

Customizing OS X

Apple is rightfully proud of the user interface design incorporated into the Macintosh OS X family of operating systems. The interface is easy to use, and it's also easy to customize so that your Mac looks and behaves the way you want.

This chapter shows you how to customize various parts of the OS X interface, including

- ➡ **Desktop:** You can change the color scheme of your Desktop or use a picture as your background.
- ➡ **Display:** You can also change the size of the Desktop display, use a custom screen saver, and adjust the way the clock appears.
- ➡ **Dock:** The OS X Dock normally resides at the bottom of the screen and gives quick access to your most commonly used programs. You can move the Dock, add or remove items, and change the way the Dock appears.
- ➡ **Keyboard and accessibility:** Mac OS X can accommodate most accessibility needs, and you can change common keyboard shortcuts.
- ➡ **Exposé:** Switch quickly between programs with this OS X tool.
- ➡ **Spaces:** If you're tired of constantly re-arranging your Desktop, create and easily move between multiple virtual workspaces using Snow Leopard's Spaces feature.

Chapter 1

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Access System Preferences

1. Open the Apple menu by clicking the Apple icon in the upper-left corner of the screen.
2. Choose System Preferences from the Apple menu to reveal the System Preferences window, as shown in Figure 1-1.



You can also open System Preferences from the Dock.

3. Click a preference icon to open a group of settings.



To return to the main System Preferences window, click the Show All button at the top of any individual preferences pane.



Figure 1-1: System Preferences

Modify the Desktop Appearance

1. Open System Preferences and then click the Appearance icon.
2. In the Appearance preferences pane (see Figure 1-2), click the Appearance pop-up menu and then choose a color scheme for the overall appearance of the interface.
3. Click the Highlight Color pop-up menu and choose a highlight color for selected text.
4. Use the Place Scroll Arrows radio buttons to choose whether you want scroll arrows right next to each other or placed at the top and bottom of scroll bars.
5. Select other scroll bar options as desired.

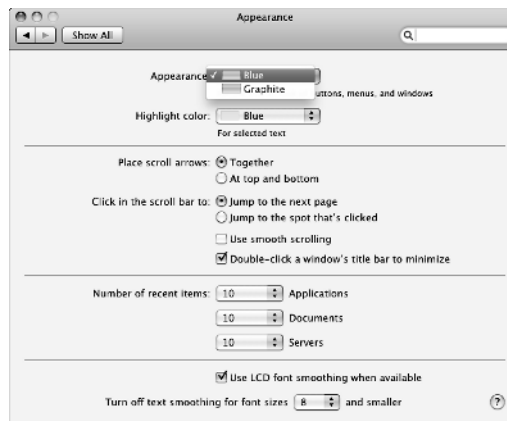


Figure 1-2: The Appearance preferences pane



If you find that your computer freezes momentarily or responds slowly when scrolling through documents, deselect the Use Smooth Scrolling option.

6. Next to Number of Recent Items, choose the maximum number of items that are displayed from the pop-up menus for Applications, Documents, and Servers.
7. Click the Show All button to return to the System Preferences menu pane.
8. Click the Desktop & Screen Saver icon.
9. In the Desktop & Screen Saver pane that appears, click the Desktop tab to bring Desktop settings to the front (see Figure 1-3), if they aren't shown already.
10. Click a picture folder on the left side of the Desktop tab and then choose an image or swatch on the right to use as your Desktop background. Choices include
 - **Desktop Pictures:** These are standard background graphics supplied with OS X.
 - **Themed images:** OS X also includes stock photos of nature scenes, plants, black and white images, as well as abstract images, which can be used as desktop backgrounds.
 - **Solid Colors:** Choose a color swatch to make your Desktop background a solid color.
 - **iPhoto:** Select an image from a picture event in your iPhoto library, as shown in Figure 1-4.
 - **Pictures Folder:** Here you can choose any image from your Pictures folder, even if it isn't in your iPhoto library.
11. Using the pop-up menu at the top of the Desktop tab, choose whether you want to tile smaller images or stretch them to fill the whole screen.



Select the Change Picture check box at the bottom of the preferences pane to automatically change the background image periodically. By using this feature, you can turn your Desktop into a slideshow using the pictures in the currently selected folder.

