Frequently Asked Questions

TinkerTool is so small. How can it have all these features?

TinkerTool doesn't implement any features of its own. It just unlocks hidden features that Apple has built into the applications that are part of Mac OS X. The Finder, the Dock, Terminal, and the Cocoa system frameworks are implementing all the functions that TinkerTool is offering.

Can you change the font in the menu bar?

No, the menu bar is controlled by the Dock and the loginwindow applications. There is no official or undocumented way known yet to change the font of the menu bar without directly reprogramming the Dock / loginwindow applications or its resources.

How can I control smoothing of fonts?

In Mac OS X, font smoothing (anti-aliasing of fonts) is enabled in most cases so that text is displayed in very high quality. However, many users with analog low-resolution monitors report a poor, unsatisfactory rendering of text. For that reason, fine-tuning of font rendering was one of the most often requested features that users wanted to see integrated in TinkerTool. Beginning with version 1.3, TinkerTool allows to control font-smoothing with Mac OS X. You can set individual limits (in points) where font-smoothing should start. Fonts with a size equal or greater than the specified size will be smoothed, smaller fonts will not be smoothed. Using TinkerTool, you can set individual thresholds for the following groups of fonts or applications:

*   Fonts displayed by Cocoa applications

*   Fixed-width fonts displayed by Cocoa applications (partially overrides the first setting)
*   Fonts displayed by applications using QuickDraw

The first "general" Cocoa setting applies both to variable and fixed-width fonts. The second value overrides the first
one for fonts of fixed width (e.g. Courier), if you specify a threshold that is **greater** than the first value. For example, if you specify 0 points for both values, all fonts in Cocoa applications will be smoothed. If you specify 4 pt as the first and 16 pt as the second value, all variable-width fonts with a size greater or equal than 4 points will be smoothed, but for fixed-width fonts, smoothing will begin at a size of 16 points.

By default, Mac OS X Cocoa uses the values 0 and 11, respectively. So the fixed-width font "Monaco 10" that is typically used in Terminal, Console, ProjectBuilder or Mail's plain text mode is already displayed without smoothing. If you want to enable anti-aliasing for those applications, use a smaller value than 11. The default threshold for QuickDraw applications is 12.

Some high-end applications (like OmniWeb) are able to control font-smoothing themselves. TinkerTool will not override any settings of those applications, so you can still define individual smoothing parameters in such programs. See the respective manuals for more information.

Beginning with version 1.4, TinkerTool can additionally disable font smoothing at the CoreGraphics level. If you set the respective checkmark, font-smoothing in almost every Aqua user interface element and in all Cocoa applications will be switched off.

Isn't there a difference between anti-aliasing and smoothing?

No, font smoothing and anti-aliasing of fonts are the same, anti-aliasing is just a more technical term. In signal theory, aliasing means that high frequencies of a given signal become distorted when being sampled with low frequencies. In the case of computer graphics, or

font rendering in particular, the limited resolution (low frequency) of the screen causes "jaggies" to appear along not exactly vertical or not exactly horizontal parts of the characters' contours. Every technique that tries to counteract this problem is called anti-aliasing. By adding levels of gray along oblique or round edges, your eyes get tricked into perceiving smoother countours. Font-smoothing is part of Mac OS since version 8.5. In Classic Mac OS, font-smoothing is controlled by settings in the Appearance control panel:

pastedGraphic.tiff ¨

However, font smoothing of Cocoa and font smoothing of QuickDraw (used by Carbon applications) behave very differently. QuickDraw uses simple 4-times oversampling (in each dimension) to compute the gray-level pixmaps for anti-aliased text. The fonts are virtually rendered with a resolution of 288 dpi. This is four times the resolution that is needed to display the fonts on a 72 dpi screen. Conceptually, each screen pixel is replaced by a square of 4x4 sub pixels. By counting the number of black sub pixels (a number between 0 and 16) of each "real" pixel, a gray level is computed that is used for display on screen. Cocoa directly uses Quartz to render fonts. Here, the much more sophisticated anti-aliasing technologies of PDF / PostScript are used for screen display as well as for printing. As you can see in these samples, the results are much better than those of QuickDraw:

1__#$!@%!#__pastedGraphic.tiff ¨
Verdana, 16 pt, rendered with the mentioned technologies, shown in original size

2__#$!@%!#__pastedGraphic.tiff ¨

Three-times enlarged detail of the word "Font"

**I'm using an inofficial future version of Mac OS X. Is it safe to use TinkerTool or will
it destroy Mac OS X components?**

The special architecture of TinkerTool guarantees that you can safely use the application on future versions of Mac OS X. TinkerTool only changes preferences values of the current user, it avoids changing parts of the operating system. The way TinkerTool works makes sure that

*   future system updates will work fine on your system,
*   the tool can be used in a network environment without any problems (e.g. in schools and universities),
*   no security holes are opened.

When I start TinkerTool, it uses a language I don't understand. How can I enable TinkerTool to use English or another language I prefer?

