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CUSTOMIZING YOUR MAC

It's your Mac—why not have some fun with it? There are myriad ways to make your Mac your own, from changing its desktop picture, its icons, and even your own login icon to changing the way the Finder works and responds to you. You can even change the Finder's language to any of a couple dozen alternatives, including Asian languages, or you can set up your Mac to talk to you—and listen for your responses.

Your custom settings are associated with your login name, so they're automatically put into action each time you log in. When other users log in, their own settings are activated. That means a single Mac can offer each user a custom experience. Your custom settings can include useful preferences such as network locations and more fun preferences such as your desktop wallpaper.

In this part you'll learn how to customize the Finder, the Dock, the desktop, your screen saver, and your security preferences. You'll also learn how to make your own Dashboard widgets—tiny custom programs that you can build from pieces of your favorite websites. If you move your computer around or switch networks a lot, you'll benefit from the “Creating Custom Network Locations” task, which shows how to create custom location settings that change all your network preferences with a single click.



TAKING ADVANTAGE OF CUSTOM SETTINGS

Magnify Dock icons

Build custom widgets for Dashboard

Choose your desktop wallpaper

Choose a screen saver

Set language preferences

Secure your files

Resize and reposition the Dock

Set Finder preferences

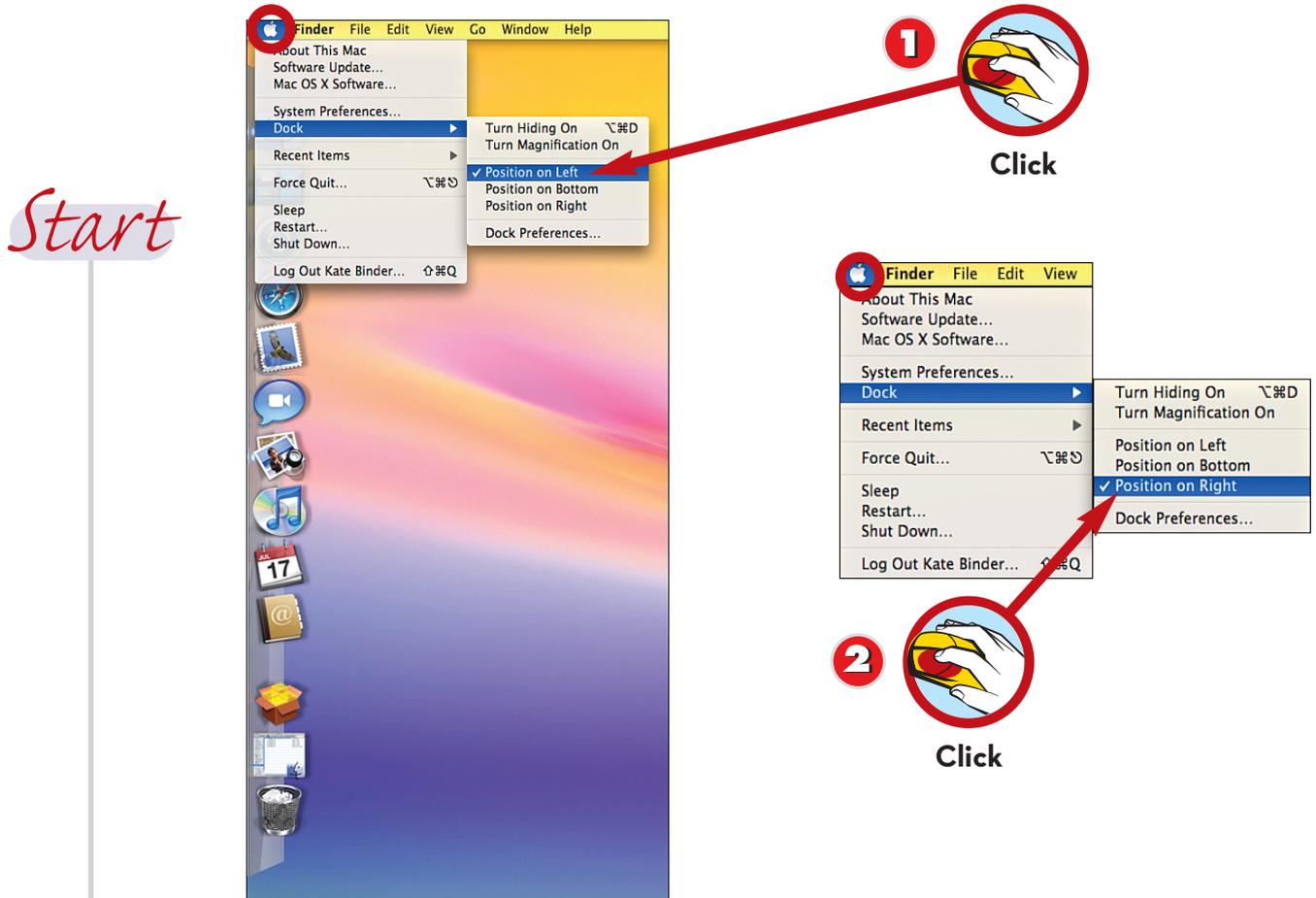
Change your login icon

Save groups of network settings

The image shows a Mac OS X desktop environment. A Safari browser window is open at the top, displaying the Apple website. The System Preferences window is open on the right, showing various settings categories like Personal, Hardware, Internet & Network, and System. The Finder Preferences window is open in the center, showing options for desktop items and window behavior. The Dock is visible at the bottom left, and the desktop background is a colorful abstract image. Red arrows point from text labels to specific elements: 'Magnify Dock icons' points to the Dock; 'Build custom widgets for Dashboard' points to the Dashboard widget; 'Choose your desktop wallpaper' points to the desktop background; 'Choose a screen saver' points to the Desktop & Screen Saver preference pane; 'Set language preferences' points to the International preference pane; 'Secure your files' points to the Security preference pane; 'Resize and reposition the Dock' points to the Dock; 'Set Finder preferences' points to the Finder Preferences window; 'Change your login icon' points to the Accounts preference pane; and 'Save groups of network settings' points to the Network preference pane.

MOVING THE DOCK AROUND

Although the Dock normally lives at the bottom of your screen, it doesn't have to stay there. If you prefer, you can put it on the left or right side of the screen instead. No matter which edge of the screen it's on, the Dock works the same way and you can set its preferences to suit your tastes.



- 1** Choose **Apple menu, Dock, Position on Left** to move the Dock to the left edge of the screen.
- 2** Choose **Apple menu, Dock, Position on Right** to move the Dock to the right edge of the screen.

End



TIP

Hide and Go Dock

To hide the Dock, choose the **Apple menu, Dock, Turn Hiding On**; the Dock sinks off the edge of the screen whenever you're not using it. Move your mouse back to that edge, and the Dock pops back up.



