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Lesson 3

Core OS X Applications

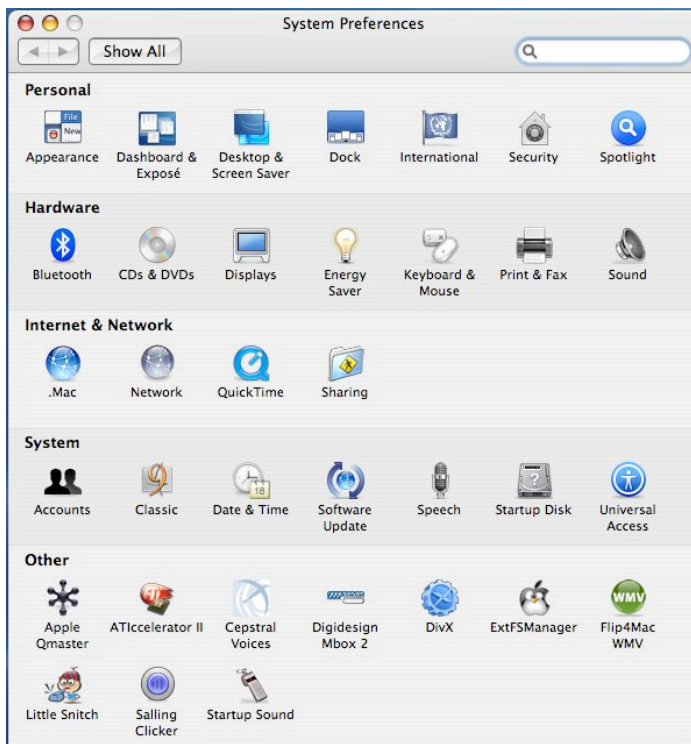
All of the core OS X applications reside in the Applications folder, located at the root level of the hard drive, which you can access by double clicking on the hard drive icon on the desktop.

These applications are split into utilities (stored in their own folder) and general applications, which are all mixed together.

System preferences can be found in the Dock.



You can open it by clicking on it once. This will open the general preferences window from where you can change all sorts of system wide (and sometimes application specific) settings.



This is what the general window for System Preferences may look like for you. Sometimes there will be a few less (or more) icons listed in the window, but this depends on the programs you have installed.

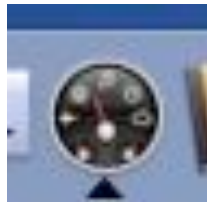
The window is actually known as the preference 'pane' and not a window.

With System Preferences you can change how your computer behaves in all sorts of ways from changing the desktop background picture and screen saver to changing your network settings, hard drive settings, user account settings, spotlight settings and much, much more. Many of the things that you will want to change will be a 'do it once and forget about it' setting such as mouse and keyboard cursor speed, whereas you may want to change some of them more often, such as the desktop background. Because of this, it is usually a good idea to get to know system preferences well as it can help avoid confusion at a later date!

Dashboard

Dashboard is one of the programs that is new to OS X Tiger, and one that is very useful. It is basically a program that launches other, smaller programs called 'Widgets'. These widgets only do one thing and are very small. Dashboard is always turned on – in fact, you can't turn it off. This is not a problem however, because widgets are so small that they do not take up any computer resources when they are not in use.

The Dashboard icon is located in the Dock, right next to the Finder.



When you click on the icon, the actual Dashboard environment will rush to the front of the computer and the open widgets will start to open. To get out of Dashboard, just click once anywhere on the desktop and the program will zoom into the previous view.

Widgets are really useful programs and are easy for companies to make, so you can get a widget for anything, ranging from weather widgets, stock exchange widgets, network rail widgets and even widgets that will show you a joke of the day! Apple have a really good website for downloading and reviewing the best new widgets. You can get there by going to <http://www.apple.com/uk/downloads/dashboard>.

Spotlight

Another of Apple's innovations in Tiger is Spotlight. This may seem like a simple search feature, but in fact there is a lot more to it than that. Previously, search programs, such as Sherlock, were carried out at the 'application level' – Spotlight is built into the OS and is much quicker. This is because Spotlight 'indexes' (takes a snap shot of) your computer and right after Tiger is installed and has a map of where everything thing is. Moreover, Spotlight can actually read into documents to produce an answer to your queries. If you are searching for something and have forgotten the name of the file, it doesn't matter, just type in something that you

know the document contains and Spotlight will find it. This makes organising and finding your files, i.e. Invoices, a lot easier.

Spotlight is located at the top right hand corner of the screen and is seen as a white magnifying glass in a blue background, as seen below:



One of the drawbacks of Spotlight is that sometimes it can take a long time to index your computer, and this mainly depends on the speed of your computer and the size of the hard drive that Spotlight is indexing. Spotlight's preferences are located in System Preferences and here you can turn off indexing for a certain area of the computer by dragging a file, folder or hard drive into the **Privacy** area. However, once Spotlight has indexed your hard drive once it only has to update its index, which it does without slowing the computer down.

Automator

Automator debuts in Apple OS X Tiger and if used correctly, can be a very efficient way of processing files en masse and bypassing the boring job of appending or deleting file names, moving files to a common folder and much more.

Unlike the other programs above, Automator is not listed in the Dock directly after installation of the OS. It is listed in the Applications folder at the root of the hard drive.



The Automator icon

Automator can be quite a complex program to get your head around, but the main thing to remember is that it is a workflow based program, and that each task that fits into the workflow needs to be correctly configured for the workflow to work properly. Incorrect setting up of tasks is usually the reason why 90% of workflows do not work properly 1st time – so always double-check this!!

If you are using Automator to do common tasks, Apple has created a list of actions that is easy to navigate. Also, many users have published their own workflows on various websites so you

can avoid the hassle of figuring out a way to accomplish your goals. Try googling 'automator workflows os x' and see what you come up with, or try Apple's site;

<http://www.apple.com/downloads/macosx/automator>.