

MAC GEMS

240+ Software Bargains



Macworld

\$12.95

Foreword



Back in mid-2002, *Macworld* published a feature called “Mac Software Bargains” that covered 60 inexpensive software titles that stood out from the crowd for their usefulness and value. The article was so popular that by the following spring, we were covering great, inexpensive software every month in a new column called *Mac Gems*.

It was an appropriate title. While most people are aware of the big-name software titles—Microsoft Office, Adobe Photoshop, and the like—some of the best Mac software is, like so many precious stones, hidden. There are many great products out there that don’t get the recognition, or even the awareness, they deserve. And when that happens, Mac users miss out.

That’s where we come in. *Macworld* mines the Web, sifting through inexpensive and lesser-known products from developers big and small to find those gems that are worth your time and hard-drive space. More specifically, we look for inexpensive software that makes your Mac run better, lets you work more efficiently, and helps your Mac do the little things you always wished it could do. It’s the software that, once you’ve tried it, you can’t imagine using your Mac without.

The *Mac Gems* column has been going strong ever since, and we’re fast approaching our 1,000th gem. Given how many new software titles are released for Mac OS X every day, we don’t plan on stopping there.

But even among the gems we’ve unearthed over the years, some deserve special recognition, and highlighting the very best of *Mac Gems* is the purpose of this book. We’ve picked more than 240 of our favorite Leopard-compatible products and divided them into useful categories. For each program, we give you a brief description of what it does, as well as the URL of our full review and the URL to the developer’s site for downloading. Some gems are ones we’ve recently discovered, whereas others are oldies but goodies. The one thing they all have in common is that each is a standout product that won’t break the bank. If you enjoy this collection, don’t forget to visit the Mac Gems Weblog (macworld.com/macgems) to keep up with our latest discoveries.

—Dan Frakes, Senior Editor and
Mac gemologist
April 2009

Table of Contents

Communication

8 Corral Your Contacts

Get easier access to your contacts and even turn them into mailing labels.



9 Manage Your Inbox

Let these smart e-mail add-ons help you quickly process your messages and squash spam so you'll never be overwhelmed by your inbox again.

16 Take Charge of Chats

Boost your online conversation skills with powerful chat, Twitter, and Skype helpers.

21 Surf Smarter

Beefing up your Internet navigation skills is easy. Download our favorite Web gems.

27 Organize Bookmarks and RSS Feeds

Know exactly where you've been, where you're going next, and what's going on now.

Text

32 Writing Tools

There's a big world of affordable word processing apps outside of Microsoft Word and Apple Pages.



36 Speed Up Routines

Increase your typing efficiency with shortcuts and a collection of text helpers.

Graphics

44 Edit Your Photos

You don't need Photoshop to edit and have fun with your photos. These apps can do it all, including creating panoramas, comic strips, and watermarks.



52 Get Creative

Unleash your inner artist with these inspiring utilities.

58 Print Your Creations

Give your images a life outside of your Mac by printing them.

60 Publish Photos Online

Don't keep all those great shots to yourself. These apps make uploading photos easy.

63 Take Screenshots

There are multiple applications that make capturing the images on your screen a snap.

Audio & Video

68 Edit Your Audio

Alter your audio tracks with affordable alternatives to expensive editing suites.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

73 Be a Better Listener

Take control of your music library with this collection of iTunes utilities and streaming tools.

79 Handle Podcasts and Other Audio

Use these creative audio gems to turn anything into a podcast, and tackle out-of-the-box audio formats.

84 Enrich Videos

Rip, burn, transfer, and watch any kind of video file.

Productivity

90 Take a Shortcut

Find an easier and faster way to do almost everything on your Mac.



97 Stay on Schedule

Pump up your scheduling power and never miss an important event.

101 Keep Yourself on Task

Your Mac isn't the only thing that needs organizing. Get yourself together with these apps.

