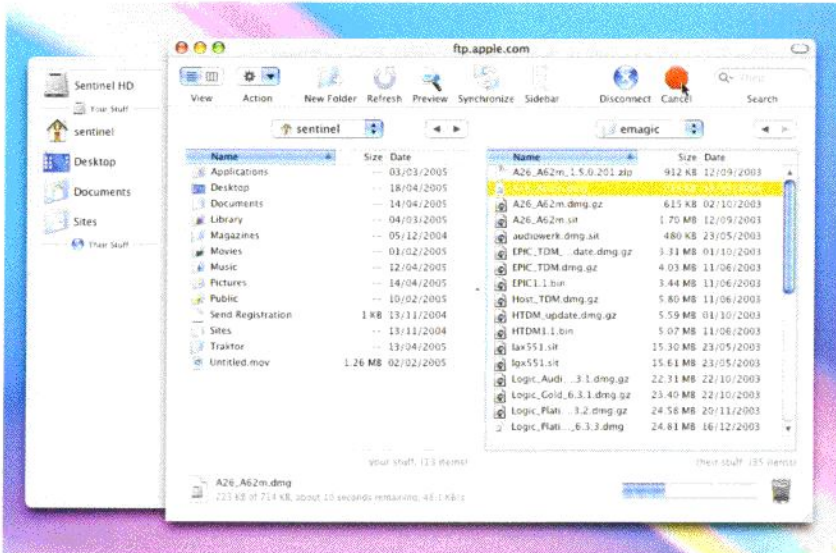
OS X already comes with several power tools built-in but there are a couple of utilities designed for such power users that can be downloaded from Apple's site. The most useful for everyone are the Apple Common Criteria Tools (free, Apple, www.apple.com/support/downloads/commoncriteriatools.html). Although hard to set up, they provide an auditing system for your Mac so you know what it's doing second by second, in case you're concerned about a dodgy application or possible hacker takeover.

Fink different

With Unix having been a programmer's paradise since the beginning, most truly great power tools are the result of the OS X developer community. However, Fink (free, open source project, <http://fink.sourceforge.net>) is almost a 'meta-power utility' in that it doesn't do much except let you install dozens of other power utilities. As such, it's a given that any serious power user is going to have Fink installed and ready to go, purely to save time getting to the good stuff.

If you find yourself getting frustrated with your basic printer driver, its performance, or the fact that the vendor hasn't written a driver for OS X at all, installing Gimp-print (free, open source project, <http://gimp-print.sourceforge.net/MacOSX.php3>) is usually a sure-fire way of making your situation a whole lot better. The Gimp-print drivers include lots of options deemed by manufacturers too tricky for ordinary mortals and usually offer better quality than the standard drivers, so even if your printer driver seems fine, take a look at the Gimp-print equivalent to see if your printer could be working even better.

There are other tools for power users that take advantage of the Unix underpinnings of OS X. Cronnix (free, Abstrature, www.abstrature.de/cronnix) is a nice front-end to the Unix 'cron' command, which schedules when various tasks occur on your Mac. If you can do it from the command line, you can schedule it with cron (and Cronnix).



Transmit looks and acts like OS X, and can upload and download files with every protocol under the sun



Can't remember the exact Terminal command you want? CLIX has all the good ones in a big list for you

You can also make cunning use of Cronnix to re-schedule the existing maintenance tasks that your Mac would normally do at night if it weren't for the fact you've switched it off. So, it makes your Mac run better as well. Everyone's a winner.

A snitch in time

Little Snitch (\$24.95, Objective Development, www.obdev.at/products/littlesnitch/) is an excellent companion to Apple's Common Criteria Tools (as well as open source security tools like HenWen and TripWire) because it works like a firewall in reverse, warning you of when applications on your computer try to connect to the Internet. Worried that a new program is going to send all your bank account details to Russia when you run it? Little Snitch will rise to the occasion and block any unauthorised network connection, giving you peace of mind at every turn. Be warned - you'll receive a constant barrage of information

Free for all

Why the open source community is your gateway to free software

The best things in life are free and that's often the case with utilities. Many of our top 50 are open source, which usually means that you can use them for free and actually rewrite them yourself if they're not what you want.

