News You Can Use

QUICK TIPS

DON'T DEGUNK
You may occasionally see an article presenting various "degunking" and cleanup tips for MacOS X. I haven't found any need to use these tips, and there's always a risk that something may go wrong. As the system changes, tips might become wrong.

LAPTOP POWER
Apple recommends that you plug the power adapter into the AC power *before* connecting it to the computer. I've never had a problem doing it in the other order, but from now on I'll follow their recommended order.

MOVING FROM OS 9 TO X ?
If you're planning to move from OS 9 to OS X, don't trust the version of OS X that came with your computer. It's probably way too old to be useful. Upgrade to 10.3 Panther or 10.4 Tiger to avoid problems.

Chicken Little Dept.   X

The Virus/Worm Issue

You've no doubt seen the recent articles about viruses, worms, and "Trojan horse" attacks upon MacOS X. The short answer? The risk has been blown way out of proportion: don't lose any sleep over it. It seems like every pundit and journalist thinks he's got the story of the century. Maybe all those reporters using Windows were jealous and now they think we've joined their misery?

If You Read No Further

Do just one thing. You should set Safari to *not* automatically do this. Go to Safari Preferences and there's a check-box in the "general" panel. Now you'll have to double-click the downloaded file to take action, so you have a chance to check it before doing anything.

But you can continue reading for more info about the issue.

The Trojan Horse

Some security attacks are called Trojan Horses, named after the famous historical story. You let it into your system, trust it, and find out later that it intends you harm.

People download files then later find out they're not what they seem. For example, one recent Trojan Horse was a so-called image of a new version of MacOS X. Some folks couldn't resist downloading the picture to see what it was.

Turns out that file wasn't an image at all, even though the file name and icon *looked* like it was. Instead, it was a malicious program. People double-clicked it, expecting to open an image with Preview or PhotoShop. Instead, the program did something bad.

Where Did It Come From?

The first line of defense is to *always know what you've got*. Where did you get it? Do you trust the source? If you're not sure, don't open the file. Don't even bother downloading it.

The Virus (aka "oompa loompa")

There actually was a virus released, but it turned out to be very limited in scope. First, you had to "catch" it by accepting a file download while running **iChat**, Apple's instant-messaging program. Then your computer could send the virus to other iChat folks–but only on your local network. There was no way it could go out over the Internet. Since most of us don't use iChat, I

THE FINE PRINT

THE PRICE LIST
Standard Rate is $52/hr.

Apple Remote Desktop help is billed at the reduced rate of $35/hr.

Phone support is free, except if the call runs to a half hour. Then it's billed at the further-reduced rate of $30/hr.

Email support is always free. Ask your questions and you'll get an answer, usually within a few hours.

Invoices are mailed on the first of each month, covering charges incurred during the prior month. (So, for example, you'll be billed on May 1st for work done in April.)

New Clients receive a one-time half hour discount !

WHAT'S IMPORTANT
Solving your problem the *right* way, as much as humanly possible.

Not making things worse. Some support folks try to fix one problem and end up creating new ones. Where does that leave you?

Keeping your costs down. It's more important to provide good service than to squeeze out a few more bucks. When you see a "comp" item on an invoice, it's my way of helping to keep your costs low.

think we needn't worry.

The "Zero Day Exploit" in Safari

This one is real. Normally, Safari is set to "Open 'safe' Files," so it opens jpg images, pdfs, and unstuffs downloads. A malicious download could run a program while masquerading to be one of the "safe" file types. This could happen when you simply click a link on a web page.

You should set Safari to *not* automatically do this. Go to Safari Preferences and there's a check-box in the "general" panel. Now you'll have to double-click the downloaded file to take action, so you have a chance to check it before doing anything.

The Bluetooth Worm (aka "inqtana.a")

Since this worm can only attack within 30 feet of your computer, I don't think it's an issue.

*Some Things Are Never Fast Enough*_____ **all**

Thinking About DSL?

If you're planning to upgrade from dialup Internet service to DSL, it's wise to first check with `www.sbc.com` to verify availability. DSL (*Digital Subscriber Line*) service uses the local phone lines to get high-speed data to your home or office. Because SBC owns the lines, they are the ultimate provider of the data bits on the wire.

DSL performance depends on *how many miles of wire* between your home and the phone company's Central Office (CO). (Here in Cambria, that building is on Bridge Street across from the Post Office.) SBC knows the distance from your home to the CO, and they base their sales decision on that distance: if you're too far away, the webs site says that DSL isn't available for you. SBC guarantees a minimum of 384Kbits per second speed. (Dialup is 56K at best.) Note that you can't always guess your "wire distance" to the CO, because phone wires often go over hill and dale to get to you. You really have to use SBC's web site.

Earthlink has been aggressively offering "Earthlink DSL" service, especially here in Cambria. But Earthlink doesn't really check your wire distance: instead, they just assume you're close enough for DSL to work. If it doesn't work, they just have you cancel. If it doesn't *perform well*, Earthlink doesn't care, because they don't guarantee any performance level.

Why would you go with Earthlink? You get to keep your `earthlink.com` email address. If you switch to SBC, your email will be `something@sbcglobal.net`. Pricing may be different, though at this time SBC seems to be more aggressive. Beware, though, that both services' prices are for the first six to twelve months: after that the prices go back to normal. Ask about the price after the introductory period.

Charter Cable's *Charter Pipeline* high-speed product is good for those with existing Charter TV service, but it tends to cost more than either DSL offering. If you *don't* use Charter for your TV service, they'll tack on a surcharge too. But Charter offers speeds up to 3Mbits (3000Kbits) for their $49 top-speed price.

Speed

Charter offers either 768Kb or 3Mbits (3000K) service. They guarantee approximate performance at those speeds.

SBC DSL guarantees 384Kbits, with speeds possible up to 1.5Mbits (depending on wire distance and wire condition). You're only guaranteed 384K.

Earthlink provides no speed guarantee at all. Often you can get 384K or lower speed where SBC would refuse service (because their guarantee would be a problem).