

Extracted from:

Mac Kung Fu

Over 400 Tips, Tricks,
Hints, and Hacks
for Apple OS X

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The Pragmatic Bookshelf

Dallas, Texas • Raleigh, North Carolina

Mac Kung Fu

Second Edition

Over 400 Tips, Tricks,
Hints, and Hacks
for Apple OS X



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Mac Kung Fu

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Printed in the United States of America.
ISBN-13: 978-1-937785-07-9
Encoded using the finest acid-free high-entropy binary digits.
Book version: P1.0—November 2012

Make Launchpad Bigger (or Smaller)

By default, Launchpad displays your app icons in a grid that's usually 5x8 icons in size.

By reducing or increasing the size of this grid, which can be achieved by adjusting a few secret settings, the icons will increase or decrease in size to fill the space, allowing you to fit more of them in (or fewer!).

However, if the icons increase in size, this will mean more pages of icons within Launchpad because fewer app icons will now be able to fit on each page. Accordingly, decreasing the size of icon grid will mean more can fit on a page.

There's another side effect too—the number of apps icons that can fit within a Launchpad folder is defined by the grid size setting. So, if you have fewer icons on-screen, folders will also contain fewer icons. If you already have a folder packed full of app icons in Launchpad (such as the Other folder), OS X automatically fixes things by creating additional folders as overflow for the remaining app icons (usually with numbers affixed to the end, such as Other 1, Other 2, and so on).

Note that this tweak also adjusts the size of the icons in the Add Widgets component of Dashboard—a small side effect.

Enlarging the Icons

Let's say you want to change the grid size to four rows by four columns of app icons (see [Figure 3, *Enlarging the icons within Launchpad*](#)), which will make for significantly bigger icons. Open a Terminal window (open Finder, select the Applications list, and then in the list of applications double-click Terminal within the Utilities folder), and type the following two lines, the first of which refers to the number of icon rows and the second of which refers to the number of icon columns:

```
defaults write com.apple.dock springboard-rows -int 4
defaults write com.apple.dock springboard-columns -int 4;killall Dock
```

Then activate Launchpad to see the changes.



Figure 3—Enlarging the icons within Launchpad

Shrinking the Icons

To make the icons smaller, we simply increase the grid size. Increasing the grid size to 10x10 icons will shrink the icons significantly into a compact layout but still leave them usable. It can be done as follows by typing these two lines into a Terminal window:

```
defaults write com.apple.dock springboard-rows -int 10
defaults write com.apple.dock springboard-columns -int 10;killall Dock
```

Experiment with the settings until you find something you like, but be aware that each time you reduce the number of rows and columns, you're also reducing the number of app icons in each Launchpad folder and possibly creating overflow folders.

Restoring Default Icon Sizes

To restore the default grid size in Launchpad, again open a Terminal window, and type the following two lines:

```
defaults delete com.apple.dock springboard-rows
defaults delete com.apple.dock springboard-columns;killall Dock
```

Once you do this, you might notice that all your icons are spread out across various pages within Launchpad. This is a side effect caused by making icons bigger. You can either drag and drop them back into place or simply issue the following command in a Terminal window, which will reset Launchpad to

the default values (although also deleting any Launchpad folders you’ve created):

```
defaults write com.apple.dock ResetLaunchPad -bool TRUE;killall Dock
```

Tip 2

Turn Off Irritating “Rubber-Band” Scrolling

You might have noticed that if you scroll to the top or bottom of a document or web page within some OS X apps like TextEdit, the page continues to scroll a little into a boundary area, before springing back. This is known as *rubber-band scrolling* and, depending on your point of view, can be rather annoying.

Deactivating Rubber-Band Scrolling in Most OS X Apps

To turn it off in most applications, all you need to do is open a Terminal window (open Finder, select the Applications list, and then in the list of applications double-click Terminal within the Utilities folder), and type the following, before logging out and back in again:

```
defaults write -g NSScrollViewRubberbanding -int 0
```

To reactivate rubber-band scrolling, should you ever want to, again open a Terminal window, and type the following:

```
defaults delete -g NSScrollViewRubberbanding
```

Log back out and in again for the changes to take effect.

Deactivating for iTunes

The previous method works for most OS X apps, although Safari and iTunes are two exceptions. It appears it’s impossible to turn it off in Safari, but you can disable rubber-band scrolling iTunes by quitting the iTunes if it’s open and then opening Terminal and typing the following:

```
defaults write com.apple.iTunes disable-elastic-scroll -bool YES
```

Should you decide you’d like to reactivate rubber-band scrolling in iTunes, you should quit the app and then use the following command within Terminal:

```
defaults delete com.apple.iTunes disable-elastic-scroll
```

Tip 3

Stop Scrollbars from Disappearing

In recent versions of OS X, the once reliable notion of scrollbars appearing at the right and (sometimes) bottom of the screen has seen some attention from Apple's software engineers.

In OS X Mountain Lion the scrollbars are invisible unless you scroll the document or simply place two fingers on the trackpad. This leaves those who like to click and grab the scroller in the lurch, because if you move the mouse cursor to where the scrollbar usually is, there's nothing there—both the vertical and horizontal scrollbars (if the window has one) remain invisible!

