

Date & Time

This control panel comes with System 7.1 and later . With it, you can change the way times and dates are displayed anywhere the Mac displays them: in Finder-window list views, for example. The usual value is the default one — American — but in keeping with the internationalization of System 7.1, you can make dates appear in European format (day of month first) or in any zany order you can think up.

If you click a number in the date or time display, you can change the Mac's clock or calendar by typing numbers or clicking the up- or down-arrow buttons.

If you're an American Mac user using System 7.1 or earlier, we suggest that you chuck this control panel; clutter is clutter. But if you're using System 7.5 or later, hang on to Date & Time. This control panel is the only remaining means of setting your Mac's clock; it also allows you to control the handy menu-bar clock that for years was known in the shareware world as SuperClock.

Date & Time Secrets

Move it, pal

Considering the increasing number of today's programs that put their own little iconic menus in your menu bar, it would be nice if you could hide the Date & Time's clock display without having to open the control panel. You can. Just Option-click the clock to make it disappear — and Option-click again to make it return.

Insta-sleep for PowerBooks

Another holdover from this control panel's original incarnation as the freeware SuperClock program: if you Control-click the time display, you put your PowerBook to sleep.

Set your clock, or live in peril

Don't underestimate the importance of keeping your clock set correctly — you should even use the Daylight Savings Time checkbox religiously. It's not particularly important that your Mac shows the correct time. But it is important that your Mac stamps your files with the correct times. Many Mac users — even experts — have suffered grief because their files were incorrectly time-stamped. See "Map control panel," later in this chapter, for the rationale.

Desktop Patterns

Focus groups strike again.

For years, the Mac's General Controls panel included a tiny painting square, in which you could draw your own Desktop background patterns (see "General Controls [original]"). Apple's studies indicated that too many people had trouble figuring out how to work that mini-pattern editor. Thus, on the early Performa Macs, the background patterns weren't editable; the Performa General Controls panel merely offered a pop-up menu of ready-made, but attractive, Desktop patterns.

Beginning with System 7.5, Apple has mainstreamed this principle; today's General Controls panel doesn't have any controls for adjusting the background pattern. Instead, you get Desktop Patterns, which allows you to scroll through 64 ready-to-use patterns. When you see the one you like, double-click it, or click the Set Desktop Pattern button. If you absolutely despise a pattern, you can get rid of it by choosing Cut or Clear from the Edit menu.

On one hand, you can't edit these patterns directly (unless you use ResEdit, included with Mac SECRETS). On the other hand, these patterns are bigger and nicer-looking than anything Apple has provided before.

ou can move from pattern to pattern by clicking the arrow buttons or by pressing the arrow keys on your keyboard.

Desktop Patterns Secrets

Make your own patterns

No, you can't edit the Desktop Patterns directly in the control panel. But you can do much better: you can whip up your own in a graphics program like Color It, included with Mac SECRETS (see Chapter 34). Simply copy your custom pattern and then paste it into the Desktop Patterns window.

If you're not artistically inclined, you can still try the following trick right now. Desktop Patterns works with Macintosh Drag & Drop. In other words, you can open your Scrapbook or your Jigsaw Puzzle and drag a graphic directly into the Desktop Patterns window, where it appears like magic.

The classic interior-decoration trick

If you press the Option key, the button in the Desktop Patterns window changes to say Set Utilities Pattern. If you click this special button, you won't notice anything different at first. But now open some of your Apple-menu programs, such as the Calculator, Find File, Jigsaw Puzzle, Key Caps, and Scrapbook. Sure enough, you've changed their window interiors to match the pattern you chose.

The Secret of Desktop Patterns Prefs

Inquisitive minds want to know: so where are all those patterns stored? You can poke around the Desktop Patterns program with ResEdit all you want, but you won't find 'em.

Cooperative authors answer: in the Desktop Patterns Prefs file, in the Preferences folder (in the System Folder). It contains all 64 of the default patterns.

This revelation has several repercussions. First, if you take that Prefs file out of the Preferences folder, the Mac will generate a new one the next time you run Desktop Patterns. By selectively placing Desktop Patterns Prefs files back into the Preferences folder, you can easily swap among several different sets of patterns you've created. (Each Prefs file can hold 226 patterns.)

