

Clean Up Your Mac EASY

by Narasu Rebbapragada

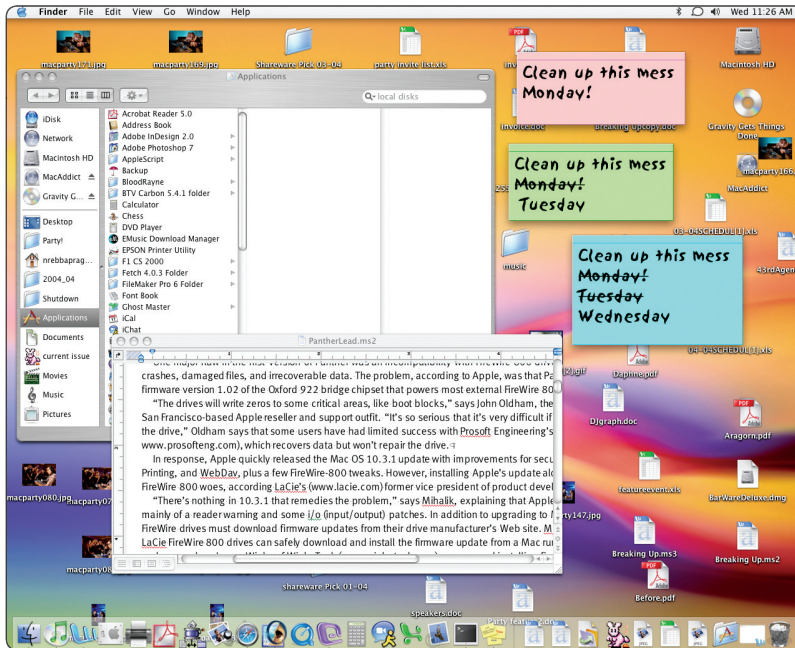
WHAT YOU NEED

Any Mac running Mac OS 10.2 or later

Cleaning is an activity you probably spend plenty of time avoiding, whether it's cleaning your house, dog, closet, or Mac. But once tackled, it doesn't take nearly as much time as you'd think. With your house, dog, and closet, you're on your own—but if your Mac is a mess, we can help.

While we can't tell you what to do with all the personal documents scattered around your Mac, we can provide you with a plan of attack for clearing out all the nooks and crannies, where errant files and folders lurk and ultimately slow down your system. Do this monthly, and your Mac will run faster, cleaner, and more reliably. As always, be sure to back up your system before proceeding with the cleanup—while the

following steps are benign on a healthy Mac, they can reveal larger problems on a sick one.

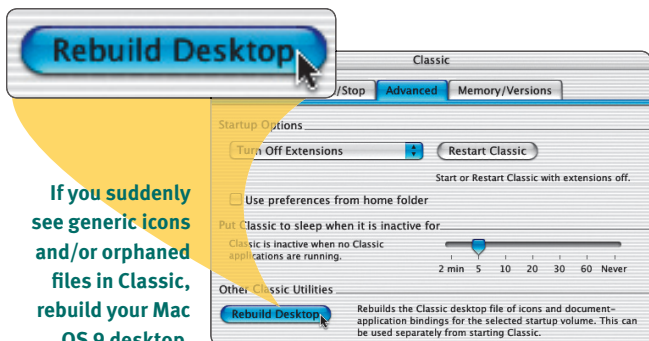


If your desktop chaos looks more like a Pollock painting than a place to work, don't despair. There's hope for you packrats.

Cleanse Your System

1 Rebuild Your Desktop

This trusty old maintenance maneuver keeps the Mac OS 9 side of your Mac organized. Common symptoms of an OS 9 desktop on the fritz include files displaying generic document icons instead of the default ones, and orphaned files that suddenly can't find their creator applications. To rebuild the desktop, open System Preferences, click Classic to open its preferences, start Classic if it isn't already running, click Advanced, and then click Rebuild Desktop at the bottom of the dialog.



If you suddenly see generic icons and/or orphaned files in Classic, rebuild your Mac OS 9 desktop.