Within System Preferences (Apple menu→System Preferences), you can opt to always have the scrollbar always visible—click the General icon, and select Show Scroll Bars. This is certainly a solution but not an elegant one.

Viewing Scrollbars When the Cursor Hovers Over Them

Luckily there's a secret setting that allows the best of both worlds—it will cause the scrollbars to appear when your mouse cursor hovers over the edge of the window (or bottom, if the document you're viewing scrolls horizontally). Otherwise, the scrollbars be invisible unless you're scrolling through the document, as mentioned earlier.

To activate the secret setting, open Terminal, and type the following:

```
defaults write -g NSOverlayScrollerShowOnMouseOver -bool TRUE
```

Then log out and back in again for the changes to take effect. Note that if this doesn't seem to work and you're using a standard PC mouse, you might also have to switch the Show Scroll Bars setting in System Preferences, as mentioned earlier, to When Scrolling.

Deactivating Scrollbars-on-Hover

To deactivate the new feature, again open a Terminal window, and type the following:

```
defaults delete -g NSOverlayScrollerShowOnMouseOver
```

Then log out and back in again for the changes to take effect.

Tip 4

Make Your Mac Speak with Siri's Voice

At the time of this writing, the iPhone tool Siri hasn't yet been integrated with OS X (although OS X has a dictation tool that you can activate via the Dictation & Speech component of System Preferences). However, you can install Siri's voice files to OS X Mountain Lion and use its built-in speech tools to have the Siri voice talk to you upon request, such as reading aloud highlighted text.

Activating the Siri Voice Files

Here are the steps needed to switch to the Siri voice files:

1. Open System Preferences (Apple menu→System Preferences), and click the Dictation & Speech icon.
2. When the Dictation & Speech pane appears, click the Text to Speech tab.
3. Click the System Voice drop-down list, and select Customize.
4. In the drop-down dialog box, scroll down and select Samantha, which will be under the English (United States) heading. Then click OK. (If you're British, you might want to select the Daniel voice under the English [United Kingdom] heading to get the default British Siri voice; Australian users should select Karen under the English [Australia] heading.)
5. You'll be asked if you want to download and install a new voice. Agree to do so.
6. The voice will now be downloaded and installed, although be aware that it's almost half a gigabyte in size so might take some time to come down the line. Once it's finished, select it within the System Voice drop-down list within System Preferences.

Testing the New Voice

You can test the new voice within Safari or TextEdit by highlighting a paragraph of text and then clicking Edit→Speech→Start Speaking. Note that it takes a few seconds for Speech to start the first time you use it, and you might have to quit and restart the app in question for the new voice to start working. See also [Tip 290, Make Your Mac Speak, on page ?](#).

Under the Dictation & Speech heading of System Preferences, you can activate other spoken helpers, such as speaking dialog boxes when they appear. These are primarily designed to help the partially sighted or blind, but they can be fun to play around with!

If you get tired of the Siri voice, you can switch to any of the other voices using the System Voice drop-down list, as described earlier. The default voice is Alex.

Tip 5

Supertip: Dictate Like a Pro

OS X Mountain Lion includes speech recognition, which you can activate by opening System Preferences (Apple menu→System Preferences), selecting Dictation & Speech, and clicking the On radio button on the Dictation tab.

Using it is very simple—just tap the **Fn** key twice (or one of the **Control** keys if you're using a full-sized external keyboard) and then speak. Double-tap the key again when you've finished.

Specifying Capital Letters, Spacing, and Line Breaks

Here's how to specify capitalization when dictating:

- Capitalizing a word: Say “cap” before the word you to capitalize. For example, to enter the phrase “We should all read the good Book,” you would say, “We should all read the good *cap* Book.”
- Using title case (capitalizing the start of each word): Say “caps on” before the words you want in title case and then say “caps off” after. For example, for the phrase “The Town of Bath is Lovely in Spring,” you'd say “*caps on* the town of bath is lovely in spring *caps off*.”
- Block capitals: To capitalize an entire word (the equivalent of using Caps Lock when typing), say “all caps.” For the phrase “I need the report RIGHT NOW,” you'd dictate “I need the report *all caps on* right now *all caps off*.” An individual word can be put in capitals by just saying “all caps” before it: “I need the report *all caps* now and not later” produces “I need the report NOW and not later.”

- All lowercase: To dictate words without any capitalization whatsoever, use “no caps” in the same way as described for “all caps.” Dictating “I want to live in *no caps on new york no caps off*” produces “I want to live in new york.”
- Prevent hyphenation: OS X’s Dictation feature is clever enough to hyphenate words that need it, but you can stop it from doing so by saying “spacebar”: “This is a low *spacebar* budget enterprise” will produce “This is a low budget enterprise.”
- Force hyphenation: Should you say something you think should be hyphenated but OS X’s Dictation doesn’t realize, you can simply say “hyphen” —“He was a no *hyphen* good man” will type “He was a no-good man.”
- Remove spaces altogether: To create a sentence or series of words without spaces between them (*compounding* words), use “no space.” As with the dictation terms earlier, it can be used singularly to indicate two words should be joined, or it can be turned “on” and “off” before and after a series of words: “We are best *no space* friends” will type “We are best-friends”; saying “We are *no space on* best friends forever *no space off*” will type “We are bestfriendsforever.”
- Inserting line breaks: To insert a line break, just say “new line.” To insert a paragraph break (that is, an empty line before the following sentence), just say “new para.”

