In this chapter, you’ll cure . . .

- Desktop setting problems
- Dock issues
- Finder toolbar aggravations

When you first started Mac OS X, one of the things you probably said to yourself was, “Hey, things look a little different!” Yes, they certainly do. If you have used Mac operating systems in the past, you will notice that OS X brings plenty of new features to the table. OS X version 10.2 (Jaguar) brings only more. As you started working with the new operating system, you may have felt a sense of fear and confusion—and quite possibly aggravation. After all, learning a new interface is no fun.

If you are a new Mac user, you probably started OS X, took one look at the desktop and thought, “Okay, what do I do now?” If you are new to computing, you have a big learning curve to master, and if you are moving to Mac from the Windows world, things certainly work differently.

With some exploration and practice, though, you can master Mac OS X. In this chapter, we’ll get your feet on solid ground by first taking a look at the headaches and problems you have probably encountered right in front of your eyes—that’s right, the interface. Can’t control the Dock? Is the desktop driving you crazy? Are toolbars, screensavers, and other interface options making you pull your hair out? Don’t worry; in this chapter, we take a look at the problems you’re experiencing and the solutions you need!

Desktop Settings Headaches

The concept of desktop settings refers to what you see on the desktop—the patterns, colors, screen effects, and general overall appearance. It also includes Mac’s energy-saving features as well. The good news is OS X gives you plenty of customization features and options—the bad news is that those customization features and options can drive you crazy if you haven’t configured them correctly. Don’t worry, though, the following examples of headaches and solutions will make your life a lot easier!

As you read and look at the pictures in this chapter, keep in mind that I am using OS X Jaguar (10.2). If you are not using Jaguar, some of the options may look a little different on your version, but the same basic steps and procedures apply.
I don’t like my desktop

Cause  OS X comes to you with a default desktop pattern, typically an abstract image of some kind. The purpose of the image is purely cosmetic—it’s there to make your desktop look nice and add some color to your life. The problem is that we all like different things. When you first start OS X, you may hate the way the desktop looks. You can fix that easily, however, because you can change the image to another image, a solid color, or even a picture or group of pictures.

The Painkiller  In order to change the desktop picture, you need to access the Desktop settings, which are found in System Preferences. Follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal section of the window, click Desktop.
3. The Desktop pane appears, shown in the following illustration. Use the Collection menu to select a new collection of images and then simply click the image that you want to use. Close the Desktop window and System Preferences.
I can’t display a picture on my desktop

Cause  OS X enables you to display your own pictures on the desktop. This is pretty nifty, but in order to display a picture on the desktop, first you have to get that picture on your computer and then use your Mac to select the picture you want to display. By default, all picture files are stored in the Pictures folder, which is found in your account folder (in Users on your Macintosh HD).

The Painkiller  In order to use a desktop picture, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal section of the window, click Desktop.
3. The Desktop window appears. Use the Collection menu to select the Pictures folder (if the picture is stored in your Pictures folder) or Choose Folder to browse for the picture you want to display. If you need to choose the folder, a pop-out menu appears so you can browse for the picture, as shown in the following illustration. Choose the picture you want and click the Choose button. The picture now appears on your desktop. You can also directly drag the picture to the square area on this pane.
If you want the desktop picture to take up the entire desktop, you have to provide a picture that is large enough and has a high enough resolution to look good. You can stretch the picture to fit or tile it, but you may have to experiment a bit to get the high quality you want.

I can’t display several pictures in a rotating fashion

Cause OS X enables you to display a single picture or a collection of pictures that alternate periodically. This is a great way to view your photographs, such as a series of vacation pictures, and to remember fun events in your life. This feature works a lot like a rotating screensaver, but the changes actually occur on the desktop. To have the pictures rotate, you need several pictures located in one folder (such as your Pictures folder). Then you have to select the folder and turn on the rotation feature. The Painkiller shows you how.

The Painkiller To use multiple pictures, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click the Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal section of the window, click Desktop.
3. The Desktop window appears. Use the Collections menu to select the Pictures folder or locate the folder that contains the pictures you want to display.
4. Once you have made your selection, click the Change Picture option at the bottom of the Desktop window. Use the drop-down menu to select how often the pictures should change and click the Random Order check box if you want the display order to be random.