There's another good reason you may want to remember this Secret, too. Believe it or not, when you delete a pattern from Desktop Patterns, it isn't actually deleted; it's only hidden. It remains in your Prefs file, inaccessible but taking up disk space! After a lot of cuts and pastes, therefore, your Prefs file can get enormous. By removing it — and forcing Desktop Patterns to generate a fresh default Prefs file — you start over with a relatively compact default set of patterns.

Easy Access

Easy Access is designed to make using the keyboard easier for people who type with one hand or find it difficult to use a mouse. If you don't fall into this category, save the disk space and throw away Easy Access. (If you don't find it in your Control Panels folder, and you'd like to, use the Custom Install option of the Installer — or look in the Apple Extras folder, if you have one.)

Mouse Keys

Turning on Mouse Keys allows you to use the numeric keypad, instead of the mouse, to control the pointer. The 5 key becomes the mouse button; the number keys surrounding it move the pointer up, down, diagonally, and so on. You can change the speed of the pointer (Maximum Speed) and the length of the delay before the pointer starts moving (Initial Delay).

Sticky Keys

With Sticky Keys, you type keyboard shortcuts by pressing the key combinations successively rather than simultaneously. For example, the keyboard shortcut for turning on the Mouse Keys feature is Command-Shift-Clear. Normally, you have to press those three keys at the same time for the shortcut to work. But with Sticky Keys on, you press the keys one at a time, in a sequence. First press the Command key, then the Shift key, and finally the Clear key.

When Sticky Keys is on, a little indicator appears at the far right side of the menu (leftmost figure). When you press a modifier key (Shift, Option, or Command) once, a little arrow appears (middle). That's a signal that Sticky Keys is waiting for a nonmodifier key (such as a letter) to complete the keystroke. If you press a modifier key twice, you lock it down. As you type letter keys now, the Mac acts as though the modifier key is being held down

continuously (right).

You can turn on Sticky Keys from the keyboard by pressing the Shift key five times in a row. The five keystrokes can be separated by several seconds, or even several minutes, as long as the mouse doesn't move between key presses. You hear a neat little starting-up chirp as confirmation that Sticky Keys is on. (To turn Sticky Keys off, press the Shift key five times again, or press any two modifier keys simultaneously.)

Slow Keys

Slow Keys delays the acceptance of each keystroke. At its highest setting, the Mac won't acknowledge a keystroke unless you hold the key down for at least a second and a half. This feature helps screen out inadvertent keystrokes.

Energy Saver

There have actually been two Energy Saver control panels. The first, a monitor-only version of CPU Energy Saver, shut off certain 1994 Mac models' screens after defined period of inactivity — the ultimate screen saver.

The current Energy Saver, included with the latest Power Macs, is much more powerful. It lets you specify intervals before the monitor, the hard drive, and the computer itself go to sleep. (If sleep mode for desktop Macs is a new concept for you, welcome to the second-generation Power Mac line!)

This control panel also incorporates the functions of the clunkily named Auto Power On/Off control panel; click the Scheduled Startup & Shutdown button to see the timing controls for powering your Mac on and off unattended. In other words, this one control panel stylishly cleans up the mess of its three predecessors: Energy Saver, CPU Energy Saver, and Auto Power On/Off.

Express Modem

This control panel is confusing, because you may need it even if you don't have an Express Modem (Apple's internal PowerBook modem). In fact, it's more likely that you will use this control panel because you have a GeoPort Telecom Adapter on your Power Mac or AV Mac; the same software is used for both.

In any case, this control panel allows you to choose Express Modem or

External Modem. These controls were originally provided for the PowerBook so that you could choose between its built-in modem and (if you had one attached) an external modem.

But when you're using a GeoPort, a paradox arises: is the modem an Express Modem, because it uses the Express Modem software, or is it External, because the Telecom Adapter dangles off the back of the Mac? Guess carefully — if you choose the wrong setting, your GeoPort modem won't work.

Answer: use the Express Modem setting.