Specifying Punctuation, Symbols, and Numerals

In most cases, inserting punctuation is intuitive and obvious. Saying “full stop” or “period” will insert that symbol, for example. Saying “copyright sign” will insert a copyright symbol, and saying “at sign” will insert @. Saying “inverted question mark” will produce the ¿ symbol.

OS X will automatically insert “curly quotes” but if you specifically want a noncurly quotation mark, say “backquote.”

Currency symbols, including the dollar, must be followed by “sign” if not used with numbers: to say “\$31” you can simply say “thirty-one dollars” but to type “We need more \$,” you would have to say “We need more *dollar sign*.”

You can also insert a long dash by saying “em dash.” To insert ellipsis (...), say either “dot dot dot” or “ellipsis.”

Should you want to use Roman numerals, just say them as you would normally preceded by numeral: “The year of my birth was *numeral* MCMLXXII.” Similarly to inserting an actual number rather than the word for the number (that is, “5” rather than “five”), say “numeral” beforehand: “He reported there were *numeral* five of them” will type “There were 5 of them.”

Inserting Emoticons

What if you want to indicate your vague emotional state via clever use of punctuation? Apple has thought of that. Simply saying “smiley face,” “winky face,” and “frowny face” will insert :-), ;-), and :-(, respectively.

Navigating Around Text

Although navigating the cursor through text is best done via the keyboard or mouse, the dictation tool offers two commands to move the cursor: “next line” will move the cursor to the next line of text, while “next paragraph” will move it to the next paragraph.

Tip 6

Get Rid of Files—Securely

Whenever you empty the trash, the files are deleted in the standard way; that is, the OS X filesystem makes the space they occupied available for another use. However, the actual content of the files sticks around on the disk until it’s overwritten, and it can be recovered using one of the many third-party file recovery tools available.

To avoid this, you can securely empty the trash, which involves writing over the data with zeroes so that it can’t be recovered (at least outside of a high-tech crime lab), but bear in mind that the files might still exist in your Time Machine backup (see [Tip 307, Make Time Machine Forget a File, on page ?](#)).

Note that if your Mac has a solid-state hard disk (SSD), such as those fitted to MacBook Air and Retina MacBook Pro computers, securely erasing files or the trash in the ways described next is ineffective and likely unnecessary because SSDs employ TRIM to clean up old data.¹ The best method of protect-

1. See <http://arstechnica.com/security/2011/03/ask-ars-how-can-i-safely-erase-the-data-from-my-ssd-drive/>, although if you’ve fitted a third-party SSD to your Mac, see also http://www.groths.org/?page_id=322.

ing an SSD (or any kind of storage disk) from data snoops is to encrypt its contents—see [Exploring OS X: FileVault, on page ?](#).

Securely Emptying the Trash

To securely empty the trash, simply click and hold the trash icon in the Dock until the context menu appears (or right-click the Dock icon). Let go of the mouse button and then hold down the **Command** key. The menu will change to read Secure Empty Trash. Click to do so. You can also open a Finder window and click the Secure Empty Trash entry on the Application menu.

Be aware that deleting files securely takes significantly longer than deleting unsecurely. With a very full trash can, it might take hours. The work of securely emptying the trash will take place in the background, however.

Always Emptying the Trash Securely

To always securely empty the trash, open a Finder window and click the Application menu and then Preferences. Then click the Advanced tab, and check Empty Trash Securely.

Wiping Individual Files

While there's no built-in method of securely obliterating individual files on the desktop, short of moving them to the trash and then selecting to securely empty it, you can use the command-line tool `srm` to delete files and then overwrite the space with random data. `srm` is perhaps one of the most dangerous commands available on your Mac, however, so use it carefully!

Next I explain how to use it at the command line, before explaining how it can be used to create a simple Automator service for use in Finder windows and on the desktop.

Using `srm` at the Command Line

Open Terminal (open Finder, select the Applications list, and then double-click Terminal in the Utilities folder), and at the command prompt type `srm`. Then drag and drop from a Finder window onto the Terminal window the file you'd like to eradicate. For example, if I wanted to delete `file.txt` from my desktop, after I'd dragged and dropped it onto the Terminal window, I'd see the following:

```
srm /Users/keir/Desktop/file.txt
```

Then hit **Return** to complete the command and eradicate the file. As with all Terminal commands, if you see no output, then everything has worked fine.

Depending on the size of the file, deletion should take no more than a few seconds.

The `srm` command is intended to be a secure version of the basic `rm` Unix command. Therefore, securely deleting a directory and its files can be achieved with `srm -rf` followed by the directory name and path. However, when deleting many files in this way, it's useful to add the `-v` (verbose) switch so you get a progress display and can confirm when each file is deleted. In other words, the command for deleting a directory would be `srm -rfv`.

