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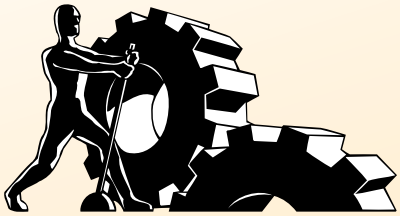

TidBITS Publishing Inc.

Take Control of v2.0

Mobile Me

SECOND EDITION

Joe Kissell

$10

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Table of Contents

Read Me First 5
- Updates and More....5
- Basics....6
- What's New in the Second Edition....7
- What Was New in Version 1.2....7

Introduction 8

MobileMe Quick Start 10

Get to Know MobileMe 11
- What Is MobileMe?....11
- Major MobileMe Features....11

Set Up and Explore MobileMe 14
- Set Up MobileMe on a Mac....14
- Set Up MobileMe under Windows....16
- Set Up MobileMe on an iOS Device....17
- Navigate the MobileMe Web Site....18

Keep Your Data in Sync 22
- Understand Syncing Options....22
- Set Up Syncing on a Mac or PC....27
- Set Up Syncing on an iOS Device....30
- Resolve Synchronization Conflicts....32
- Reset Sync Data....34

Mail 37
- MobileMe Mail Benefits....37
- Access MobileMe Mail on the Web....38
- Access MobileMe Mail Using Apple Mail....58
- Access MobileMe Mail with Other Email Clients....60
- Use Mail on an iOS Device....60

Contacts 62
- View Contacts....62
- Search for Contacts....63
- Work with Contact Groups....63
- Edit, Add, or Delete Contacts....64

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Perform More Contact-Related Tasks 64
Set Contact Preferences 65

Calendar 66
Work With Events 66
Add, Edit, or Delete Events 68
Work with To-Do Items 70
Manage Your Calendars 71
Share Calendars 72
Set Calendar Preferences 74

Gallery 77
Understand Gallery 77
Create a Gallery with iLife 81
Create a Gallery Album on the Web 87
Use the MobileMe Gallery App 89

iDisk 90
Explore Your iDisk 91
Share Files 93
Access an iDisk 94

Find My iPhone 109
Activate Find My iPhone 109
Find Your iPhone in a Browser 110
Find Your iPhone with an App 113

Account 114
Summary 114
Personal Info 115
Account Options 115
Billing Information 116
Password Settings 116
Storage Settings 116
Personal Domain 116
Security Certificates 117

MobileMe and iLife 118
Create Sites and Blogs with iWeb 118
Publish Photos from iPhoto 121
Publish Movies from iMovie 122
Publish a Podcast with GarageBand 122

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Access Your Mac Remotely 125
What Back To My Mac Can Do 126
Configure Your Devices 127
Configure Your Router 130
Get Back to Your Mac 131

Back Up Your Files 132
Use iDisk for Backups (or Not) 132
(Don't) Back Up with Backup 133

Appendix A: Account Conversion Methods 136

About This Book 137
Ebook Extras 137
About the Author 137
Author's Acknowledgements 138
Shameless Plug 138
About the Publisher 138
Production Credits 138

Copyright and Fine Print 139

Featured Titles 140

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Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of MobileMe, Second Edition,* version 2.0, published in October 2010 by TidBITS Publishing Inc. This book was written by Joe Kissell and edited by Dan Frakes.

Membership in MobileMe gives you access to a suite of online services that both complements and integrates tightly with Mac OS X and iLife. Although MobileMe was designed for ease of use, it also has tremendous power—and a few hidden pitfalls. Learn how to make the most of your MobileMe membership by reading this book, which goes far beyond Apple's online help to give you detailed instructions, tips, and strategies.

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BASICS

In reading this book, you may get stuck if you don't know certain basic facts about MobileMe or Mac OS X, or if you don't understand Take Control syntax for things like working with menus or finding items in the Finder.

Please note the following:

- **Menus:** To describe choosing a command from a menu, I use an abbreviated description. For example, my description of the menu command to create a new folder in the Finder would be "File > New Folder," that is, "choose New Folder from the File menu."
- **Multiple ways to perform an action:** You can perform many actions in more than one way—for example, using a button, a menu command, or a keyboard shortcut. In this book, for the sake of brevity, I usually mention only one way to perform each action. In general, I describe the most obvious way—buttons are often easier to find than menu commands, which are in turn more obvious than keyboard shortcuts—but choose whichever approach suits you best.
- **Finding preference panes:** I sometimes refer to system-wide Mac OS X preferences you may want to adjust. To do so, open System Preferences by clicking its icon in the Dock (shown beside this paragraph) or choosing System Preferences from the Apple (🍎) menu. Settings are categorized in topic-specific *preference panes*. You access a preference pane by clicking its icon. For example, to see "the MobileMe preference pane," open System Preferences and click the MobileMe icon.

