Knowing Your Mac For OS-X Systems

George the Help Desk

One of the problems I frequently encounter at the Help Desk is that people seeking my aid will tell me they know almost nothing about their Mac or how to use it. What often amazes them though is that, in actual fact, they do know quite a bit – it's just that their knowledge is all over the place, as one of them so nicely put it. One day at the doctors' I was looking through one of those magazines you'd expect to find there, when I came across a quiz – don't ask me what it was about, but it gave the reader an opportunity to see how much he/she knows about the subject. The beauty of such a quiz is that the reader is the only person who ever actually sees the results. And, you can't really cheat with such a quiz – looking at the answers will simply teach you what you didn't know before.

The quiz is divided into a number of topics, each with a range of questions. At the end of each topic are brief answers for each question. The way this quiz works is that you give yourself one mark for every question you can answer in a given topic. You can then asses yourself by counting the number of questions you answered correctly out of the total questions for the topic.

What I hope this quiz will achieve primarily is to identify for you your weaknesses. This will help both of us, in that we can concentrate on helping you with the gaps in your knowledge rather than wasting time going over material that you already know. And you never know, you may actually discover that there are topics that you know quite a bit about, where you can turn round and help others.

Jargon
Like any other self-respecting human activity, computing has its own jargon – like it or lump it, you will need to learn some of it. Jargon is really like a shortcut – a way of describing some aspect or activity without going into a lengthy explanation or description. The following illustration may help as you work through the definitions

(Note – the items are in no particular order, for now the explanation is attached to the question)

What is –	
Desktop	It's what you see when you turn on your Mac. It's also an Icon in the Sidebar
Icon	A little picture representing things on your Mac
Folder	A place to keep your files
File	A document, graphic, application, utility – it's the lowest level item your Mac recognises
Cursor	Usually an arrow. The tool that does all the work
Menu Bar	The strip across the top of the screen. Changes depending on whether the Finder or an application are running
Apple menu	The small blue apple on the far left of the menu bar
Operating system	The main piece that makes you r Mac do everything it does. Find out which version you are running from A"pple menu>About This Mac"
Home	This is where your Mac keeps all your stuff – even the junk you have spread out on the Desktop. Also known as the Home folder.
Hard drive	Also referred to as "HD". The thing used to store permanently everything on your Mac. Usually appears on the top right of the Desktop with a name like "Macintoch HD"
Window	The main way for your Mac to communicate with you. Windows display the contents of a folders and hard drives, are used by applications to display documents, and are used by the Mac to ask you what you want to do, for example when you choose "Save as...".
Sidebar	Specific to OS version 10.4 windows, it's the stack of icons on the left side of the window
Click	Place the cursor on an item, and Click once to select it, by quickly pressing and releasing the mouse button
Double-Click	Place the cursor on an item and Click twice in quick succession. If the item is a Document it will open it, if it is an Application it will launch it
Click'n Hold	Click on an item and hold the mouse button down instead of releasing it
Click'n Drag	Click'n Hold on an item then drag the item to another place

Keyboard

The keyboard is your primary means of inputting information into your Mac. In addition to the alpha-numeric keys your keyboard has a number of special keys. It's those special keys that often give you trouble.