One more word of advice: your PowerBook-modem and GeoPort experiences will be much happier if you strictly keep abreast of new versions of this control panel. Apple updates it once a year or so, and the versions get dramatically more reliable each time.

Extensions Manager

When Apple added 60 control panels and extensions to System 7.5, somebody decided that it might be nice to provide you, the humble user, with some means of controlling them all. After all, if you're settling in for a nice afternoon of word processing, you might not need the 24 PowerTalk extensions, 37 CD-ROM extensions, and 53 QuickDraw GX extensions.

Extensions Manager is very simple. When you turn on your Mac, hold down the Space bar. After a moment, you'll see a list of your control panels and extensions, and you can click to turn off the ones that you won't be needing. For every item that you turn off, you'll have fewer conflicts, more memory, and a faster startup sequence.

Of course, Extensions Manager doesn't have nearly the flexibility or troubleshooting smarts of Conflict Catcher, which is included with Mac SECRETS (see Chapter 34). It does, however, have a (boring) hidden credits screen; click the version number to see it.

File Sharing Monitor

As its name denotes, this control panel provides an overview of your file-sharing activity at any given moment. It displays a list of all your shared files, folders, and disks, and allows you to keep track of which network users are currently connected to your Mac. For details, see Chapter 32.

General Controls (original)

The pre-System 7.5 General Controls panel governs several of the most basic elements in the Macintosh work environment: the current date and time, menu and insertion-point blinking, and the pattern and color that appear on the Mac Desktop.

Setting the date and time

You probably already know how to set the date and time; click a number to edit it by typing, or click the up and down arrows that appear whenever numeric text is selected.

Changing the Desktop pattern

Changing the Desktop pattern also is pretty basic, but it's such a quintessentially Macintosh activity that we'd be remiss to ignore the essentials. Click the little triangles (or click just outside them) at the top of the mini Desktop to cycle through the dozen or so Desktop patterns that come stored in the Mac. Click the mini Desktop (below the little triangles) to apply the selected pattern to your actual Desktop, as shown in Figure 4-15.

The real fun comes from creating your own Desktop patterns. To do so, change the colors of the individual dots in the upper-left square, which is an enlargement of an 8-by 8-pixel (screen dot) area on the Desktop. Each tiny square represents one pixel. Below the mini Desktop is a palette of eight colors. To edit the enlarged pattern, click a palette color and then click the tiny dots in the enlarged view to change their colors. When you finish the new pattern, click the mini Desktop to apply the pattern to the entire screen.

To change a color in your palette of eight, double-click its tile to open the Macintosh Color Picker . Using the color wheel, you can change each color and adjust its hue, saturation, and brightness.

The point to remember when you create new Desktop patterns is that single-clicking the mini Desktop applies the selected pattern to your Finder background, but double-clicking saves the new pattern permanently. If you don't save your current Desktop pattern, it disappears the next time you change patterns.

Insertion point blinking rate

Elsewhere in the control panel, you can change the rate at which the insertion point blinks (the insertion point is the I-beam cursor that appears whenever you're editing text). The Slow setting produces 30 blinks per minute; the Fast setting goes at a hyperactive 100 bpm. The middle setting is roughly 50 times per minute.

Menu blinking

When you release the mouse button after choosing a command from a menu, the command blinks: black-white-black. You may never even have noticed it. The menu-blinking setting specifies how many times it should blink.

Why should a menu command blink at all? About the only reason we've ever heard is that it gives you a split second to confirm what you just did. Frankly, we don't get that logic. The menu blinks after you let go of the menu — when it's too late to change your mind!

Furthermore, suppose that it takes one second for a command to blink three times. If you use, say, ten menu commands an hour, that means that if you work a typical work week, in ten years you'll have wasted two and a half days — full 24-hour periods — doing nothing but sitting in front of your Mac waiting for menus to blink.

We can think of many other things that we'd rather do with a free weekend. The best choice for this setting is Off.

