



The Apple Core

Latest technical news

• The big news this month is the release of Snow Leopard, aka Mac OS X 10.6. It was expected in late September, but to everyone's surprise the DVDs went on sale on the 28th of August.

This major new version of Mac OS X isn't filled with new features. Instead, Apple decided to spend the time refining what they already had, fixing many outstanding bugs and introducing numerous new tools for developers to use and make their own programs faster and more efficient.

As a result, nothing much appears to have changed, but nearly all the plumbing is new. This means that over time and as developers update their software, Snow Leopard will become better and faster.

You can order your copy for NZ\$59 from the Apple Online Store (www.apple.com/nz/store/) but be aware that it's Intel only; all PowerPC Macs have reached the end of the road as far as major software updates are concerned and will be limited to Leopard (10.5) from now on.

The Hardware Refresh Cycle

To help you time your Mac or iPod purchase perfectly

Model	Last Updated	Recommendation
Mac Pro	3 Mar 2009	Nearing end of life cycle
Mac mini		
iMac		
MacBook Air	9 Jun 2009	Mid product cycle
MacBook		
MacBook Pro		
iPod shuffle	9 Sep 2009	Buy now Product just updated
iPod nano		
iPod classic		
iPod touch		
iPhone	9 Jul 2009	Buy now



The Help Desk

Answering your most pressing technical questions

Q: Having just upgraded to Leopard, I've bought a new hard drive to use for Time Machine backups but it's been a nightmare from end to end. Should I buy a Time Capsule to make sure my backups work properly?

A: Your problem is most likely due to the hard drive's original file format. Since most computers run Windows, hard drive manufacturers generally assume their products will be used on such a machine and format the drive accordingly. However, although Macs are capable of reading and writing to Windows-formatted drives, Time Machine is incredibly picky and will only work properly if the drive is formatted specifically for the Mac. To do this, you need to use the Disk Utility program which you can locate with the help of Spotlight (top right of your screen).

Plug your drive into your Mac and switch it on. It will then appear in the program's sidebar to the left. Select it from there and click on the 'Erase' tab. Choose the Volume Format pop-up menu and select 'Mac OS Extended (Journaled)'. Name your new drive and click on 'Erase'.

Be aware though that doing this will wipe all data from that drive so if you've got something on it you'd rather not lose, make sure you saved it to another drive before erasing it: this is one action you cannot undo.

Once reformatted, open the Time Machine System Preferences, click on the 'Change Disk' button and select your new drive. Your backups should now work as flawlessly as advertised.

To submit your questions, send an email to help@machelp.co.nz.



Safeguarding your Digital Life

Computers are so powerful and we can do so much with them that we tend to forget how vulnerable they can be. If your photos, documents, music or home movies are important to you, you should seriously consider backing them up.

Don't wait until it's too late. *Contact me* to find out how.



The Dock : Always used but not often to the best of its ability

For most people, the Dock lives at the bottom of the screen with icons you may or may not use and a myriad of others that keep popping in and out of it as you launch or quit programs. However, what you may not realise is that this tool is fully customisable: drag one of its icons left or right and the others will move to make room to accommodate its new location. To remove an icon, drag it up and release it to make it disappear in a puff of smoke. This doesn't delete the program, merely the link to it. The original is safe wherever it usually resides.

To add an item to the Dock, drag it from any Finder window onto it. Notice a divider to the right of your Dock (a line in 10.4 and earlier and a pedestrian crossing in 10.5 and later): you can add programs to the left of it and documents and folders to its right.

That divider also has a few other uses. For instance, move the mouse over it to turn your cursor into a resize icon. Drag that divider up or down to increase or decrease the icons' size. Furthermore, control-click on it to reveal a menu which grants you access to many features like offering you the ability to hide your Dock (making it appear once your cursor touches the bottom of the screen). Another useful command is labelled 'Position on Screen'. With it, you can set your Dock to either the left or right of your display as opposed to the default position at the bottom. Since we often have more room on our screen left and right than top and bottom, you may find this feature one of the best options available to you to turn your Dock into a very useful and versatile tool.



Steve Paris has had over 25 years experience in computers. He is an internationally published writer supplying articles, reviews and tutorials to the main Mac magazines worldwide. He is also an Apple Certified Trainer and provides consultancy, training and troubleshooting services to the Waitakere area. You can contact him on **09 817 4127**.