- **Path syntax:** I occasionally use a *path* to show the location of a file or folder in your file system. For example, Mac OS X stores most utilities, such as Terminal, in the Utilities folder. The path to Terminal is: /Applications/Utilities/Terminal. The 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), which is a shortcut for a user's home directory. For example, if a person with the user name joe wants to install fonts that only he can access, he would install them in his ~/Library/Fonts folder, which is another way of writing /Users/joe/Library/Fonts.

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WHAT'S NEW IN THE SECOND EDITION

A great many changes affecting MobileMe have occurred since version 1.2 of this book was released. The iPad appeared, as did the iPhone 4 and iOS 4; Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard was released, as was iLife '11; and the MobileMe Web site got a major overhaul (especially the Mail and Calendar applications). The second edition of this book is an attempt to bring it up to date with these new developments. Although the book contains numerous changes, the most significant are these:

- Added coverage of the new site layout, navigation controls, toolbars, and other changes in Navigate the MobileMe Web Site.
- Updated the section A Word about Push Synchronization so that it remains correct for 10.5 Leopard while also more fully describing Snow Leopard and iOS.
- Completely revised the discussion of Notes, which now sync via push across Macs and some iOS devices.
- Thoroughly updated the Mail chapter to account for changes such as a new layout, styled text, server-based rules, support for multiple From addresses and POP accounts, and greatly revised preferences.
- Gave the Calendar chapter a massive makeover to reflect the sweeping changes to the MobileMe Calendar application.
- Updated the iDisk chapter to keep it current with the latest user interface and feature changes.
- Broke out Find My iPhone as its own chapter and expanded it significantly, now that Apple has added to Find My iPhone's capabilities and put it in a new location on the Mobile Me site.
- When iLife comes up, I discuss iLife '11 and iLife '09. (I dropped coverage of iLife '08, and Apple never released an iLife '10.)

WHAT WAS NEW IN VERSION 1.2

Version 1.2 added instructions for using Apple's then-new MobileMe iDisk app for iPhone and iPod touch (see Connect Using an iOS Device) and removed one tiny leftover mention of .Mac Groups.

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Introduction

In 2000, Apple introduced iTools, a free set of Internet services including such useful features as an email address in the mac.com domain and online storage space called iDisk. Over the following decade, this package evolved significantly. It switched from a free service to a paid one; it changed its name to .Mac in 2002 and then, in 2008, to MobileMe; it added and removed features; and it repeatedly updated its look and feel. MobileMe continues to change, but at its core is a powerful set of features that can simplify and enhance your digital life.

People frequently ask me whether I still think MobileMe is relevant—and in particular, whether it's still worth the money. It's true that other providers offer services comparable to portions of MobileMe at no cost, that MobileMe has had (and continues to have) some rough spots, and that Apple's service still lacks certain key capabilities that competitors have. For example, you can get free email, online calendars and contacts, Web hosting, and cloud storage from Google. So, the thinking goes, why pay for what you can get for free?

I'm not going to try to talk you into using MobileMe or talk you out of using other services. But I do want to make a brief case for what's uniquely great about MobileMe:

- **Ease of use.** MobileMe is a showcase for Apple's legendary user interface finesse, and tasks that are complicated to perform in other services are a piece of cake in MobileMe. This is especially evident when setting up syncing for multiple types of data across several devices—particularly compared to analogous services from Google.
- **Integration.** The components of MobileMe work brilliantly and seamlessly with each other, as well as with Mac OS X and iOS and their associated applications. Other services require you to go through several distinct setup procedures, and still don't tie in as closely to, for example, iLife and iWork, as MobileMe does.

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- **Find My iOS Device.** MobileMe is the only service that lets you locate (and optionally disable) an iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch no matter where in the world that device is located.

In short, if most of the devices you use for computing, communication, and entertainment are made by Apple, MobileMe has a lot to offer.

The goal of this book is to help you get the most out of MobileMe. I want to be clear, however, that this book is not a troubleshooting guide. Although I've included a few tips that address common complaints, I can't offer help for problems that involve errors or outages on Apple's end, network issues between your computer and Apple, or other random problems. If something isn't working the way this book describes, the most likely reason is that Apple's servers or software are misbehaving, or that a network issue is affecting your connection to those servers. I can commiserate with you, because whatever the problem is, I'm probably experiencing it, too, but I can't offer any magic fixes for problems that only Apple can solve.