2 Zap Your PRAM

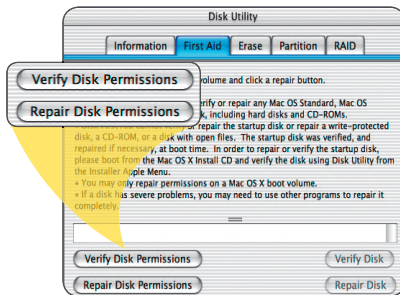
If your Mac has been acting sluggish, resetting (aka zapping) your PRAM (parameter random access memory) and NVRAM (nonvolatile random access memory) may help. Depending on what model you have, your Mac stores information such as clock settings, speaker volume, preferred startup disk, Disk Cache, and more in PRAM or NVRAM—resetting restores this info back to factory defaults, which can speed things up. To do this, reboot your Mac while pressing Command-Option-P-R until you hear the startup chime for the second time.



Zapping your PRAM and NVRAM can speed up a sluggish Mac—these are the key ingredients.

3 Repair Permissions

When file or application permissions get damaged, they can cause your Mac to run slowly, so repair them periodically—especially after installing new software. Open Disk Utility (Applications > Utilities) and choose a volume from the left pane. Click the First Aid tab and then click Verify Disk Permissions to see what needs fixing, if anything. If you spot troubles, click Repair Disk Permissions to fix them.



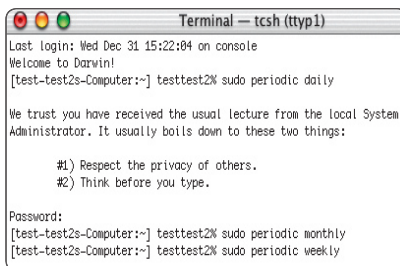
File permissions you aren't even aware of can get damaged, so verify and repair them periodically to keep your Mac running smoothly.

4 Run Prescheduled Tasks

Mac OS X's Unix core contains basic maintenance tasks that automatically clean up old log and cache files. However, they're scheduled to run weekly in the middle of the night—and because your Mac is probably shut down at this specified time, they don't run. To run them manually, launch the Terminal (Applications > Utilities) and execute the following commands one at a time—you need your admin password to invoke the sudo command:

```
sudo periodic daily
sudo periodic weekly
sudo periodic monthly
```

If you've never run these before, don't freak out if your system seems suspended for several minutes—the task has finished when you see a prompt. When finished with all three tasks, reboot your Mac.

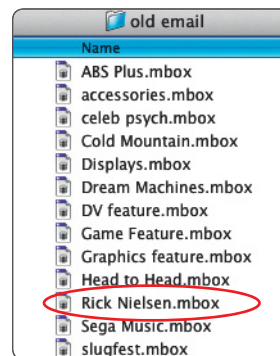


Rather than leave your Mac running through the wee hours, use the Terminal to run prescheduled maintenance tasks at your convenience.

Prune Files and Folders

1 Clean Out Old Mail

If you're like us, your email folder contains gigabytes of data that you simply can't bear to delete. So archive it. Create a new Finder folder and then drag your email app's in-box and/or any message folder to this folder to create an .mbox file, a standard Unix text archive format (note: in Mail, you can't drag the in-box, but you can drag all of its other folders). Then burn the .mbox collection to disc and delete the folders from your mail folder. The next time you need to access them, simply pop in the CD and import an .mbox file back to your email app for viewing.



Here, we archived our old Entourage email folders as .mbox files—hey, you never know when you'll need a good witticism from Cheap Trick's guitarist.

2 Cache Out Your Browser

You pay for broadband, so why does your surf speed seem so slow? If you've amassed a huge Web browser cache, it can bog down performance. The solution? Flush it. If you use Safari, just press Command-Option-E to empty the cache. In Internet Explorer, select Preferences from the Explorer menu, select Web Browser in the resulting dialog, select Advanced, and then click Empty Now in the Cache portion of the dialog.



Clear the cache. Clear your clutter. Speed up your surfing. 'Nuff said.

Helpful Software

Just like household chores, you can have someone—or something—do everything for you.

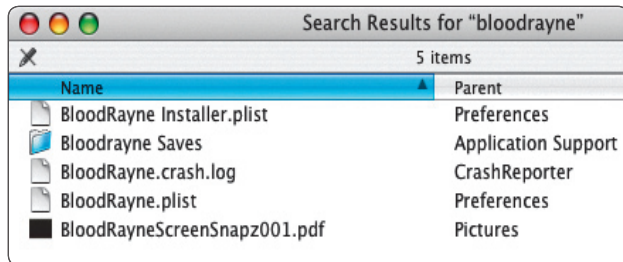
MacJanitor (free, http://personalpages.tds.net/~brian_hill/macjanitor.html) This free app performs those pesky Unix maintenance tasks if you're daunted by Terminal commands.