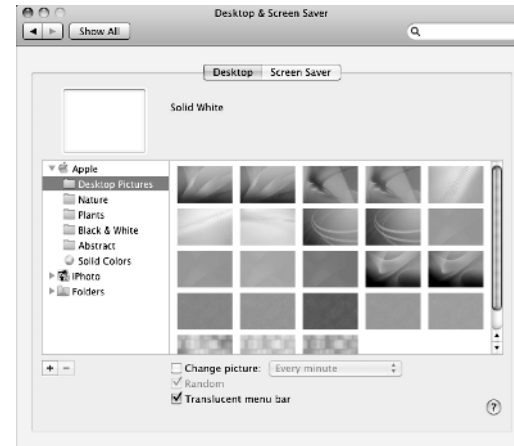


Figure 1-3: The Desktop settings



Figure 1-4: Picking your Desktop background

Change the Display Size

1. Open System Preferences and then click the Displays icon.
2. In the Displays pane that appears, click the Display tab to bring Display settings to the front, if they aren't shown already.
3. Choose a resolution on the left side of the window, as shown in Figure 1-5.
4. If your Mac has a built-in monitor, use the Brightness slider to adjust the display brightness.
5. Choose a refresh rate in the Refresh Rate pop-up menu.



In general, you should use the highest available settings in the Refresh Rate pop-up menu. Reduce it only if you see distortion or other display problems.



If you connect a second display to your computer — for example, an external monitor or a multimedia projector — open the Displays settings and then click the Detect Displays button. OS X detects the new display and allows you to adjust its settings as well.

6. Click the Color tab to bring the Color settings to the front, as shown in Figure 1-6.
7. Choose a Display Profile on the left side of the screen.



Which display profile you use depends primarily on your hardware. See Chapter 4 for more on choosing display profiles.

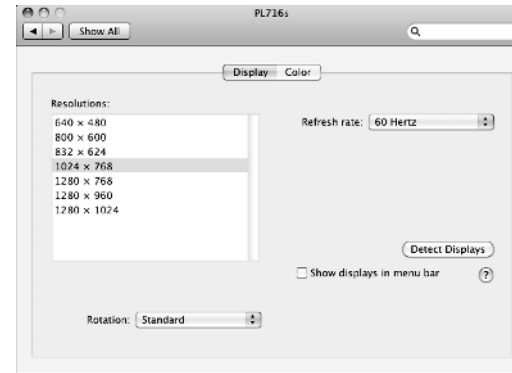


Figure 1-5: Changing the display resolution and refresh rate



Figure 1-6: Choosing a color profile

Customize Keyboard Shortcuts

1. Quit any open applications by using $\text{⌘}+Q$.
2. Open System Preferences and then click the Keyboard & Mouse icon to open the Keyboard & Mouse preferences pane, as shown in Figure 1-7.
3. Click the Keyboard Shortcuts tab to bring the Keyboard Shortcut settings to the front, as shown in Figure 1-8.
4. Choose a shortcut category from the menu on the left. Categories are organized into major OS X features.
5. Double-click the shortcut you want to change. Make sure you double-click the actual shortcut listed on the far right, not the command listed in the middle.
6. Press the new keyboard shortcut that you want to use for the command.



If the shortcut you want to use is already assigned to a different command, a yellow warning triangle appears next to the duplicated shortcuts. If you see the yellow warning triangles, at least one shortcut must be changed.

7. To disable a keyboard shortcut, remove the check mark next to it.
8. Close the Keyboard & Mouse preferences pane to save your changes.



If you're unhappy with the keyboard shortcuts you've customized or if you're using a pre-owned computer that was customized by someone else, open the Keyboard Shortcuts settings and click the Restore Defaults button. This restores all keyboard shortcuts back to their factory defaults.

