

# Advanced Finder Techniques

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# 7

## Advanced Finder Techniques

In addition to the basic Finder and file management techniques covered in **Chapters 2** through **4**, Mac OS X offers more advanced techniques you can use to work with files:

- ◆ Use spring-loaded folders to access folders while copying or moving items.
- ◆ Apply color-coded labels to Finder items.
- ◆ Use aliases to make frequently used files easier to access without moving them.
- ◆ Quickly reopen recently used items.
- ◆ Use the new Quick Look feature to view the contents of a file or folder without opening it.
- ◆ Use the Info window to learn more about an item or set options for it.
- ◆ Compress files and folders to save space on disk or minimize data transfer time.
- ◆ Undo actions you performed while working with the Finder.

### ✓ Tip

- If you're brand new to Mac OS, be sure to read the information in **Chapters 2** through **4** before working with this chapter. Those chapters contain information and instructions about techniques that are used throughout this chapter.

## Spring-Loaded Folders

The spring-loaded folders feature lets you move or copy items into folders deep within the file structure of a disk—without manually opening a single folder. Instead, you simply drag icons onto folders (Figures 1 and 3) and wait as they're automatically opened (Figures 2 and 4). When you drop the icon into the window you want, all windows except the source and destination windows automatically close (Figure 5).

### ✓ Tips

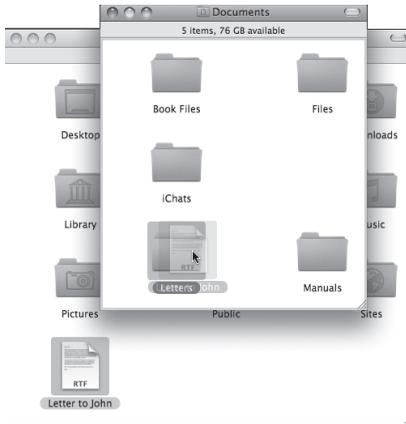
- The spring-loaded folders feature is sometimes referred to as *spring-open folders*.
- Using the spring-loaded folders feature requires a steady hand, good mouse skills, and knowledge of the location of folders on your disk.
- To use the spring-loaded folders feature, it must be enabled in the Finder preferences. Although this feature is normally turned on by default, if it's not, you can learn how to enable it in **Chapter 8**.
- To use the spring-loaded folders feature to move or copy more than one item at a time, select the items first, and then drag any one of them.



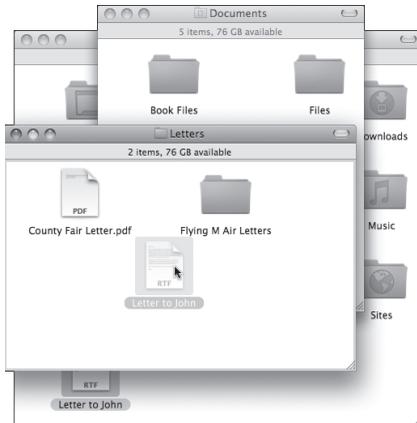
**Figure 1** Drag an icon onto a folder and wait...



**Figure 2** ...until the folder opens.



**Figure 3** Continue to drag the icon onto a folder in that window and wait...



**Figure 4** ...until that folder opens.



**Figure 5** When you're finished, only the source window (which is active) and destination window remain open.

## To move an item using spring-loaded folders

1. Drag the item you want to move onto the folder to which you want to move it (**Figure 1**), but do not release the mouse button. After a moment, the folder blinks and opens (**Figure 2**).
2. Without releasing the mouse button, repeat step 1. The destination folder becomes selected (**Figure 3**), then blinks and opens (**Figure 4**). Do this until you reach the final destination.
3. Release the mouse button to place the item into the destination window. All windows other than the source and destination windows close; the source window remains active (**Figure 5**).

### ✓ Tips

- In steps 1 and 2, to open a folder immediately, press **Spacebar** while dragging an item onto it.
- To close a folder's window so you can open a different folder in the same window, drag the item away from the open window. The window closes so you can drag the item onto a different folder and open it.

## To copy an item using spring-loaded folders

Hold down **Option** while following the above steps.

### ✓ Tip

- If the destination folder is on another disk, it is not necessary to hold down **Option** to copy items; they're automatically copied.

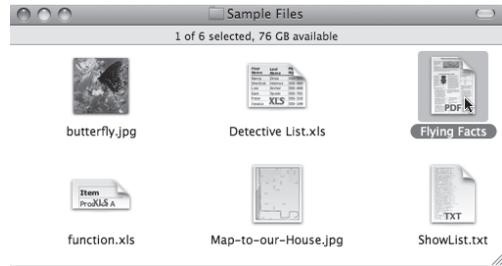
## Labels

Mac OS X's Labels feature enables you to assign color-coded labels to Finder icons. You can then sort list view windows by label or search for items based on the assigned label.

With a little imagination, labels can be a useful file management tool. For example, when I write a book and it goes through the editing process, I use labels to indicate each chapter's status. Yellow means it's a first draft, orange means it's a second draft, and green means it's final. This color-coding makes it possible for me to see a project's status just by looking inside a folder containing its files. (Imagine how good I feel when all of a book's chapter folders are green!)

### ✓ Tips

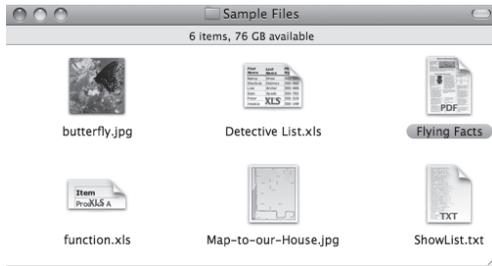
- You can only sort a window by labels if the Label column is displayed in that window. I explain how to customize a list view window in **Chapter 4**.
- You can change the name associated with a label or its color. I tell you how in **Chapter 8**.