Creating a GUI Secure Delete Tool

Using Automator you can create a service that appears on the menu that appears whenever you right-click a file and offers a secure delete function powered by `srm`. Here's how to set it up:

1. Start Automator, which you'll find near the top of the Applications listing within Finder. When it starts, click the Service icon within the Choose a File Type For Your Document dialog box, and then click the Choose button. If this dialog box doesn't appear, click `File→New`.
2. In the Automator program window, click in the search field above the second column from the left, and type `Run Shell Script`. This will filter the list beneath to one item, which you should drag to the right side of the program window, dropping it over the area containing the text `Drag Actions or Files Here to Build Your Workflow`.
3. At the top right of the window, alongside the heading `Service Receives Selected`, you'll see two drop-down lists alongside each other: `Text` and `Any Application`. Change the first to `Files or Folders` and the second (on the right) to `Finder`.
4. Under the `Run Shell Script` heading, change the `Pass Input` drop-down to `As Arguments`.
5. In the large text area beneath the `Run Shell Script` heading, delete what's already there, and type the following; for an example from my test system, see [Figure 4, Creating a secure delete GUI tool:](#)

```
for i in "$@"
do
srm -rf "$i"
done
```

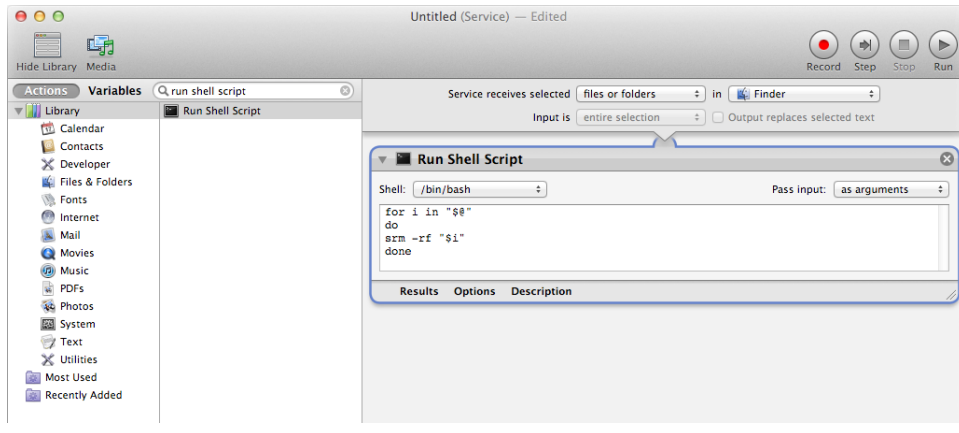


Figure 4—Creating a secure delete GUI tool

6. Click File→Save. Because this is a service, there's no need to specify a destination for the file. However, you will need to type a filename. This is what will appear in the menu when you right-click files, so something illustrative like Secure Delete will do. Click the Save button in the dialog when you're done.
7. Once the service has been saved, you can quit Automator.

You can now test your new service—right-click a file/folder (or a selection of them), and select Secure Delete from the menu. Alternatively, you may have to click Services→Secure Delete. After a few seconds, the file or folder will simply disappear and will be gone forever (it *won't* go to the trash!).

Bear in mind two things: first, there's no status update when deleting files this way, and second, large files or large collections of files might take some time to be deleted. Deleting will take place in the background, so, once started, you can get on with other things.

Also bear in mind as mentioned earlier that there's no way to undo file/folder deletion that's done this way—it's an extremely thorough way of eradicating data!

To remove your Secure Delete service, open a Finder window, and hit **Shift+Command+G**. In the dialog box that appears, type `~/Library/Services`. Then drag the Secure Delete service file to the trash. Then log out and back in again.

Tip 7

Auto-answer FaceTime Calls

Here's a neat tip that enables the FaceTime app to automatically answer incoming calls from contacts you specify. You can use it if you're happy having calls from specified colleagues, friends, or family automatically answered, although be careful because there'll be nothing stopping these incoming callers from instantly seeing what's happening in front of your computer!

Enabling Auto-answer on FaceTime

Here are the steps required to enable automatic answering of calls on FaceTime:

1. Start by opening FaceTime if it isn't already open, and log in. Then look for the contact details of the individual(s) you'd like to enable auto-answering for. This will be listed in your Contacts or Favorites list and will probably be an email address. Write the details down, and then quit FaceTime.
2. Open a Terminal window (open Finder, select the Applications list, and then in the list of applications double-click Terminal within the Utilities folder), and type the following line:

```
defaults write com.apple.FaceTime AutoAcceptInvites -bool TRUE
```

3. Then type the following line, and at the end type the FaceBook ID of the individual or device you want to auto-answer when they call. For example, if the contact FaceTime ID is keir@example.com, you'd type the following:

```
defaults write com.apple.FaceTime AutoAcceptInvitesFrom -array-add keir@keirthomas.com
```

If the FaceTime ID is a cell phone number, you need to type it after the command without any spaces. For example, if the FaceTime ID was the cell phone number +1 555 123 1234, you'd type the following:

```
defaults write com.apple.FaceTime AutoAcceptInvitesFrom -array-add +15551231234
```

Restart FaceTime, and you should find calls from the FaceTime IDs you added are automatically answered!