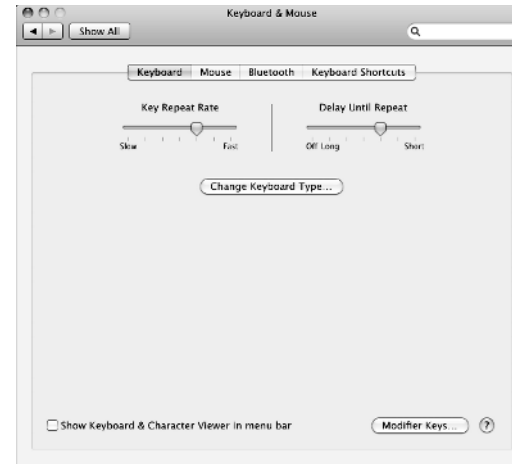


Figure 1-7: The Keyboard & Mouse preferences pane



Figure 1-8: Customizing keyboard shortcuts

Add and Remove Dock Icons

1. Double-click the desktop icon for your hard drive and then click Applications under Places in the Sidebar on the left side of the Finder. This action opens the Applications folder, as shown in Figure 1-9.
2. Locate the icon for the program that you want to add to the Dock.



In some cases — such as Apple iWork or Microsoft Office applications — you may need to open a subfolder to find a program's icon. Look closely at the icon; if the icon looks like a folder, it's a folder.

3. Click and drag the program's icon to the Dock, as shown in Figure 1-9. The place where you drop the icon on the Dock will be that icon's location. (Keep in mind that applications must be to the left of the divider.)
4. To launch an application from the Dock, simply click the appropriate icon. The application launches.
5. To remove an icon from the Dock, click and hold the mouse button on the icon until a pop-up menu appears, as shown in Figure 1-10.



If you're using a two-button mouse, simply right-click the Dock icon you want to remove instead of clicking and holding.

6. While still holding down the mouse button, move the pointer over Remove from Dock and then release the mouse button. The icon disappears from the Dock.



Figure 1-9: Clicking and dragging application icons to the Dock



Figure 1-10: Removing an icon from the Dock

Move and Hide the Dock

1. Open System Preferences and then click the Dock icon.
2. In the Dock preferences pane, as shown in Figure 1-11, move the Size slider to change the Dock size.



You can also change the Dock size at any time by clicking and dragging up or down on the thin vertical line near the right side of the Dock.

3. If you want to use Dock magnification — a useful feature that magnifies icons when you hover the mouse pointer over them — place a check mark next to Magnification and adjust the slider as desired.
4. Choose a Dock position by clicking the Left, Bottom, or Right radio buttons. Figure 1-12 shows the Dock on the left side of the screen.



If you have a widescreen monitor, you may find that putting the Dock on the left or right side of the screen makes more efficient use of screen real estate.

5. If you don't like the bouncy feedback provided by Dock icons when you launch a program, remove the check mark next to Animate Opening Applications. An arrow still shows you when the program is launching.
6. To automatically hide the Dock when it isn't in use, place a check mark next to Automatically Hide and Show the Dock. To reveal the hidden Dock, simply move the mouse pointer to the bottom (or left or right, as appropriate) of the screen.