The items on my screen are too large or too small

Cause OS X can display different screen resolutions. The resolution refers to the size of the items that you view on the screen. The resolution also affects the quality of what you see. If the items and windows you see on the screen appear too large, you probably need to change the resolution setting. The good news is that you can change the resolution setting easily and find the one that you want with a little harmless experimentation.
The Painkiller  To adjust the resolution, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. At the top of the System Preferences toolbar, click the Displays icon.
3. In the Display window that appears, shown in the following illustration, select a different resolution. Your screen changes to show you the new setting. If you do not like the setting, choose another. Notice that you can also adjust the brightness of the screen by moving the slider knob. Note too that you can adjust the colors. Typically, the colors setting should be for millions, but you can reduce the setting if the display looks odd.

The brightness slider is available only on Apple LCD screens. If you are using an Apple ADC CRT screen, you’ll see a Geometry tab.
I don’t like the appearance of the windows

Cause  OS X can display different window settings that affect the look of the windows you see on your screen. The default settings all fall under OS X’s general appearance, but you may find that certain window behavior just irritates you. For example, the color may not be right or the scroll arrows may not work the way you want them to. Don’t worry—you can adjust these settings to meet your needs.

The Painkiller  To adjust the appearance of windows, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal category, click the General icon.
3. The General pane, shown in the following illustration, enables you to change the appearance and the highlight color of the windows you see. You can also change the location of the scroll arrow, determine the number of recent items to show, and change the smooth font scaling values. You can experiment with these settings to see which ones you like best.

What about Display Color Settings?

You may have noticed that the Display window also contains a Color tab. The color referred to here is the color profile for your particular Macintosh. For example, if you are using a color LCD screen, your system is calibrated for that kind of screen. If you are using an iMac, the color is calibrated for the iMac. As a general rule, you don’t need to change anything here because the default calibration is probably right for your computer. Keep in mind that OS X attempts to take care of you and keep you from having to worry about such items. In most cases, you don’t need to do anything.
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Under the Appearance option, try using Graphite—it’s a new grayscale option that many users prefer over Blue.

I don’t like the screen effect (screensaver)

Cause  Screen effects, formerly called screensavers, give your monitor something to display when you are not using it. You can select from several available screen effects, and you can even purchase Macintosh software that will give you many more if that is something you’re heavily into.

The Painkiller  To adjust the appearance of screen effects, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.

2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal category, click the Screen Effects icon.

3. In the Screen Effects window, shown in the following illustration, select the screen effect you would like to display. You can see a preview of the screen effect in the provided box. Notice also that some screen effects have a Configure button where you can adjust the speed and other settings of the screen effect. Others simply do not provide this option; don’t worry if you...
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You do not actually need to use a screen effect—they are for entertainment purposes only. In the past, an unattended monitor could suffer from “screen burn,” but today’s monitors are not affected by this problem.

**The screen effect starts too quickly, after a very long time, or never**

**Cause** The screen effect is designed to give your monitor something pretty or interesting to display when you are not using your computer. Once you stop using your computer, an internal clock tracks the time that passes. Then, at a configured time, the screen effect begins. However, you can control how much idle time goes by before the screen effect starts, or you can simply not use one at all.

**The Painkiller** To adjust the amount of time that passes before the screen effect begins, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal category, click the Screen Effects icon.
3. Click the Activation tab, shown in the following illustration. Adjust the slider bar to set the amount of time you want to pass before the screen effect begins. If you do not want to use a screen effect at all, use the Never setting.

The screen effect asks me for a password every time I try to wake the computer

Cause  The screen effect has a protection feature that requires a user account password to wake it from sleep. This feature, which is tied to the screen effect, protects your computer if you are away from it so that other people cannot access it. If this feature is unneeded or annoying, though, you can stop it.

The Painkiller  To stop the password wake feature, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal category, click the Screen Effects icon.
3. On the Activation tab, click the Do Not Ask For A Password radio button.
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You can find a number of free screen effects for OS X on the Web. Search for them using your favorite search engine. A good place to start is www.epicware.com.

Stealing Screen Effect Shots
Many of the screen effects are simply JPEG pictures that are stored in the System | Library | Screen Savers folder, but some are actual programs. If you open the Screen Savers folder, you can hold down CONTROL and click one of the folders you see there. On the menu that appears, click Show Package Contents. Another window appears listing the pictures in the folder. You can copy one of the pictures you like and store it in your Pictures folder for use as a desktop picture. Pretty cool!