I've been using MobileMe and its predecessors since day one, and I've been writing books about it since 2005—in other words, for half the product's lifetime! In that time, a lot has changed, but one thing that's stayed the same is the absence of a detailed instruction manual. Although online help is available for MobileMe, it's not terribly thorough or helpful. I've written this book to fill that gap—to help you take control of every aspect of your MobileMe membership and get as much value out of it as you can. As Apple continues to modify the MobileMe services, I plan to update this book, as well, so that you'll always have the latest information.

According to Apple, MobileMe works with Macs, Windows PCs, and iOS devices. In practice, though, Apple products, and especially Macs, are far better supported than other devices. Apple says the minimum system requirement for Macs is Mac OS X 10.5.8 (Leopard); for iPhone and iPod touch, iOS 3.1.3; and for iPad, iOS 3.2. As a result, I say nothing here about older operating systems. And, although I do discuss Windows and, to some extent, iOS devices, most of the book, like MobileMe itself, focuses on Mac OS X. Likewise, because MobileMe is so tightly tied to iLife, which itself gets regular overhauls, I focus on iLife '11, the latest iLife version as I write this, with notes as to where it differs from the previous version, iLife '09.

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MobileMe Quick Start

You can read the entire book in order, or click a blue link below to immediately jump to any particular topic. If you are completely new to MobileMe, however, I strongly recommend reading Get to Know MobileMe first.

Get started:

- Learn about MobileMe features. See Get to Know MobileMe.
- Set up your Mac, PC, or mobile device to work with MobileMe, and learn how to use the MobileMe Web site. Read Set Up and Explore MobileMe.
- Make sure your computer(s) and mobile device(s) can share information with MobileMe. Read Keep Your Data in Sync.

Use the six core MobileMe applications:

- Send and receive email with Mail.
- Manage your address book using Contacts.
- Keep track of your schedule and to-do items with Calendar.
- Share photos and movies online using Gallery.
- Store and share files on your iDisk.
- Locate a wayward iOS device with Find My iPhone.

Go beyond the basics:

- Manage your MobileMe Account.
- Use MobileMe and iLife together to create Web sites.
- Access stuff on a faraway Mac using Back to My Mac. See Access Your Mac Remotely.
- Back Up Your Files—to an iDisk or another destination.
- Convert your MobileMe account from one type to another, if the need arises. See Appendix A: Account Conversion Methods.

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Get to Know MobileMe

What exactly *is* MobileMe? This set of Internet services has many facets—some of them quite obvious, and others that function invisibly but powerfully in the background. Before going further, I want to review what your MobileMe membership includes.

WHAT IS MOBILEME?

You can go to an Apple Store and walk out with a "MobileMe" box, but it won't contain any hardware or software. The main thing in it is an activation code that you can use to turn on your MobileMe features; you can just as easily purchase your membership online and save a tree branch or two. Rather, MobileMe is a collection of online services—some of which you can use on their own, and some of which add capabilities to your Mac, Windows PC, iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch.

MAJOR MOBILEME FEATURES

Although Apple is constantly tweaking the capabilities of MobileMe, here are the major features as of September 2010:

- **Synchronization:** If you have more than one computer (or a computer plus an iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch), you can keep key information—your contacts, calendar, and more—in sync on all of them automatically. I cover the details in Keep Your Data in Sync.
- **MobileMe Mail:** Your MobileMe membership includes one or more email addresses (using the format *member-name*@me.com or *member-name*@mac.com); you can check and send email via the MobileMe Web site or use a program such as Apple Mail. For details, see Mail. You can also use your MobileMe address for instant messaging with iChat or AOL Instant Messenger (AIM).
- **Contacts:** Sync the address book from your Mac or PC with other computers, your iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch, and the MobileMe Web site. To learn more, see Contacts.