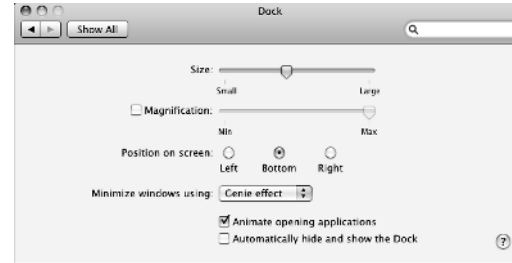


Figure 1-11: The many ways to customize the Dock

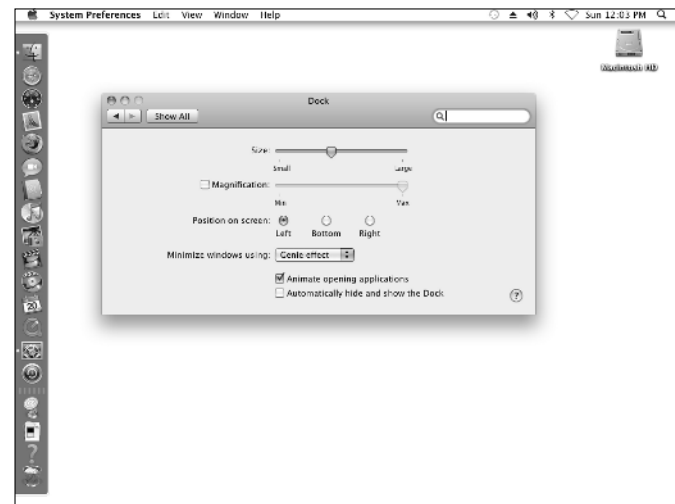


Figure 1-12: Repositioning your Dock to the side

Make OS X Accessible

1. Open System Preferences and then click the Universal Access icon.
2. To adjust settings for visual impairments, click the Seeing tab to reveal the Seeing settings, as shown in Figure 1-13.
3. To enable *VoiceOver* — a basic screen-reader program built-in to OS X — select the On radio button below VoiceOver.



If you aren't happy with how VoiceOver sounds, click the Open VoiceOver Utility button. There you can change the voice, pitch, speed, and other characteristics of VoiceOver.

4. To enable screen zooming, select the On radio button below Zoom. Press Option+⌘+= to zoom in on an area of the screen, and press Option+⌘+- to zoom back out.
5. Use the settings below Display to change the appearance and use of color on-screen.
6. Click the Hearing tab to reveal audio options, as shown in Figure 1-14.
7. If you can't hear alert sounds from the computer, place a check mark next to Flash the Screen When an Alert Sound Occurs.



Click the Flash Screen button to test the screen flash.

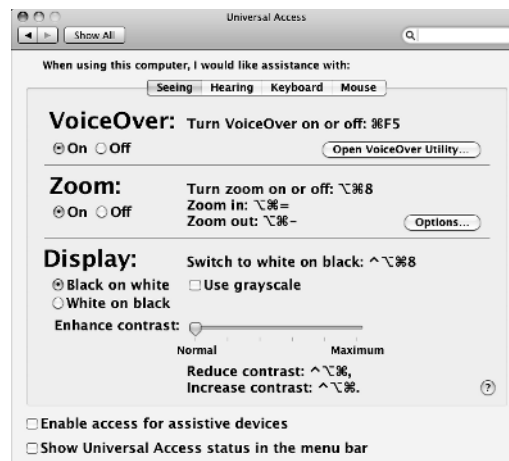


Figure 1-13: Settings that help you see your Mac



Figure 1-14: The Hearing tab and its audio options

8. Click the Keyboard tab to adjust keyboard options, as shown in Figure 1-15.
9. To enable Sticky Keys, select the On radio button next to Sticky Keys. The Sticky Keys feature allows you to use modifier keys, such as Shift, Function, Control, Option, and ⌘ , without simultaneously pressing multiple keys.



If you need Sticky Keys only occasionally, place a check mark next to Press the Shift Key Five Times to Turn Sticky Keys On or Off. This option gives you an easy way to quickly enable or disable Sticky Keys.

10. To create a delay between when a key is first pressed and when it's accepted by the computer, select the On option next to Slow Keys. Use the Acceptance Delay slider to change the length of the delay.
11. Click the Mouse (or Mouse & Trackpad if you have a laptop) tab to open pointer device settings, as shown in Figure 1-16.
12. If you want to use a numeric keypad in place of a mouse, select the On option next to Mouse Keys.



If your keyboard doesn't include a dedicated keypad — this is usually the case with laptops — you can purchase a USB (Universal Serial Bus) keypad at most computer and office supply stores.

13. Use the Initial Delay and Maximum Speed sliders to fine-tune the behavior of the Mouse Keys feature.
14. If the mouse cursor is too small, use the Cursor Size slider to change the size of the cursor. The Cursor Size slider works with Mouse Keys as well as a conventional mouse or trackpad.



If you're giving a presentation with your Mac and a digital projector, you may want to increase the size of the mouse cursor so that the cursor can be used as an on-screen pointer during the presentation.

