macmost.com Guide to Switching to the Mac

for Snow Leopard!

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Gary Rosenzweig

MacMost.com Guide to Switching to the Mac

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Introduction

You could be switching to Mac for many reasons. Perhaps you were impressed with the clean interface or sharp design. Maybe you were tired of common problems with Windows like dealing with virus protection or frequent crashes.

You could be switching to Mac from Windows XP or Vista, or perhaps an older version of Windows or another operating system. Or, this could be your first computer, or your first personal computer after only using one at work.

Whatever your reason for buying your first Mac, you can now start enjoying the best computing experience available.

A Mac is a combination of hardware—the physical computer—and software—the program that reacts to what you type and click and displays information on your screen.

The hardware is your MacBook, iMac, Mac Pro, or Mac Mini. The software is Mac OS X, the Macintosh operating system. You get both when you buy a Mac.

But you don't really care about that. You want to get things done, create art, and write stories. You want to connect to the Internet and learn, shop, and explore. You want to organize your photos, make videos, and compose music.

Mac OS X's greatest strength is that it doesn't get in your way when trying to do these things. Instead it enables you. And, at times, it can even inspire you.

NOTE

It's true. Your Mac can inspire you, just as a fine set of brushes can inspire a painter, a beautiful landscape can inspire a photographer, or new lab equipment can inspire a scientist. Your new Mac can help you reach your creative potential. Or, it can simply help you get your work done.

But Mac OS X is a tool, and as with any tool, it is important to know how to use it. This book looks at all of the different aspects of Mac OS X and how to use it well. We'll also look at the Mac hardware, products that work with your Mac, other software that comes with your Mac, and common problems and questions people have when switching to Mac.

Who Should Read This Book

This book is targeted toward anyone who has just bought their first Mac. You could be a switcher, having previously used Windows, or you could have been a Mac user a long time ago, but are unfamiliar with the way that modern Macs work. Mac OS X is quite an advancement over the older Mac operating systems of the 80s and 90s. And with every version, it keeps getting better and better.

Or, perhaps you have been using a Mac for a while now, but feel that you really haven't explored its full power. Have you created a movie in iMovie? Composed a song in Garage Band? Organized your week with iCal?

This book takes you deeper into Mac OS X and tells you what you need to know to get started with the most frequently used aspects of your computer and the applications that come with it.

NOTE

Macs come with software to help you write, communicate, organize your life, edit video, manage your photos, and even compose music. But you can find even more free and inexpensive software to do almost anything on your computer.

Although it is fun to explore the features of your new Mac, it can also be useful to have a guide show you around. Let me help you get the most from your Mac!

What You Need to Know

This is a book for switchers, so a basic understanding of computers is assumed. That said, even if this is your first computer, you may have picked up that basic understanding at work or school.

You should know how to use a mouse and keyboard. You should know what a file is and that files are stored in folders on your hard drive.

After all, Mac and Windows are essentially the same. The difference is in the details. So if you know how to manipulate icons on the screen by dragging and dropping them, and you know how to click on a menu and select a menu item, you are all set to start using this book.

At the beginning of each chapter is a brief statement about "Who Should Read This Chapter." You might not need every chapter in this book. Some chapters may be about things you already know. Other chapters may be about subjects that you are not interested in.

The first few chapters of this book cover the basics and build on each other, and later chapters are about specific applications and topics. You may want to read the first eight chapters to get the basics. Then, decide on the next chapters on a subject-by-subject basis. The last four chapters are perhaps the most important and should be read by all.

Who Am I, and What Is MacMost?

Hello. I'm Gary and I'm a Mac.

I bought my first Mac in 1987. It was a little Mac SE with two disk drives, a monochrome screen, and no way to connect to anything.

Since then I've used PowerBooks, various Mac towers and desktops, iMacs, and MacBooks. I've used Macs working in desktop publishing, programming, multimedia, game development, web development, and writing. But I also use Macs to organize my photos, video, and social networking.

I've always been a Mac guy. At one point, in the mid-1990s, I was forced to use a Windows computer. I got by with that at work, and a Mac at home. But when deadlines approached and I was asked to put in extra hours, I replied: "OK, but if you really want me to get things done fast, I'm bringing in my Mac!"

Two years ago I was running a small company making websites and games for the Web when web video started to take off. We had the talent to make our own web videos, so we started a variety of shows. But most of our efforts failed because we lacked the passion behind the topics they covered.