You can repeat step 3 and add more FaceTime IDs to the list.

Removing Auto-answer Entries

To remove a FaceTime ID from the auto-answer list, you can use the following command, but unfortunately this removes *all* of the entries you might have added using the previous commands.

Quit FaceTime, open a Terminal window, and type the following two lines:

```
defaults delete com.apple.FaceTime AutoAcceptInvites
defaults delete com.apple.FaceTime AutoAcceptInvitesFrom
```

If you have Xcode installed and are competent using its Plist editor, you can manually remove individual auto-answer entries from the FaceTime preferences file, which is found in the `~/Library/Preferences/com.apple.FaceTime.plist` file.

Tip 8

Instantly Add Movies and Music to iTunes

If you use third-party software to download music and movies to your computer, you'll be familiar with the rather lengthy process needed to add them to your iTunes library—you have to start iTunes, then ensure the correct music or movie list is visible, and finally drag and drop the files onto the program window....

However, there's a hidden folder you can use to import music and movies straight into iTunes. All you need to do is configure any app you use to download files straight into this folder, and they will be instantly imported—even if iTunes isn't running at the time.

To find the folder, open Finder, hit **Shift+Command+G**, and then type `~/Music/iTunes/iTunes Media/`. One of the folders you should see will be Automatically Add to iTunes. As its name suggests, any files copied into this folder will be added to iTunes automatically. Assuming you have kept the default preferences setting of iTunes organizing your media folders, any files placed there will be moved out of the folder and automatically filed within the Music folder whenever iTunes is running, so it should appear empty most of the time.

You can create a desktop alias of the folder by clicking and dragging it to the desktop, before pressing **Option+Command** and releasing the mouse button. You can then simply drag and drop files onto the alias instead.

Tip 9

Be a Messages App Keyboard Wizard

Because the Messages app is all about typing and because reaching for the mouse or trackpad can be a distraction, keyboard shortcuts are essential. Here are some of the more useful:

Shortcut	Description
Control+Command+A/I/O/W	Set your status as available (A), invisible (I), away (W), or offline (O).
Command+1	Show buddies list.
Control+Tab	Move between conversations listed on the left of the Messages window (if two or more conversations are listed).
Option+Up/Down	Cycle through things you've already typed and sent—useful if you need to repeat something said earlier in the conversation. Hit Return to resend the message.
Option+Command+B	Show the entry within Contacts of the person you're chatting to; if they have no entry within your address book, you'll instantly create a new one.
Shift+Command+I	Show profile details of the person you're chatting to, and set audio alerts/bounce the Messages icon in the Dock/run an AppleScript when they perform various actions, such as come online or send you a message.
Option+Command+E	Compose a new email to the individual in Mail, provided an email address is associated with the individual's IM chat account.
Option+Command+L	Show a list of recent and ongoing file transfers (to transfer a file, drag and drop it onto the conversation within the Messages window, or hit Option+Command+F to open a dialog box where you can select a file).
Shift+Command+K	Add a timestamp to the conversation, similar to that which appears when you initially go online

Shortcut	Description
Option + Command + K	and start chatting with somebody—useful if you want to record when something was said. Permanently delete conversation—cannot be undone.
Shift + Command + E	Open video effects window so you can apply special effects to any video conversation (click the camera icon at the top right of the chat window to start video conversation; note that Messages doesn't support video calls on all chat protocols).

Tip 10

Store Absolutely Any File in iCloud

The built-in Preview app lets you add images and PDFs to its iCloud store (click File→Open to add files), which are what the app usually displays on most Macs, but that's not all it'll accept for upload. It'll also store (and let you view!) Microsoft Office documents, such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint files. Strangely, however, it won't accept more primitive office document formats such as rich-text files (those with an .rtf extension) or comma-separated value spreadsheets (those with a .csv extension).

It's worth bearing in mind that, just like with Finder windows, you can hold down **Option** to copy a file to iCloud, rather than moving it there, which is the default behavior.

Note that the range of image files Preview will accept for upload to iCloud is very broad—you can save Photoshop (.psd) documents there, for example, and view them within Preview.

TextEdit accepts any kind of file for upload to its iCloud storage area—from MP3 files and movies to images—even though it can't open them (attempting to open, say, a movie will produce a screen full of seemingly random characters, although you can still watch the movie in **Quick Look** by selecting it in the iCloud listing and hitting **Space**).

TextEdit's egalitarian approach to iCloud makes it an ideal way of transferring files from one Mac to another via iCloud, provided they're both logged in to the same iCloud ID—just drag and drop the file onto the TextEdit window of

the first computer, and then drag and drop it from TextEdit’s iCloud listing to a Finder window on the other Mac.

Tip 11

Use a Secret, Alternative Cut and Paste

Ever had something important held in the clipboard, like a picture, yet wanted to quickly cut and paste some text within a document? OS X actually contains two clipboards, although the second is much more primitive than the main one and will cut and paste only text. You won’t find it on any menus, either, and it is available only via two keyboard shortcuts. You can use it in the usual way by highlighting some text, using **Control+K** to cut the text, and pressing **Control+Y** to paste the content in the new position. (Note that’s **Control** and not **Command**; longtime Unix/Linux users will, of course, recognize this secondary clipboard as an implementation of the kill and yank tools found in the likes of Emacs.)

