



Take Control *of* Users & Accounts in Panther

by Kirk McElhearn

Table of Contents

Reading and Printing Tips.....	3
Introduction	5
Working with Accounts Quick Start.....	7
About User Accounts	8
Types of Accounts	11
Choose an Account Strategy.....	19
Create and Delete Accounts.....	22
Log Into and Out of Accounts	28
Fast User Switching.....	32
Manage Startup Items	36
Troubleshoot Startup Items.....	41
Troubleshoot Preference Files	45
Share Files among Users.....	48
Appendix A: Share Digital Media Files.....	57
Resources	60

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READING AND PRINTING TIPS

We designed this ebook to be read online or printed. Here are a few tips to help you get the most out of your reading experience.

Online reading tips:

(We're still learning the tricks for Panther's Preview application, so these are primarily for Adobe Acrobat and Adobe Reader.)

- In Adobe Acrobat 5, the Take Control default settings on the View menu are Fit in Window and Continuous. For most people with larger monitors, those should be fine. To focus only on reading, in Acrobat 5, choose View > Full Screen, or in Acrobat 6, choose Window > Full Screen View. (Press Esc to leave full screen mode.)
- Increase the size of the text by clicking the window's Zoom button to make the window as wide as possible, then choose View > Fit Width.
- To scroll using keyboard shortcuts, you must first click the main text area. The Page Up and Page Down keys may be the easiest (and they scroll by screen when you view less than a full page). The Left and Right arrow keys scroll to the previous and next page starts.
- Blue text indicates links. You can click any item in the Table of Contents to jump to that section. Cross-references are also links, as are URLs and email addresses.
- Work with the Bookmarks tab showing so you can always see and jump to any main topic by clicking the associated bookmark.
- You may experience a display problem wherein the top border on tip and screenshot layouts does not appear. The borders should print properly and may show properly at a different view percentage. They also appear correctly in Apple's Preview.

Printing tips:

- In the unlikely event that Adobe Acrobat or Adobe Reader cannot successfully print this PDF, try Apple's Preview; several readers have solved printing problems by using Preview.
- If you prefer a tighter layout that uses fewer pages, check your printer options for a 2-up feature that prints two ebook pages on

one piece of paper. For instance, your Print dialog may have an unlabeled pop-up menu that offers a Layout option. Choose Layout, then choose 2 from the Pages per Sheet pop-up menu. You also may wish to choose Single Hairline from the Border menu.

- When printing on a color inkjet printer, if you want to avoid using up a lot of color ink (primarily on the yellow boxes we use for tips and figures), look for an option to print entirely in black-and-white.

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INTRODUCTION

Apple has done an excellent job of hiding many of Mac OS X's Unix underpinnings, so Unix-related features such as preemptive multitasking just make the Mac work better than ever before, without drawing attention to themselves. But other aspects of that Unix foundation do affect the way we work in important and noticeable ways; for example, Unix brings a full multi-user operating system to OS X, which means that each person who wishes to use the Mac must use it while logged into an account.

This ebook goes much further than just telling you how to set up and configure user accounts. I explain the different types of accounts, how to limit the capabilities of certain accounts, and what you need to know about Fast User Switching. I also explain why you should have at least two accounts even if no one else uses your Mac.

By the end of this ebook you'll be able to take control of all your accounts—whether you have one or dozens—and work more efficiently with Panther.

Terminology and Conventions

In reading this ebook, you may encounter a few unfamiliar terms and conventions. To get the most out of this ebook, please note the following:

Permissions: I talk about *permissions* often in this ebook. Permissions are special bits in files and folders that tell your Mac who owns a file; what rights they have: read (view a file, open a folder, or access an application), write (view a file and save changes, or create new files in a folder), execute (launch a program); and what others can do with the item.

Authenticate: This is a fancy word that means “enter your user name and/or password.” The login window, which appears when you log into your Mac, is an authentication dialog. You'll also see an authentication dialog if you have an administrator account and try to access, change, or delete certain files, or perform other tasks, such as installing some software.

Path syntax: This ebook occasionally uses a *path* to show the location of a file or folder. Path text is formatted in bold type. A path is the location of a particular item in your file system. For example, Panther stores most utilities, such as Stuffit Expander, in the Utilities folder. The path to Stuffit Expander is:

`/Applications/Utilities/StuffIt Expander.`

The front slash at the start of the path tells you to start from the root level of the disk.

You will also encounter paths that begin with ~ (tilde). The tilde is a shortcut for any user's home directory. For example, if a user wants to install fonts that only he can access, he would install them in his `~/Library/Fonts` folder, which (to a user named kirk) is just another way of writing `/Users/kirk/Library/Fonts`.

WORKING WITH ACCOUNTS QUICK START

User accounts affect almost everything you do under Mac OS X. You must have at least one account, and, if you need to create additional accounts, you can do so easily. Here's an overview of how this ebook will help you work with accounts in Panther:

Learn about accounts:

- Learn what user accounts are, and why you need them. See [About User Accounts](#).
- Discover what has changed with accounts from Jaguar to Panther. See [What's New with Accounts in Panther](#).
- Find out about five types of user accounts; see [Types of Accounts](#).
- Learn strategies for setting up accounts for situations that you may not have previously considered, such as for troubleshooting or visitors. See [Choose an Account Strategy](#).