Then I realized that the number one topic in the office was always Apple. We all used Macs and had iPods. We followed the Apple culture. We talked about it constantly.

So, why not do a show about Apple? That's how MacMost was born.

Our passion for Apple meant that MacMost soon took over all of our video efforts. Soon, it became our most important website, overshadowing even the game sites that we had for more than 10 years.

MacMost is a website, a video podcast, and a community. Every week brings several more episodes of the video show. Each episode features a new tip, tutorial, review, or news summary. They all help you get the most from your Mac.

NOTE

What is a video podcast? A podcast is a regularly updated audio or video show that you can subscribe to using your Mac's iTunes application. They are almost all free and cover a wide variety of topics, from sketch comedy to financial news. They are produced mostly by individuals and small companies. You can find out more in the section "Subscribing to Podcasts" in Chapter 17, "Managing Your Music and Video."

Each week also brings a new edition of our free newsletter. There are recommendations for free and inexpensive software applications you can download, tips, a weekly news summary, and even iPhone app recommendations.

In addition to getting started with your Mac using this book, I invite you to join the community at MacMost.com and learn how to get the most from your Mac!

- The MacMost website—http://macmost.com
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WHO SHOULD READ THIS CHAPTER:

If you are switching from Windows to Mac and you need to get your files or other bits of information off your old machine onto your new Mac, this chapter shows you how. You'll also learn how to transfer files from a friend's Windows computer to yours without needing to set up a network.

8

Moving from Windows to Mac

If this is your first Mac, but not your first computer, chances are that your old machine runs Windows. You may have old files on your Windows machine—your contact list, calendar events, even your browser bookmarks.

You don't have to leave those behind. You can take them with you to your new Mac. There are many methods for bringing files and information over from your old Windows machine.

Transferring Your Documents

There are two ways to move files from a Windows computer to a Mac: the hard way and the easy way. The hard way is to set both machines up on the same network, get both machines to recognize each other, and transfer files.

You'd think with both Mac and Windows being so mature and advanced that this would be easy. But networks vary so much and are so complex that it can be rather frustrating.

Chapter 13 describes how to network Macs and PCs. If you plan on keeping your Windows computer around and transferring files between them often, you probably want to put the time in now to figure it out. Otherwise, there is an easier way.

The easy method is to use a small and cheap USB flash drive to copy files from your PC to your Mac. They can be bought for $10 to $40,

depending on the size. And they will continue to be handy for bringing files to and from work, sharing between friends, and for bringing files along with you away from your Mac.

Copying Files with a USB Flash Drive

When you have a flash drive, the first thing you may need to do is format it in such a way so it can be read by both Mac and Windows machines. Windows cannot read a Mac-formatted disk, but Macs can read a Windows-formatted one. So, if it needs to be formatted at all, you need to format it as FAT32.

You can do this in Disk Utility on your Mac, where it is called MS-DOS (FAT) format, but it is probably easier to just reformat the drive on your Windows machine. It may even already be formatted FAT32 if you just brought it home from the store.

Connect the drive to a USB port on your Windows machine. If it is not in a Windows-readable format, you will be asked to reformat it now. Go ahead and do that, but realize that any data you may have had stored on the drive before will now be gone.

Now you should see the drive show up under My Computer on your Windows machine. In Windows XP, it will look something like Figure 8.1, where you can see the drive as F:.

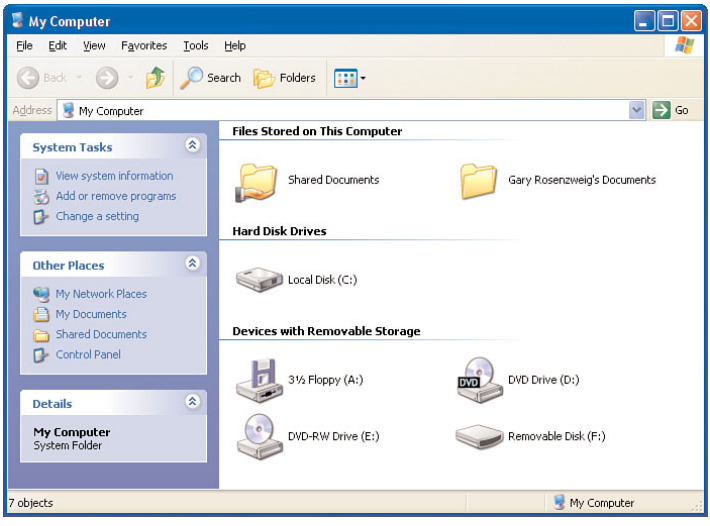

Figure 8.1

In Windows XP you can see a flash drive show up under My Computer.

