

eXtensions: for new users



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If you have recently bought a Mac and are looking at OSX for the first time, you may be concerned about how to use the machine.

OSX is the latest Mac operating system (currently version 10.3) and, although it looks something like the earlier Apple operating systems (like 7, 8 or 9), it is not the same, nor is it like Windows.

I am going to make several suggestions in the course of this text based on my experience. You (or others) may not agree with what I write, but my machines work and they are not



prone to crashing. I will begin with the first start-up and work through various parts of the operating system and how it affects the way you will work with your Mac.

One or two points are worth considering: as I suggest above, it ain't Windows. Certain aspects will function in a similar way (as some will function similarly to earlier Mac systems), but OSX does have a certain uniqueness and its Unix

core has a lot to do with this. You may never see or use the Unix, but it is there and it affects OSX.

It is fairly common these days (Linux, Mac and XP) that the system is not shut down using the power button. With OSX this really is a last resort and may require some maintenance if you ever have to do this (to be on the safe side). Avoid it like the plague.

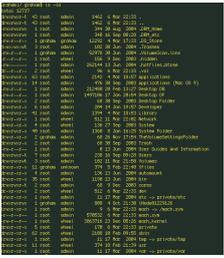
When you start up your Mac for the first time, there is a procedure that allows you to enter information about yourself and to register online. I would suggest that you enter only as much as you can get away with, and I would particularly urge you not to register online at this stage.

The last time I did this, the procedure was set up for US residents, and (really) for those with a fast link. Many users in

Thailand are still running a 56k modem. It may be better to register when you are online. This will also give you time to enter and check the online settings. You can register your Apple products at <https://register.apple.com/> and first time users will be asked to create an account (cookies on for this).



One of the reasons for security in OSX (apart from the Unix) is that users do not normally have access to Root. If you are unfamiliar with this expression, Root is the main account in Unix-based systems and with Root access, you can do anything, including delete the entire hard disk. Read on. . . .



Root or Not

Apple, in its wisdom, has made it so that us ordinary users

User Accounts

In the System Preferences (see below) there is a panel with the name Accounts. This allows a Mac owner both to create an account and to select the extent of the privileges. The Administrators account can control it all. A normal user account can use all applications but is restricted when it comes to controlling the computer and installing software.

There are also other restrictions that can be applied to limit a user to the barest of essentials and even to bar that person from certain applications -- perhaps ideal for the kids or for guest users. Separate accounts means that separate settings are created for each user: tune your computer to do what you want to do (and how it looks), regardless of what others want.

In the past I have had an Admin account for myself and user accounts for others. On the office computer, I have an Admin account and a user account. For my day to day activities, I work from the User account; for serious work and installing software, I use the Admin account. On my next computer, I will do the same.

This may be inconvenient for some folks, but it will give you better control over all operations,

have either administrator access or ordinary user access. With Admin, almost all tasks that would sometimes require Root, can be accomplished by entering a password. It may, be less effective if a password is not se-

lected carefully. I despair when I see some computers where the password is simply the Enter (Return) key. This does little for security and may cause access problems.

and if something does go wrong, you can change to another account and see if the problem still exists. In that way, you may be able to isolate an error.



Passwords

The password is one of the lines of security that you control. As above, I do not recommend that you use a simple password, nor do I suggest that, with one user, you avoid the login screen. This may be done in System Preferences, by accessing the Security panel. At the bottom (active if there is only one user) is a tick-box for allowing this. Similarly, I would also suggest, especially if you use the computer in your office, that you tick the box that requires a password to wake the computer.

A few more words

Having examined one or two early administration details, it is now worth looking at the day to

day operation of the computer itself.

During the course of this text, I will make one or two recommendations about software. Most of the suggestions concern programs which are either "Freeware" or "Shareware". In the main, I do not see a pressing need for commercial software, other than the applications that come as part of the initial installation. There is enough on your hard disk to use the Internet, create and open documents and spreadsheets, to handle digital photographs, and to make a movie.

Almost all of the software I use is either available from Apple or from [Versiontracker](http://www.versiontracker.com) at <http://www.versiontracker.com>

As a last point here, I also suggest that upgrading the memory will bring benefits to operations. The Macs come with a standard 256MB (or 512 on some of the latest machines) and perform much better if this is increased.

Other sources

The ideas here are basic and I would strongly recommend buying a book. I have made several recommendations at <http://www.extensions.in.th/reviews.html>.