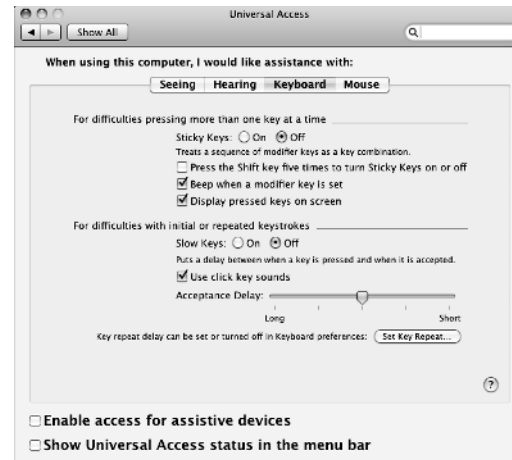


Figure 1-15: Settings for how your keyboard behaves

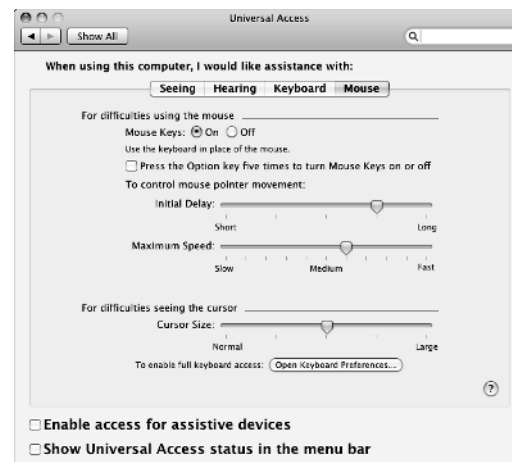


Figure 1-16: Settings for the mouse pointer

Activate a Screen Saver

1. Open System Preferences and then click the Desktop & Screen Saver icon.
2. Click the Screen Saver tab to reveal screen saver settings, as shown in Figure 1-17.
3. Scroll through the list of screen savers and click a screen saver to preview it in the area to the right.



To create a screen saver with photos from your iPhoto library, choose Library in the Screen Savers list. Alternatively, scroll down the Screen Savers list and click Choose Folder and then browse to a folder containing pictures you want to use.

4. Use the Start Screen Saver slider to change when the screen saver appears. If you choose 15, for example, the screen saver appears only after the computer is inactive for 15 minutes.
5. To configure a hot corner for activating your screen saver, click the Hot Corners button.
6. Decide which corner you want as the hot corner and then choose Start Screen Saver in that corner's menu, as shown in Figure 1-18.
7. Click OK to close the hot corner options. To test the hot corner, move the mouse pointer all the way to the corner you selected. The screen saver begins.



If you don't want to use a screen saver, move the Start Screen Saver slider to Never.

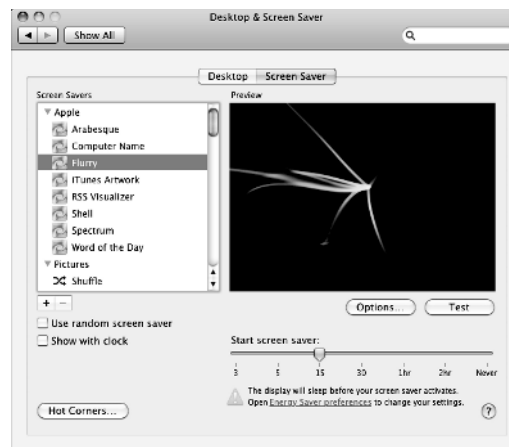


Figure 1-17: The Desktop & Screen Saver preferences pane

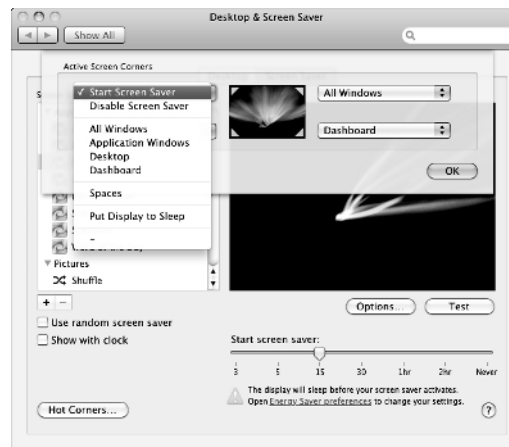


Figure 1-18: Creating a hot corner to quickly activate a screen saver

Display 24-Hour Time

1. Open System Preferences and then click the Date & Time icon.



You can also open the Date & Time control panel by clicking and holding the clock in the upper-right corner of the screen and then choosing Open Date & Time from the contextual menu that appears.

