

# 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.

## Rule #2

Use the *Dock*. Look to the *Dock* for clues about applications left running unattended. Check the *Dock* frequently. If you notice an application icon, in the *Dock*, with a small black triangle or a blue light bulb under-

neath it, that application has been left running. Mac OS X 10.0 through 10.4 use the black triangle. The new Mac OS X 10.5 uses the blue light bulb. Examples of both are shown at the bottom of this page.

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

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, PanaMax, APC and Kensington. 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

Identifying running applications from their *Dock* icon—



and for 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, rechargeable battery inside. The battery charges from your electrical wall outlet, and your Mac runs off of the battery. A



UPS supplies your Mac with consistent and 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.

Happily, laptop Macs have a UPS built in. The laptop's battery serves the UPS function very well, but does not provide surge suppression.

#### Rule #5

*Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up, Back Up. . .*  
Yes, we've talked about this before.  
Do it! . . . *Now! Pleeeeze!*

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## March Tip—

One of Mac OS X 10.5 (Leopard)'s nicer tricks is that it puts a folder in the Dock specifically to collect files downloaded from the internet or email. No more searching around for where your downloaded file landed!

Earlier Mac OS Xs can do this, too. You just have to set it up. Do this:

- 1) Open your Documents folder and created a new, untitled folder.
- 2) Name the new folder: Downloads.
- 3) Drag this Downloads folder into the Dock. Place it between the Trash can and the vertical line somewhat left of the Trash can.
- 4) Open Mail.
- 5) In General Mail Preferences, set the Downloads folder to be the Downloads folder that you created in step 2.
- 6) Quit Mail.
- 7) Open Safari.
- 8) In General Safari Preferences, set the Downloads folder to be the Downloads folder that you created in step 2.
- 9) Quit Safari.

Now, whenever you download a file it will be found by clicking the Downloads folder you have conveniently placed in your Dock.