Create and delete accounts:

- Set up and configure a new account; see [Set Up an Account](#).
- Delete accounts when you need to; see [Delete an Account](#).
- If desired, activate the root account; see [Activate the Root Account](#).

Work with accounts:

- Log in and out of your account, plus customize options to simplify or secure the login process. See [Log Into and Out of Accounts](#).
- Use Fast User Switching to share your Mac more efficiently. See [Fast User Switching](#).
- Add and remove user startup items; see [Manage Startup Items](#).
- Use your knowledge of user and system startup items to perform basic troubleshooting. See [Troubleshoot Startup Items](#).

Share files among users:

- Choose from one of four methods for sharing files among users on the same Mac, and set one up. See [Share Files among Users](#).
- Share music and photos; see Appendix A: [Share Digital Media Files](#).

ABOUT USER ACCOUNTS

User accounts are at the heart of any Unix-based operating system, including Mac OS X. The entire system relies on this concept, so having a basic understanding of what accounts are and why you need them will help you better comprehend and use Mac OS X.

Since Unix-based operating systems rely on the concepts of *permissions* and *ownership*, each file, folder, and application must belong to a specific user. For this to be the case, users must be declared and identified; hence the idea of creating unique *accounts* for each user, much as every customer of a bank has their own account that no one else can access.

When you set up or receive an account on Mac OS X, you become a *user* of that computer, and you are assigned a *home* folder (the folder with your name and the house icon). Your home folder is the receptacle for your personal files, and, under Mac OS X, it contains a number of sub-folders that help you further organize your files.

Because your files belong to you, other users cannot access files contained in the sub-folders of your home folder; this is also true in the other direction: you cannot access files in other users' folders. To help users on the same Mac share files, each home folder contains a Public folder, from which any user can copy files, and this folder contains a Drop Box folder, into which any user can copy files.

This multi-user focus is quite different from earlier versions of the classic Mac OS, which generally assumed that any user of the computer could access all its files. You could set up multiple users for file sharing over a network, but for the most part, you couldn't limit what other users of the same computer could do. In particular, you could put files anywhere on the computer, and anyone could access them when they started working on the Mac.

In addition to this segregation of files among users, Unix-based operating systems prohibit standard users from accessing, changing, or deleting essential system files. This prevents standard users from damaging the operating system. Administrators, however, can access all files on a computer. You'll learn more about this distinction later, in [Types of Accounts](#).

TYPES OF ACCOUNTS

Panther offers four normal types of accounts: administrator accounts, standard accounts, managed accounts, and simplified accounts.

There is also a special fifth type of account, called root, which is not accessible from the Accounts preference pane. You can see the types of accounts set up on your Macintosh by viewing the Accounts pane in System Preferences, as shown in **Figure 1**. (To open System Preferences, choose it from the Apple menu or click its icon in the Dock.)

FIGURE 1



A quick look at the left side of the Accounts pane in System Preferences reveals which accounts are set up on the Macintosh. You can easily see the user name for each account and which type of account it is: admin, standard, managed, or simplified.

Before you start creating new accounts, you need to understand these different account types, what rights each one has, and how you would use each type. **Table 1**, next, summarizes the powers and limitations of these accounts; the rest of this section explains the account types in more detail.

NOTE Technically speaking, managed and simplified accounts are merely variants of standard accounts, but I follow the example of the Accounts preference pane, which uses all three terms in its interface.

FAST USER SWITCHING

Inspired by a feature that exists in Windows, Apple added to Panther the capability to switch from one user account to another without first logging out of the first account. You can keep applications and documents open in the first account, switch to another account and work in it, then switch back.

NOTE Fast User Switching offers cool eye candy on newer Macs that support Quartz Extreme; as you switch, you see one account change to another as a 3D cube turns, with each cube face displaying a user account. Video cards that support Quartz Extreme currently include the NVIDIA GeForce2 MX, GeForce3, GeForce4 MX, and GeForce4 Ti video cards, or any ATI AGP Radeon card with a minimum of 16 MB VRAM. The 3D cube effect appears only if both accounts are set to the same screen resolution in the Displays pane of System Preferences.

Fast User Switching is great for people who share a Mac. Say you're working on your Mac and your spouse or child simply *has to* check his email. Rather than log out and shut down your applications, you can switch to his account quickly, he can check his email, and then you can switch back to your account and pick up right where you left off, saving you a lot of time.

Turn On Fast User Switching

To enable Fast User Switching, open the Accounts preference pane, click the Login Options button (at the lower left), and check the Enable Fast User Switching checkbox. When you turn on Fast User Switching, a new menu appears at the far right of your menu bar, labeled with the name of the current user and offering commands for switching to other user accounts on your Mac or displaying the login window.

TIP The User menu that displays in the menu bar is called a *menu extra*, and it is just like all the other icons at the right of the menu bar. You can move it by pressing the Command key and dragging it to another location in the menu bar.