Also in My Computer you should see a folder with your name followed by the word "Documents." If you have stored all of your files in Windows in your document folders, they should all be there.

Simply drag and drop the whole folder with your name on it on to the removable flash drive. They should copy right over.

Then, think about where else on your Windows machine you would have documents. Have you been storing files in some other part of the drive, outside of you're Documents folder? Think about it and also look around to see what you can find. You can always come back later if you are not getting rid of your PC right away.

NOTE

If you have too many files to fit on your flash drive at one time, you may have to only copy portions at a time—like photos for one trip, documents for another, music for a third, and so on.

Then remove the drive by right-clicking on it in the My Computer window and selecting Eject. Wait a few seconds and then disconnect it from the USB slot.

Next, plug it into your Mac's USB slot. It should appear as a device on the left side of all of your Finder windows. You can then drag and drop documents from there into any folder on your Mac. I recommend putting them all in a "From Windows" folder in your Documents folder in your user folder.

If you also want to bring over photos, videos, and music, you can place them in those folders as well, though you should read later in this chapter about how to get photos and music into iPhoto and iTunes.

Alternate File Transfer Methods

A flash drive isn't the only way to transfer files from a Windows machine to a Mac. Here are some more options.

- **Full-sized hard disk**—You are buying an external drive to use for Time Machine backups anyway, right? Before you start, just format it for Windows as FAT32 the same way you would format a flash drive. Then use the full-sized drive to get your files over to your Mac before letting Time Machine reformat it for backup use.
- **Local network**—If you can connect both computers to the same network, turn file sharing on for both, and you can connect successfully, this is the best method. See Chapter 13, "Networking and File Sharing," for details.
- **Bluetooth file sharing**—If your Windows computer has Bluetooth, a wireless communications method, you can attempt to send single files back and forth.
- **iDisk**—If you are a MobileMe user, you can access your MobileMe storage space on both Mac and Windows computers. Then just transfer files from your Windows machine to your iDisk, and then from your iDisk to your Mac.
- **Email**—If you have email working on your Windows machine and your Mac, consider just attaching files to an email and sending them to yourself.
- **File-sharing website**—Some websites allow you to upload files, for a fee, to make them publicly or privately available to others. You could simply send or share a file to yourself this way, from one machine to the next. Check out http://yousendit.com, http://www.box.net, http://www.jungledisk.com, and many others.

- **Special hardware**—For a price you can get a special cable that will allow you to connect a Windows computer and a Mac. One is the Belkin Switch-to-Mac Cable. Another is the iTornado.
- **Burn a CD**—If your PC has a CD or DVD burner in it and you know how to use it, you can burn a CD-ROM or DVD-ROM with all of your files on it. This is also a good way to archive your PC's files before retiring the PC in favor of your new Mac.
- **Apple Genius**—The Apple Store offers to do the file transfers for you for free. Just make an appointment at the Genius Bar and bring both your new Mac and old PC. See Chapter 25, "Getting Help," for more about the Genius Bar.

Moving Contacts and Calendars

Moving files isn't too painful. But moving contacts, calendars, and email can be harder.

For one thing, it depends on which program you are using to store this data. For email, some Windows XP users use Outlook, and others use Outlook Express, a completely different program. Others use a third-party email program. In Windows Vista, Outlook Express was replaced by Windows Mail. But it is pretty much the same thing.

A similar thing happened with Windows Address Book. That's what it was called in Windows XP, but Windows Vista has Windows Contacts instead.

Moving Contacts

Fortunately, thanks to standards, it is easy to move your Windows address book contacts over to your Mac. The first thing you want to do is to find Address Book or Windows Contacts and run it.

You should then see a list of all of your contacts. The goal is to get these over to your Mac. How to do this varies depending on whether you are using Address Book in Windows XP or Windows Contacts in Vista.

