

# Get Up to Speed on Slowdowns

Any Mac can suffer from slowdowns, but they can be easy to fix if you know where to look...



## >>>Five Secrets to Keep Your Mac Running Smoothly

### 1 CLEAR OUT THE CLUTTER

Leaving lots of data lying around will quickly fill up a hard drive, especially if it consists of thousands of large pictures and music files. You can copy your iTunes and iPhoto libraries to external hard drives inside your Home directory. When starting either app, hold down Option and select the library's new location.



In iTunes and iPhoto, move library folders to external drives.

### 2 ONLY RUN WHAT YOU NEED

Applications use resources and memory even when they are hidden or in the background. Some, like music or video production apps, use lots of RAM just by being open. It's bad practice to leave lots of apps open if you're not using them, so try to be economical. If you're finished with an app, quit it. This should make your system snappier, and other apps more responsive, especially on older Macs.

### 3 UPGRADE YOUR OS

Older systems such as Mac OS 10.5 Leopard can be sluggish and if your Mac hasn't been updated, it will feel slow. Most recent Intel Macs can be upgraded as far as Mac OS 10.6, and maybe even to OS X 10.7 or 10.8 if the Mac is newer. A clean install will fix any unexplained problems, but make doubly sure that you have full backups of all your data. If in doubt, do an upgrade rather than a clean install.

### 4 RESTART PERIODICALLY

OS X is designed to be left running for long periods of time, and will perform maintenance on itself as it runs. Some people rarely restart their Macs, choosing instead to put them in sleep. However, if you find you are having problems with things like peripherals not being recognized or wireless connectivity not working, a restart will very often fix the problem because it forces your Mac to re-load drivers and re-establish connections with external equipment.

### 5 KEEP AN EYE ON TIME MACHINE

Time Machine is an excellent backup system that can really save your bacon in an emergency. If left on, it will perform backups at hourly intervals. However, this can sometimes interfere with your workflow if you are doing resource-intensive work like video or music creation or gaming. You can choose to back up manually, which is good if you are conscientious about backing up, or use a free app such as TimeMachineScheduler to alter the schedule to something slightly less intensive, like six hours.



Changing Time Machine's schedule can stop it from interfering in disk-intensive work while still backing up.

## 1 Use Disk Doctor

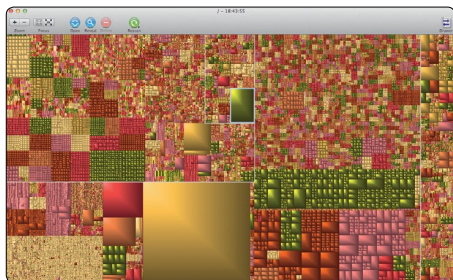
Disk Doctor is a pretty straightforward app that scans your Mac's startup disk to potentially free up a lot of disk space. Launch it and you'll see the capacity of your disk, along with how much free space is available. Click Scan and Disk Doctor lists how much space is taken up by content that is safe to remove. This can include application caches and log files, extra language support within applications, and content in the Trash.

There are also two other options: Downloads and Mail Downloads. The former is the default location for everything you download from the web, and the latter is where attachments live that you've downloaded from Mail. In both cases, we strongly recommend not enabling Disk Doctor to delete them (and, indeed, Disk Doctor does not activate these items by default), but if one of them is displaying an especially large number, click View to open the folder in the Finder, then go to View > as List and click the Size column to re-sort it. You might find one particularly large file you no longer need that can be deleted, or discover that Downloads is full of somewhat smaller files, which can also be deleted without any problem.

Back in Disk Doctor, decide which things you want deleted by checking or unchecking the boxes, and then click "Clean up Disk!" You'll get a confirmation sheet, asking one final time if you're sure. Once you click Yes, Disk Doctor's work is done.

## 2 Work with GrandPerspective

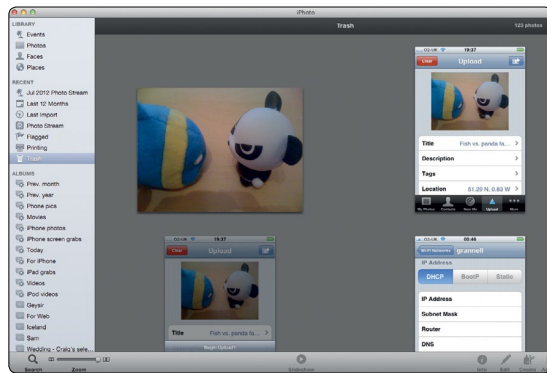
Although system files often take up a lot of space, the largest files on your Mac can sometimes be things you've created or downloaded, but that you might no longer need or have any use for. GrandPerspective is great for finding these files. Launch it and go to File > Scan Folder. Use the dialog's drop-down menu to select the top level of your Mac's startup disk (such as "Macintosh HD") and click Scan. Depending on how much data you have, this process can take several minutes to complete. When it's done, GrandPerspective will provide a representation of your disk as a bunch of rectangles. The bigger a file appears, the more space it's taking up. Now, you can't just select the biggest files and gleefully click the Delete button; if you do, you'll be waving goodbye to things like your iPhoto library. But what you can do is select items, investigate what they are (the path and filename is shown at the bottom of the GrandPerspective window) and then decide what to do with them. Likely culprits for deletion are huge apps you no longer use, big games for iOS you no longer play, and media project files that no longer need to be on your Mac.



This is GrandPerspective. Your disk is rendered as lots of rectangles. That really big one is an iPhoto library.

## 3 Deal with App-Specific Trash

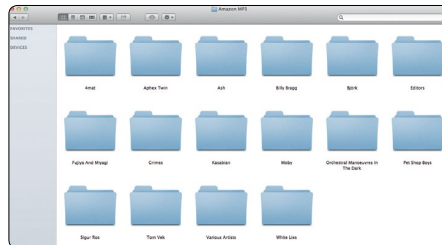
Occasionally, applications have their own Trash, presumably intended as a means to save accidentally deleted content or rescue something important should you change your mind. The most popular application of this type is iPhoto. When you delete a photo, it's not immediately sent to the OS X Trash, but instead to iPhoto's own Trash, which is found in the sidebar's "recent" section. To check what's in the Trash, select it and you'll see the images you've placed there. To delete them for good, click Empty Trash at the top-right corner of the window. iPhoto will warn you that you can't undo the action—it's sort of lying—and once you click OK, the photos are gone! Only they're not really gone entirely, because at this point they'll just be sent to the OS X Trash, meaning you can fish them out if you've made a terrible error and just deleted all of your favorite photos. (Although if that's the case, we do wonder why they were in iPhoto's Trash in the first place. Tsk.)



iPhoto has its own Trash, which must be emptied in order to remove from your system photos you intend to discard.

## 4 Consider Deleting Duplicates

Rarely, you'll end up with weighty duplicates on your system. To unearth those, you can use Gemini to scan any drive or folder dropped onto its window. It will provide a list of files that you can sort by size, select, and then remove. Note that you might also be able to think of duplicates that don't need software to weed out. For example, we regularly download music from Amazon, and the Amazon MP3 Downloader app is set to add all downloaded tracks to iTunes. However, that means we also have copies of the exact same files sitting in ~/Music/Amazon MP3, which seems rather pointless. One quick rummage-and-delete in Finder later and—boom—several gigabytes of freed-up space (well, once we empty the Trash yet again).



Here we have an Amazon MP3 folder, which should have been deleted ages ago.