

California Computer Care

News,
Views,
Tips and
Cool Techniques
for CCC Members

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We
speak
Geek,
so you
don't
have to.

REVIEW Curt's Five Rules

Two years ago, I wrote an earlier version of this article about the five rules I use to help my Macs be easier to use, more efficient and run better. Things change. *Mac OS X Jaguar* is gaining popularity, so I have revised my five rules with Mac OS X in mind.

Rule #1

When you finish using an application, DO NOT close the last window. QUIT! Nothing could be simpler and more important in keeping you out of trouble.

Rule #1 addresses the most common mistake made. In most applications, closing the last visible window does not quit the application, it just removes the most obvious clue that the application is *still running*. In time you may have five, six or more applications running without being aware of them. Unless you have a super fast Mac and tons of RAM, this will slow you down and eventually cause “out of memory” messages and crashes. Plus, you will be surprised the next time you open one of these applications and no window appears on screen. “Why didn’t that work?”, you ask. It *did* work, but you earlier told the application NOT to show you a window, so none is there to greet you. Remember, don’t close. Choose *Quit* from the *File* menu instead.

Mac OS X’s great memory management and crash proofing makes some of this rule obsolete. Even so, leaving unused applications running will slow you down. Also, because of the way that Mac OS X manages windows, the “where’s that window?” surprise is even more likely if you do not follow rule number 1.

Rule #2

Use the Application Menu.

Rule #2 is Rule #1's best friend. The Application Menu is the menu that you find in

the upper right corner of your screen. The Application Menu shows you the icon and, sometimes, the name of the application currently in use. Clicking on the Application Menu will drop down a list of all running applications. If you have not followed Rule #1, the unseen, running applications will be listed here. Change applications by clicking on their name. Then, if you are done using them, choose *Quit* from the *File* menu. It is wise to check the Application Menu frequently to see if you’ve left a forgotten application running.

Mac OS X dispenses with the Application menu. Instead, look to the *Dock* for clues about applications left running unattended. Check the *Dock* frequently. If you notice an application icon with a small black triangle under it, that application has been left running. If you find an unattended application in the *Dock*, just click on its icon and choose *Quit* from the *File* menu. Doing this will also avoid the possibility that the unattended application may want your attention. When this happens the application’s *Dock* icon begins bouncing madly (like a fidgety student in need of a bathroom break). If the application isn’t left running, it can’t annoy you with its requests.

Rule #3

Do monthly maintenance. Every month you should do these things:

- 1) Run the *Disk First Aid* application. *Disk First Aid* can usually be found in your Utilities folder (if not, use *Sherlock* or *Find File* to search for it). *Disk First Aid* is great at fixing all manner of nasty little problems before they become big ones. However, if *Disk First Aid* finds problems that it cannot fix, please call me. **Mac OS X’s** *Disk Utility* works differently. To use *Disk Utility*, pop your *Mac OS X*

Jaguar install CD in the CD drive and restart while holding down the c key on your keyboard. Once your Mac has restarted, choose the *Open Disk Utility...* command from the *Installer* menu.

When the *Disk Utility* window opens, click on your hard drive's name and then click on the *First Aid* tab. On the *First Aid* tab's window, you will see two repair options: *Repair Disk* and *Repair Disk Permissions*. Click the *Repair Disk* button. The same process as described for *Disk First Aid* will occur. When *Repair Disk* is done, click on *Repair Disk Permissions*. When done, *Quit* the *Disk Utility*, then choose *Quit Installer* from the *Installer* menu and lastly, choose *Restart* and follow the instructions on the the drop down warning sheet.

- 2) Rebuild the desktop. After running *Disk First Aid*, restart your Mac. As soon as you hear the start-up tone, hold down the Apple and Option keys on your keyboard. When you see a message asking if you want to rebuild the desktop, release the keys and click the OK button. It will take a few minutes to complete the process. You won't see a difference, but your Mac will feel the dif-

ference and like it; a lot.

Mac OS X has no need of desktop rebuilds, so there is no reason for, or way of doing, this step.

- 3) Check your date and time. Most computer clocks run a little fast or slow, but if your clock and calendar become wildly erratic, the PRAM battery is probably dead or dying (please call me immediately).

Rule #4

Use a high quality surge suppressor and properly polarized and grounded electrical outlets.

Quality surge protectors cost at least \$30.00. Good brands are Belkin, APC, Kensington and PanaMax. Many surge protectors have tell-tale lights that will show you if the outlet they are plugged into is not properly wired and/or grounded. If your surge protector does not tell you this, get a tester from Radio Shack or a good hardware store. This is essential for your safety and the safety of your expensive equipment.

Rule #5

*Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up,
Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up
Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up. . .*

We've talked about this before. *Do it!
...Now!*

February Tip—

With only two exceptions (the base model *iBook* and the traditionally-styled *iMac*) all Macs come ready to burn (record on) CDs. Here are a few things to know about this:

- 1) Recordable CD disks come in 2 flavors: CD-R (record-only, no erase) and CD-RW (can record, but also can be erased back to the blank state for reuse).
- 2) CD-Rs are best for long-term storage of files or music CDs and cost about 30¢ each in bulk.
- 3) CD-RWs are best when your data changes often and cost about 90¢ each in bulk. Many CD music players cannot read CD-RWs.
- 4) The CD burning software included with your Mac cannot record to the same CD more than once (with CD-RWs you can erase back to blank and burn again, but not add files to a partially used disk).
- 5) If you want to burn more than once to a CD (called multi-session), you need more capable software like *Roxio Toast* or *CharisMac Discrite* (both about \$70.00). I use and prefer *Toast*.

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