You can move your contacts from Windows XP to Mac by using these steps:

1. Connect your flash drive to your Windows machine.
2. Create a new folder on your flash drive. Name it "My Contacts" or something similar.
3. Have that folder open in a window, and the Address Book window next to it, as shown in Figure 8.2.
4. Then select all of your contacts and drag and drop them into the folder. This creates a whole bunch of files with a .vcf file extension. This stands for vCard file. This is a standard way of transporting contact information from one device to another.
5. Now remove the flash drive from the PC and bring it over to your Mac and plug it in.
6. Launch the Address Book. Select the group All Contacts.
7. In the Finder, find the "My Contacts" folder and select all the .vcf files in it.

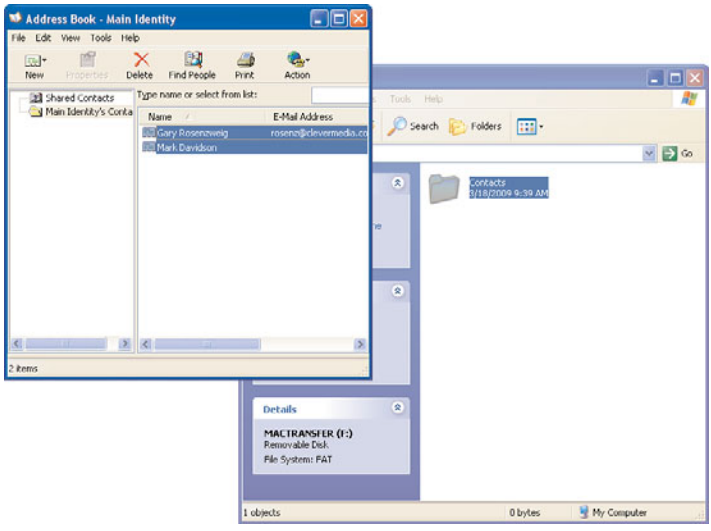

Figure 8.2

This Windows XP address book shows two contacts that are about to be dragged to the Contacts folder created on a flash drive.

8. Drag and drop all of the .vcf files from the Finder window into the Name column of the Mac Address Book.

It's as easy as that. You now have new Address Book entries for every .vcf file you brought over from Windows.

Now if you are using Windows Vista, steps 1 and 2 are the same, as are steps 5 through 8.

But in order to get vCard files out of Windows Contacts, you need to use the Export button located at the top of the window. It will ask you to select a folder to save all the vCard files to—it then dumps each contact into its own file. So select the folder you created in step 2.

Moving Your Calendar

Windows XP didn't come with a standard calendar program, though users of Outlook have a calendar. Windows Vista has Windows Calendar.

With events in Windows Calendar, you can employ a similar strategy as with Windows Contacts or Windows Address Book. Simply select File, Export and you will get a .ics file, which is a standard calendar format. Make sure you haven't selected any events in the calendar, as you may then only get those events in the export. Otherwise, you should get everything.

Then take that .ics file and move it to your Mac.

Strangely enough, you cannot use File, Import to bring in the .ics file. But you can simply drag and drop that .ics file onto your iCal window and all of the events will appear in your new calendar.

NOTE

Make sure you have selected the right calendar on the left side of your iCal window. For instance, if you have Personal and Work calendars, select the one where all of your imported events should appear. Or, create a new calendar and call it "From Windows" and select that, so that all imported events appear in that calendar.

Moving Your Email

Mail programs on both Mac and Windows are just interfaces for handling mail from servers—so email is really universal itself; it is just the visual interface that differs between Mac and Windows.

To move to a Mac, all you need to do is to take your email settings from your Windows computer and use them to set up Mail on your Mac.

You can, to a limited extent, take old email messages from Outlook Express, Windows Mail, or Outlook and move them to your Mac.

Setting Up Email

In the section "Setting Up Mail" in Chapter 11, we'll look at how to configure Apple's Mail program to connect your mail to a standard POP server. If that is how you get your mail on Windows, from a program like Outlook Express or Windows Mail, you just need to take the information from the Windows side so that you have it ready to enter on the Mac side.

Figure 8.3 shows part of the Outlook Express mail settings. You can get to them by choosing Tools, Accounts and then the Mail tab. You then double-click on the account to get to the settings.