NOTE

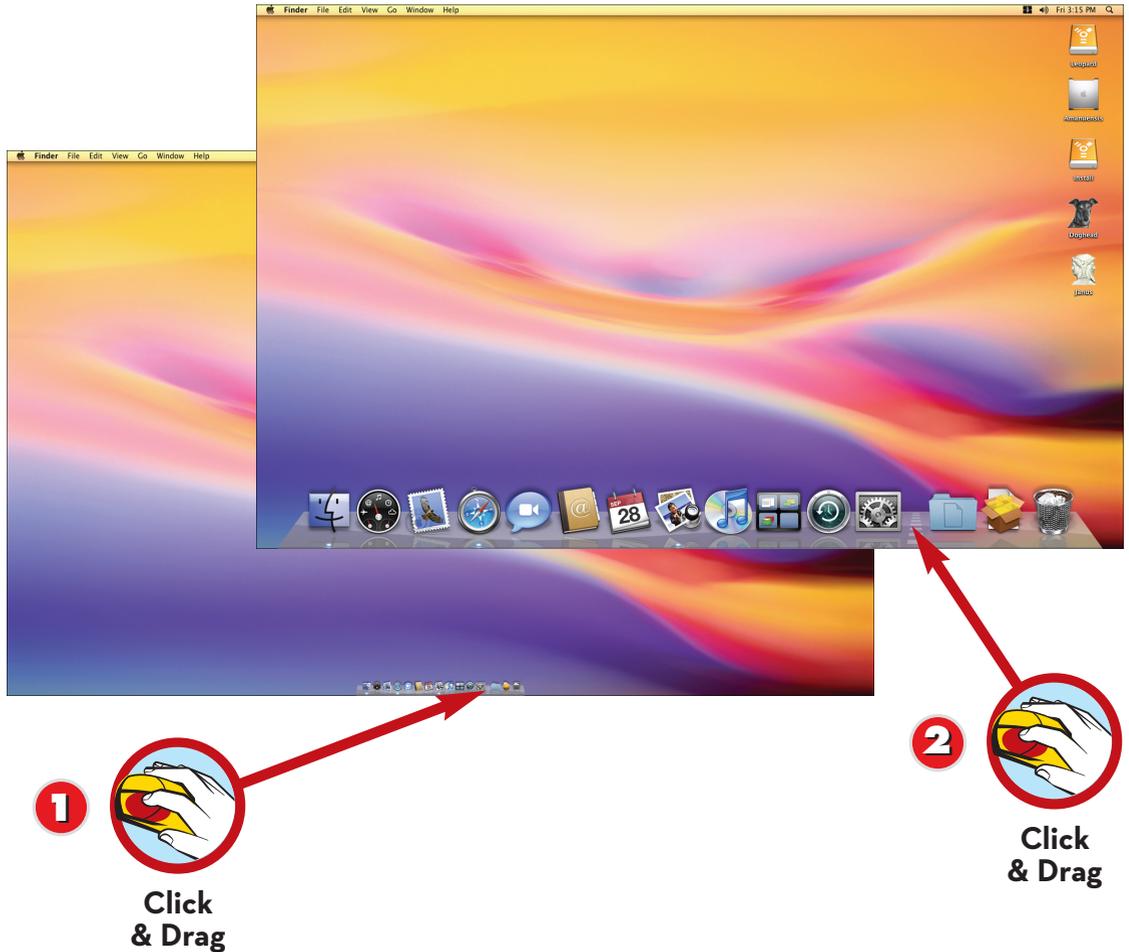
Dock Substitutes

The Dock can get crowded if you store everything there. Some users use the Dock as an application switcher, with inactive programs and documents stored in a third-party Dock substitute such as DragThing (www.dragthing.com).

CHANGING THE DOCK'S SIZE

The more stuff you stash in the Dock, the more room it takes up on your screen. If it gets too full, you can shrink it to give you more room onscreen—or, if you prefer, you can make it larger so it's easier to see what it contains.

Start



- 1** Click the line between the two halves of the Dock and drag upward to enlarge the Dock.
- 2** Drag downward to reduce the Dock's size.

End



TIP

There's Always Another Way

You can also use the Dock Size slider in the Dock preferences (choose the **Apple menu, Dock, Dock Preferences**) if you happen to be going there to change other preferences as well.



CUSTOMIZING THE DOCK'S BEHAVIOR

As if moving the Dock around and changing its size weren't enough, there's yet more you can do to make the Dock work just the way you want it to. The Dock preferences enable you to control the way the Dock moves—or, more precisely, the way its icons move and change size and the way windows enter the Dock.

Start

1 Click

2 Click & Drag

3 Click

4 Click

End

1 Choose **Apple** menu, **Dock**, **Dock Preferences**.

2 Click and drag the **Magnification** slider toward **Max** if you want Dock icons to be enlarged as you pass the mouse cursor over them.