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- **Calendar:** Synchronize calendar events between devices and with the MobileMe Web site. You can also view and edit your calendars as easily on the Web as you can on your computer or mobile device. See Calendar.
- **Gallery:** Share photos and movies on the Web with MobileMe Gallery, a slick media-viewing interface. You can grant access to friends and family members so they can upload their own media to your gallery, and you can view these galleries using an iPhone, iPad, iPod touch, or Apple TV. Read Gallery.
- **iDisk:** With this online storage space, you can access selected files from nearly any computer with an Internet connection (and even from an iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch). You can also publish Web sites and share files with other people. See iDisk.
- **Find My iPhone:** If you're separated from your iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch, you can use MobileMe to locate it almost anywhere in the world—and remotely erase its data if you can't retrieve the phone. See Find My iPhone.
- **iLife integration:** MobileMe and iLife have always had a friendly relationship, and iLife '11 provides especially rich integration with you MobileMe account. Read MobileMe and iLife.
- **Back to My Mac:** If your Macs are in different locations, you can now access files on and share the screen of a remote Mac with a few clicks. See Access Your Mac Remotely.
- **Backup:** MobileMe members can download a backup application called Backup—though it's generally not the best tool for the job. Consult Back Up Your Files for an explanation.

MobileMe is not the only way to get most of these features, but the single, easy-to-use package makes it a great choice—especially if you have an iPhone, iPad, iPod touch, or more than one Mac.

MobileMe accounts are designed to be used by a single person. With a Family Pack, you can get accounts for five people for less than the cost of two individual memberships. The catch is that only the main account holder gets the full amount of iDisk and email storage space; the other four Family Members (as Apple calls them) get somewhat reduced quotas—see iDisk for details.

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Save Money on Your MobileMe Membership

Buying a membership or renewal directly from Apple costs $99 for individuals or $149 for a five-user Family Pack. But I've seen prices well under $80 and $110, respectively, at other sites. (Yes, you can use a retail box to renew an existing membership.) Some good places to check for discounted MobileMe retail boxes are:

- **Amazon.com:** http://www.amazon.com/
- **dealmac:** http://www.dealmac.com/
- **Buy.com:** http://www.buy.com/

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Set Up and Explore MobileMe

Before you can do useful things with MobileMe, you must set up your Mac, PC, and mobile device(s) properly. In this chapter, I describe setup procedures for Mac OS X, Windows, and iOS devices, and walk you through using the MobileMe Web site.

This chapter assumes you've already activated your membership with Apple; if you haven't, go to http://www.me.com/activate, enter your activation key, and follow the onscreen instructions.

SET UP MOBILEME ON A MAC

If you're using Mac OS X, only one small item requires your initial attention. (I discuss other settings later.) Follow these steps:

1. Be sure that you're running the latest version of Mac OS X. If you're using Snow Leopard, you must have version 10.6.3 or higher installed; if you're using Leopard, you need version 10.5.8. In either case, if your system software is an earlier version, choose Apple (🍎) > Software Update and follow the prompts to install the latest version.
2. Open MobileMe System Preferences.
3. If the window looks like **Figure 1** (with fields provided for Member Name and Password), fill in these fields and click Sign In.

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Keep Your Data in Sync

MobileMe can synchronize several kinds of information, in several different ways. For example, it can sync contacts, calendars, and Web bookmarks between computers (Mac or PC), the MobileMe Web site, and one or more iOS devices. Other kinds of data (such as Dashboard widgets and keychains) can be synced only between Macs. And the files on your iDisk can be synchronized only between a Mac and the MobileMe servers (read more about this in iDisk).

In this chapter I cover the main ways of syncing data (including the sometimes-confusing notion of "push" synchronization) and discuss some of the issues you may encounter.

UNDERSTAND SYNCING OPTIONS

Apart from files on your iDisk, the kinds of data you can sync using MobileMe fall into three categories: those that can sync across all your devices (Calendars, Contacts, and Bookmarks, which I discuss in a moment), those that can sync only between Macs (Mac-Only Data Types, shortly ahead), and those that can sync across Macs and iOS devices (but not Windows computers)—a category currently occupied only by notes (see Notes).

But before I get into the specific kinds of data you can synchronize and how to set that up, I want to make sure you understand a key concept that applies to some kinds of MobileMe data: push.

A Word about Push Synchronization

Let's say you have an iPhone. One day you sign in to the MobileMe Web site from a computer and change a contact's phone number. The question is, what has to happen for your phone to be updated?

Well, there are three possibilities:

- Your iPhone could check in with the server every so often (say, every hour, or when you manually tap a button) to see if there are any changes, and when it finds new data, it can download it.

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Mail

Each MobileMe account includes an email address in the me.com domain (such as jwk@me.com), which you can use with your existing email program or with MobileMe's Web-based interface. You may already have an email account from your ISP or a service such as Google's Gmail, but MobileMe offers some useful features that make it ideal as a primary or supplemental email account.