General Controls (7.5 and later)

The Performas, of all things, are determining the course of Apple's mainstream System software, as this completely redesigned control panel clearly shows .

hen you turn off "Show Desktop when in background," for example, every time you launch a program, the world of Finder icons and windows disappears. You're now protected from inadvertently switching to the Finder when you accidentally click outside your document window. You also have a one-click method of launching your favorite programs and documents: this control panel now offers auto-opening of the Launcher, once more adopted from the successful ease-of-use formula of the Performas. (See "Launcher" later in this chapter.)

More in the protect-them-from-themselves category: the Protect System Folder checkbox prevents little hands (or mischievous ones) from dragging icons out of the System Folder's root level. If you use the Launcher, click the Protect Applications Folder checkbox to prevent your programs from being trashed while you're off at the movies. (If you do try to move a System Folder or Applications Folder item, you'll be told that you "don't have

enough access privileges.” Now you know what that means — you’ve got these folder-protection options engaged.) One warning: The Protect System Folder checkbox can interfere with certain software installations; it’s probably better to have this turned off when installing new programs, which sometimes involves moving items into and out of the System Folder.

And while we’re discussing warnings you may prefer to do without: after a few repetitions of the “This Macintosh was not shut down properly” message when you turn on the Mac following a system crash, you may want to turn off the “Warn me if…” option in this control panel, too.

Finally, the era of “Where did I file that darned document?” cries ends with the Documents-folder option, yet again modeled on the Performa’s features. This setting specifies what folder’s contents you see whenever you choose Save As or Open from a program’s File menu. Novices will appreciate the “Documents folder” choice, which makes all new documents fall into a central Documents folder on the Desktop. Most people will enjoy the “Last folder used in the application” choice, which is good for keeping all related project documents together in their appointed folders. The ungrammatical “Folder which contains the application” option is what people had to endure before System 7.5, meaning that all new documents get dumped into the folders that contained their creator programs, no matter how deeply buried and hard to find the documents become.

By the way: notice anything missing? The Desktop-pattern tools of the older General Controls panel are gone (see “Desktop Patterns” earlier in this chapter). So are the clock-setting controls, which, with the System 7.5 death of the Alarm Clock, now are available only in the Date & Time control panel.

How to lose a manuscript

We once saw a certain international best-selling novelist — a beginning Mac user — fill ten pages of his word processing document with spaces when he inadvertently leaned a book on his spacebar. If the Delay Until Repeat setting in the Keyboard control panel had been Off, this accident would have produced only a single space on-screen.

Keyboard

The Keyboard control panel lets you switch from one keyboard layout to another. A keyboard layout is a little file placed in your System file that defines what key the Mac understands when you press each key on your keyboard.

What good are keyboard layouts? Here are a few tricks you can pull off with

them:

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Replace your current layout (called U.S.) with the famous Dvorak layout: an arrangement of keys scientifically designed to be easier and more efficient to use. Using Dvorak requires you to spend a couple of weeks adjusting, which isn't made any easier by the fact that your keyboard keys are still labeled the old way. But many people who have made the switch swear that the Dvorak layout is faster, more comfortable, and less conducive to typos. (The actual Mac SECRETS CD-ROM comes with a Dvorak keyboard layout kit.)

*

Replace only two symbols of the keyboard: < and >. They're what come out if you type a period or comma while the Shift key is down, and that usually leads people to type things like P>O> Box 234 by accident. If you replace the < and > symbols with another comma and period, you won't have that trouble anymore.

*

For PowerBook users only: equip your keyboard with a numeric keypad. That is, create a keyboard layout in which pressing a certain key — Ctrl, say — turns the letter keys on the right half of your keyboard into a numeric keypad: K is 5, L is 6, and so on.

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Switch between the System 6 and System 7 keyboard layouts. Believe it or not, Apple switched the locations of a few obscure symbols. See Chapter 24 for details.

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For non-American Mac users: if you buy System 7.1's WorldScript software, you can use the Keyboard control panel to switch between an American key set and yours.

OK, we admit it: 95 percent of Americans will never use any layout except the one that came with the Mac.

Key Repeat Rate

The Keyboard control panel also controls two minor functions involving

repeating keys. The Key Repeat Rate setting controls the rate at which characters repeat when you hold down a key. At the slowest setting, characters repeat once every two seconds — an utterly pointless choice. It's much faster to just press the key repeatedly.