Cocktail (\$11.95, www.macosxcocktail.com) This shareware app gives you a front-end interface to some Unix maintenance tools and interface customizations.

Spring Cleaning (\$49.99, www.aladdinsys.com) If you're willing to part with \$50, this app will do most of this how-to for you. It also comes with Secure Delete, a digital document shredder for trashing files to the point of no return.

3 Purge File Residue

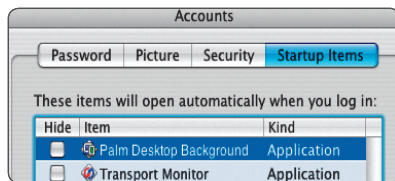
Even after you delete unwanted applications, remnant files can linger in your Preferences, Application Support, and Logs folders (*user name* > Library), taking up space. Go through these folders and weed out files bearing app names you no longer have. Check inside folders for important files before you delete them. Or use the search command (Command-F) to search for unwanted apps by name. To get rid of old installer files and archives, do a search for .dmg, .sit, and .tgz files. Warning: Only delete your user folder's Library files, not root ones (see "What Not To Clean," below).



Even though we deleted our Blood Rayne game app from our Applications folder, a search for *bloodrayne* revealed these remnant files.

5 Delete Startup Items

Some startup items launch transparently in the background, even ones you may no longer use. In Panther, click Accounts in System Preferences, and click the Startup Items tab. In Jaguar, click Startup Items in System Preferences to open the panel. Everything that launches at startup is stored here, including items like old schedulers and Palm-syncing software you no longer use. To delete an unwanted item, select it and press Delete.



In Panther, startup items are in Accounts preferences. Select and delete ones you don't want.

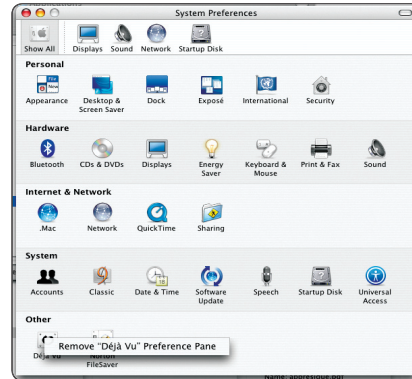
What Not to Clean

Important Mac OS X system files are alarmingly easy to throw away by accident thanks to their seemingly arbitrary names and storage places. A general rule of thumb: If you don't recognize a file, don't throw it out. Here are three file types you shouldn't touch unless you are absolutely sure what the file is and what the consequences of throwing it away are.

Invisible Files Unix comes with a host of invisible files you can't see in the Finder but can call up via the Finder's Find command, either by using the Visibility search parameter or via some navigational dialogs in Classic.

4 Ditch Unused Preferences

If you installed third-party apps you no longer want (such as interface-enhancing apps that show up only as preference icons), the preferences may still be in your System Preferences pane. Open System Preferences; if you see any preference you no longer want in the Other row—and in this row only—Control-click it and select Remove *Application Name* Preference Pane from the contextual menu. A dialog pops open, asking for an admin password. Type it, and *poof*—the prefs are gone. Do

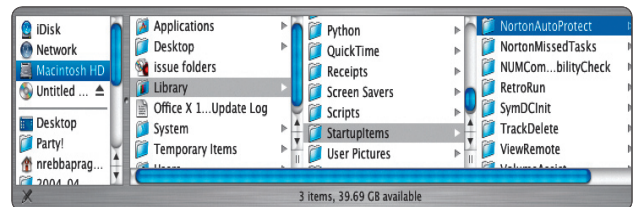


not remove any preferences except those in the Other row—the rest are integral to the Mac OS.

Delete only third-party system preferences from the Other row. The rest are crucial to running the Mac OS.

6 Extra Pesky Startup Items

Even after you delete stuff from the Startup Items preference pane, you may find yourself starting down a defiant one that you deleted but that still launches on startup. To get rid of it, go into your system Startup Items folder (Library > StartupItems) and heave-ho the troll to the Trash.



Here, we're deleting system-level startup items that we're 100-percent sure we no longer use.

Don't trash invisible files. They are crucial to the underpinnings of Mac OS X.