MOBILEME MAIL BENEFITS

Here are a few things that make MobileMe Mail great:

- You can check your email using the www.me.com Web site or your favorite email software, on nearly any platform.
- Using the MobileMe site, you can set up autoreplies (for example, for "out-of-the-office" and vacation notices), forward your me.com email to another account, check one or more POP accounts hosted on other servers, configure rules that automatically sort your messages, and more.
- Despite scattered reports to the contrary, Apple's mail servers generally provide excellent spam and virus filtering.
- You can add up to five *aliases*—extra email addresses that are automatically forwarded to your main Inbox. You can also configure MobileMe Mail to send messages with From addresses of other accounts you own (see Addresses Preferences).

MobileMe Mail has improved both its appearance and its capabilities significantly since the last edition of this book, and if you haven't tried accessing your email on the Web recently, you may be in for some pleasant surprises.

One subtle but significant change is that MobileMe Mail—and the rest of the MobileMe Web site, for that matter—now uses SSL to encrypt communication with your computer. (Previously, Mail used an unconventional method to secure data transmission, leading many users

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Contacts

Once you've followed the steps in Keep Your Data in Sync to synchronize your contacts between MobileMe and Address Book in Mac OS X or Windows, or Outlook in Windows, you can not only sync those contacts easily to *another* computer or mobile device, but also view (and edit) them from any computer on the Internet using the MobileMe Contacts application. Naturally, these contacts are also available when using the site to send email; see Mail for more information.

Changes Ahead?

In the several months prior to the publication of this book, Apple made a series of methodical changes to the capabilities of the MobileMe Web site—notably, overhauling Mail, switching to a new infrastructure and interface for Calendar, adding significant capabilities to iDisk, and modifying the overall site design.

The one component that hasn't yet received a major makeover is Contacts, which leads me to suspect it could be next. In the event of any big changes from what you see here, click Check for Updates on the cover of this ebook to see what's new and what plans we have for future Take Control coverage.

VIEW CONTACTS

To access your contacts online, sign in to the MobileMe Web site and go to the Contacts application. You should see something resembling **Figure 20**.

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Calendar

Back in the .Mac days, you couldn't edit calendars on the Web, and even viewing them was a pain—plus Windows users had no calendar features at all. But now, with MobileMe, you can sync calendars between iCal on your Mac, Outlook on your Windows PC, and the Calendar app on your iOS device—and access those calendars on the Web in a fantastic calendar application that looks and acts much like Calendar on an iPad. First follow the steps in Keep Your Data in Sync, and then read on to find out how to use MobileMe Calendar.

The New MobileMe Calendar

In mid-October 2010, Apple rolled out a new and revised MobileMe Calendar application, which is what I describe in this chapter.

However, please be aware of the following:

- To use the new Calendar on a Mac, you must be running Mac OS X Snow Leopard 10.6.4 or later; on an iPad, you need iOS 3.2 or later, and on an iPhone or iPod touch, you need iOS 4.1 or later.
- Assuming you meet the system requirements, you must complete a few easy steps to switch to the new Calendar—it's not automatic. Sign in to the MobileMe Web site, go to the Calendar application, and click the Upgrade Now link in the lower-left corner. Then follow Apple's onscreen instructions. (If you join MobileMe as a new user after October 1, 2010, you can skip these extra steps.)
- Apple provides a helpful FAQ about the new and improved Calendar at http://support.apple.com/kb/HT4037.

WORK WITH EVENTS

To see your calendars on the Web, sign in to the MobileMe Web site and go to the Calendar application. (The date on the icon changes to match the current date!) You'll see something like **Figure 21**.

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Gallery

MobileMe Gallery is an elegant way to display photos and videos on a Web page or on an Apple TV—and even enable your friends to upload their own content. Not only do you get a beautiful end result, you get it much more easily than with earlier methods of creating Web pages.

UNDERSTAND GALLERY

Back in the old days—you know, before late 2007—putting photos or movies on the Web typically meant creating a Web page with static thumbnails of each item; clicking a thumbnail displayed a larger image. (That's still the basic process that Apple's iWeb, part of iLife, normally uses.) Although it was possible to get quite a bit fancier, Apple raised the bar considerably with Web Gallery, which enabled users to easily create a richer and more beautiful display of media on the Web. Then, in less than a year, Web Gallery morphed into MobileMe Gallery—the same thing, only better, because now you can create and edit Gallery albums directly on the Web, even if you don't have the latest version of iLife, or are using someone else's computer.

Gallery has two faces: the public face (what your friends and family see when they visit your site) and the private face (what you see on the Web when creating or editing a site). I describe the public side of Gallery next; a bit later, I describe the two ways to create a Gallery album: Create a Gallery Album on the Web or Create a Gallery with iLife.