Delay Until Repeat

The Delay Until Repeat setting controls how long you have to hold a key down before it starts repeating the character. At the slowest setting, the delay is less than one second; at the fastest setting, repeats begin almost instantly. You can disable repeating keys by choosing Off in the control panel — an excellent choice for beginners who are used to nonrepeating typewriters.

Honestly, though, after you make these settings, you probably won't ever need to adjust them. Feel free to throw this control panel away.

The Keyboard layout-switching fiasco

The road to hell is paved with good intentions, and programmers will be the first to tell you.

For example, in an effort to make the Mac more “world-ready,” Apple endowed the Keyboard control panel with a quick-switch feature, in which pressing a special keystroke instantly changes the keyboard from one layout — or language — to another.

That was terrific for businesspeople who regularly traveled between Holland and America, and who needed to change keyboard layouts regularly. But for everyone else, this handy feature turned out to be a nightmare. The layout-switching keystroke Apple chose was, unfortunately, Command-Option-Space bar — a keystroke already in use by many programs. The result: all over America, people's word processors suddenly began producing gibberish when they typed normally, and nobody knew what was going on. (There's no visual or audible cue that you've changed anything.)

Crimson-faced, Apple made the layout-switching keystroke optional in the very next version of the Keyboard control panel.

If you have the older control panel, and you're experiencing the language-switching problem, open your System file and trash all the layouts except the one you plan to use. That's the only workaround.

Labels

As described in Chapter 1, System 7's Label feature enables you to apply

text and/or color labels to your files and folders. You use the Labels control panel to set up the label categories and pick the color associated with each label .

When you open the Labels control panel, the top label name is selected. To replace the label text, just start typing. Press the Tab key to cycle through the seven label fields. Label names can be up to 31 letters and spaces long.

To change label colors, click the rectangular color tile next to a label name. Clicking a tile opens the Macintosh Color Picker, where you click a new color or type new values in the text boxes for Hue, Brightness, Saturation, and so on.

We've got only one Label control panel Secret. It takes a little more work than most, but it's weird. Select and delete all seven label names in the control panel so that all the fields are blank; then restart your Mac and check out the Labels menu. Read vertically, the labels spell out the names alan and jef — the two programmers.

Of course, there's a much more creative use of your Labels menu awaiting you with this book — Label Secrets Pro. See Chapter 34 for details.

Launcher

Apple actually has blessed us with three Launchers. The original Launcher control panel gave the Performa its user-friendly features, such as the Documents folder and automatic Finder-hiding. Then there's the Launcher introduced with System 7.5 (and with some pre-7.5 PowerBooks and Performa models). Because the Apple menu is so convenient, some Mac fans won't see the point of yet another frequently used file launcher. But set up a Mac for kids or novices, and you'll begin to understand.

Finally, when Apple introduced System 7.5.1 (see Chapter 6), it overhauled the Launcher yet again, this time endowing it with a host of user-friendly conveniences, described below.

Here's how it works. In the System Folder is a folder called Launcher Items. Anything you put in this folder instantly appears in the Launcher window as a jumbo icon . (In many ways, this process resembles adding items to the Apple menu.) One click in the Launcher window (focus groups found that double-clicking was too hard to remember) suffices to open that icon.

The modern-day Launcher window even offers separate screens, each listing a different array of jumbo icons. For example, three large topic buttons appear at the top of the Launcher on a new PowerBook. These

buttons might say Applications, Quick Tips, and Service/Support; appropriate icons appear, depending on which button you most recently clicked (see Figure 4-20 again).

The Launcher has one confusing aspect: when you double-click the Launcher control panel, the Launcher window appears — not a set of controls and checkboxes, as would with any normal control panel. Even so, we find the Launcher well worth trying out.