RESOURCES

Three general troubleshooting books that I recommend you try when things go wrong with your Mac are:

- *Macworld Mac Upgrade and Repair Bible, 3rd Edition* (Wiley), by Todd Stauffer and Kirk McElhearn
<http://www.mcelhearn.com/bible.html>
- *Mac OS X Power Tools* (Sybex), by Dan Frakes
- *Mac OS X Disaster Relief* (Peachpit), by Ted Landau

And some of the best troubleshooting Web sites are:

- MacFixit
<http://www.macfixit.com/>
- MacInTouch
<http://www.macintouch.com/>
- Mac OS X Hints
<http://www.macosxhints.com/>
- Apple's troubleshooting site
<http://www.info.apple.com/>
- Apple's troubleshooting discussion forums
<http://discussions.info.apple.com/>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kirk McElhearn is a freelance writer, journalist, and translator. He has written user manuals for many popular Macintosh programs, as well as technical documentation for Windows and Linux programs.

Kirk has written and co-written several books about using the Mac, including:

- *How to Do Everything with Mac OS X Panther* (Osborne; expected in early 2004)
<http://www.mcelhearn.com/htde.html>
- *Mastering Mac OS X, 3rd Edition* (Sybex), with Todd Stauffer
<http://www.mcelhearn.com/panther.html>
- *Macworld Mac Upgrade and Repair Bible, 3rd Edition* (Wiley), with Todd Stauffer
<http://www.mcelhearn.com/bible.html>
- *Microsoft Office v. X Inside Out* (Microsoft Press), with Tom Negrino and Kate Binder
<http://www.mcelhearn.com/insideout.html>

As a journalist, he has written articles for a variety of publications and is a regular contributor to *TidBITS* and *Macworld*. As a translator, he has worked for some of the world's leading computer and telecommunications companies.

A native New Yorker, Kirk has lived in France for almost two decades, and currently resides in Guillestre, a village in the French Alps. You can check out pictures of Guillestre and its surroundings on the Web at <http://homepage.mac.com/kirkmc/PhotoAlbum8.html>.

Find out more about him at <http://www.mcelhearn.com/>.

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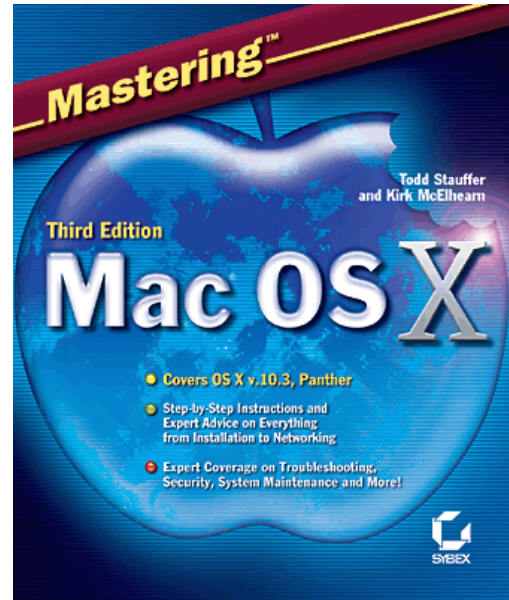
SHAMELESS PLUG

And now, a shameless plug for my latest book.

I worked with Todd Stauffer, the author of the first two editions of the bestselling *Mastering Mac OS X*, on the third edition of the book, which was published in December 2003 by Sybex.

I recommend this third edition to anyone who needs coverage of the ins and outs of Panther, as well as comprehensive information on setting up and working with Mac OS X 10.3.

Find out more about this book at <http://www.mcelhearn.com/panther.html>.



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This ebook was produced on an 800 MHz iBook, a 933 MHz G4 iBook purchased as I was writing, and a 400 MHz iMac, using Microsoft Word, Snapz Pro X, and Photoshop Elements. Pre-production was carried out using Inspiration, for outlining, and iChat AV and SubEthaEdit, for collaborative communication.

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Take Control of Customizing Panther, by Matt Neuburg

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Take Control of Sharing Files in Panther, by Glenn Fleishman

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Take Control of Upgrading to Panther, by Joe Kissell

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ABOUT TidBITS ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING

Take Control ebooks are a project of TidBITS Electronic Publishing. TidBITS Electronic Publishing has been publishing online since 1990 when publishers Adam and Tonya Engst first created their online newsletter, *TidBITS*, about Macintosh and Internet-related topics. *TidBITS* has been in continuous, weekly production since then, and it is the leading online Macintosh newsletter.

To stay up to date on Mac OS X 10.3 Panther and other Macintosh topics, be sure to read *TidBITS* each week. At the *TidBITS* Web site you can subscribe to *TidBITS* for free, participate in discussions on the TidBITS Talk mailing list, or search 13 years of news, reviews, and editorial analysis.

Adam and Tonya are well-known in the Macintosh world as writers, editors, and speakers, and they have written innumerable online and print publications. They are also parents to Tristan, who is almost five and thinks ebooks about trains, clipper ships, and dinosaurs would be cool.

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...and the many friends and relatives that helped in large and small ways by providing technical expertise, dinner, childcare, and so on.