

Mac OS X Wizardry

Tips, Hints, Tricks, Hacks & Utilities
to Solve Problems, Enhance Productivity,
and Just Have Fun

Ted Landau & Dan Frakes

Macworld Expo
San Francisco 2005

© All material copyright 2005

.plist file
wizardry

Add a Quit item to the Finder menu

- **Why to do it:** For a convenient way of relaunching the Finder.
- **Utility and file:** Property List Editor and `com.apple.Finder.plist`.
- **How to do it:**
 - Change `QuitMenuItem` value from No to Yes.

Modify Unexpected Quit behavior

- **Why to do it:** If you would rather not repeatedly get the messages that appear after an unexpected quit.
- **Utility:** Terminal (can also use Property List Editor or a text editor).
- **How to do it:** In Terminal, type:
 - `defaults write com.apple.CrashReporter DialogType {value}`
 - Where `{value}` is one of the following:
 - `crashreport`: bypasses initial screen
 - `none`: bypasses all screens
 - `prompt`: default (used if property is not added at all)
 - **Note:** CrashReporter System Preferences pane provides GUI

Assign an app other than Finder as default

- **Why to do it:** Can be useful if you wish to replace Finder with another application such as PathFinder. Also a preliminary step for “kiosk” mode.
- **Utility & file:** Property List Editor and `com.apple.loginwindow.plist` file.
- **How to do it:**
 - Add Finder property to the plist file.
 - Assign the desired application as the value. [Use path to actual executable file.]

Super-enlarge Dock icons

- **Why to do it:** Just for fun
- **Utilities:** Dock, System Preferences, & Property List Editor
- **How to do it:**
 - Enable Dock Magnification: “Turn Magnification On.”
 - Change magnification size/slider in Dock System Preferences pane. This just creates the property, if not already created.
 - Open `com.apple.Dock.plist` in Property List Editor.
 - Change the value of the `largesize` property to 512 (which is the maximum value that affects the appearance). Save the change.
 - Relaunch the Dock.

Packages wizardry

Enhance the Calculator

- 👁️ **Why to do it:** To give added features to the Calculator application.
- 👁️ **Utility:** Show Package Contents contextual menu command in Finder
- 👁️ **How to do it:** Select application, use command and go to desired location:
 - 👁️ Open Calculator's package and go to Contents/Resources.
 - 👁️ Drag Graphing-2D.calcview and Hexadecimal.calcview to Contents/Plugins.
 - 👁️ Launch Calculator. Check out new modes in View menu.

Edit text of dialogs

- **Why to do it:** Why not?
- **Utility:** Any text editor (with Pseudo if needed for root access).
- **How to do it:** As an example, change the text of the unexpected quit message:
 1. Go to `/System/Library/CoreServices` and open the `CrashSubmitter` package. [Save a copy before making changes.]
 2. Navigate to `Contents/Resources/English.lproj` and open the `crashdump.strings` file in TextEdit. Use Pseudo to open TextEdit.
 3. Change the message to whatever you like, and save it.
- **Note:** BareBones' TextWrangler and BBEdit let you edit root-owned files, bypassing the need for Pseudo.

Extract a file from an Installer package (.pkg)

- **Why to do it:** After doing a Mac OS X update, perhaps you want to reinstall just a single file that may be damaged.
- **Utility and file:** Pacifist and an Installer .pkg file.
- **How to do it:** Pacifist lists all files that the package will install, and allows you to extract them individually.

Add scrollbars to Stickies

- **Why to do it:** For convenience.
- **Utility:** Interface Builder (or various third party utilities).
- **How to do it:**
 - Open Stickies package. Go to: Contents/Resources/English.lproj
 - Open StickiesDocument.nib in Interface Builder
 - Click Window from Instances. Select Show Info
 - Click on text area of Stickies window so Attributes list of Info window is NSTextView
 - Enable Show Scroller. Save.
 - **Note:** A backup copy of the original is saved automatically.

Invisible
wizardry

See and work with invisible files in Finder

- **Why to do it:** Any time you need to locate, open, copy, or delete an invisible file, you can temporarily make all invisible items visible.
- **Utility:** InVisibles (or other similar utility).
- **How to do it:** Click the Visibles button.
 - Add/Delete a period to start of file name to make a file "permanently" invisible/visible. Or delete invisible file if desired.
 - Can also use Finder's Find or Terminal (`ls -a`) to view invisible files. e.g.:

```
ls -a /var/db/ reveals .AppleSetupDone
rm /var/db/.AppleSetupDone deletes the file
```

Delete .GlobalPreferences file

- **Why to do it:** Deleting file can fix problems with Energy Saver, Sound, etc.
- **Utility:** InVisibles (or other similar utility).
- **How to do it:**
 - Use InVisibles to make invisible files visible. [Note: Can use Terminal instead.]
 - Go to `~/Library/Preferences`. [Note: There is another such file, less often a source of problems in `/Library/Preferences`.]
 - Delete the `.GlobalPreferences.plist` file.
 - Use InVisibles make invisible files invisible again.
 - Log out and log back in.

Permissions & Password wizardry

Open applications with root access

- **Why to do it:** To modify and save changes to otherwise "unsavable" documents.
- **Utility and app:** Pseudo and any application, such as Property List Editor or BBEdit.
- **How to do it:** Drag the application icon to the Pseudo icon. Documents will now save.
 - **Note:** Can also use sudo command in Terminal

Resetting the Master Password

- **Why to do it:** You forgot the password.
- **Utility:** Terminal is "easiest" here.
- **How to do it:** Launch Terminal
 - Type: `sudo rm /Library/Keychains/FileVault*`
 - Restart. Go to Security System Preferences. You should now be able to create a new password.
 - **Note:** This will not work if FileVault is currently enabled for account.

Even more Wizardry
(if time permits...)

Change a document via its file extension

- **Why to do it:** This is one way to change the behavior of a document when you double-click it.
- **Utility:** The Finder.
- **How to do it:** Change or delete the portion of the name after the period. For example:
 - You can use this as an alternate way to get inside a package (deleting extension changes package to folder).

Create your own Bootstrap Daemon

- **Why to do it:** Get items to run at each login for all local users. e.g.: Open Preview.
- **Utility:** Property List Editor or Terminal.
- **How to do it:**
 - Create a file called LaunchPreview.plist and enter:
ServiceName = com.ted.LaunchPreview
Command = /Applications/Preview.app/Contents/MacOS/Preview
 - Place item in /etc/mach_init_per_user.d. Need to authenticate.
 - **Note:** Can achieve similar result by adding items to a loginwindow.plist file in /Library/Preferences

For more help and info:

Ted Landau's Mac OS X Help Line
www.macosexhelpline.com

Mac OS X Power Tools
www.MacOSXPowerTools.com

MacFixIt:
www.macfixit.com

Please help make these sessions better
by filling out an evaluation form.

This presentation will be available soon online at
<http://www.tlandau.com/expo.shtml>

How to reach us:

Ted Landau: expo@tedlandau.com

Dan Frakes: expo@danfrakes.com