The operating system always supports several languages simultaneously. If your primary language is not in the list of languages supported by TinkerTool, the operating system will automatically select an alternative language for you. This selection is based on a language priority list that can be set by the user. To change those priorities, click on "International" in the "System Preferences" application. Select the "Language" pane and use the mouse to drag the languages into preferred order. For example you could drag a language that is supported by TinkerTool to the second position, just after your primary language. Restart System Preferences and the TinkerTool module will now use the language you prefer.

I used TinkerTool for a while, then I deleted it. But all of its settings are still effective, what should I do?

As mentioned above, TinkerTool unlocks settings in other applications. The applications will respect their settings no matter if TinkerTool is installed or not. If you want to reset your configuration, select the TinkerTool pane in System Preferences, select the item "Reset" and

press the button "Reset everything to defaults". All settings that are accessible via TinkerTool are reset to the state of a "clean installation". The only exception is the startup language which has to be reset manually using an administrator's password. Note that a full reset of TinkerTool's settings might also affect preference values that are partially shared between TinkerTool and the standard preferences panes, e.g. the style of the scrollbar arrows.

I don't like the striped Aqua backgrounds or the arrows in the Dock. Why can't I change those resources with TinkerTool?

TinkerTool has never supported and will never support the manipulation of system resources. This is a design decision that is based on many reasons:

*   Mac OS X is a multi-user system. Replacing system resources would be a system-wide change
      affecting all users, not an option a single user could control.
*   the majority of our users has integrated Mac OS X in a professional environment, in most cases
      a computer network where you typically don't have the administror's or Unix-administrator's
      passwords. Changing the resources is not possible without the correct password, so this
      feature would be of no use in such an environment.
*   replacing system resources can create serious security problems. We won't go into details here,
      but the uncontrolled manipulation of resource files could put your computer and your data at great risk.

Version 1.5 suggested that there would be a feature to select the default paper size in Mac OS X 10.1. Where is this feature?

We had planned to introduce this feature with the release of Mac OS X 10.1. TinkerTool 1.5 supported this feature successfully with

unpublished preview releases of 10.1. Unfortunately, Apple changed the mechanism to select the default paper size in later releases of 10.1. They replaced it by a technique that automatically selects the default paper size based on the primary language preference of the current user. Apple considers this a "feature", but for users outside the US, this is one of the most annoying bugs in Mac OS X.

For these reasons, default paper size selection did not become an integrated part of later TinkerTool versions. We have informed Apple about this problem and hope they correct it in future updates of Mac OS X.

We know that there are "hacks" to solve this kind of problem. Those hacks basically destroy or alter language resources to change the default paper size. While this might be an alternative for some users to make printing in Mac OS X usable, we will not support these "hacks" in TinkerTool because they cure the symptom but don't solve the problem.

When I connect multiple monitors to my Mac, the resize option for the Desktop background picture does not stick or does not work correctly.

The current version of TinkerTool does not support the resize options for the Desktop background in a multi-monitor setup. Also, in case you have a PowerBook that supports distinct screen resolutions on the integrated display and an external monitor, the Finder might "auto-correct" the background image when you switch between the two screens. This will override the background setting you made in TinkerTool.

I downloaded the latest release of TinkerTool, but I'm missing some of the features that were built into earlier versions.

Some features of TinkerTool had to be taken out during certain updates. The features have been removed because either Apple disabled the required functionality when updating Mac OS X, or they introduced an official interface to control the preference values affected. TinkerTool should not reimplement features that are already built into the base system to guarantee a consistent user experience.

* **[TinkerTool 1.1] Finder Option: Show hard disks and network mounts on the desktop:** This feature is now controlled directly by the Finder. Select the menu item "Finder - Preferences" and look for the checkmarks "Show these items on the Desktop".

* **[TinkerTool 1.1] Finder Option: Open new window when double-clicking folder:** This option has been removed because the Finder now controls this feature depending on the toolbar status: If the Finder toolbar is hidden, the Finder will always open a new window when double-clicking a folder. If the Finder toolbar is visible, no new window will be opened. You can control the toolbar by clicking the oval button in the top right corner of a Finder window. It is also possible to select the respective option in the main menu or to press Command-B (Apple-B). In Mac OS X 10.1 there is also the new option "Always open folders in a new window". You can enable it after selecting the menu item "Finder - Preferences" in the Finder.

* **[TinkerTool 1.1] Appearance: User Interface Style:** Apple has taken out the functionality to display the user interface in NEXTSTEP or Microsoft-Windows style. This option has been removed.

* **[TinkerTool 1.1] Appearance: Double-click in title-bar minimizes windows:** This feature is always switched on in Mac OS X 10.0 or higher and cannot be disabled. The option checkmark has been removed.

* **[TinkerTool 1.1] Display Settings and Gamma Calibration:** There is now an official interface to change these settings. Open "System Preferences" and select the "Displays" control. Select the "Color" pane, choose a display profile to begin with and press the

"Calibrate" button.

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