There’s no “copy” option, unfortunately, although you can emulate this by cutting the text with **Control+K** and then immediately pasting it back in with **Control+Y**, before moving to the new position where you’d like the text to be inserted and again pasting with **Control+Y**.

Only plain text is copied—any formatting such as bold or italics is lost. Additionally, although it should work fine within most OS X applications, it probably will not work if you cut text from one app to paste into another app—in my testing, each app seemed to have its own private secondary clipboard. However, the only way to find out for sure is to give it a try!

Tip 12

Correct Misspellings or Typos Without the Mouse

Although in many OS X apps you can right-click a misspelled or mistyped word to see suggested replacements (that is, words that are underlined in red or blue), you can also simply move the cursor to the end of the word using the cursor keys and then wait a second until a list of suggested replacements

appears beneath. Hit the Down cursor key and then the Left/Right cursor keys to select a replacement, before hitting **Return** to select the one you're happy with (or hit **Esc** to quit the replacements menu). If no list appears, it's probably the case that OS X has no suggestions for that particular misspelling or typo.

Tip 13

Create iCloud Folders

Here's a tip that will be obvious to anybody who owns an iPad or iPhone but possibly a revelation to anybody else.

Apps that let you save files within iCloud, such as TextEdit and Preview, allow you to create folders within iCloud to help organize documents. But there's no New Folder button. Instead, you can create a new folder by dropping one file on top of another (provided either file isn't locked). You'll immediately be prompted to enter a name for the new folder. Simple!

You can add new items to the folder by dragging and dropping them on top, just like in Finder. Note that you can also elastic-band select many files at once.

To delete the folder, you'll need to empty it of all its contents by either dragging the files out or deleting them. Then the folder will vanish.

Note that there are a couple of caveats. First, iCloud folders aren't like those on your hard disk because you can't create another folder within them. All each folder can contain are files. Second, note that any file that's locked (see [Tip 199, *Lock Files for Safety*, on page ?](#)) can't be added to an iCloud folder until it's unlocked.

Tip 14

See What Folders You've Accessed Recently

Want to see a list of folders or places you've recently accessed in Finder? Just click and hold the back button at the top left of the Finder window. In the list that appears, you can click any of the folders to jump straight to that location.

You can also click and hold the forward button to select one of the folders or places later in your history—in other words, that you previously visited *after* visiting that folder! (Note: This also works in most web browsers, where clicking and holding back or forward will show a list of your most recently accessed websites.)

Tip 15

See Bluetooth Signal Strength

If you use any Bluetooth devices with your Mac, such as a keyboard or mouse, there are a variety of ways you can view the strength of the signal between your Mac and the device(s).

Using System Preferences to View Signal Strength

To get the most information, you can use System Preferences (Apple menu→System Preferences). Once it's open, click the Bluetooth icon, and then select the Bluetooth device in the list while holding down **Option**—see [Figure 5, Viewing the signal strength of a Bluetooth peripheral, on page 23](#). You'll see a number along with a familiar signal bar display that you might be used to with your cell phone or Wi-Fi signal.

As with similar displays, five bars is the maximal signal strength, while one bar indicates a weak and potentially unstable connection (the solution is to move the Bluetooth device closer to the Mac or to remove any objects that might be obscuring your Mac or the device, especially those that are metal). To get an updated signal reading, repeatedly click the Bluetooth's entry in the list while holding down **Option**.