3 Choose an option from the **Minimize using** pop-up menu.

4 Click the **Animate opening applications** check box to make Dock icons bounce as their programs start up.



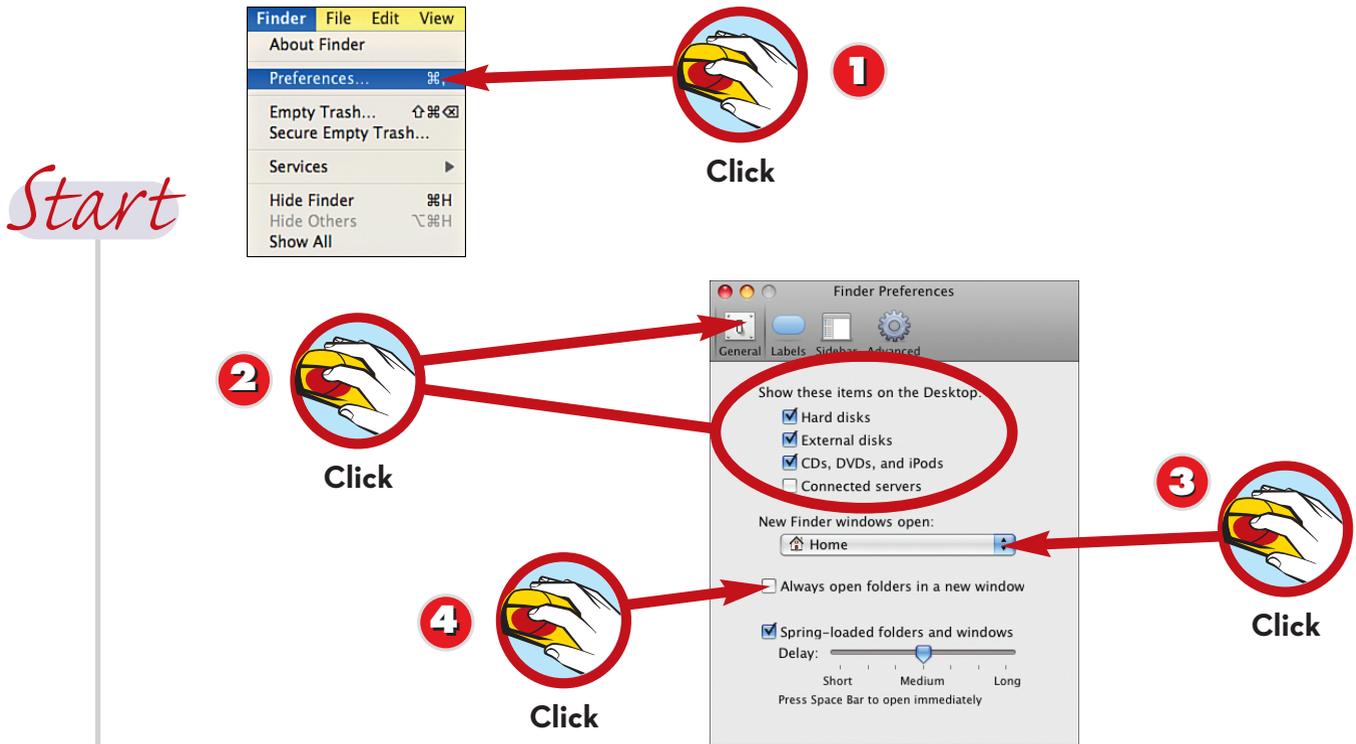
TIP

Dock Behavior in Another Context

You can control Dock Preferences by **Ctrl-clicking** the dividing line between the halves of the Dock. The contextual menu has controls for magnification, hiding, position, and the minimization effect, as well as a Dock Preferences command.

CHANGING THE WAY THE FINDER WORKS

The Finder—the program that generates the desktop and enables you to explore your hard drive and network drives visually via windows—is where you’ll spend a lot of time while using your Mac. You have several choices about the way it operates; here’s how to set up the Finder to suit your tastes.



1 In the Finder, choose **Finder, Preferences**.

2 Click the **General** button to see basic Finder preferences, and then click check boxes to set the kinds of disks to appear on the desktop.

3 Choose an option from the **New Finder windows open** pop-up menu to determine which folder or disk location appears in new Finder windows.

4 Click the check boxes to set whether each folder generates a new window and whether new windows start out in Column view.

End



TIP

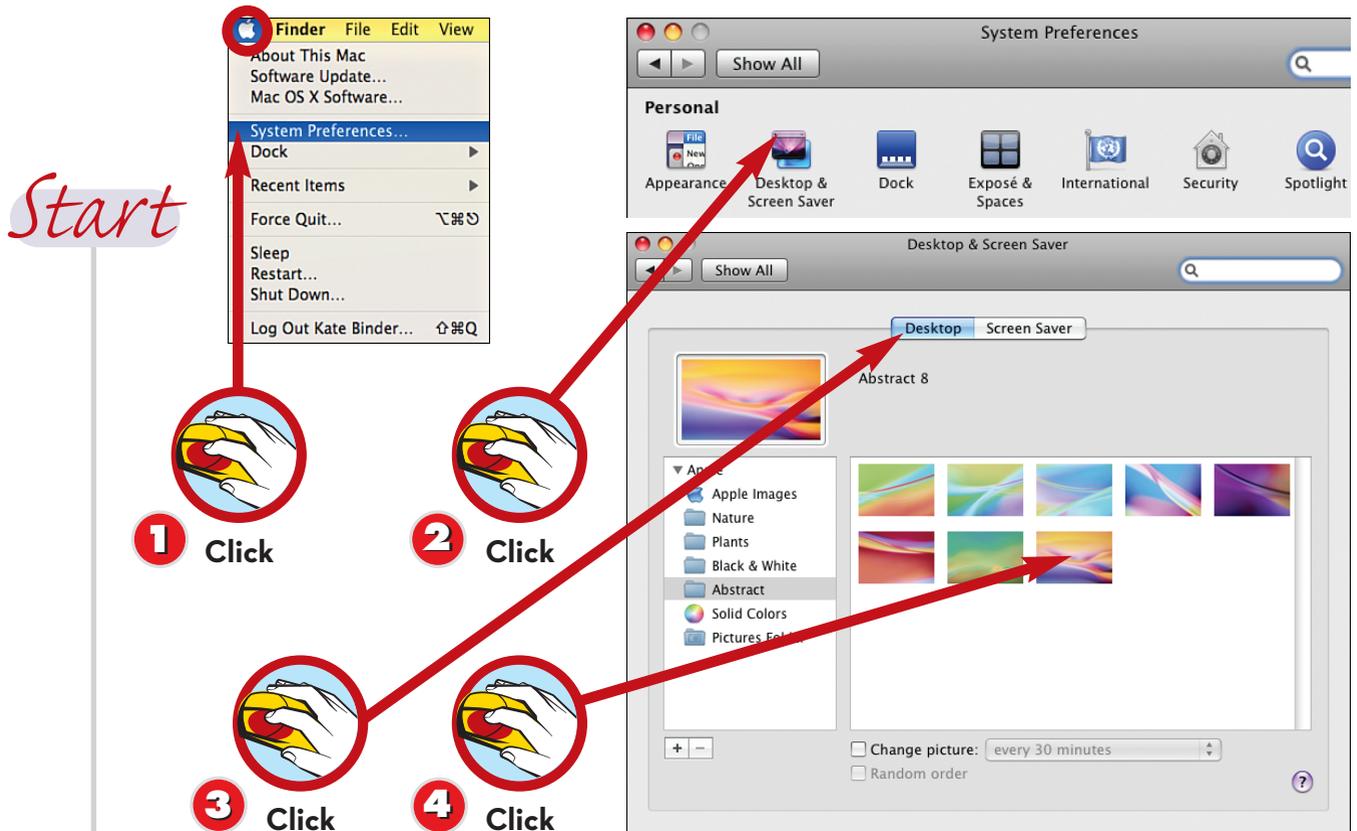
Finding Files with the Finder

The Finder got its name for its capability to find files. To find files in the Finder, choose **File, Find** or press **F9** and type in the information for which you want to search.



CHANGING YOUR DESKTOP PICTURE

Every time you sit down in front of your Mac, you're looking at your desktop—or, more specifically, at the picture displayed on it. Why not have some fun with it? You can change the desktop picture any time you like, using any photo, cartoon, or other graphic that catches your fancy.



- 1** Click the **Apple** menu, **System Preferences**.
- 2** Click the **Desktop & Screen Saver** icon to see your choices.
- 3** Click the **Desktop** button.
- 4** Click a folder and an image from within the folder to apply that image to the desktop.

End



TIP

Surprise Me

If you want your desktop picture to change automatically, click **Choose Folder** in the Desktop tab and pick a folder full of your favorite images. Then check **Change picture** at the bottom of the Desktop tab and choose a time interval.



