

REVIEW NEWS Curt's Five Rules

It's time again to remind you about the five rules I use to help my Macs be easier to use, more efficient and run better. Things change, but these rules of good computer behavior are just as valid today as ever.

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* 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 or the Dock.

Mac OS 9: 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 unused, running application in the *Dock*, just click on its icon, hold down the mouse button for a few moments and choose *Quit* from the menu that pops up. Doing this will also avoid the possibility that the unused 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. If you run **Mac OS 9**, each 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. If *Disk First Aid* finds problems it cannot fix, please call me.
- 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 difference and like it; a lot.

Mac OS X has no need of desktop rebuilds or regular hard drive maintenance. With Mac OS X 10.2 and newer, these things are done automatically. With Mac OS X, problems are best dealt with when and if they arise.

However, every Mac can benefit from maintenance suggestion number 3:

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 contact me immediately).

Rule #4

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

Quality surge suppressors cost at least \$25.00. Good brands are Belkin, APC, Kensington and PanaMax. Many

surge suppressors 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 suppressor 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.

Better than a surge suppressor is a UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply). A UPS is a high quality surge suppressor with a large battery inside. The battery charges itself from your electrical wall outlet, and your Mac runs off of the battery. A UPS supplies your Mac with consistent, reliable power.

Most UPSes can also provide up to fifteen minutes of electricity during a power outage. This gives you time to save your files and safely shut down your Mac. Most modern Macs and many UPSes can be connected with a USB cable. This allows the UPS to shut down your Mac safely during a power outage if you aren't around to do so.

Rule #5

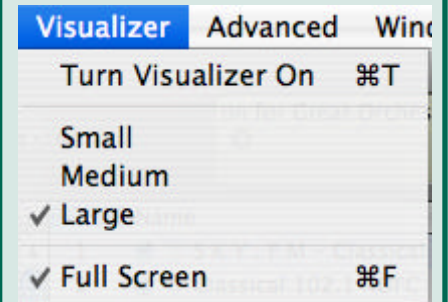
Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up. . .

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

July Tip —

A little mindless entertainment never hurt anybody. If you'd like a dose, look no further than your copy of iTunes.

You may never have noticed the Visualizer menu in iTunes' menu-bar. If you click the Visualizer menu, you will see these choices:



Check the Large and Full Screen commands as shown.

Now, start some music playing. You can use your own music or one of the iTunes "radio stations."

Lastly, choose *Turn Visualizer On* from the Visualizer menu and watch as your Mac's screen transforms into a 60's era light show synchronized to the music.

When done, click your mouse.

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