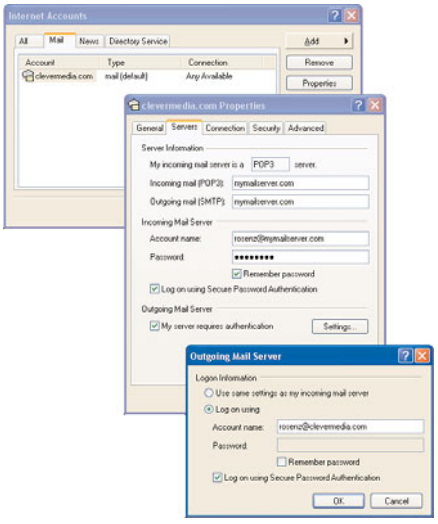

Figure 8.3

The settings in Outlook Express have basically the same information that you will need for Apple Mail.

You should be able to find server information for incoming mail (POP3) and outgoing mail (SMTP), and an ID and password for both the Incoming Mail Server and Outgoing Mail Server. You will have to click on the Settings button under Outgoing Mail Server to get to those settings. You will not be able to see your password, however, so hopefully you remember it.

These map logically to the Incoming Mail Server, User Name, Password, and Outgoing Mail Server information as well in Apple Mail's accounts. The settings and how to get to them are virtually identical between Outlook Express in Windows XP and Windows Mail in Vista.

Moving Old Messages

You can use the same drag-and-drop strategy as the address book to get old mail messages from Outlook Express or Windows Mail to your Mac—sort of.

If you open one of these mail programs that come with Windows, you can select messages and drag and drop them into a folder on your flash drive. Then you can bring them over to your Mac. They will be .eml files. Each file is a single email message.

At first you can't seem to do anything with them in Mail. Dragging and dropping doesn't produce results. But you can double-click on a .eml file and it will open up in Mail—even the header information is all set just as if you got the email on your Mac.

From there, you can choose Message, Move To and put the message into one of your existing Mail folders. You may want to create a specific folder just for this purpose.

So getting one Windows email to your Mac is a piece of cake. But you can only do one at a time. So one, yes. Twenty, maybe. Four thousand—not really.

A better way to do it is to use an intermediary. You can get a program like Microsoft Entourage on Mac, or Mozilla Thunderbird (http://www.mozilla.org/projects/thunderbird/) to import the .eml messages in bulk. Then you can use the File, Import Mailboxes menu choice in Mail to import the whole lot at once.

NOTE

If you are using Outlook, which is a completely different mail program than Outlook Express, you can get your Outlook mail to Apple Mail with the help of a third-party program like 02M (http://www.littlemachines.com/).

Moving Your Music and Photos

To get your music, photos, and other media files from your Windows computer to your Mac, just follow the suggestion in the first section of this chapter and get those files from your Windows computer onto a flash drive.

Music files on the Mac are handled by iTunes and photos are handled by iPhoto. Both of these program support drag-and-drop import. This means you can simply drag a photo file from the Finder onto the iPhoto library and it will import into iPhoto. Same for music and iTunes.

Organizing Your Windows Photos

What you get when you drop photo files into iPhoto depends a lot on what data is stored in those files. For instance, if they are the original files from your camera, they may have date, time, and even location information. iPhoto will pick that up and use that information.

Separating them into events might be trickier. You may end up with a huge untitled event containing all of your Windows photos. You can leave them like that, or spend the time organizing using the tools in iPhoto.

Music Playback Issues

Music files also include lots of data. An MP3 file usually includes the artist, song name, album name, and other information. iTunes uses this to organize the imported music into artist and album.

However, you may be disappointed to find out that some or even all of your music doesn't play on your Mac. The reason for this is DRM: digital rights management.

If you imported music from CD to your Windows computer in MP3 format, those files will play fine on your Mac. But if you purchased music from an online music service, those files may be protected and can only be played on a computer you registered with that music service. In almost all cases, that will be Windows-specific copy protection. There is simply no way to play those files on a Mac because the program needed to grant you rights to listen to that music is built into Windows.

Transferring Bookmarks

Fortunately, transferring your browser bookmarks is relatively simple. In Windows, you most likely used Internet Explorer for web browsing. On Mac, you'll be using Safari.

To get your bookmarks out of Internet Explorer, it depends on which version of Internet Explorer you are using. In IE7, you would select the Add Bookmark button near the top left of the window. It looks like a star with a plus sign next to it. One of the options is to Import and Export Bookmarks.

Follow the dialog to export all or some of your bookmarks to a file. Figure 8.4 shows just one step in the export wizard. You should end up with something like Bookmark.htm.