A published album in Gallery offers all of the following:

For photos and movies shared from iPhoto or on the Web:
You have a choice of four views:

- A grid of dynamically resizable thumbnails.
- A "mosaic" view (**Figure 23**), in which thumbnails appear on the side of the window, and the selected image appears at a larger size.

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iDisk

Your iDisk is like an extra drive that provides 20 GB of storage (5 GB for Family Members in a MobileMe Family Pack), but this virtual drive is located on Apple's servers. You can use it to store anything you want, and you can access it from nearly any computer. By putting items in your iDisk's Public folder, you can also make them available to others (with optional password protection). Because you share that space between your MobileMe email account and your iDisk, the amount of space you've designated for email storage is subtracted from the total available for other files (see Divide Space between Files and Email).

Although 20 GB is a fair amount of storage, you can quickly fill it with photos, videos, Web pages, and other files you want to store online. Even if you purchase extra capacity (consult Buy More Space), you may find that it's too little; all those files—especially digital media—can take up a huge amount of space. In addition, iDisk access is often slow (even as network servers go), making it less than ideal for transferring large amounts of data.

These can be serious limitations, but the key to effective iDisk use is to concentrate on its strengths. Its optimal uses are:

- Providing remote access to important files—using your iDisk instead of a USB flash drive or a CD/DVD to make files available to yourself when away from your main computer.
- Synchronizing information between two or more Macs (or making that information available via the Web).
- Publishing Web sites and blogs, and using Gallery for sharing photos and movies.
- Providing a *secondary* offsite backup for key files.
- Making large files available to other people.

These are my opinions, of course; your mileage may vary. But keep these ideas in mind as you read more about iDisk's features.

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Find My iPhone

If you're an iPhone, iPad, or iPod touch owner, you can use the MobileMe Web site to locate your device if it's lost or stolen. You can also display a message on its screen, play a sound, remotely change its passcode, or even remotely wipe all the device's data (to keep it private in case you're unable to retrieve the device). This feature is called Find My iPhone. (It's actually called Find my iPod touch for iPod touch owners, and Find my iPad for iPad owners, but for simplicity's sake, I refer to it here only as Find My iPhone.)

This feature works more reliably on iPhones and 3G iPad models than on devices without cellular capabilities. Devices with 3G support are more likely to have an always-on network connection—cellular access is pretty ubiquitous, whereas Wi-Fi is spotty. Plus, iOS devices with 3G support also have GPS chips, so their reported location is generally much more precise than for devices that lack GPS. Note, however, that the iPhone and iPad maintain their mobile connections even when "sleeping," whereas the iPod touch won't display any messages or report its location until it's woken up.

ACTIVATE FIND MY iPHONE

Before you can use Find My iPhone, two prerequisites must be met:

- Your mobile device must be running iPhone OS 3.0 or higher (including any iOS version). If it isn't, connect the device to your computer, open iTunes, select the device in the sidebar, and click Check for Update on the Summary pane. Install the latest software.
- You must activate Find My iPhone on your iOS device itself. To do this, tap Settings; then Mail, Contacts, Calendars; then your MobileMe account. Make sure Find My iPhone is set to On (**Figure 33**); if not, tap the Off switch to turn it on.

Note: Although you can set up more than one MobileMe account on an iPhone or iPod touch, Find My iPhone can be enabled for only one of the accounts.

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Account

In the Account view of the MobileMe Web site, you can add storage, change your password or billing information, and make other changes that affect your account as a whole.

To manage your account, sign in, choose Account from the pop-up menu in the upper-right corner—the one that displays your name—and provide your password again. Then click a link in the sidebar to visit the pane with the information you want to change. In this chapter, I look at each of the panes in turn.

SUMMARY

The Summary pane (**Figure 35**) provides an overview of your account. The right side of the pane also includes announcements and status reports about the MobileMe service.