NOTE

The Mother Lode

Looking for more desktop pictures to relieve your boredom? You can download hundreds of high-quality desktop images at MacDesktops (www.macdesktops.com).

CHANGING YOUR LOGIN ICON

Your login icon represents your face within the world of your Mac. It's used as your buddy icon for online messaging in iChat, it appears next to your personal information in the Address Book, and you see it every time you log in. You can use one of the built-in pictures, or you can add any picture you like—your photo or anything else.

Start

1 Click **1**

2 Click **2**

3 Click

4 Click & Drag

End

- 1 Choose **Apple menu**, **System Preferences**.
- 2 Click the **Accounts** icon to see your choices.
- 3 Click the **Password** button; then click your picture and choose **Edit Picture** in the pop-up menu.
- 4 Drag or paste an image file into the Images window, drag the image and the scaling slider until the square shows the area you want for the icon, and then click **Set** to make it your login picture.



CAUTION

Using Your Own Picture

If you're concerned about privacy, it might not be wise to use your own photo as a login icon. If people you don't know will see the photo—as an iChat icon, for instance—you might want to substitute a personal logo of some type.



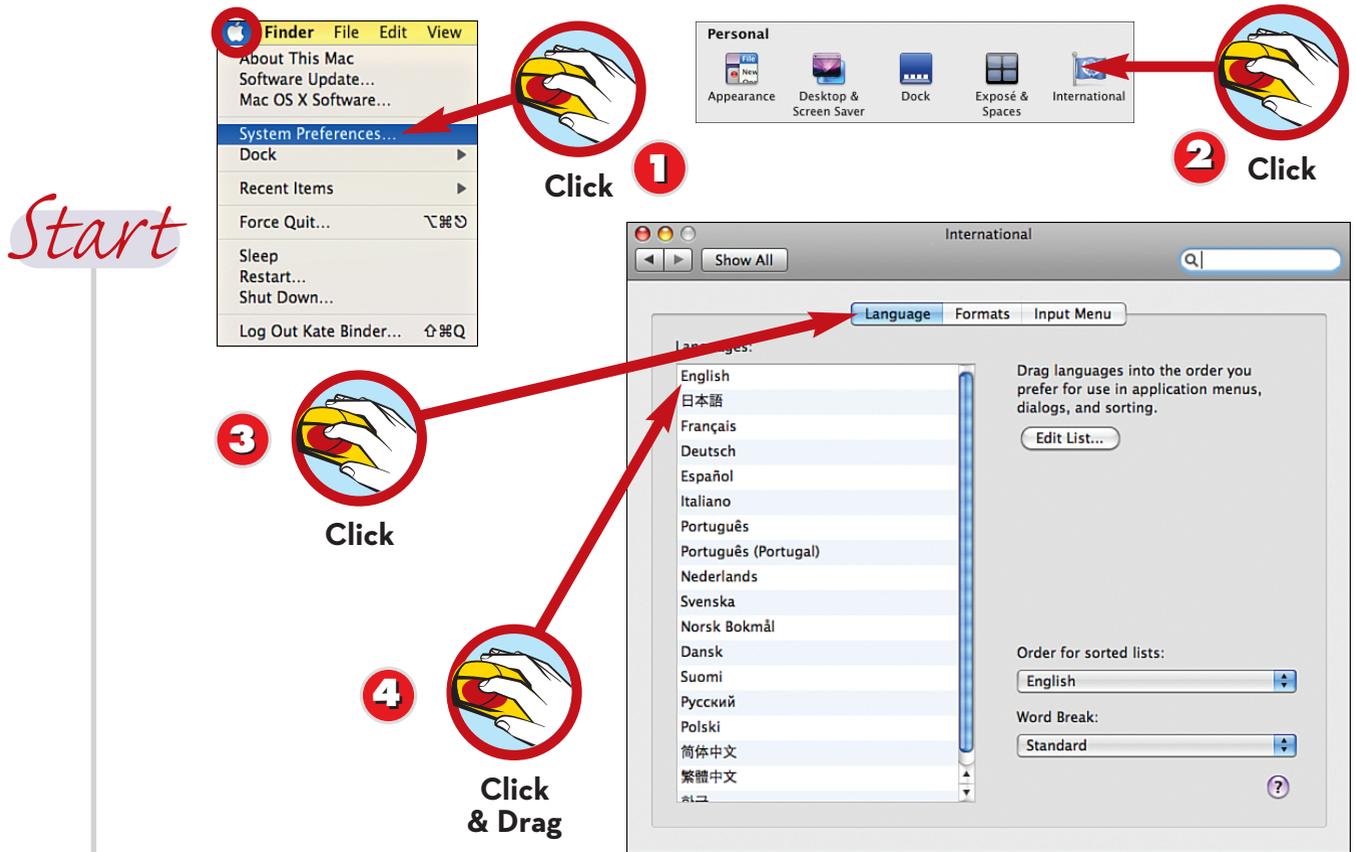
TIP

I'm Ready for My Close-Up, Mr. Jobs

If you have an iSight camera, either standalone or built into your Mac, you can use it to take a picture right from the Images window and turn that photo into an icon on the spot.

CHANGING YOUR MAC'S LANGUAGE

You might have thought that you would need to buy a special version of Mac OS X if you want your Mac's interface to use a language other than English. Actually, Mac OS X ships with the capability to display menus, dialog boxes, and other interface elements in a couple dozen languages, including those with special alphabets.



- 1** Choose **Apple menu, System Preferences.**
- 2** Click the **International** icon to see your choices.
- 3** Click the **Language** button.
- 4** Click and drag your preferred language to the top of the pick list.