Anyone thinking that free means rubbish should take a look at some of the open source video players available, such as VLC (www.videolan.org/vlc) and MPlayer OS X (<http://mplayerosx.sourceforge.net>). In many ways, these are better than QuickTime Player, et al, so prepare to be impressed by what a few people working in their spare time can do.

The best way to get most of these programs is Fink (<http://fink.sourceforge.net>), an open source utility that downloads hundreds of other open source applications, games and utilities, as is the lesser known DarwinPorts (<http://darwinports.opendarwin.org/>). If you're not sure if there's a utility that does what you want, use Fink or DarwinPorts to do a search.

about perfectly innocent programs when you first run it though, so you'll have to know in advance what the wheat is before you can start checking for chaff. That's why it's a power tool.

Top five power user tools

1. CLIX

Developer: Rixstep

URL: <http://rixstep.com/4/0/clix>

Price: Free

For anyone who needs a gentle introduction to UNIX or a good way to remember commands, CLIX has over 540 Terminal commands to start you off or prompt you.

2. Transmit

Developer: Panic

URL: www.panic.com/transmit

Price: \$17.95

For those who plan to use FTP more than once in their lifetime, Transmit is the most user-friendly, most Mac-like FTP program available and supports every major FTP encryption standard.

3. OS X packages

Developer: Mark Liyanage

URL: www.entropy.ch/software/macosx

Price: Free

Installers for all major open source Web packages (PHP, MySQL, PostgreSQL, Apache2), complete with the best supporting libraries (including GD and PDFlib). A database and Web developer's dream.

4. SharePoints

Developer: HornWare

URL: www.hornware.com/sharepoints

Price: Free (donations welcome)

Share any folder on any hard drive with other Macs or even PCs using SharePoints. Tell it what you want to share and who with and then simply click the button.

5. Pseudo

Developer: Brian Hill

URL: http://personalpages.tds.net/~brian_hill/pseudo.html

Price: \$15

The security conscious never log in with an admin account, which makes installing and using some software (especially utilities) a pain. Pseudo elevates your privileges to 'root' level.

Housekeeping helpers

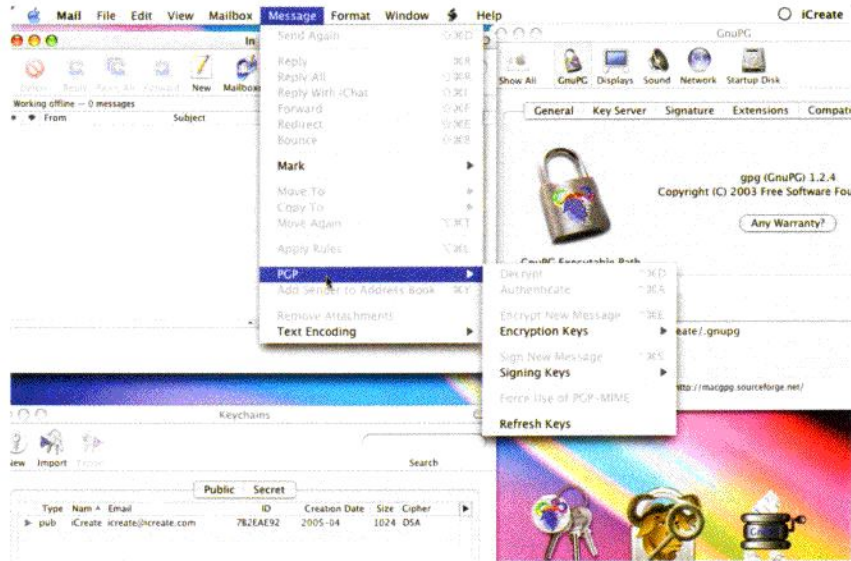
Let these indispensable tools make light work of Macintosh maintenance



There are two unbreakable laws of nature: 'whatever can go wrong, will go wrong' and 'if it ain't nailed down, they'll nick it'. Even Macs aren't immune from these two hard facts of life. Fortunately, even if you can't do anything to prevent the worst from happening, you can sometimes fix it or prevent total meltdown from occurring using tools from our next category - housekeeping helpers.