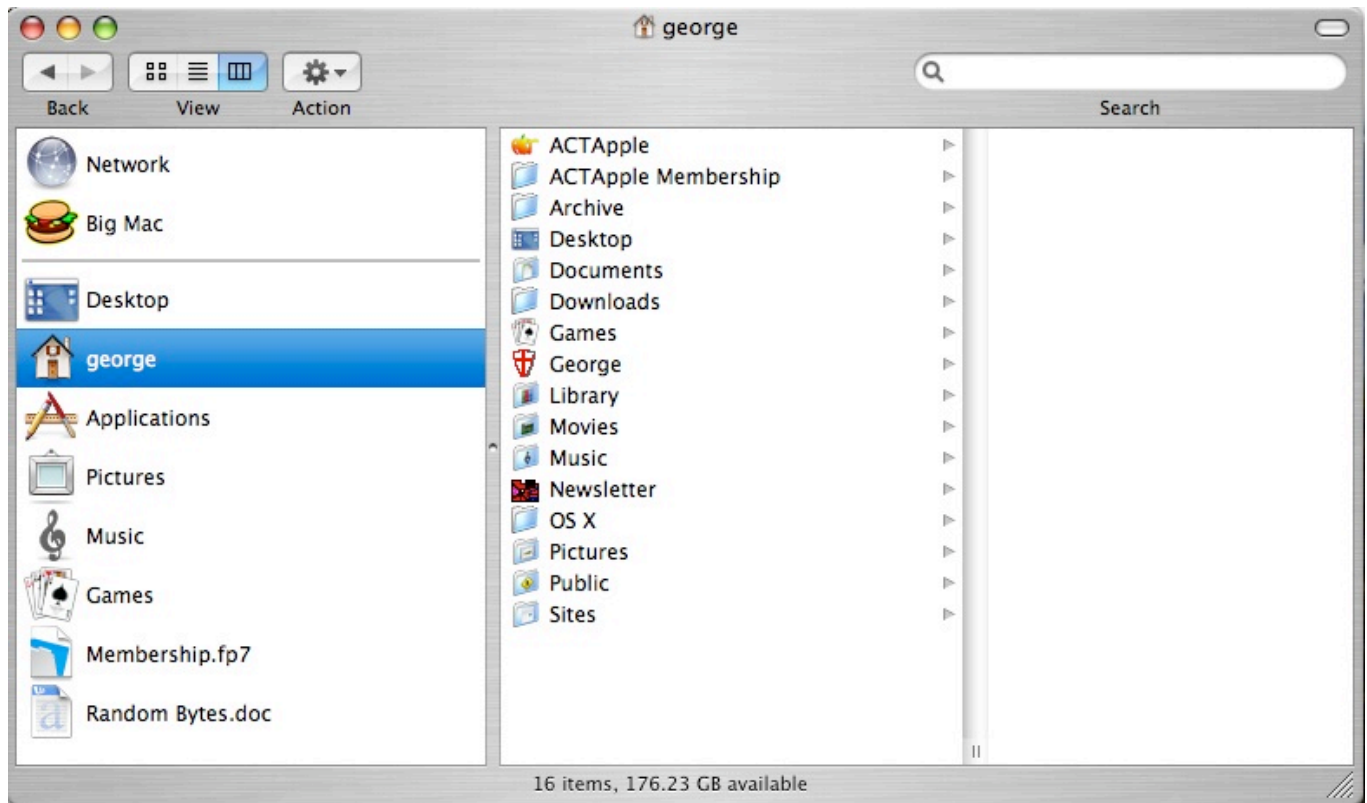| Key	
Command	It's the one with the Apple on it
Option	The label is on the key
Control	Ditto
Shift	Hold it down to produce UPPER CASE letters and special characters
Escape	Labelled esc – it's at the top left corner
Function Keys	Labelled F1 to F16. On a laptop you need to hold the Fn key (bottom left of keyboard) down to activate Function Keys.
Eject Key	Top right hand corner of keyboard, use it to eject disks

Dock

The Dock serves two functions – it tells you what applications you have running and also lets you launch applications directly. Each application is represented by its icon.

There are a lot of icons in my Dock – how can I tell what they are?	Hold the cursor over each one and read the name
If your Dock gets too cluttered, it becomes difficult to use. You should therefore only keep those applications you are actually currently using in the Dock. How do you get rid of those you don't want?	2 choices... Click on the Icon and drag it out of the Dock, or Click'n Hold on the Icon. In the menu that appears click on Remove from Dock
How do I know an Application is running?	It's got a black triangle against it in the Dock
I have my Dock on the right hand side of my Mac's screen – how did it get there?	Apple Menu>Dock >Position on Right
How do I get an Application into the Dock?	Open the Applications folder, find the Application (you may need to open a folder to find it) and Click'n Drag the application to the Dock
How do I get my Home folder into the Dock?	Double-Click on your Hard Drive icon on the Desktop or Click on it in the Sidebar. Look for a folder labeled Users. Open that folder and Click'n Drag the House icon to the Dock
There's a whole lot of white icons in the lower half of my Dock. How did they get there and how do I get rid of them?	They are each windows, and they got there because you clicked on the Yellow button in the top left of a Window. To get rid of them click on each one in turn until they have all gone from the Dock. Now click on the red button of each window in turn to close it. If you've made changes, you may be asked if you want to save the changes.

