A Checkbox Away From Greatness

by John Roach

It is never a good day to buy a new computer. There is always a better, faster one next year.

When your Mac is brand-new, and you first turn it on, be mindful of the checkbox that wants to copy everything to iCloud. This also holds true if you reinstall the operating system. If you have a lot of files you will be charged for the storage space on iCloud.

I would rather backup my own files to my own external backup. If you have important files, back them up multiple ways. If they are sensitive, encrypt them. This can all be done with Apple Time Machine, or third party software like Carbon Copy Cloner, depending on your needs.

One of the first things I like to do is to go to the Apple Menu, then to System Preferences, then choose General. I like to change the scrollbars so they're always on. Other things to change while you're in System Preferences are the Desktop Picture, Screen Savers, the size of the pointer, the number of items in your Recent's Folder, which side your Dock is on, Sharing, Security settings, etc.

Yes, set up takes a little time, but in the long run it makes your life a lot easier. I tell my clients that they're just one checkbox away from greatness. This holds true with many things in life.

The next tip is in several stages. The Favorites area of a Finder window is a very handy place to put Folders that you use constantly.

I start by choosing the Finder Menu while in a Finder window, and then choose Preferences. Click on the Sidebar tab, making sure your Home Folder (the

one that looks like a little house) is checked and any other icons that you see in the list that you might want.

Under the General tab in the same Finder Preferences, I change my Home Folder to my default in a new Finder window.

Another organizing tip, when you first set up your Documents Folder, add new Folders with names like Receipts, Local, School, Work, Sports, Recipes, Banking, etc. Once you have these created, named and inside your Documents Folder, drag the ones you use the most into the Favorites Bar on the left of a Finder window, wait for the blue line to appear, and let go. Arrange the most important ones to the top of the Favorites list right under Documents. The reason for this is, when you save a document you will see the Favorites list in a Save dialog box.

It gets better… you can add a Favorites Folder to your Dock.

While in the Finder, choose the Go Menu, then Utilities.

Open the Terminal App.

Copy and paste the statement below in the Terminal window and hit the return or enter key.

defaults write com.apple.dock persistent-others -array-add '{ "tile-data" = { "list-type" = 1; }; "tile-type" = "recents-tile"; }';killall dock

Magically a new icon appears in your Dock.
Next hold down the Command key and click on your new icon in the Dock. You will see some options from a pop-up window. Choose Favorites. Now any Folder that you add to your Favorites list magically appears in your new icon on your Dock.

You can drag any Folder on to the Dock between the dividing line and the Trash can. Any icon that you dragged to the Dock is an alias, so don't be nervous if you lose one, you can always add it back by dragging the original onto the Dock.

A lot of folks ask me about security. That could easily be a topic for a another article. Briefly, for the Home Computer user, most people have a router or a modem/router combination. A good router keeps you relatively safe. <u>Don't open email attachments from people that you don't know.</u>

I also use some extra software. My two favorites lately are Little Snitch and Block Block. Both let you know when Apps that you have on your computer try to phone home, or some other unknown location. Some Apps have to phone home to see if there are updates.

You can change the update schedule on some Apps in their Preferences.

There are links to these and to other helpful and handy Applications on my website, on the Downloads page.

<u>If you are going to use Adobe flash, please make sure that it is set to automatically update itself.</u> If it's installed, you can check its update Preferences in the System Preferences under the Apple Menu.

You don't need Adobe Flash if you use Google Chrome as your main browser; it is built into Chrome.

One more thing… :-)

When you go to restart or shutdown your Mac, there is a dialog box with a checkbox. Make sure that it is <u>Not</u> checked.

The reason for this is, if it is checked, and you have a problem, or a program that has crashed, when you restart it will crash again, and you'll have the same mess you did when you shutdown or restarted.

I hope this helps.

John Roach has been Apple Ombudsman since 1989

I can be found at http://www.roachranch.com. My wife and I have had the good fortune of living in Chatham County for more than 30 years. I fell in love with Macintosh computers when I worked in construction in the 1980s. I have an incomplete spinal cord injury from a fall from a ladder in 2004. I'm in a wheelchair most of the time. Life moves on. Let's all try to be a little nicer to each other. We are all part of the Blue Marble Tribe.