There are basically two groups of housekeeping apps: those you can use before disaster strikes and those you can use after. The best kind are, of course, the ones you use before. Backup software, such as Apple's Backup or SuperDuper! (\$19.95, Shirt Pocket, www.shirt-pocket.com) is essential. SuperDuper! is vital for anyone whose hard drive is filled with more than just idle doodles. If you only ever buy one utility, make sure it's a back up tool that can save all your useful data somewhere secure.

At first, you may think that you can't afford to have a decent backup strategy: with hard drives coming in at 120GB, where else can you back up to except another hard drive? But it might be that you simply have a load of old rubbish on your drive that you don't actually need. The problem is finding out where the biggest lumps of rubbish are. OmniDiskSweeper (\$14.92, Omni Group, www.omnigroup.com) goes where the Finder can't, and will give you a simple rundown of which directories and files on your Mac are taking up the most space. You may be surprised how many strange files in all sorts of places are cramming up your system.



Better integrated with Mac apps than PGP Freeware, Mac GPG is free and will keep prying eyes out of your affairs



The ultimate utility tool: tinker, repair, optimise. You can even schedule your Mac to do the repairs automatically

Problem solvers

Assuming hardware isn't the root cause of your problems and you just want to fix the problem, rather than wipe everything and start again, there are a few tools that can help out, some of which are in the chart. Pacifist (\$20, Charles Srstka, www.charlesoft.com) is a neat utility that takes the standard Apple installer a stage further and gives you far more control. Only want to reinstall a single file or application? Fancy putting it in a place of your choice, rather than the installer's? Pacifist can do all this and verify your existing installation for damage and missing files.

Security solutions

Keeping out those naughty hackers before they do unpleasant things to your Mac is also a plan worth implementing. BrickHouse (\$25, Brian Hill, http://personalpages.tds.net/~brian_hill/brickhouse.html) is the most useful of all the firewall configuration tools: it

Knowledge Base

Avoiding CD confusion

There are 50 must-have applications identified here and 50 must-have applications on this month's CD. So why aren't they the same? It's because not every program we chose was available in a downloadable format (Version Tracker Pro, for instance) or could be licensed for inclusion on a cover disc (Apple Common Criteria Tools). Therefore, we've topped up the list on the disc to 50 with some of the superb applications that we had to leave out of our eventual 50, giving you the best of both worlds.

lets you configure the built-in firewall more finely and lets you enable its logging function, so you can see who's been trying to break in.

In the event the hackers do get access to your Mac, a password will initially stop them. But booting off another hard drive or a CD will give them access to your Mac's data. Your Mac has a password system built in that can stop them, but you'll need to activate it with Apple's Open Firmware Password utility or Startup Security (\$19.95, Chaotic Software, www.chaoticsoftware.com/ProductPages/StartupSecurity.html). If they can get your hard drive out of your Mac, having FileVault or some other form of encryption in place (such as PGP Freeware or Mac GPG) will stop them accessing your important data.

Top five housekeeping helpers

1. Retrospect Desktop
Developer: Dantz
URL: www.dantz.com
Price: £75

For versatility and power, it's hard to beat Retrospect Desktop. Whether it's to an FTP site, a DVD, or an external hard drive, Retrospect is still king of backups.

2. Cocktail
Developer: Kristofer Szymanski
URL: www.macosxcocktail.com
Price: \$14.95

Cocktail does all the system maintenance you want, and also optimises your network settings, cleans up your hard drive and tweaks OS X's hidden interface preferences.

3. Mac GPG
Developer: Open source project
URL: <http://macgpg.sourceforge.net>
Price: Free

Mac GPG is the ultimate encryption package. Together with GPG Mail and other free packages, you'll have a near-seamless secure mail and file system up and running in minutes.

4. Printer Setup Repair
Developer: Fixamac software
URL: www.fixamac.net
Price: \$20

The most common problems involve printing. If the problems are software-related, Printer Setup Repair (Print Center Repair for Jaguar users) is virtually guaranteed to fix it.

5. Preferential Treatment
Developer: Jonathan Nathan
URL: <http://homepage.mac.com/jonn8/as/html/pt.html>
Price: Free

Most repair programs focus on fixing the system, but Preferential Treatment will help find corrupt preference files for applications, which is a common cause of program crashes.