105 Unlock Your Mac

Expand your Mac's horizons with a few minor but very useful tweaks.

108 De-Stress with Games

All that productivity can take a toll. Unwind with a few affordable and soothing games.

Organization

112 Organize Your Files

Bring a satisfying sense of order to your system with the top type-A applications.



117 Manage Data

Download helpful tools to corral your information into logical and neat collections.

Customize

122 Deck Out the Dock

Create a custom Dock by changing its appearance and even how it functions.



126 Add to the Menu Bar

The menu bar is small but powerful. Add notifications of every stripe to this coveted piece of screen real estate.

129 Enhance the Finder

Your window to OS X, the Finder is easily tailored to suit your needs.

134 Master the Mouse

Behind the mouse's and trackpad's simple exteriors lie powerful tools just waiting to be pumped up.

139 Power Up Searches

When tracking down files, Spotlight is only the beginning. Faster and

TABLE OF CONTENTS

smarter searches are as easy as installing these great applications.

144 Expand System Preferences

When you want to alter the way your Mac works, take a trip to OS X's System Preferences pane. But don't stop there. Use these programs to unlock hidden options and access new settings.

151 Get Advanced

Do you enjoy spending time under OS X's hood? These programs show more advanced Mac users how to get the most out of their system.

Networking



154 Make Smart Connections

Help your Mac connect to networks, the Internet, and other computers.

159 Move and Manage Your Files

Send files of every size and type over the Internet and across local networks.

Troubleshooting

166 Back It Up

Be prepared for anything by properly backing up all of your files.



170 Monitor Your System

Keep a close eye on potential problem areas on your system and you might just catch trouble before it happens.

176 Remedy Common Problems

You don't have to be a genius to fix your Mac. Just download these helpful tools.

180 Solve iPod and iPhone Issues

Take control of your iPod and iPhone with these nifty programs that transfer files—including music and video—from your device to your Mac.

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HAVE COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS? E-MAIL US AT EBOOKS@MACWORLD.COM.



About This Book

There are more than 240 software recommendations in this book, each hand-picked by *Macworld* editors. Here are a few tips and caveats to using this collection.

Understanding Prices

You can download many of the programs in this book without paying a dime. But that doesn't mean they are all free. Many were created by small developers who ask users to pay (some developers prefer the word *donate*) whatever the user feels the program is worth. Here's a guide to how we've labeled software that doesn't come with a specific price tag:

FREE These programs are completely free to download, no strings attached. However, in many cases the developers do accept payment, should you be interested in thanking them for their effort.

PAYMENT REQUESTED You can use these programs without paying, but a payment is strongly suggested. We encourage you to pay for the software, as doing so allows the developer to keep up the good work.



Editors' Top Picks

The programs and add-ons in this book are the best that we've reviewed over the years. But even among these carefully culled selections, our editors have some can't-miss favorites. We've marked these gems throughout the book with a Top Pick icon.



Mac OS Compatibility

All of these gems work in Leopard. If you have an older operating system, be sure to check the developer's Web site to see if the program is compatible with your system or if an alternative version is available.

Versions and Prices

Although we've tested all of the software reviewed in this book, versions change quickly, as do features and prices. Be sure to check the developer's Web site for the most recent version and price. For even more recommendations, check out the Mac Gems blog at macworld.com/macgems.

Find Quick Links to Gems

To help make browsing and downloading this collection of software gems a snap, we've given them their own Web page. You can find a complete list of the apps reviewed in this book, along with links to the developers' Web sites, at macworld.com/4743.