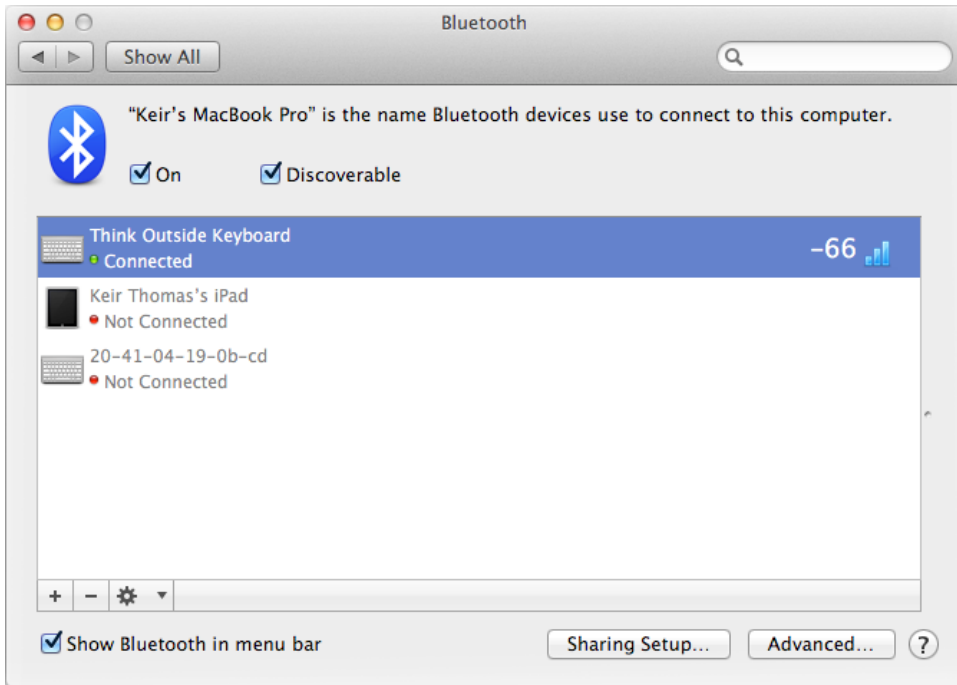


Figure 5—Viewing the signal strength of a Bluetooth peripheral

The number corresponds directly with the bar display and shows the power ratio (dBmW) of the signal. A smaller number indicates a stronger signal—in my test -40 equated to a strong five-bar signal, while -70 equated to a poor signal strength of one bar.

Quickly Viewing Signal Strength on the Desktop

Another way to view signal strength that doesn't use System Preferences is as follows: hold down **Option** while clicking the Bluetooth icon at the top right of the screen, before moving the mouse down the menu showing all connected devices (you can release **Option** after clicking the Bluetooth icon). Here you'll see not only the power ratio figure mentioned earlier but also battery life (in the case of Apple peripherals) and other technical details, such as the MAC address of the Bluetooth device.

Monitoring Signal Strength Over Time

To monitor signal strength over a period of time, which can be useful when diagnosing connection problems, return to the Bluetooth pane of System

Preferences, and select the device you want to monitor in the list. Then hold down **Option** before clicking the cog icon beneath the list of Bluetooth devices, and select Monitor Connection RSSI from the menu that appears. This will open a new window showing a graph of connection strength, updated every few seconds continuously until you click the Close button at the bottom right.

Tip 16

Switch to Black Menus in Full-Screen Mode

Here's a small secret tweak that will make the menu bar at the top of the screen turn black whenever you enter full-screen mode with any application. It brings no new functionality other than altering the appearance of the menu.

Open a Terminal window (open Finder, select the Applications list, and then in the list of applications double-click Terminal within the Utilities folder), and type the following:

```
defaults write -g NSFullScreenDarkMenu -bool TRUE
```

Then log out and back in again. Switch any compatible app to full-screen mode (click the arrow at the top right of the window or click View→Enter Full Screen), and then push the mouse against the top of the screen to see the now-blackened menu bar appear.

To switch back to the standard gray tint menu, again open a Terminal window, and type the following:

```
defaults delete -g NSFullScreenDarkMenu
```

Log out and back in again for the changes to take effect.

Tip 17

Create Reminders Ultra-Quickly

Imagine the situation: you receive an email from a friend reminding you to pick up a book for him from the bookstore. Being a Mac OS X user, you know exactly how to handle the situation: you can add an entry in the Reminders

app, which will then be shared with your iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad. No more forgetting!

There's just one problem: starting Reminders and then creating the actual entry on the list is a lot of effort and far from the casual single-click we might expect of Apple technology.

There are two solutions to this terrible problem, as follows.

Dragging and Dropping to the Reminders App

If the mail you've received has as its subject line the nature of the reminder (e.g., "Don't forget to pick up the book!"), you can drag and drop the email from the list within Mail to the Reminders icon on the Dock, or you can drag and drop the email on top of the Reminders program window if it's open. This will instantly create a new reminder named after the subject of the mail, and you'll even be provided with a link to the original email within the reminder (click Show in Mail).

If anybody has replied to the original email or if it's part of a series received from the sender, then this trick needs a little modification—click the email in the list so it's visible in the preview pane on the right side of the Mail window. Then move the mouse cursor over the left side of the email preview, near the Subject and Reply-To headings. The cursor will change to a hand grabber. You can then click and drag the mail to the Reminders app, as described earlier.

Adding a "Create Reminder" Entry to Right-Click Menus

As easy as drag and drop is, wouldn't it be handy just to be able to select the text in the email (i.e., "pick up the book from the store"), then right-click, and select a menu option that will instantly create a Reminders entry—even if Reminders isn't running? This function isn't built into OS X but can be easily created and will work in almost any app. The following are the necessary steps, although there are actually two methods—the first will simply add a reminder without prompting you for any details, while the second will pop up a dialog box wherein you can select which Reminders list to use, the reminder's priority, and its due date.

Creating a Simple Reminders Service

Here's how to create the first of the options mentioned earlier—a simple right-click option that will instantly create a new reminder in the default list based on the text you select:

1. Open Automator, which can be found in the Applications view of Finder. If the new file dialog doesn't appear, click File→New. In the Choose a Type For Your Document dialog box, select Service (the cog icon), and then click the Choose button.
2. In the search field above the list of actions within the Automator program window, type New Reminders Item. Click and drag the only item in the list (which will also read New Reminders Item) to the right side of the Automator window, over the text Drag Actions or Files Here to Build Your Workflow.
3. Leave everything blank. All you need to do is click File→Save and then type a name for your new service in the Save Service As dialog box. This is what'll appear in the right-click menu, so something like Create Reminder is fine (there's no need to choose somewhere to save the service because they're automatically saved in the correct location). Then you can quit Automator.