My Mac goes to sleep too soon, too late, or not at all

Cause OS X has energy-saving features that govern when the Mac goes to sleep or whether it sleeps at all. You may find that although your computer has a screen effect, the effect never starts working because the computer goes to sleep too quickly. Or, you may feel that too much time goes by before the computer goes to sleep. Keep in mind that energy-saving features are just that—features to help you conserve power. However, if the settings do not work for you, you can easily change them.

The Painkiller To adjust the energy savings, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Hardware section, click the Energy Saver icon.
3. In the Energy Saver window that appears, as shown in the following illustration, adjust the slider bar to determine how much idle time passes before the computer goes to sleep. Notice that you can configure a separate sleep time for the monitor if desired.
4. On the Options tab, shown in the following illustration, note that you can have the computer wake when the modem detects a ring or when a network

TIP You can find a number of free screen effects for OS X on the Web. Search for them using your favorite search engine. A good place to start is www.epicware.com.
administrator accesses the computer. You also can have the computer restart automatically after a power failure. Simply click the check boxes to use any of these options if desired.

OS X Dock Headaches

OS X provides a new desktop feature called the Dock, which has been admired and cursed by Mac users since OS X’s release. The Dock, shown in the following illustration, is simply a launcher area for programs, files you use a lot, and different disks. Residing by default at the bottom of your screen, it also contains the Trash and gives you quick access to the Finder. The Dock is divided by an almost invisible vertical bar that keeps things organized. All of the programs appear on the left of the Dock, while documents, folders, disks, files, and anything else other than a program goes to the right side.

Overall, the Dock is easy to use, but a few configuration items can be really annoying. Read on….
I can’t manage stuff on the Dock

Cause  The Dock is a rather versatile OS X feature, and you can manage items on the Dock with a little practice. At first, though, how to manage those problems may not seem readily apparent. I’ll admit, when I first saw the Dock, I thought, “What am I supposed to do with this thing?” The good news is that you can manage the Dock in a lot of ways, and the more you use it, the more you will like it.

The Painkiller  To manage the Dock, practice the following tasks:

■ You can drag items on and off the Dock. If an item will not drag off the Dock, the item is open. CONTROL-click the item on the Dock (or click and hold down the mouse key), and a menu pops out, as shown in the following illustration. Click Quit.

■ You can rearrange items on the Dock by simply dragging them around to different places. However, keep in mind that applications always stay to the left of the Dock and everything else goes to the right.

■ If you need to open an item that is on the Dock, click it once and it opens. A triangle appears under opened Dock items.

■ If you store items on the Dock that contain subfolders, you can CONTROL-click or just hold down the mouse key on the icon to see the subfolders. For example, as you can see in the following illustration, I keep my personal folder on the desktop for easy access to all of my files!
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Pop-out menus will only display 96 items. So, if you have a folder that has more than 96 items, you can only see the first 96 from the Dock pop-out menu. The items are not gone; it is just that the Dock can’t display them all.

- Programs that are open appear on the left side of the Dock automatically. They disappear once the program is closed. However, if you want to keep a program on the Dock all the time, whether it is open or closed, just CONTROL-click or hold down the mouse key over the icon when it is on the Dock and click Keep In Dock.

- You can drag any item off the Dock to remove it from the Dock (when you release your mouse key, it disappears in a cloud of smoke). However, you can’t remove the Finder or Trash icon—or anything that is currently open.

The Dock is too big or too small

**Cause** The Dock’s default size may not work for you. The items on the Dock may be too small for you to read, or you may find that the Dock takes up too much room on your desktop. If you have a lot of items on the Dock, you may find that you can’t see them all. You can adjust the Dock’s size to meet your needs, though, so you need to play around with the feature to find the size that works for you.

**The Painkiller** To change the size of the Dock, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal section, click the Dock icon.
3. In the Dock window, shown in the following illustration, adjust the slider bar to increase or reduce the Dock size.
The Dock’s icons are too large when I hover over them

**Cause**  The Dock’s icons grow larger when you move over them with your mouse. This feature, called magnification, causes the Dock items to jump at you. Depending on your point of view, you may find this nice or weird. The idea is to magnify the item you are pointing at so you can see it better, then click the item to open it. However, you can adjust the magnification feature however you like.