Launcher control panel Secrets

Make your own Launcher buttons

If you poke around a little, you'll find out how Apple makes those big topic buttons appear at the top of the Launcher window. In your System Folder, in the Launcher Items folder, are subfolders. The name of each subfolder is preceded by a bullet (•). Turns out that any folder name bulleted this way shows up in the Launcher window itself as a big button name — and the folder's contents "page" appears when you click the folder's name. The following example should make this relationship clear.

o change the names of the big Launcher topic buttons (above), change the names of the bulleted folders in the Launcher Items folder (below). You can make other bulleted folder buttons, too; each will appear in the Launcher window as a topic button.

add as many topic buttons (bulleted folders) as you want; the Launcher window will do its best to display them all. (You create the bullet symbol by pressing Option-8.) You can even resize or reshape the Launcher window, and the topic buttons, like Silly Putty, will stretch and reconfigure — becoming stacked vertically, for example — to accommodate your nutty design impulses.

Easy-install, easy-remove icons

One of the virtues of System 7.5.1 and later: the new Launcher. This new version lets you happily forget all that jazz about the Launcher Items folder. To install a Launcher button onto this Launcher, you simply drag an icon onto the Launcher window. That's it — it jumps alphabetically into place.

Removing a button is equally simple: just Option-drag it to the Trash. Or, if you'd like an alias of it, Option-drag it to your desktop or into another window.

Change the icon-button size

Apple's System 7.5.1 Launcher includes another delicious feature: the ability to change the size of the icons in the Launcher window. Press the Command key and hold down the mouse button inside the Launcher window. You get a pop-up menu listing three icon-button sizes; just select the one you want. The smallest size is particularly useful and makes the Launcher look a lot less kid-oriented.

Quick access to Launcher Items

As you customize your Launcher setup, you may find it an increasing hassle to burrow your way into the System Folder, into the Launcher Items folder, and from there into your individual topic folders.

Fortunately, there's a speedy shortcut: Option-click any topic button. (As you press Option, your cursor turns into a tiny folder, to let you know that you're doing the right thing.) You'll be teleported directly into that topic folder within Launcher Items.

Of course, if you have System 7.5.1 or later — for example, if you started with System 7.5 and then installed the System 7.5 Update (see Chapter 6) — you have less use for this trick. You can add an icon to your enhanced Launcher just by dragging it onto the Launcher window. And you can remove an icon by Option-dragging it out of the Launcher window.

Change the Applications topic button

You may have discovered that there's no bulleted folder for the first topic button, called Applications. Any icon that's loose in the Launcher Items folder appears on the Applications screen of Launcher-window icons.

Most books and articles tell you that you can't change the name of the Applications button. You can, however, if you use ResEdit (included with Mac SECRETS). To do so, launch ResEdit. Open the Launcher control panel inside your System Folder. Double-click the icon called STR#.

In the list of numbers, double-click -4033. Scroll down until you see the item called Applications. Change this word to whatever you wish your programs folder to be called.

And one more thing: you'll notice frequent references, in these Launcher ResEdit adventures, to Mashie. Free book to the first person who tells us what, or who, that is!

Change the “Software Highlights” name

On some PowerBooks, such as the 500 series, the Launcher has been titled Software Highlights, and you can't rename it — at least not in the usual way. You can, however, rename a duplicate of the control panel. (Leave the Software Highlights Items folder in the System Folder alone, however — it's your equivalent of the Launcher Items folder described in this section.)

The amazing Recent Apps page

Wouldn't it be nice if you could combine the one-click easy access of the Launcher with the Recent Applications-tracking feature of the Apple Menu Options control panel?

You can, and it works beautifully (System 7.5 and later; we'll assume that you do, in fact, have Apple Menu Options installed and activated). Open your System Folder. Highlight the Recent Applications folder; from the File menu, choose Make Alias. Put a bullet symbol (•) in front of the alias's name (create the • by pressing Option-8) and then drag the alias into the Launcher Items folder.

From now on, your Launcher will have a new page called Recent Applications. On it will appear the programs you've used most recently — and the page will update itself automatically from day to day!

Roll credits

Hold down Command and Option-click over the gray area of the Launcher window (the thin margins around the folder buttons) to see the secret About box.

A better Launcher

Despite the improvements in today's Launcher control panel, it's still a wannabe compared with the flexibility of DragStrip, included with Mac SECRETS. See Chapter 34.