End



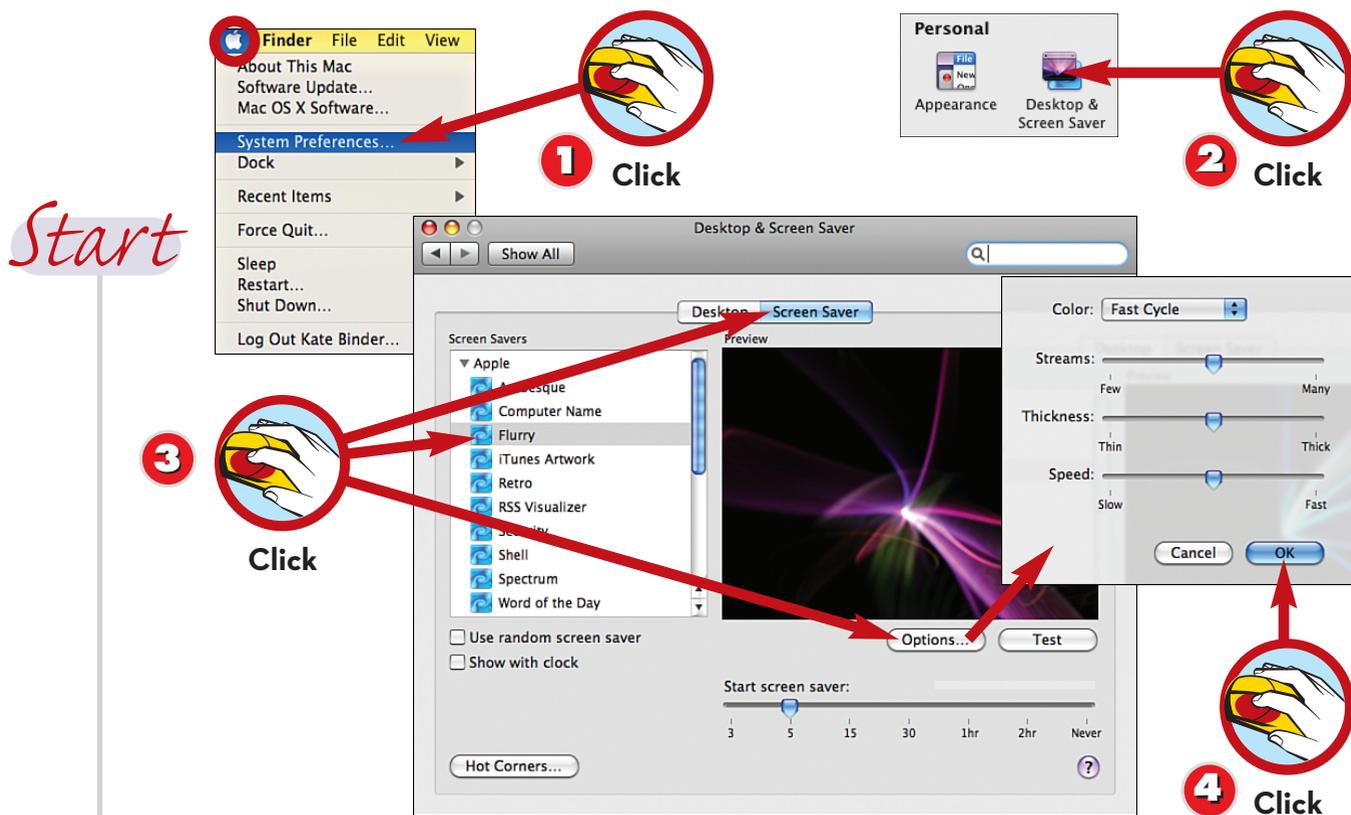
TIP

Making a Menu

When you switch languages, you should also switch keyboard layouts to activate each language's special characters. In the International preferences' Input Menu tab, you can create a menu of the languages you use, then click the **Show input menu in menu bar** box so you can switch keyboard layouts quickly.

CHANGING YOUR SCREEN SAVER

Originally invented to stop the kind of screen burn-in that you see on automatic teller machines, screen savers are actually little more than a pretty entertainment these days. But that shouldn't prevent you from using them; screen savers provide some privacy, shielding your screen from casual observers, as well as being fun to look at.



- 1** Choose **Apple** menu, **System Preferences**.
- 2** Click the **Desktop & Screen Saver** icon to see your choices.
- 3** Click the **Screen Saver** button, and then click a screen saver in the list to select it. Click the **Options** button.
- 4** Use the settings in this dialog box to change settings specific to each screen saver. Click **OK** when finished.

End



TIP

Got Savers?

If you're not satisfied with the built-in selection of screen savers—or if you've run through them all and are desperately in need of new ones—check out www.macscreensavers.com.



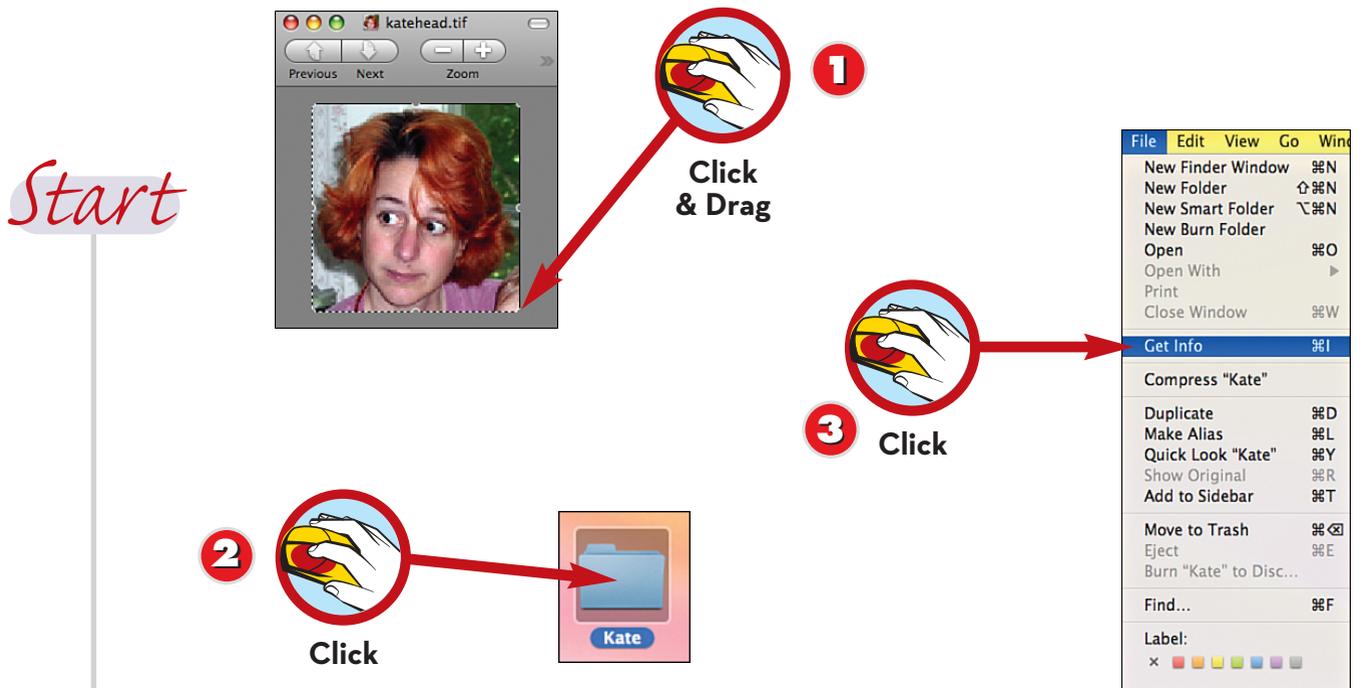
TIP

A Screen Saver All Your Own

For a custom screen saver, put your favorite photos in a folder and click **Choose Folder** in the Screen Saver pane's pick list. Locate the folder you want to use and your Mac uses the "Ken Burns" effect to animate your photos.

