

eXtensions: starting with OSX



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If it is going to go wrong, it will be within your first few weeks

Although Apple's OSX is renowned as being a stable and secure operating system, those unfamiliar with its modes of working may unwittingly cause problems, by deleting strategic files, by overloading the Finder or trying to do too much.



Some Essentials?

As I wrote earlier, we are not working in a Windows environment with OSX. It all happens differently. Here I want to set you up with some basics for trying to avoid problems, and fixing any problems that do occur.

I see most Mac problems with new users, partly because they try to work using old (perhaps Windows) methods. Start slowly.

Not many of us leave our computers on 24 hours a day. If we

were to do so, a set of maintenance routines would run automatically (in the small hours): daily, weekly and monthly. If the machine is off or in sleep mode, these do not run and the result might be some slowness eventually.

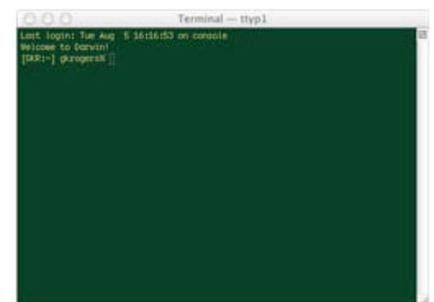
This can either be remedied the pretty way or using Terminal: command line Unix.



The pretty way can be effected with one of several applications: MacJanitor, Macaroni, OnyX. There are others.

Macaroni, is shareware (about \$12) and once installed, you can forget it. MacJanitor's sole

function is to run the cleanup routines. OnyX runs the routines and has several other utilities. Beware: a little knowledge is dangerous. Until you know what you are up to, do not experiment.



The Terminal, is daunting for some but working at the Unix command line can be really fast. Terminal will open looking like a white rectangle with some black letters.

You can change the colours if you want (I have in this image -- this reminds me of the original monochrome monitors that were almost universal when I first used computers).

Terminal is the OSX way to use a command line. It sounds odd for the Mac which pioneered the graphical interface, but (believe me) getting used to this has made my life a lot easier. The commands you need to run are really only for the Root user. Root is the owner of the system. Most of the time we do not use Root as it is dangerous. One wrong keystroke and you could lose everything. Being Unix, there is a way round. If we have an administration account we can pretend to be a substitute user by using the sudo command and then entering the necessary text (**note the spaces in the command**):

`sudo sh /etc/daily`

Hit the Return key. The Terminal will first give a warning, and then it will ask for a password. Enter your password and again press the Return key. Let OSX do its stuff and then you will be back to the prompt.

As well as the daily command, there are weekly and monthly commands too. Either type in the command in full or press the UP key and then edit the last command, so you end up with

`sudo sh /etc/weekly`

Have faith with this one. It takes a long time: perhaps as long as ten minutes, depending on the size of the hard disk and the speed of the machine. I also regard this one as the most essential of the three cleanup routines as there are noticeable performance increases on a Saturday morning (it normally runs dur-

ing the previous night). Similarly, the monthly command is

`sudo sh /etc/monthly`

Your main concerns will be not when things are running, but when things stop. Note what is happening before you panic. Is there a rainbow colored disk spinning; is the mouse able to be moved; is there a multi-language panel asking you to restart the computer?

The rainbow disk is the Mac's way to tell you that it is working hard and you may have to wait. If you are waiting for more than a minute or so (presuming you are not rendering a huge image or a movie), it may be worth investigating. Can you use any other open application? If not, and nothing seems to be changing, it may be necessary to Force Quit.

Press the blue Apple at the top left of the screen and access the item, "Force Quit". A panel will appear showing open applications. Select the one you are having trouble with (it may be coloured red if the operating system has already detected a problem) and click on the button.

The multi-language panel is a different matter. This is a kernel panic, although these are rare nowadays. Either press the restart button (this may be at the side), or press the power button for ten seconds and the power will go off. This is probably the better choice. You could now restart, but keep your fingers

crossed. If there has been a kernel panic, there is a reason. My approach is to check before going further.

A safe start (start up with the Shift key held down), followed by a restart, may be enough to put things back in order. My own action would mean some command line Unix work (see below). I would suggest that a new user start the computer with the C key held down and put the installation disk #1 into the drive.

It will appear to prepare for a new installation, but will stop at a panel. When it does, at the top left is a menu and in here is an item Disk Utility. Start this and in First Aid, select the startup disk (the one that does not look like a CDROM). There are two options: verify and repair permissions; and verify or repair the disk. Repair the disk. Running this once should be enough.



If you want to think about the Unix method, details are here: <http://www.extensions.in.th/post/rescue/help.html> and there is also an application called "applejack" that can help you if you do want to work at the Unix shell.