Communication



Between e-mail, blogs, social networking sites, instant messaging, video conferencing, and so on, you've never had more options for keeping in touch with far-flung friends and family—even strangers are no more than a few clicks away. But with all of that chatter comes the sometimes daunting task of managing various forms of communication. If you're not diligent, e-mail can quickly pile up in your Inbox and gregarious friends can pop up for a long heartfelt chat just when you're settling down to work. Thankfully, there are plenty of tools that can help you stay focused and productive without becoming a hermit.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 8** Corral Your Contacts
- 9** Manage Your Inbox
- 16** Take Charge of Chats
- 21** Surf Smarter
- 27** Organize Bookmarks and RSS Feeds

Manage Your Inbox

Overrun with e-mail? Simplify your workflow and save time with these clever e-mail assistants

Categorize Your E-mail

Looking for an easy way to round up e-mail messages on a related topic? If you use Mail and have a POP account, **MailTags** (macworld.com/2457) lets you assign keywords to e-mail for easier search and retrieval. The great thing about keywords, as opposed to simply moving messages to folders, is that you can assign multiple keywords to a given message. This gives you more flexibility when performing searches or when creating smart mailboxes that automatically group related messages. In addition to assigning keywords to messages, you can also use MailTags to organize messages by project. Each message can be assigned to a single project and unlimited keywords. You can also use MailTags to add notes to messages, set and view a message's priority, and set due dates for responding to messages.

Once MailTags is installed, a small tag appears in the upper-right corner of Mail messages. Clicking on it displays the MailTags panel, which allows you to assign keywords, either by typing them in manually or by choosing previously used keywords from the pop-up menu. You can even assign tags to messages you send, and create rules to tag messages automatically. **\$30; Indev Software, indev.ca**



Quickly File Messages

If you're a heavy e-mail user with many folders and subfolders, or if you tend to file mail in bunches to the same folder—for example, when you're receiving lots of e-mail about specific work projects, each with its own

folder—manually moving messages into the correct folder can get tedious. **MailRecent** (macworld.com/4631) makes viewing and filing your e-mail easier by adding several new options to Mail's menus: Move To Recent, Copy To Recent, and Go To Recent. The former two options are for managing your e-mail: select a message and then mouse down to Messages: Move To Recent. The submenu will list any folders to which you've recently moved other messages. Choose one and the message will be moved to that folder. Copy To Recent works similarly, except that the original will remain in its current location. The third new option, Go To Recent, switches the main Mail window view to the folder you choose.

Free; Gregory F. Welch, cs.unc.edu/~welch/MailRecent



File Messages without the Mouse



When it comes to performing common tasks, some people prefer to use the mouse, while others prefer keyboard shortcuts. If you're in the latter group and use Mail to manage your e-mail, check out Adam Tow's **MsgFiler** (macworld.com/3692), which lets you file your messages without your fingers ever leaving the keyboard.

Instead of using the mouse to file a message, just press a keyboard shortcut to bring up the MsgFiler window; type a few letters of the desired folder's name, and all matching folders appear in the list below. To move the current message to the first folder displayed, just press return; to choose a different folder, type more characters to narrow down the results, or use the down-arrow key to select the desired folder. MsgFiler also offers variations on this trick. For example, you can use additional keyboard shortcuts to copy a message to a folder instead of moving it (the original remains in its current location) or open a mail folder. Finally, you can set MsgFiler to automatically mark unread mail as Read when you file it.

\$8; Adam Tow, tow.com/msgfiler



Apply Rules On the Fly



If you want more control over how Mail applies rules to your messages, including the ability to apply rules to single messages, check out **Mail Act-On** (macworld.com/4632). This Mail plug-in lets you invoke mail rules using the keyboard.

Anything you can do with a rule in Mail—move, copy, forward, redirect, reply to, or delete a message; set the color and read/flagged status of a message; or even run an AppleScript—you can do via the keyboard using Mail Act-On. With Mail Act-On installed, you simply select one or more e-mail messages that you want to apply a rule to—for example, changing the color or moving it to another mailbox—and then press a key to bring up Mail Act-On’s shortcut screen, which lists all of the available rules. Besides the convenience of being able to apply a rule to any message (or group of messages) on the fly, Mail Act-On overcomes one of Mail’s biggest rule weaknesses—it lets you apply a single rule to selected messages. (Mail’s Apply Rules command applies *all* rules.) This means that individual rules can be used to process messages after they’ve been received. It can also apply *multiple* rules to the same message(s). If you realize you’ve applied the wrong rule to a message, just choose Mail’s Edit: Undo command to reset the affected messages back to their original states (and, if a rule moved them, to their original locations). If you’re a power user of Mail, or someone who just prefers pressing a few keys to mousing all over the screen, Mail Act-On is a must-have.

