

# California Computer Care

News,  
Views,  
Tips and  
Cool Techniques  
for CCC Members

May 2006  
Vol. IX, No. 5

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

## Oh, brother...

Apple has just released a *Knowledge Base* article that has me steamed! In *KB303602*, Apple lays out suggestions for “getting your Mac organized and up to snuff.” I disagree with so many of these suggestions that I have to go on record here. With your permission, here is the article with my appended comments *in red italics*:

### *Mac Maintenance Quick Assist*

The best way to keep your Mac (and you) happy is to update your system software periodically and perform some regular maintenance. As a Mac user, you won't have to do windows, but you will need to do some housekeeping! Think of this as your handy survival guide to computing happiness. Here are our Top 10 Tips to getting your Mac organized and up to snuff.

#### *Top 10 Tips to Keep Your Mac in Top Form*

##### 1) Keep Things Up to Date

Make it a point to check for Apple software updates once a month to keep your system running optimally. From the Apple menu, choose Software Update (make sure that your computer is connected to the Internet). Software Update will assess the Apple software on your computer and check our servers for new versions. If it finds any, the updates will appear in the Software Update window. Select the checkbox for the software you want and then click the Install button to download and install the software. *No, no, no! Just check the MacFixIt web site to see the howls of pain from users who install from Software Update. Computers embody the maxim “If it ain't broke, don't fix it.” better than any other aspect of life. Never install anything from Software Update until you know exactly how necessary, useful and SAFE that new software is to YOUR Mac. If you aren't sure, please contact me.*

##### 2) Put Your Toys Away

You're not 5 years old anymore — make it a point to clear off the mess strewn about across your desktop and put your files away where you can easily find them. This can help prevent accidental file deletion (you may inadvertently select and trash a wanted file with your undesirables) and help you find things much more efficiently.

You can get organized by creating new folders (in the Finder, press Shift-Command-N) and arranging them into a workable hierarchy for your files at hand, or you can move your files into existing folders. *Slobs of the world unite! Desktop clutter is only an aesthetic issue. While useful for organizational efficiency, following this rule will not make your Mac run better.*

##### 3) Name Your Children

Untitled folder 8, Word027.doc, DSC\_1366.jpg — you've probably got a few (or way more than a few) files and folders that you've felt less than inspired to properly name. Then suddenly you need to pluck that prized picture from your gi-normous collection of DSC\_0001.jpg to DSC\_1400.jpg named files — if you only knew which number it was. Go through your generically-named files and folders and give them more descriptive names so you can find what you need fast (though it can find files quickly, Spotlight won't find your tabloid-ready Bigfoot picture if you left the file alone with its cryptic camera-given name). *They got this one right. Yes, it's a time consuming pain, but in the long run you will appreciate having properly named files that you can actually find.*

##### 4) Prune Through Your File Forest

To reduce the amount of clutter on your hard drive, free up some disk space by archiving large, seldom used files ..., and be sure to name the resulting archive file appropriately too, so you know what's in it. Delete any unnecessary or outdated personal files whenever possible and anything that you no longer want or need—just drag them all into the Trash and don't forget to empty it. Be brave. Your computer will reward you with improved performance. *OK, this one is right, too. A good rule of thumb is to never have your hard drive over 90% full. 75% would be even better. Getting rid of photos, music and documents that you don't really need will recover lots of disk space. To check how full your Mac's hard drive is, click once on your hard drive's desktop icon and then choose the Get Info command from the File menu. In the Info window that appears, note the amount Used and divide that by the hard drive's indicated capacity.*

## 5) Repair Disk Permissions

It's a good idea to make sure that your disk permissions are in good working order on a regular basis — especially after upgrading or installing new software. Open Disk Utility... and select your hard disk icon in the left pane. Click the First Aid tab, then click Repair Disk Permissions to start the process, which can take a few minutes to complete. If Disk Utility finds any issues, it'll fix them along the way.

*There is currently a very noisy debate in the Mac world about this topic. Many experts say that repairing disk permissions is useless and potentially dangerous. I do not agree. However, I also do not agree with Apple's assertion that repairing disk permissions is good maintenance. I recommend repairing disk permissions during installations (as noted above) and if your Mac misbehaves. I do not recommend repairing disk permissions as a maintenance routine.*

## 6) Back Up Your Files

To prevent losing your prized or important files, make it a point to back up your keepsakes on a regular basis. You can back up files onto a CD, DVD, external hard drive, iPod, iDisk, or other storage medium and then delete the copies on your hard drive to free up some space. To learn how to back up files, choose *Mac Help* from the Help menu in the Finder and do a search for "back up files." To get some ideas of what and what not to back up, see this page: (<http://www.apple.com/support/>

[mac101/help/9/](http://www.apple.com/support/mac101/help/9/)). *Yet another good piece of advice. Back up, back up, back up and back up your files. Do it now!*

7) Restart Your Computer Every Once in a While While your Mac can happily hum along 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, you should restart it every once in a while to refresh the system if you're in the habit of keeping your computer running all day and night. This can help clear issues before they arise. *Your Mac does self-maintenance during start up and shut down. An occasional restart will not hurt and could help. Once or twice a month should be often enough.*

## 8) Check for Viruses

Macs don't get anywhere near the amount of viruses that Windows PCs are prone to, but that doesn't mean that they can't get infected. If you don't already have antivirus software, you may want to consider making a purchase. If you have the software installed, be sure to keep your virus definitions up to date — you can find the latest updates on your software manufacturer's website.

*Huh? Viruses? What viruses? There are NO Mac viruses. There are a couple of Trojan Horses (see CCC News Mach 2006), but no antivirus software will protect you from them. Antivirus software is useless and DANGEROUS to Macs. Please avoid antivirus software from all makers. Maybe someday we will need to use antivirus software, but that day is not today.*

## 9) Optimize Your Hard Drive

To ensure the best system performance and keep file damage to an all-time low, opti-

mize your hard drive once a year. Third-party utilities such as *Alsoft Disk Warrior Optimizer* and *Micromat Tech Tool Pro* will defragment and optimize your drive.

Be sure to back up important files before optimizing your drive. *OMG! Stop right now. Did Apple really say that? Really? They did? What are they thinking? This ain't Windows®.*

*Disk optimization is a technology whose time has passed. Mac OS X is a UNIX operating system and UNIX operating systems do not take kindly to disk optimization. In fact, optimizing your Mac OS X disk will damage it severely. Fortunately, Mac OS X is equipped to fix the damage automatically, but only after hours or days of poor performance. I promise that you will be very disappointed if you optimize a Mac OS X disk using any optimization software.*

## 10) Clean the Outside Too

Dust and other debris can harm your computer's innards if you allow the stuff to build up around your workspace. Use a soft, dry, lint-free cloth, feather duster, or canned air to clean your Mac's outside as well as the surface areas around it. You can use a slightly water-dampened cloth to clean the screen. Do not use any type of liquid cleaner to clean your Mac. *Cleanliness is next to... well, you know the rest. KlearScreen is an excellent cleaning product for screens and cases. Don't use "canned air." The stuff in the can isn't air, but ozone depleting chlorofluorocarbons.*

California Computer Care

P.O. Box 9445

Santa Rosa, CA 95405

(800) 540-8989

[help@calcompcare.com](mailto:help@calcompcare.com)

Like an  
auto club  
for your  
computer.