**The Painkiller**  To adjust the magnification setting, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal section, click the Dock icon.
3. In the Dock window, adjust the magnification slider bar as desired. If you do not want any magnification at all, just click the Magnification selection box to turn it off.

I do not want the Dock at the bottom of my screen

**Cause**  By default, the Dock lives at the bottom of your screen. The idea is to give you one place at the bottom of your screen to access items. However, you might need the bottom of your screen for other items, so OS X gives you some flexibility here. You can move the Dock to the right or left side of your screen rather than the bottom (but you can’t put it on top).

**The Painkiller**  To change the location of the Dock, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal section, click the Dock icon.
3. In the Dock window, choose the left or right radio buttons under Position On Screen.
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Items minimize to the Dock too slowly

**Cause** The Dock contains two effects that move items back to the Dock when they are minimized. The first option, called Genie Effect, shrinks the window so that it looks like it is shrinking to the Dock (the same way a genie would return to a bottle). However, this option takes a little longer. If the genie is too slow for you, you can set a scale option that makes the window drop back into the Dock.

**The Painkiller** To change minimization to scale, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal section, click the Dock icon.
3. In the Dock window, choose the Scale Effect option in the Minimize Using menu.

**NOTE** Remember, if you have several items open, you can simply click the Dock icon for the item you want to bring to the foreground. A triangle under the icons tells you what items are currently open.

I want the Dock to disappear when not in use

**Cause** By default, the Dock is always present. However, you can have it disappear when you are not using it. When you want the Dock to reappear, just move your mouse to its location and it reappears on the screen.

**The Painkiller** To autohide the Dock, follow these steps:

1. On the Dock, click the System Preferences icon. If you can’t find it there, click Apple | System Preferences.
2. The System Preferences window appears. In the Personal section, click the Dock icon.
3. In the Dock window, click the Automatically Hide And Show Dock check box.

**TIP** Don’t like those bouncing Dock icons when you open an item? No problem. On the Dock window, just clear the Animate Opening Applications selection box.
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Finder Toolbar Headaches

At the top of each Finder window there is the new Finder toolbar that has appeared in OS X. The good news is that the Finder toolbar is generally easy to use and is helpful in “finding” the items you are most likely to need, as you can see in the following illustration.

OS X gives you the following standard toolbar options:

- **Back / Forward**  As you move through different folders, you can use the Back / Forward buttons to move back and forth—just as you would when using a web browser. You can also use the Go menu to move backward and forward.

- **View**  The click-button view controls enable you to change the appearance of the folder items to icons, lists, or columns. You can click them any time to make the change, and you can use the View menu to change them as well.

- **Computer**  This option opens a window containing disk icons, the network file system, any mounted shares, and related information.
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- **Home**  This option opens your Home folder.
- **Favorites**  This option opens your favorites list.
- **Applications**  This option opens the Applications folder.

**TIP**  
Computer, Home, Favorites, and Applications are all found on the Go menu as well.

**I don’t want to use the Finder toolbar**

**Cause**  The Finder toolbar is an OS X feature but not one that you have to use. The idea is to make navigation around your computer easier and more flexible. The problem, though, is that the toolbar takes up room. If you are pressed for space, consider getting rid of the toolbar altogether.

**The Painkiller**  To get rid of the Finder toolbar so that you do not see it at all, click View | Hide Toolbar.

**I don’t like the icons on the Finder toolbar**

**Cause**  The default toolbar options are simply guesses that OS X is giving to you—however, you can customize the toolbar to include any items you want. When the programmers at Apple wrote OS X, they took some liberties with the toolbar by placing the default icons on it. These commonly used icons are really just to show you what you can do with the toolbar. You are not locked into using them, and they are completely customizable.

**The Painkiller**  To customize the toolbar, follow these steps:

1. Click View | Customize Toolbar.

2. In the Customize Toolbar window, shown in the following illustration, drag and drop the desired icons on and off the toolbar until you have the items that you want. When you are finished, click Done.
Do you really need to save some space? No problem. In the Customize Toolbar window, click the Show menu at the very bottom and click Text Only. The icons you placed on the toolbar now appear with the text instead of the icons, which can save you some real estate.