You can try your new service straightaway. Just highlight some text, right-click it, and select Create Reminder (or Services→Create Reminder if there's no Create Reminder option on the menu). If Reminders is running, you'll see the entry has been added, but even if it isn't, the entry is still added, as you'll find when you next start the app.

Creating a Pop-up Dialog Box Service

Here's how to create a service similar to the one earlier except when you select Create Reminder from the right-click menu, a dialog box will pop up each time to let you set options such as which reminder list will be used, its priority, and due date.

1. Follow steps 1 and 2 earlier so that the basic New Reminders Item automator service is in place. However, click the Options link at the bottom of the service.
2. Check the box Show This Action When The Workflow Runs; then check Show Only The Selected Items.
3. You will now see a checkbox alongside each item of the service. Check everything, except the Title field. You should end up with something that looks like [Figure 6, Creating a service to create new reminders](#). Now repeat the earlier step 4 to save the new action.

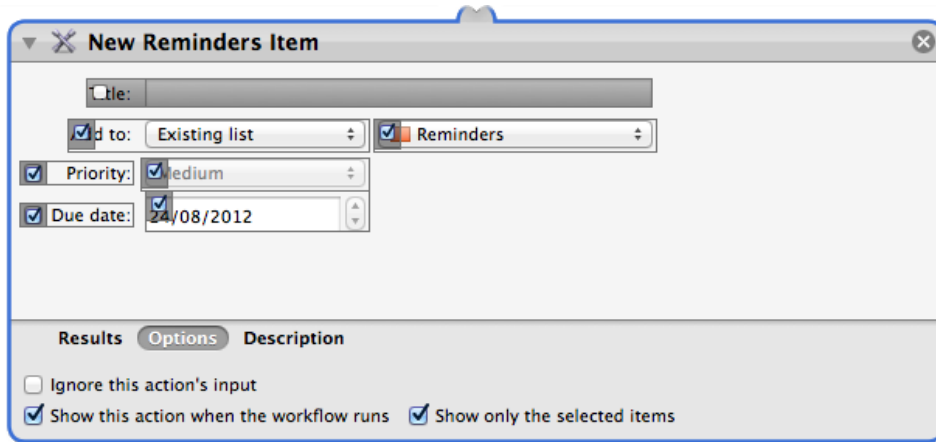


Figure 6—Creating a service to create new reminders

Test our new service by highlighting some text, right-clicking it, and selecting Create Reminder (or Services→Create Reminder if there’s no Create Reminder option on the menu). A dialog box should appear letting you set various options, such as which of your Reminders lists to add the new reminder to. Select from them, and click the Continue button. (Note that, on my test Mac, the first time I used this new service, an additional dialog box popped up asking if the app could access my contacts; I assume this is a bug, but agreeing to it will do no harm.)

If Reminders is running, you’ll see the entry has been added—complete with the attributes you set—but even if it isn’t, the entry is still added, as you’ll find when you next start the app.

Removing the Menu Entry

To remove the service, should you want to, open Finder, and then hit **Shift+Command+G**. In the dialog box that appears, type `~/Library/Services`, and hit **Return**. Then drag the service you created to the trash. Log out and back in again to complete the removal.

Tip 18

Right-Click to Share Anything

OS X Mountain Lion features Share Sheets, which are buttons at the top of certain program windows (including Finder) that allow you to instantly share things via Twitter, email, Facebook, and Messages or to AirDrop what you're viewing or working on (provided accounts for these services are set up within the Mail, Contacts & Calendars component of System Preferences, of course).

However, you can also right-click just about anything to share it in this way—right-click an image file on the desktop, for example, and you can select the Share option on the menu to instantly tweet or post it to your Facebook wall. This works in Finder windows too, where you can share any file via email, AirDrop, and Messages. Highlight some text (and/or images) within TextEdit before right-clicking it, and the same Share option will appear on the menu, allowing you to send just the highlighted text to your Twitter or Facebook accounts (if the Send button is grayed out and you're attempting to tweet something in this way, it might be because you've exceeded the 140-character limit!).

Tip 19

View Safari's Google History

To see a list of your recent searches in Safari, click in the Address and Search bar, delete what's there, then either click the magnifying glass icon at the left of the Address and Search bar or simply hit `Space`. The previous searches will appear in a list beneath, along with some recent history. You can jump between headings in the list using the keyboard by holding down `Command` and pressing the Up/Down cursor keys.

You can also quickly switch to an alternative search engine by selecting it from the bottom of this drop-down list. Your new search engine choice will remain in place until you again select a different choice—even after you restart Safari.

Tip 20

Open a Link Displayed in Terminal

If you see a web or email link within a Terminal window (in a man page, for example), simply hold down `Command` and then double-click it. The link will instantly open in your usual browser or email client, such as Safari or Mail.

For what it's worth, this will work even if you simply type an address into a Terminal window, even if it isn't preceded with `http://`.