Finder

The Finder is what you use to organise your work. You will do most of your work in the Finder Window. This is what my Finder window looks like :–

Window title: ⌂ george

Sidebar items:
- Network
- Big Mac
- Desktop
- george
- Applications
- Pictures
- Music
- Games
- Membership.fp7
- Random Bytes.doc

Column:
- ACTApple ▸
- ACTApple Membership ▸
- Archive ▸
- Desktop ▸
- Documents ▸
- Downloads ▸
- Games ▸
- George ▸
- Library ▸
- Movies ▸
- Music ▸
- Newsletter ▸
- OS X ▸
- Pictures ▸
- Public ▸
- Sites ▸

16 items, 176.23 GB available

What's that column on the left good for?	It's called the Sidebar, and provides quick access to your HD, lets you manage CDs, opens your Home folder, your Applications folder and any other folder or document you drag into it. To set up what you want to see above the horizontal divider, go to Finder >Preferences and click on the Sidebar icon. Untick any items you don't use (e.g. iDisk) and they'll disappear. Any "other" items you drag into the Sidebar can be made to vanish by dragging them out of the Sidebar.
What do the Red, Yellow and Green buttons in the left hand corner do?	The Red button closes the window. Unlike in Windows, it does NOT quit the application that is currently running. The Yellow button puts the window into the Dock The Green button maximizes the window to show all of it without any extraneous stuff
What do the three icons in View mean?	The leftmost is Icon view, the one in the middle is List view and the one on the right is Column view.
How do I set it so that the Window always displays my preferred view?	Open a Window in the Finder. Set the View you prefer. Shut the Window without doing anything in it. From here on this Window will always open in your preferred View. You will need to repeat this until all the Windows open in your preferred view. You can get all new Windows to open in Column View by ticking "Open new windows in column view" in the Finder Preferences.
What's with the Gearwheel?	Select an item in the window. Click on the Gear Wheel and you can do a lot of useful things to the item, such as getting Information about it, moving it to the Trash without dragging it there or giving it a coloured label
How do I create a new folder?	3 choices... File >New Folder, or Click on the Gearwheel and select New Folder, or

	Use the Cmd-Shift-N keyboard shortcut.
How do I name a new folder?	Click on the folder name to highlight it. After a short delay (say, count to 2) click on the name ie. "Untitled Folder". Be sure to click on the letters of the name, and not the folder icon. The name will appear highlighted in a box. Start typing a new name

Open & Save

Opening a document, whether for the first or umpteenth time, and saving a document, either while working on it or when one is finished with it are tasks that are basic to using a computer.

Where do I find my Applications?	Click on Applications in the Sidebar. This will show you all the applications you have installed on your Mac.
How do I know what Application is running?	Look at the left hand end of the Menubar, next to the Apple menu, for the name of the application that is currently in front of you. Any application that is running will have its Icon in the Dock with a black triangle against it
How do I open a new document?	To open a new document you need to first find the appropriate application. If the application is in the Dock, click on its Icon. If the application is not in the Dock, click on Applications in the Sidebar, find the Application and double-click on its Icon or name. Some Applications hide themselves inside a folder … Once the Application is open go to File on the Menubar and select New (or use the Cmd-O keyboard shortcut).
How do I save a document?	On the Menubar go to File and click on Save, or use the Cmd-S keyboard shortcut
How do I know where my document is getting saved?	When you click on File>Save for the first time for a document the Application will open a Save window. This will look like a small version of a Finder window, complete with sidebar. At the top of this window is the name that will be given to your document when it is saved. You should change this to something meaningful. Immediately below this document name is a folder name – this is where your document is about to go. If you click on the folder anme, you will see where it lives. If the default folder is not correct, you should use the sidebar to find the folder that should be used. Once these two items are set, you can click the 'save' button at the bottom of the window. If you don't want to save the document, click 'cancel'.