2. Click the Clock tab to bring Clock preferences to the front, as shown in Figure 1-19.
3. Select the Use a 24-Hour Clock check box to display time in 24-hour format.



If you're displaying time in 24-hour format, the Show AM/PM option is automatically disabled.

4. Adjust other clock options as desired and then click the Date & Time tab to show the calendar and time setting options, as shown in Figure 1-20.



Some clock options — such as Analog display — aren't compatible with a 24-hour clock.

5. If you want the computer to automatically synchronize its clock with an online date and time source, make sure that Set Date & Time Automatically is selected. Choose a source based on your geographical location.



Figure 1-19: Customizing the way time is displayed on your computer

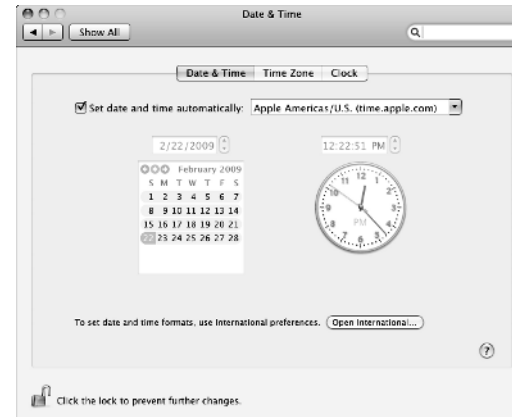


Figure 1-20: Letting your computer automatically check and set the time

Access Programs Quickly with Exposé

1. Open System Preferences and then click the Exposé & Spaces icon.
2. Click the Exposé tab to bring Exposé settings to the front.
3. Select a hot corner that you want to use for switching between open programs and then choose All Windows from that corner's pop-up menu. In Figure 1-21, I've chosen All Windows in the upper-right corner.



You can assign different functions to each corner of the OS X desktop. For example, you may want to assign the screen saver to one corner, and the Dashboard to another.

4. Close the Exposé & Spaces preferences pane.
5. Move the mouse pointer to the corner you selected as the Exposé hot corner. A window for each active program appears, as shown in Figure 1-22.
6. Click the program window you want to bring to the front. The selected program becomes active as its space fills the screen; meanwhile, those other programs are still running.



You can also quickly switch between open applications by holding down the \mathbb{C} key and then pressing Tab. A small window appears in the middle of the screen with an icon for each open application. Keep pressing Tab until the desired program is highlighted and then release the \mathbb{C} key.

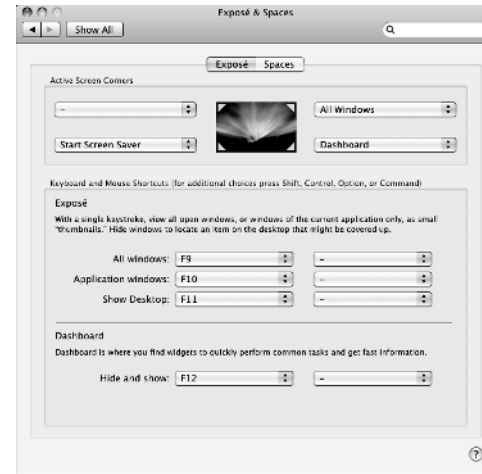


Figure 1-21: Select a hot corner



Figure 1-22: Click the program window you want to open

Set Up Spaces

1. Open System Preferences and then click the Exposé & Spaces icon.
2. Click the Spaces tab to view the Spaces options, as shown in Figure 1-23.
3. Place a check mark next to Enable Spaces.



To switch between Spaces more easily, place a check mark next to Show Spaces in Menu Bar. A Spaces icon and number appear in the menu bar. Click the Spaces icon and then select a new space from the menu that appears to jump to that space.