CHANGING FILE ICONS

Mac OS X has wonderful graphics; it's a lovely looking operating system, and that's due in large part to its detailed, scalable icons. One of the easiest—and coolest—customizations you can perform on your Mac is to apply the system's dexterity with icons to your own homemade icons. You can turn any picture you like into an icon.



- 1** In Preview or another graphics program, select part or all of an image to be the new icon. Press **⌘-C** to copy the selection.
- 2** In the Finder, click to select the file whose icon you want to change.
- 3** Choose **File, Get Info** to see the file's Info window.

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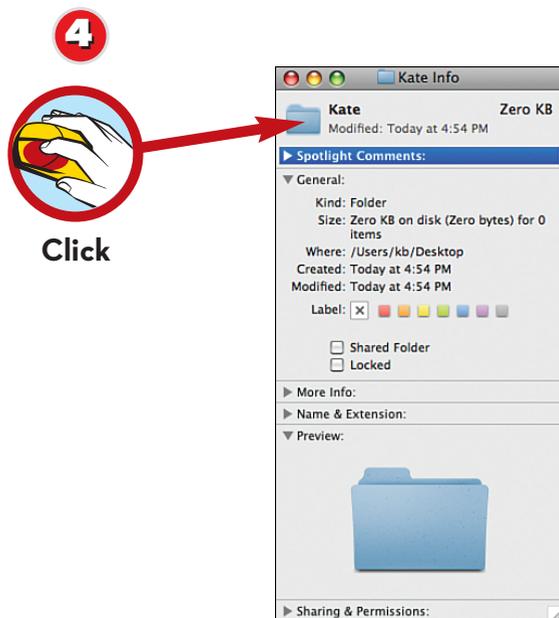


NOTE

More Fun with Icons

You can copy and paste existing icons, too. For a great collection of free Mac icons you can download and apply to your files and folders, check out the Iconfactory (www.iconfactory.com).





- 4** Click the icon shown in the Info window.
- 5** Press ⌘-V and the new image is pasted into the icon area.

End



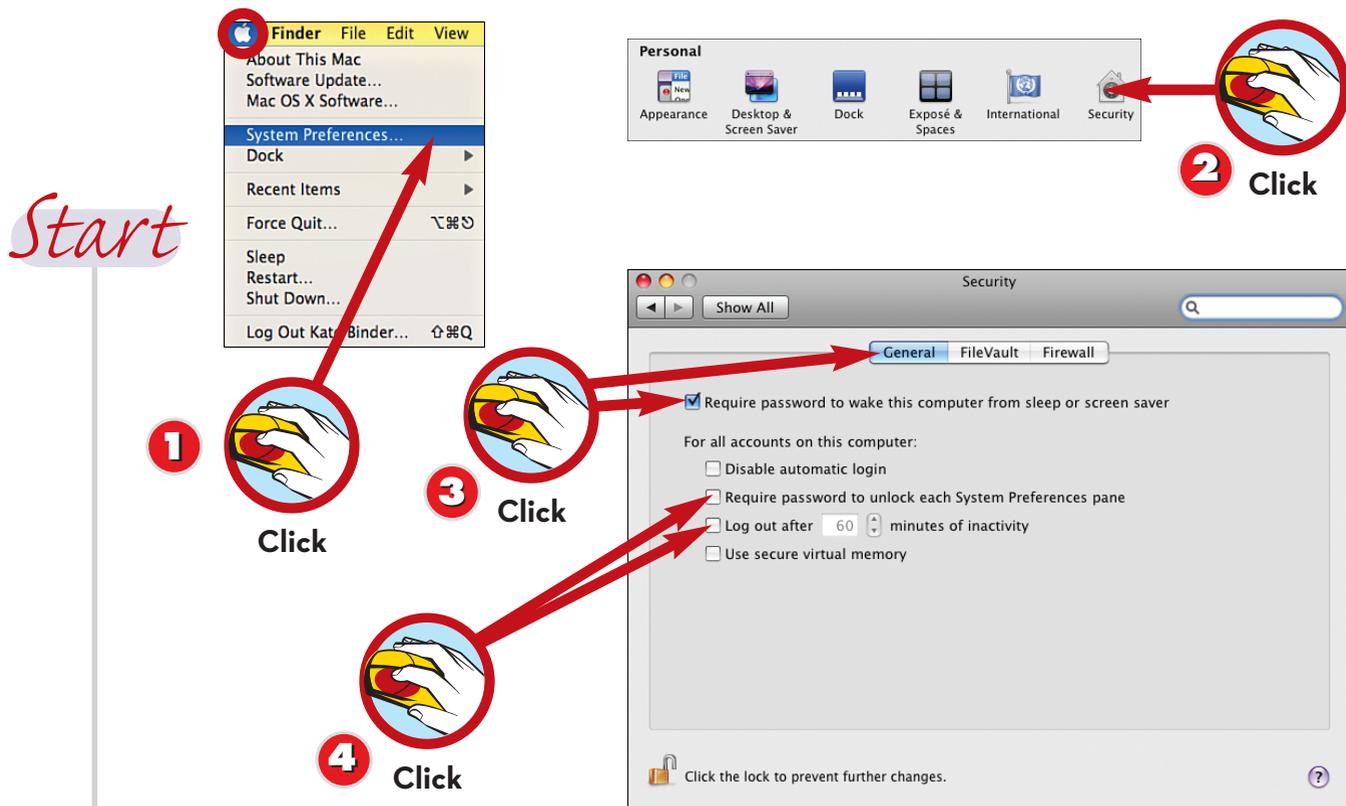
TIP

For Best Results

The bigger the picture you use to create an icon, the more detailed the icon will be when it's scaled to its largest size. With that in mind, however, remember that at small sizes, simple, clear, less-detailed images are the easiest to identify.

INCREASING YOUR MAC'S SECURITY

Whether these settings are important to you depends on how vulnerable your Mac is to snoopy intruders. If your computer is in a dorm room or an open office, or if it's a PowerBook, you'll probably want to put at least some of these measures in place to ensure that unauthorized people can't use it.



- 1** Choose **Apple menu, System Preferences.**
- 2** Click the **Security** icon to see your choices.
- 3** Click the **General** button, and then click the **Require password** check box to make sure that only you can wake the computer up when it's sleeping.
- 4** Click the check boxes next to the other options to turn them on or off.

