How to Keep Macs Up and Running

Inexpensively, Simply, & with Little Effort

For OS X Clients:

1 - See that all Macs are running 10.3.9, or the latest version of 10.4, with at least 512 MB of RAM

   {Note: this is an easy to do assignment where ".x" updates are __free__.}

2 - Arrange the Hard Drive sidebar into **eight, logical,** and **easy to understand** folders: Applications, Documents, Pictures, Music, Internet, Games, Utilities, and Downloads. Set each of these to open in list view. In the Dock, delete lesser used items, adding more commonly utilized applications (e.g. AppleWorks and Disk Utility). This setup may seem somewhat trivial, but it is helpful.

   {Note: this is a one-time simple project that is __free__ and easy to do.}

3 - Adopt the KISS philosophy and only have the **minimum** items loaded in the system (especially Fonts). In Apple's included Font Book application, deselect lesser used fonts. Similarly, check System Preferences –> Accounts to verify that unnecessary startup items are unchecked.

   {Note: this is a one-time very little effort task that is __free__ and easy to do.}

4 - Keep all Macs up-to-date with the current free Apple updates by using the built-in software update utility (or Apple's OS X [downloads](#) site).

   {Note: this is a low effort mission that is __free__ and easy to do.}

5 - Buy only well-written, well-reviewed and **fully Mac supported** commercial software, and keep it up-to-date. (In a school environment, don't allow other third party software to be loaded unless it is on your approved list.)

   *{Note: this is an easy, low effort job that is **low cost** over the long term.}*

6 - Make sure that a good system Password is selected. For extra Internet security, in System Preferences –> Sharing, enable Firewall protection.

   {Note: this is a free, one-time effort that is easy to do.}

7 - Do preventive maintenance by monthly running basic test utilities:
   a) e.g. [OnyX](#)
   b) Apple Disk Utility.

   {Note: this is a very low effort activity that is __free__ and easy to do.}

8 - In the *rare* case where a problem persists, then have an external Firewire drive prepared (with an image made with Apple's free Disk Utility application, or the also free Carbon Copy Cloner program) that will reformat the hard drive and reset-up the computer, customized to your specifications (and should take *less than 10 minutes*).

*{Note: this is a very low effort undertaking that is **free** and easy to do.}*

In the special situation where a manual checkout is preferred, have a **written, detailed, logically progressing troubleshooting procedure** to resolve the problem. This would include testing with DiskWarrior, TechTool Pro, etc. A detailed procedure is here. [Another good source for Jaguar troubleshooting information is here, and for Panther is here.]

*{Note: this is an easy, **low cost,** moderate effort, but is rarely necessary.}*

9 - Have a simple well-written procedure for teachers and students that identifies good computing practices for them to follow.

*{Note: this is a low effort assignment that is **free** and easy to do.}*

10-Have only Apple OS X Servers (XServe) with OS X clients. (Using Netboot (PDF), the simple steps #1-#5 can be done **much** easier, as updating the server will update all networked Macs.)

*{Note: this is a straightforward job that is **low cost** over the long term.}*

For pre-OS X Clients:

1 - See that all Macs are running the latest pre-OS X version possible (9.2.2, or 9.1, or 8.6.).

*{Note: this is an easy to do one-time moderate effort assignment that is often **free**.}*

2 - Arrange the Hard Drive into **six, logical,** and **easy to understand** folders (icon view): System, Utilities, Games, Applications, Internet, and Documents. Set each of these to open in list view. On the Desktop (icon view) have a few aliases (e.g. *AppleWorks, Netscape*), printer icon, a "Downloads" folder (connected to Netscape & NAV), and the Control Strip. This setup may seem somewhat trivial, but it is important! (See sample pix.)

*{Note: this is a one-time simple project that is **free** and easy to do.}*

3 - Adopt the KISS philosophy and only have the **minimum** items loaded in the system folder (especially Extensions, Control Panels and Fonts). Use Extension Overload to identify items, and Extension Manager to arrange sets (if desired). Manually create your own "Fonts (disabled)" folder, and drag lesser used fonts into it. Here is a sample article that discusses this matter.

*{Note: this is a one-time very little effort task that is **free** and easy to do.}*

4 - Keep all Macs up-to-date with the current free Apple updates for their system software (e.g. ref Version Tracker and our pages for what is necessary for: 9.1 and 8.6).

*{Note: this is a low effort mission that is **free** and easy to do.}*

5 - Buy only well-written, well-reviewed and **fully Mac supported** commercial software, and keep it up-to-date. (In a school environment, don't allow other third party software to be loaded unless it is on your approved list.)

*{Note: this is an easy, low effort job that is **low cost** over the long term.}*

6 - Make sure that adequate RAM is assigned to every frequently used application and utility.

*{Note: this is a one-time very little effort check that is **free** and easy to do.}*

7 - Do preventive maintenance by monthly running basic test utilities:
   a) TechTool
   b) Apple Disk First Aid (current version is 8.6.1).

*{Note: this is a very low effort activity that is **free** and easy to do.}*

8 - In the *rare* case where a problem persists, then have a CD prepared (with an image made with Apple's free Software Restore program) that will reformat the hard drive and reset-up the computer, customized to your specifications (and should take *less than 10 minutes*).

> *{Note: this is a very low effort undertaking that is **free** and easy to do.}*

In the special situation where a manual checkout is preferred, have a **written, detailed, logically progressing troubleshooting procedure** to resolve the problem. This would include testing with DiskWarrior, Norton DiskDoctor, etc. (See our sample Mac Troubleshooting Procedure.)

> *{Note: this is an easy, **low cost,** moderate effort, but is rarely necessary.}*

9 - Have a simple well-written procedure for teachers and students that identifies good computing practices for them to follow.

> *{Note: this is a low effort assignment that is **free** and easy to do.}*

10-Have only Apple OS X Servers (XServe) with OS 9.x or OS X clients. (Using Netboot (PDF), the simple steps #1- #6 can be done **much** easier, as updating the server will update all networked Macs.)

> *{Note: this is a straightforward job that is **low cost** over the long term.}*

— Section #7-a —