4. To add spaces, click the plus sign next to either Column or Row. In Figure 1-23, a row and column have been added.
5. If you want to use only a certain program in a certain space — for example, you may set up a separate space just for the DVD player — click the plus sign under the Application Assignments list and then choose Other from the menu that appears.
6. In the Selection dialog that appears, as shown in Figure 1-24, select an application and then click Add. The application is added to the Application Assignments list.
7. In the Application Assignments list of the Spaces window, click the Space number corresponding to the added application and choose a space to which the application should be assigned.



You can create assignments for any application, but they're most effective for multimedia applications that might compete with each other, such as iTunes and the DVD Player. If iTunes is in Space 3, audio from iTunes goes away when you switch to the DVD Player in Space 4 and vice versa.

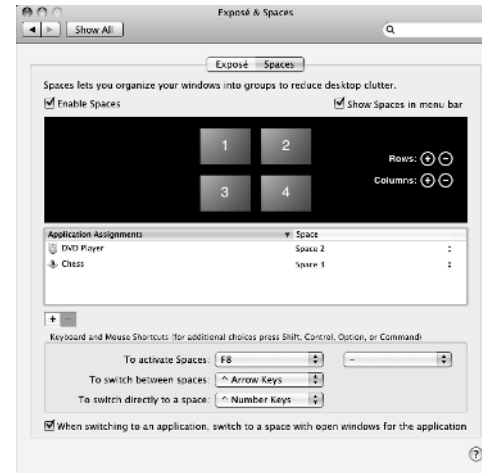


Figure 1-23: Enabling and configuring Spaces for your desktop

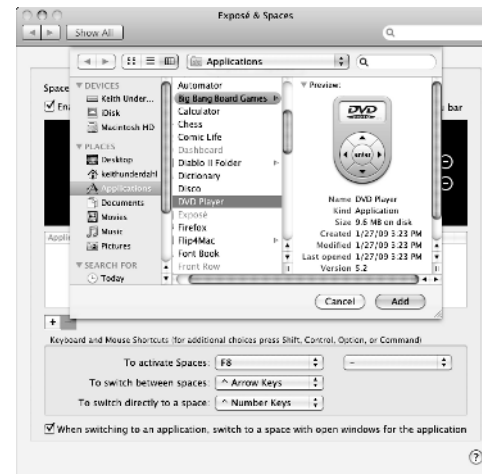


Figure 1-24: Assigning applications to specific spaces

Switch between Spaces

1. To switch between spaces, use one of the following techniques:

- Press F8 to activate Spaces, as shown in Figure 1-25, and then click the space that you want to open.



You can change the Spaces hot key by opening the Spaces preferences pane and selecting a different function key from the To Activate Spaces pop-up menu. (Refer to Figure 1-23.) F8 is the default hot key for Spaces.

- Click the Spaces number in the menu bar (if shown) and then select a Space number from the menu that appears.
 - Launch a program that has a dependency to a specific space. The previous section shows you how to set up dependencies.
2. To move an application window from one space to another, activate the Spaces feature and then click and drag a window to a new space, as shown in Figure 1-26.

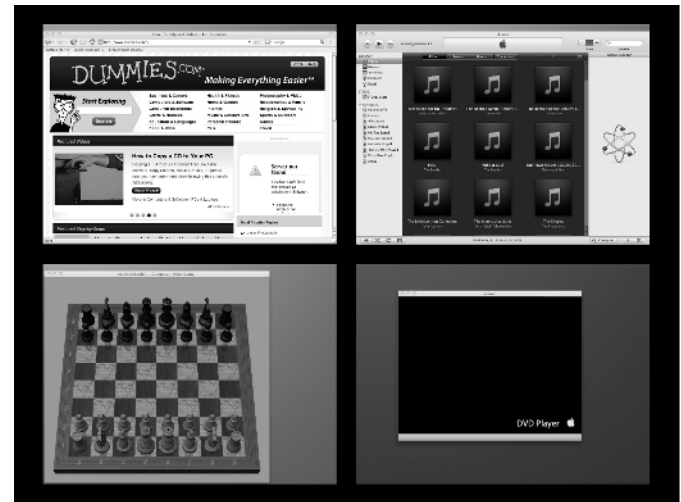


Figure 1-25: Spaces on your Desktop



Figure 1-26: Drag windows between spaces