\$25; Indev Software, indev.ca

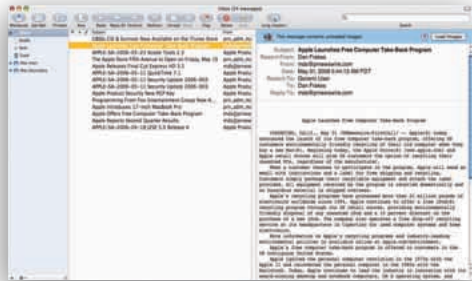


Reconfigure the Message Window



Mail gives you the option of displaying your message window below the Inbox list. While this keeps things tidy, it doesn’t leave a lot of screen space for the window. **LetterBox** (macworld.com/3456) gives you a little more breathing room by letting you move the preview pane from the bottom of Mail’s window to the right-hand side—a setup that uses the space on today’s widescreen displays more efficiently (and

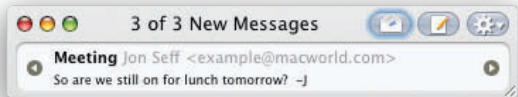
one that's available on many competing e-mail clients). Having the preview pane on the right also lets you preview more of each message, as well as see more messages in the current mailbox or folder. **Free**; Aaron Harnly, harnly.net/software/letterbox



Miniaturize Mail



If you're trying to stay focused on the task at hand, switching to Mail every time



you have a new incoming message probably isn't going to help. **MiniMail** (macworld.com/4633) is a nifty plug-in for Mail that lets you minimize the Mail window down to a much smaller version that displays on-the-fly previews of incoming e-mail messages. You can use it to simply keep an eye on unread messages or respond to e-mails directly from this mini window.

The top of the window displays the number of new messages and which one you're currently viewing. The main area of the window shows

TIP

QUICKLY HIDE MAIL'S PREVIEW PANE

Mail's preview pane lets you quickly read messages without having to open them in separate windows. But if it gets in the way, you can quickly banish it. Just double-click on the bar that divides it from the message list. If you'd like to keep the preview pane open but want to quickly hide the current message—for example, when a coworker stops by—⌘-click on the message that's currently displayed in the preview area to deselect it. The preview area will become blank. When you're done being secretive, just click on any message to reveal it again.





Nobody spends more time with Apple's computers, and the software you can run on them, than the writers and editors at *Macworld*.

Although OS X is chock-full of useful features, chances are it still can't do everything you want, exactly the way you want. Luckily, the Mac universe—filled with free and low-cost software—what we like to call Mac gems—just itching to add new features to your Mac. For this book, we pulled together our favorite Mac bargains, as well as helpful tips. Whether you're a power user looking to get more control over your system or a Mac beginner search-

ing for add-ons that will make your life easier, this collection has something for you.

Each of the more than 240 programs in this book has been reviewed and handpicked by a *Macworld* editor. There are bargain programs that do everything from organizing your files and increasing productivity to customizing OS X and fixing common problems. There are nifty applications for audio editors, graphic designers, students, Internet addicts, and photographers. Save time with must-have shortcut applications and search tools. Discover apps that will make staying in touch easier and working less of a chore. Some of the best gems are subtle, improving on OS X in ways that Apple somehow missed.

There is a lot of free and low-cost software available to Mac users these days. The challenge is sifting through that vast selection to find the prized few apps worthy of a permanent place on your hard drive.

Let this book be your ultimate guide to affordable Mac software.

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