End



NOTE

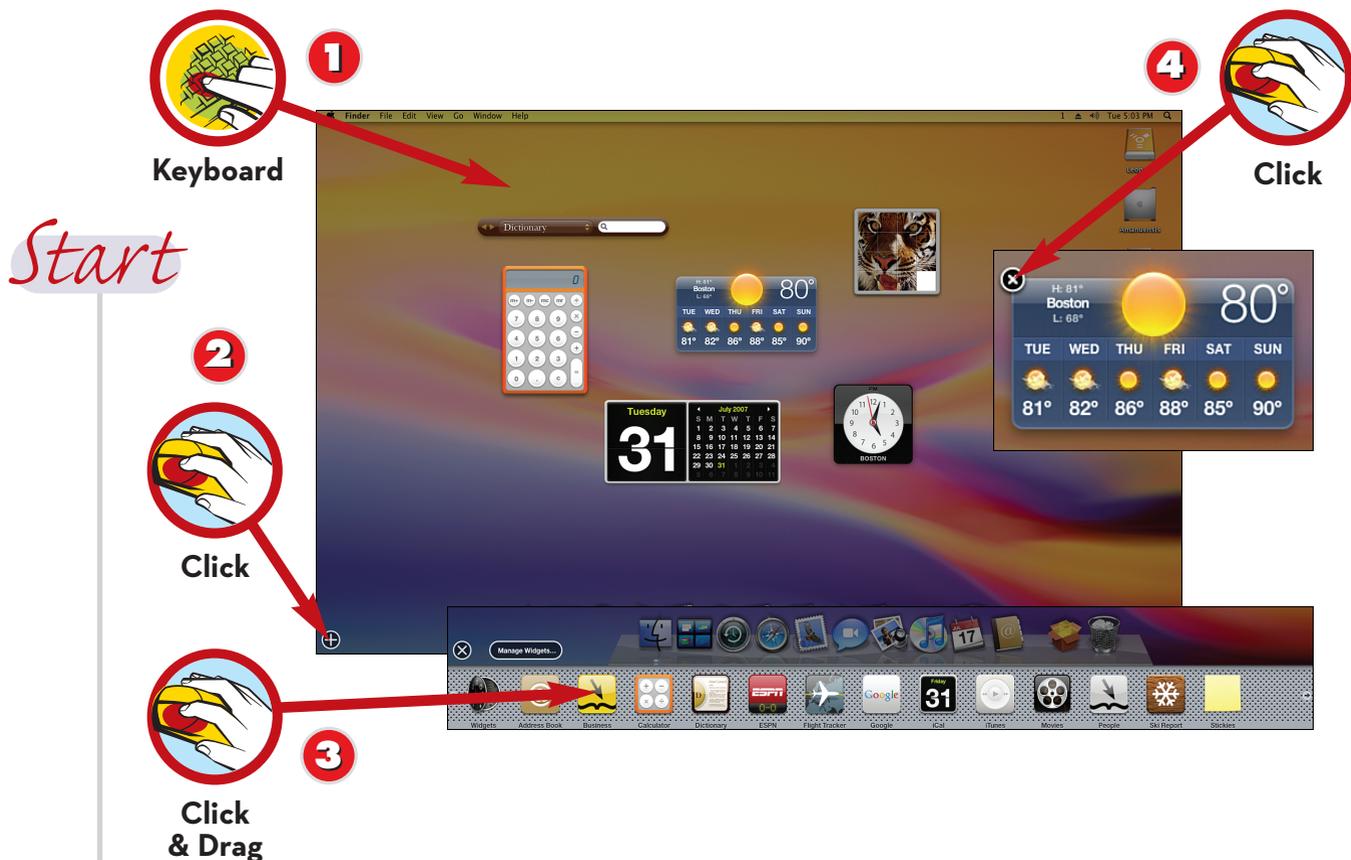
Learning to Live Together

To learn about ways to get along when you share your Mac with other users, turn to Part 11, "Sharing Your Mac with Multiple Users."



USING THE DASHBOARD

Naturally, the Dashboard is where you keep indicators, gauges, and other useful things. This handy feature enables you to quickly access helpful desk accessories and just as quickly sweep them out of the way when you're done using them.



- 1** Press **F12** to view or hide the Dashboard.
- 2** Click the **+** button to see the Dashboard shelf.
- 3** Drag a widget out of the shelf to place it on the Dashboard.
- 4** Click the **Close** button in the upper-left corner of a widget to put it back on the shelf.

End



TIP

Double Vision

Some widgets can be in two places at once—you can drag more than one sticky or calendar out of the Favorites bar. Watch out, though; if you double-click a widget, you might unintentionally end up with two copies of it when you only wanted one.

MAKING YOUR OWN WIDGETS

If you frequently visit particular web pages, you'll be thrilled to hear that Leopard enables you to stick them right in your Dashboard so you can take a quick glance at them any time. It's very simple to turn your favorite web pages into Dashboard widgets, and you do it right from Safari.

Start

- 1** In Safari, type the URL of the web page you want to turn into a widget.
- 2** Click the **Web Clip** button.
- 3** Select the area on the web page that you want to include in your widget.
- 4** Click **Add**; the new widget opens in Dashboard.

End



TIP

Make It Your Very Own

To customize the appearance of your widget, click the **i** button in its lower righthand corner. The widget flips neatly over and presents you with a choice of visual themes. Click the one you want to use.



TIP

The Widget Underground

Want to be just a little bit subversive? Use Web Clip to avoid ads on web pages by turning them into widgets—and carefully cropping out all the area occupied by ads.

AUTOMATICALLY UPDATING YOUR WIDGETS

If you use more than one computer, .Mac now gives you a convenient way to make sure your favorite widgets are installed on *all* your Macs. If you're a .Mac member, you need never again experience the frustration of not having just the widget you need.



- 1** Choose **Apple menu, System Preferences**.
- 2** Click the **.Mac** button in the System Preferences window to display the .Mac preferences.
- 3** Click the **Sync** button.
- 4** Click the check box labeled **Synchronize with .Mac**, then choose **Automatically** from the pop-up menu.