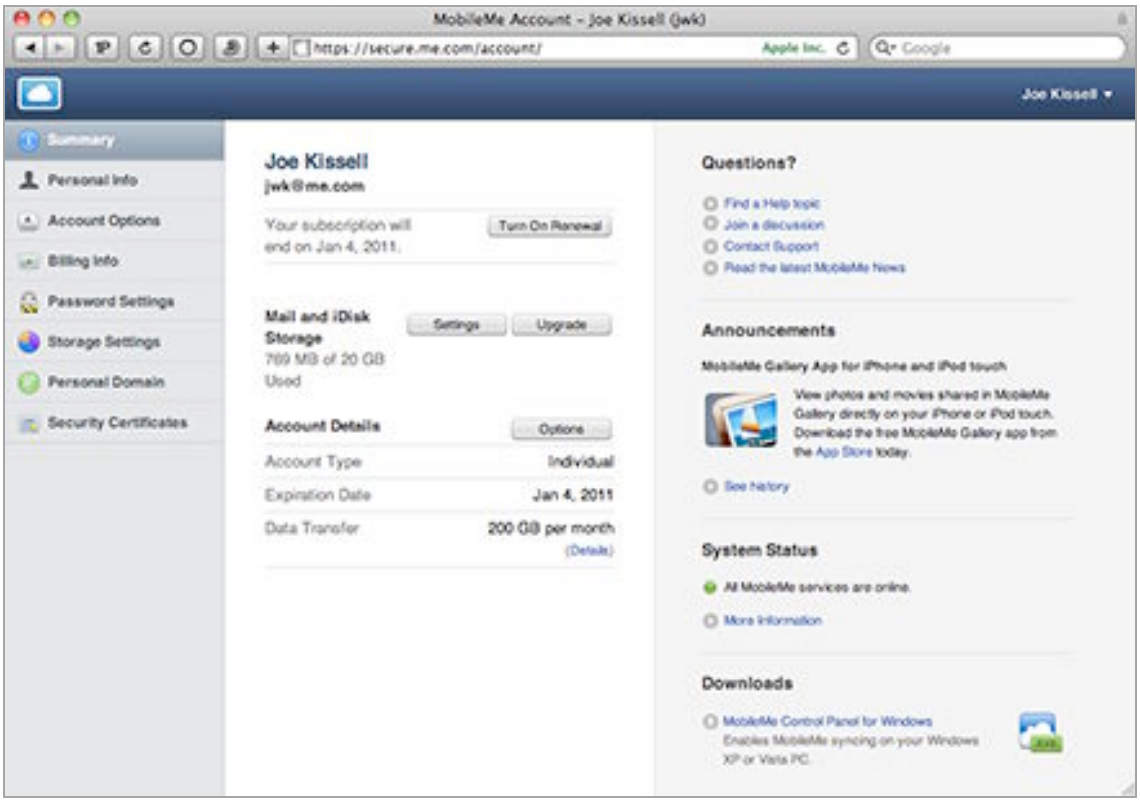

Figure 35: Manage your account settings in this pane.

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MobileMe and iLife

Another important aspect of MobileMe is the way it integrates with iLife, Apple's suite of software for managing digital media on a Mac. iPhoto, iMovie, iWeb, and GarageBand, while all useful on their own, become extra powerful when used in conjunction with a MobileMe subscription. (iDVD, also part of iLife, does not have any MobileMe-specific features.)

CREATE SITES AND BLOGS WITH iWEB

iWeb makes it easy to design attractive Web sites, as well as create blogs; publish podcasts directly from GarageBand; and add content to your site from iPhoto, iMovie, or iTunes with just a click or two. You can use iWeb to create a Web site and upload it to any Web hosting provider, but in this book I cover an easier approach: publishing your site directly to MobileMe.

(Besides creating a site or blog in iWeb, you can also start in iPhoto, iMovie, or GarageBand and send your content to iWeb. I describe those approaches as well; see Publish Photos from iPhoto, Publish Movies from iMovie, and Publish a Podcast with GarageBand, all later in this chapter.)

Note: iWeb offers many options I can't cover here. To learn how to go beyond the basics, see Steve Sande's *Take Control of iWeb '09*.

To create a basic Web site or blog using iWeb, follow these steps:

1. Open iWeb. If you see a "Welcome to iWeb" window, click Close. The next thing you should see is a dialog (**Figure 36**) listing a variety of templates. (If iWeb is already open, click the plus button at the bottom of the window to display the templates.)

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Access Your Mac Remotely

Back to My Mac (BtMM), a MobileMe feature exclusively for users of Mac OS X, lets you easily connect to one of your Macs—or a Time Capsule or AirPort Disk—from another located elsewhere on the Internet in ways that were previously very difficult to set up, if not impossible. Once you have this feature configured properly, using it is every bit as simple as (in fact, it's *exactly* the same as) connecting between two Macs on the same local network in your home or office—generally just a bit slower.

That's the good news. The bad news is that this remarkable capability belies considerable behind-the-scenes complexity, and because some of the many variables required for success may be beyond your (or Apple's) ability to address, you may not be able to get it working in every situation.

