Mac OS X Wizardry

Tips, Hints, Tricks, Hacks & Utilities to Solve Problems, Enhance Productivity, and Just Have Fun

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.plist file wizardry

Modify Unexpected Quit behavior

- Why to do it: If you would rather get more (or less) information after an unexpected quit.
- Utility: CrashReporter Prefs
  - Can also use Property List Editor (PLE) or a <defaults> command in Terminal.
- How to do it:
  - Launch CrashReporterPrefs and make selection. OR
  - Change DialogType value in PLE.

Super-enlarge Dock icons

- Why to do it: Just for fun
- Utilities: Dock, System Preferences, & Property List Editor
- How to do it:
  - Enable Dock Magnification: "Turn Magnification On."
  - Change magnification size/slider in Dock System Preferences pane. This just creates the property, if not already created.
  - Open com.apple.Dock.plist in Property List Editor.
  - Change the value of the largesize property to 512 (which is the maximum value that affects the appearance). Save the change.
  - Relaunch the Dock.

Move a Dashboard Widget to the Desktop

- Why to do it: To access a widget without having to shift to Dashboard mode
- Utilities: Property List Editor or Terminal
- How to do it:
  - Open Property List Editor and add a property. Name it devmode and give it a value of YES.
    - [Or in Terminal, type:
      defaults write com.apple.dashboard devmode YES.]
  - Log out and log back in again.
    - [Or relaunch Dock via Activity Monitor.]
  - Activate Dashboard, click-drag desired widget to desktop.
  - Before releasing mouse, press F12 to de-activate Dashboard.

Permissions wizardry

Open applications with root access

- Why to do it: To modify and save changes to otherwise "unsavable" documents.
- Utility and app: Pseudo and any application, such as Property List Editor.
- How to do it: Drag the application icon to the Pseudo icon. Documents will now save.
  - Note: Can also use sudo command in Terminal.
  - Note: BBEdit has its own option to save "unsavble" files.

Packages wizardry

Edit text of dialogs

- Why to do it: Why not?
- Utility: Any text editor (with Pseudo if needed for root access).
- How to do it: As an example, change the text of the unexpected quit message:

1. Go to /System/Library/CoreServcies and open the CrashSubmitter package. [Save a copy before making changes.]
2. Navigate to Contents/Resources/English.lproj and open the crashdump.strings file in TextEdit. Use Pseudo to open TextEdit.
3. Change the message to whatever you like, and save it.

- Note: As just covered, BareBones' TextWrangler and BBEdit let you edit root-owned files, bypassing the need for Pseudo.

Add scrollbars to Stickies

- Why to do it: For convenience.
- Utility: Interface Builder (or various third party utilities).
- How to do it:
  - Open Stickies package. Go to: Contents/Resources/English.lproj
  - Open StickiesDocument.nib in Interface Builder
  - Click Window from Instances. Select Show Info
  - Click on text are of Stickies window so Attributes list of Info window is NSTextView
  - Enable Show Scroller. Save.
    - Note: A backup copy of the original is saved automatically.

Change a document via its file extension

- Why to do it: This is one way to change the behavior of a document when you double-click it.
- Utility: The Finder.
- How to do it: Change or delete the portion of the name after the period.
  - For example, you can use this as an alternate way to get inside a package (deleting extension changes package to folder).

Invisible wizardry

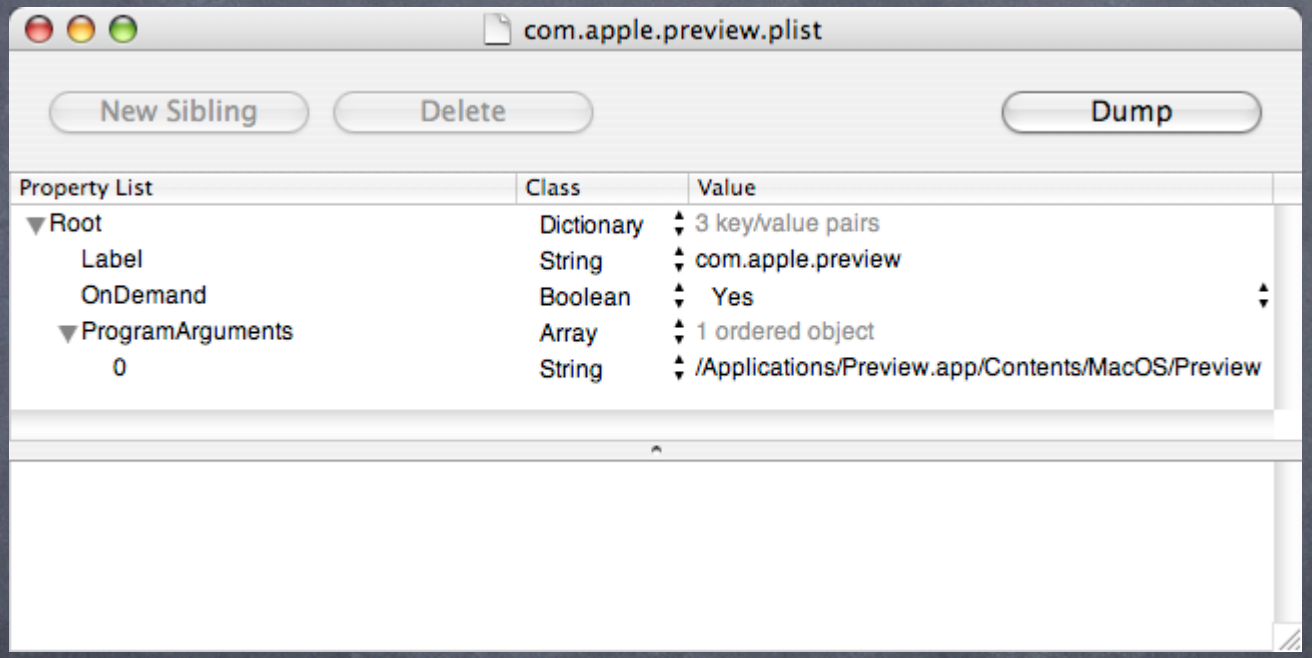
Hide files for security

- Why to do it: Simple security to hide files.
- Utility: Invisibles [or Property List Editor and/or Terminal].
- How to do it:
  - Use Invisibles to make all invisible items visible.
  - Create a folder and name it .TopSecret. Put any files you want to hide in here.
  - Use Invisibles to make invisible files visible again.
  - Redo procedure to access or modify folder contents.
  - Note: Can use Terminal to access/move files in .TopSecret folder.
  - Note: Can use Property List Editor or Terminal instead of InVisibles.

Advanced Wizadry

Create a launchd item

- Why to do it: To see how this new technology in Tiger works.
- Utility: Property List Editor and Terminal.
- How to do it:
  - Create a file with name and text as shown in next display. Essentials:
    - Program Arguments: Identifies program to be launched
    - WatchPaths: Identifies path to folder that, if modified, will cause program to launch.
  - Put file in /Library/LaunchAgents folder.
  - In Terminal, type: launchctl load /Library/LaunchAgents/com.apple.preview.plist. [Or just restart.]
  - Drag a file into folder.


com.apple.preview.plist
New Sibling
Delete
Dump
Property List
Class
Value
Root
Dictionary
3 key/value pairs
Label
String
com.apple.preview
OnDemand
Boolean
Yes
ProgramArguments
Array
1 ordered object
0
String
/Applications/Preview.app/Contents/MacOS/Preview

For more help and info:

Ted Landau's Mac OS X Help Line
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www.MacOSXPowerTools.com

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