End



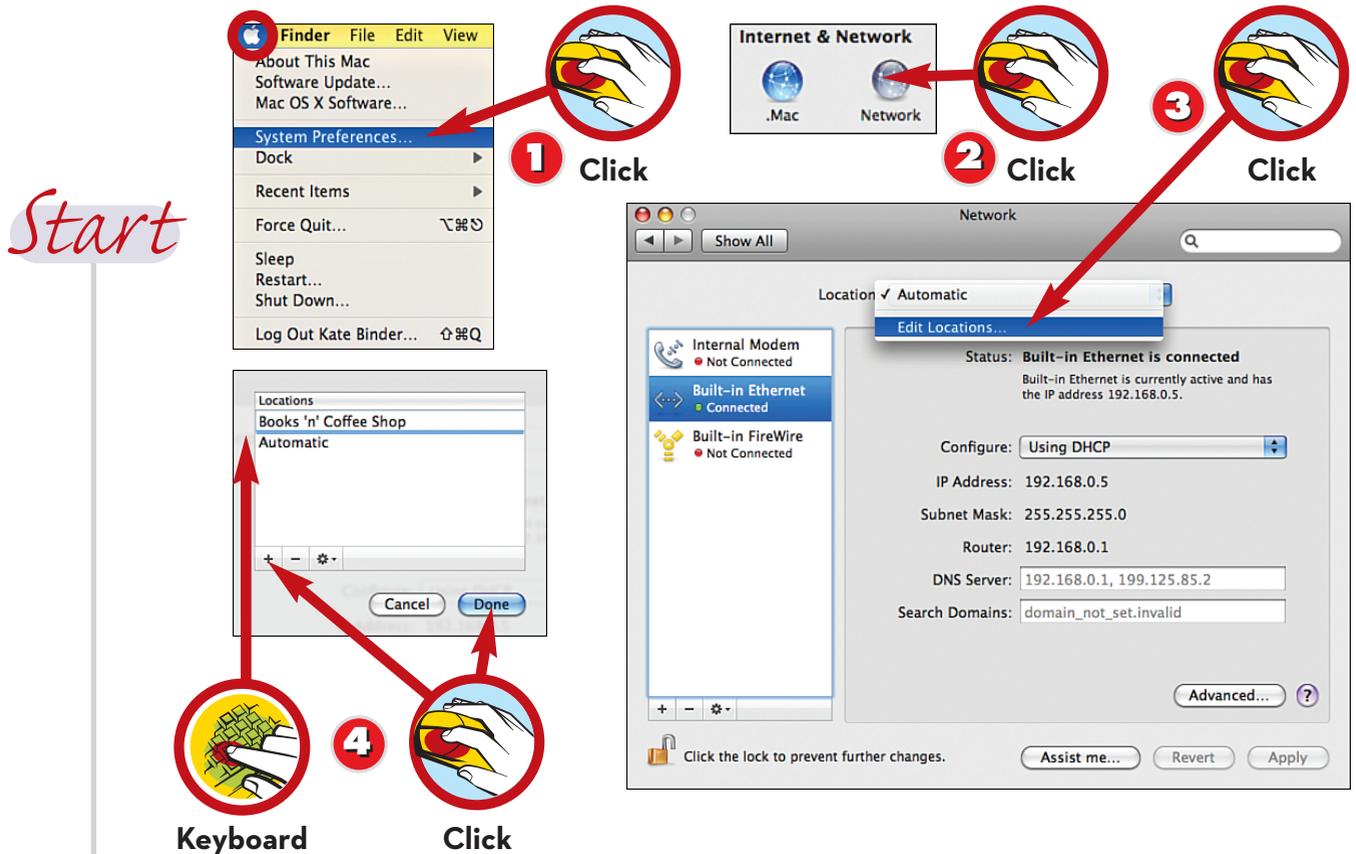
NOTE

Dotting Your Mac

Apple's own online service, .Mac, has lots of other benefits—your own website, synchronization of iCal, Address Book, and Safari's bookmarks, Internet backup for your important files, and much more. To learn how to set up a .Mac account, turn to Part 9, "Living Online."

CREATING CUSTOM NETWORK LOCATIONS

Network locations are groups of network settings, each saved with a descriptive name so you can switch all your settings with a single click and get online or on the local network instantly no matter where you happen to be. After you've created a location, to use it all you have to do is choose it from a pop-up menu.



- 1** Choose **Apple menu, System Preferences**.
- 2** Click the **Network** icon to see your choices.
- 3** Choose **Edit Locations** from the **Location** pop-up menu.
- 4** Click the **Add Location** button, give the location a descriptive name, and click **Done**.

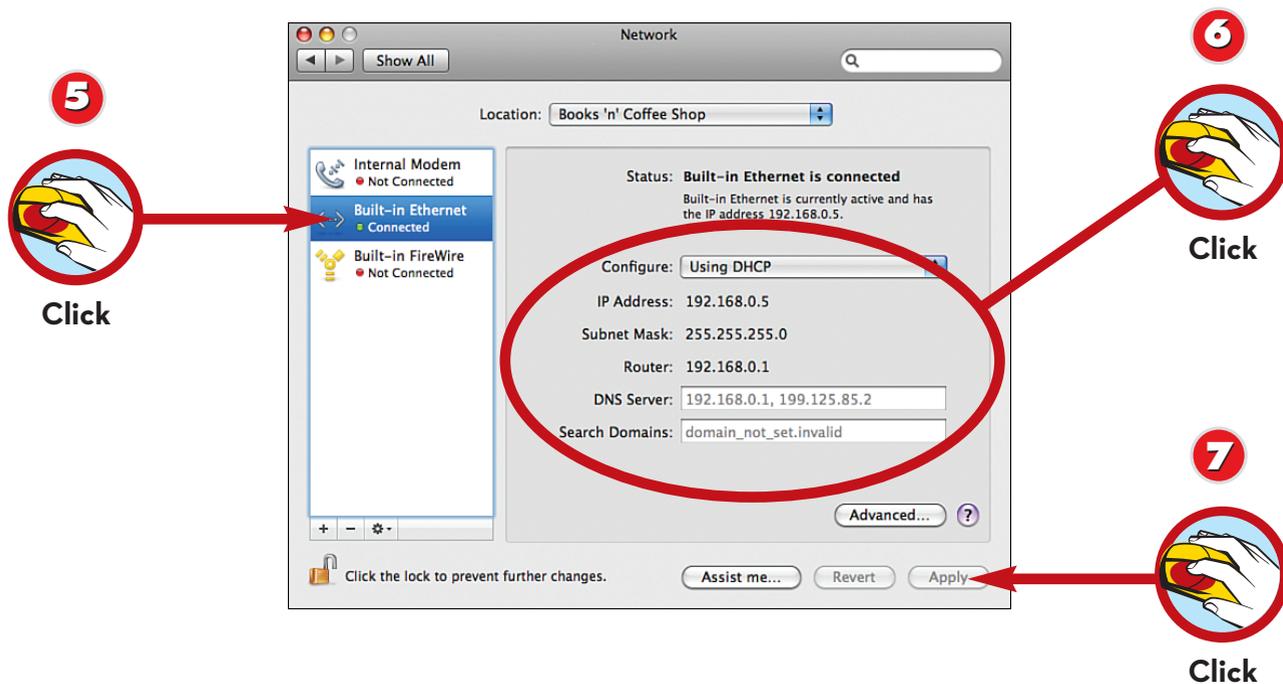
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TIP

A Time and a Place

You can use locations to save settings for different situations as well as different places. For example, if you have both a cable modem and a dial-up account, create a location for each so you can easily switch to dial-up if the cable connection goes down.



- 5** Choose the network interface you want to set up from the list at the left.
- 6** Make the appropriate settings for that network interface.
- 7** Click **Apply** to switch to the new location.

End



NOTE

Naming Names

Just to be sure we're all on the same page here, a descriptive name (see step 4) is something like "Joe's office Ethernet," rather than "New Location 4." It tells you where and under what circumstances the location setting is applicable.



TIP

What's in a Name?

To change the names of your locations, choose **Edit Locations** from the pop-up menu again.