Then, after bringing the files over to your Mac via flash drive or some other method, you can import them with Safari's File, Import Bookmarks command.

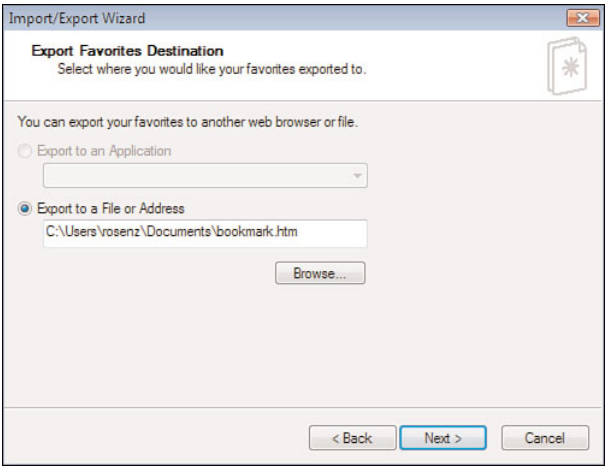

Figure 8.4

Exporting your bookmarks from Internet Explorer is as easy as following a quick series of steps.

Opening Windows Files on Your Mac

So you've got your files from your PC to your Mac. Now what? Despite the windows, icons, and mice, these are different operating systems that run different applications.

You've been used to opening .doc files in Microsoft Word and .ppt files in PowerPoint. The .exe files are executables and the .wmv files are videos. But getting any or all of these to open on a Mac can be tricky.

Document Files

If you have .doc files, they are in Microsoft Word format. You can open them using Microsoft Word on Mac, if you have purchased Microsoft Office for Mac. You can also open them in Pages if you have iWork.

If you have neither Word or Pages, your easiest option is to open them in the free TextEdit program that comes with your Mac. The formatting in complex documents may be lost, but the basics will be there.

You can also open .doc files using open source office software like OpenOffice. You can get that at http://www.openoffice.org. Another option is to use the free Google Docs website at http://docs.google.com to import and view the files.

Another popular type of document file is the .pdf, or Portable Document Format. These are sometimes known as Adobe Acrobat files, though they can be generated by just about any document creation application.

Opening .pdf files is easy on a Mac, as the Preview application handles them. If you like, you can also download the more complex Adobe Reader at http://get.adobe.com/reader/.

Presentation Files

Another type of file that may present some problems is the presentation file—almost certainly a PowerPoint presentation if it is coming from Windows.

Once again, Microsoft Office for Mac has the best solution with PowerPoint for Mac. But you can also open PowerPoint files in Keynote, if you have iWork. However, because visual effects differ between the two programs, you'll have some work to do to complete the transformation.

You can also use OpenOffice, which has a presentation application, and Google Docs to view the simplest of presentations as well.

Spreadsheet Files

If you use spreadsheets at work, chances are that they are Excel spreadsheets. You can get Microsoft Excel for Mac as part of Microsoft Office. And, honestly, it is probably your best option if you need to work with Excel spreadsheets.

Numbers is the spreadsheet program that comes with iWork, and it is very powerful, but quite different than Excel. It will not be easy to take a file back and forth, though it can be done. OpenOffice is closer to Excel if you really need the option.

Video Files

The standard video file format in Windows is a Windows Media file, a .wmv file. You can't play those files on a Mac without adding some extra software. Fortunately, it is free.

Go to http://www.telestream.net/ and download the free Flip4Mac WMV player. It is also shown on the site as the trial version of the Flip4Mac WMV Player Pro. If you don't plan to use it to make .wmv files, but only to watch them, the free trial is all you need.

After installing Flip4Mac WMV you can watch .wmv files in the QuickTime player and in Safari.

For other formats that QuickTime Player cannot handle by itself, try the VLC Media Player, another free download at http://www.videolan.org/vlc/. This can play back DivX and other odd formats.

Executables

If you have .exe files, these are Windows executable files. The equivalent are .app files on the Mac—but Mac users rarely see or notice the .app file extension, so these are just thought of as applications.

There is no good way to do anything with a .exe file in Mac OS X. It is a Windows program and can only be run under Windows.

But there are ways to run Windows on a Mac. We'll explore these in Chapter 18, "Running Windows on Your Mac." Using one of these methods, you can run .exe files.

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