In this chapter, I describe what BtMM is designed to do, how to set up your Macs correctly, and how to use its capabilities.

Additional BtMM Documentation

Apple offers a free 8-page PDF user's guide for BtMM, which you can download at http://images.apple.com/mobileme/docs/L358808A_BackMac_UG_070708.pdf.

However, that guide provides little detail and doesn't address many of the situations in which you'll need to jump through additional hoops to get BtMM working properly. For the complete scoop, read Glenn Fleishman's *Take Control of Back to My Mac*; you can access a discount via the link in Ebook Extras near the end of this ebook.

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Back Up Your Files

Since your iDisk is always available as a network volume (at least as long as you're connected to the Internet), and since its contents are inherently offsite, iDisk has an obvious attraction as a repository for backups. Apple even provides MobileMe users with a free utility (imaginatively named *Backup*) to assist in this process.

But, as online storage services go, you can do better than iDisk for backup. And as backup programs go, Backup is not near the top of my list. In short, while I'm all in favor of online backups in theory, I suggest *not* using Backup; and, depending on your needs, perhaps not using your iDisk, either. I explain why in this chapter.

USE iDISK FOR BACKUPS (OR NOT)

Since data on your iDisk is stored safely offsite on Apple's servers, anything you put there is protected against disasters that could affect your computer or local hard drives. You can get to the data from another computer if need be. So it's a reasonable storage space for a modest amount of information. However, here are some reasons you might *not* want to store backups on your iDisk:

- Your iDisk holds only 20 GB of data (or possibly as much as 60 GB, if you've paid for an upgrade), but your computer's hard drive likely contains hundreds of gigabytes of data or more—so you may be able to back up only a portion of your files to your iDisk.
- The more space you use on your iDisk for backups, the less is available for other purposes, such as sharing photos.

Note: The latest version of Backup, 3.2, can recycle older backups to save storage space—see http://support.apple.com/kb/HT3991.

- Copying files to and from an iDisk can be quite slow—even if you have a fast broadband Internet connection.
- As of Mac OS X 10.6.4, transfers to and from your iDisk in the Finder aren't encrypted (although published rumors state that SSL

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Appendix A: Account Conversion Methods

To convert a MobileMe account from one type to another, find your existing account type in **Table 1** and follow the instructions.

Table 1: Account Conversion Methods

To convert *from* this:	***To* this:**	**Do this:**
Expired MobileMe membership	Full MobileMe membership	1. Sign in to MobileMe with your existing member name and password. 2. Click Reactivate; follow the instructions.
Email-only account or Family Member account	Full MobileMe membership or Family Pack primary account	1. Go to http://me.com/upgrade. 2. Follow the instructions that appear.
Full MobileMe membership	Family Pack primary account	1. Go to the MobileMe Account view. 2. Click Account Options in the sidebar. 3. Click the Upgrade button. 4. Select Add the Family Pack to Your Account, and then click Continue. 5. Enter your billing information.
Trial or expired MobileMe membership, email alias, or email-only account	Family Member account	Have the primary account holder do this: 1. Go to the MobileMe Account view. 2. Click Account Options in the sidebar. 3. Click the Set Up Account link next to an unused Family Member account. 4. Click Convert an Existing Account or Convert an Email Alias, as appropriate. 5. Enter the member name and password for your (trial or expired) membership, or select the email alias to convert. 6. Click Continue, and then click Done.

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Joe Kissell is Senior Editor of *TidBITS,* a Web site and email newsletter about the Macintosh and the Internet, and the author of numerous print and electronic books about Macintosh software, including *Take Control of Running Windows on a Mac* and *Take Control of Mac OS X Backups*. He is also a Senior Contributor to *Macworld*, was the winner of a 2009 Neal award for Best How-to Article, and has appeared on the MacTech 25 list (the 25 people voted most influential in the Macintosh community) since 2007. Joe has worked in the Mac software industry for over 10 years, including positions managing software development for Nisus Software and Kensington Technology Group.

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In his increasingly imaginary spare time, Joe likes to travel, cook, walk, and practice t'ai chi. He lives in Paris with his wife, Morgen Jahnke, their son, Soren, and their cat, Zora. To contact Joe about this book, send him email at jwk@me.com and be sure to include the words Take Control of MobileMe in the subject of your message.

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SHAMELESS PLUG

Although I write about computers as my day job, I have a great many other interests, which I write about on several Web sites, including Interesting Thing of the Day and my personal blog. You can find links to all my sites, a complete list of my publications, and more personal details about me at JoeKissell.com.

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