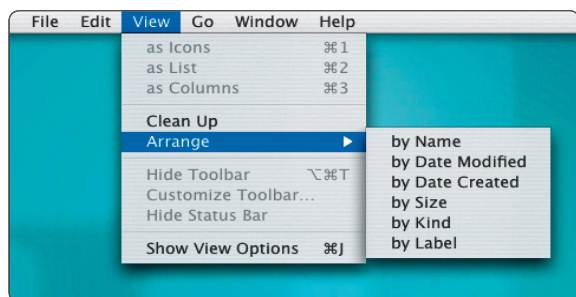
System Files With general maintenance, you shouldn't need to toss anything inside the System folder, so don't.

Root-Level Files It's easy to confuse root-level folders with user-level folders since they share the same names. However, deleting a file from the root-level Preferences folder (Macintosh HD > Library) can have much bigger consequences than deleting a file from the user-level Library folder (Macintosh HD > *user name* > Library) because it affects system-level items, such as Application Support and Keychain.

Finishing Touches

1 Beautify Your Desktop

What's the point of vacuuming the inside of your car if the outside looks like it 4-wheeled through the Grand Canyon? The same can be said about your Mac. File away the messy file piles on your desktop, and keep only the ones you frequently need in sight. If you're a real neat freak, arrange your desktop icons alphabetically into neat little rows by selecting View > Arrange > By Name in the Finder. Then choose a serene desktop picture or pattern to show off your clean slate.



Arrange your icons and choose a calming background to beautify your desktop.

2 Blast Your 'Board

Rather than shake your keyboard upside-down until a key falls loose, you can safely oust dust bunnies and crumbs stuck between keys with a can of compressed air. For the best results, aim the nozzle at an angle to blast the junk out the side of your keyboard.




Clean out the bits of food, dust, and gunk from your keyboard with a can of compressed air.

3 Clean Screen

To clean your LCD or CRT screen safely, use either a screen cleanser like Monster iClean Screen Cleaner (\$14.95, www.monstercable.com) or plain water with a lint- and static-free cloth. Or try our own Rik Myslewski's method: Use a Post-it Note's sticky side to pick up lint and dust off of your Mac's screen and body.



Clean your screen with either a cleanser like Monster's iClean or plain water.

 News Editor Narasu Rebbapragada would rather clean her Mac than the burnt cake pan in her sink.

Stash and Hide Sensitive Files

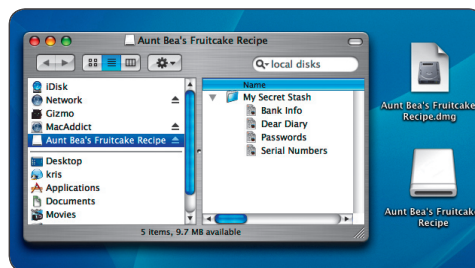


by Kris Fong

WHAT YOU NEED

Mac OS 10.2 or later

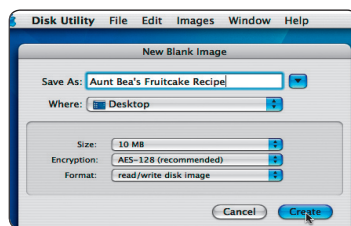
Anytime you leave your Mac unattended, it's a prime target for snoops. If coworkers, friends, or spouses can't fight the urge to eyeball your files, at least you can protect your most private (or incriminating) stuff. Here's how to encrypt files and make them invisible.



Even if savvy snoops uncover your invisible file—despite its unassuming name—encryption will send hackers packing.

1 Encrypt a Volume

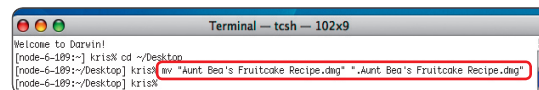
In Jaguar, launch Disk Copy and select File > New > Blank Image. In Panther, launch Disk Utility and select Images > New > Blank Image. In the resulting dialog, give the file a name that won't inspire deviants to open it. Select AES-128 from the Encryption pop-up, and click Create. In the resulting dialog, type a password, uncheck the Remember Password box, and click OK to generate a .dmg file and volume. Stash your secret stuff in the volume and drag the volume to the Trash to unmount it.



Encryption keeps files secure.

2 Make It Disappear

Launch the Terminal (Applications > Utilities), type `cd ~/Desktop`, and press Return to navigate to your desktop. Then type `mv "your file name.dmg" ".your file name.dmg"` and press Return to make the file disappear. Whenever you need to access it, use the Terminal to navigate to your desktop, and type `mv ".your file name.dmg" "your file name.dmg"` to make the file reappear.



Make a file or folder invisible by renaming it with a period.