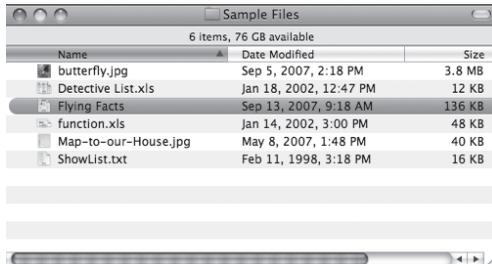
**Figure 6** Select the icon you want to apply a label to.



**Figure 7** Choose a label color from the bottom of the File menu.



**Figure 8** The color you chose is applied to the icon's name. (I know it doesn't look red here, but it is.)



**Figure 9** In list view, the label color is applied to the entire line for the item.



**Figure 10** Choosing the X under Label removes the label from selected icons.

## To assign a label to an item

1. In a Finder window, select the icon(s) you want to apply a label to (**Figure 6**).
2. From the File menu, choose the color of the label you want to apply (**Figure 7**).

The name of the icon is enclosed in an oval in the color you choose (**Figure 8**).

### ✓ Tip

- In list view, an item's entire line turns the color you chose (**Figure 9**).
- You can also assign a label to an item in the Info window for the item. I tell you more about the Info window later in this chapter.

## To remove a label from an item

1. In a Finder window, select the icon you want to remove a label from.
2. From the File menu, choose the X beneath Label (**Figure 10**).

The label is removed.

## Aliases

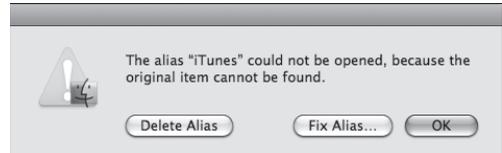
An *alias* (Figure 11) is a pointer to an item. You can make an alias of an item and place it anywhere on your computer. Then, when you need to open the item, just open its alias.

### ✓ Tips

- It's important to remember that an alias is not a copy of the item—it's a pointer. If you delete the original item, the alias will not open (Figure 12).
- By putting aliases of frequently used items together where you can quickly access them—such as on your desktop—you make the items more accessible without actually moving them.
- The sidebar, Dock, and recent items features work with aliases. The sidebar and Dock are discussed in **Chapters 2** and **8**; recent items are discussed a little later in this chapter.
- You can name an alias anything you like, as long as you follow the file naming guidelines discussed in **Chapter 3**. An alias's name does not need to include the word *alias*.
- The icon for an alias looks very much like the icon for the original item but includes a tiny arrow in the bottom-left corner (Figure 11).
- You can move, copy, rename, open, and delete an alias just like any other file.



**Figure 11** The icon for an alias looks like the original item's icon but includes a tiny arrow.



**Figure 12** If the original for an alias cannot be found, a dialog like this appears when you attempt to open it.



**Figure 13**  
Select the item  
you want to make  
an alias for.



**Figure 14**  
Choose Make  
Alias from the  
File menu.



**Figure 15** The alias  
appears with the  
original.



**Figure 16**  
To find an alias's  
original, choose  
Show Original from  
the File menu.

## To create an alias

1. Select the item you want to make an alias for (**Figure 13**).
2. Choose File > Make Alias (**Figure 13**), or press **⌘L**.

The alias appears right beneath the original item (**Figure 15**).

Or

Hold down **⌘Option** and drag the item for which you want to make an alias to a new location. The alias appears in the destination location.

### ✓ Tip

- An alias's name is selected right after it is created (**Figure 15**). If desired, you can immediately type a new name to replace the default name.

## To find an alias's original file

1. Select the alias's icon.
2. Choose File > Show Original (**Figure 16**), or press **⌘R**.

A window for the folder in which the original resides opens with the original item selected.

## To fix a broken alias

1. Select the alias's icon.
2. Choose File > Show Original (Figure 16), or press **⌘⇧R**.

or

Open the alias icon.

A dialog like the one in Figure 12 appears if the original cannot be found.

3. Click Fix Alias.
4. Use the Select New Original dialog that appears (Figure 17) to locate and select the item that you want to use as the original for the alias.
5. Click Choose. The item you selected is assigned to the alias.

### ✓ Tips

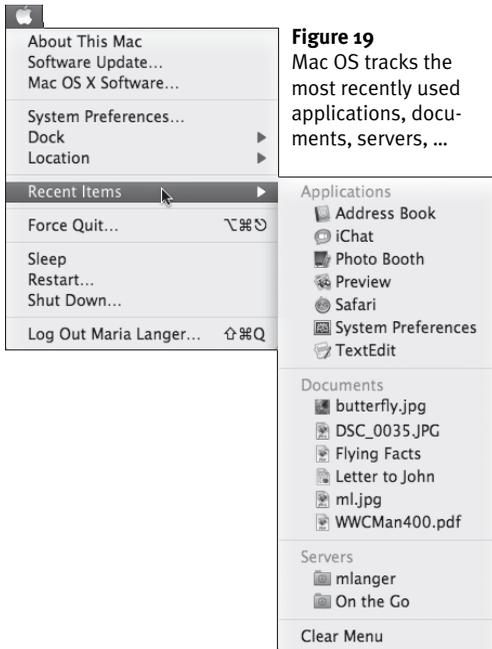
- The Select New Original dialog is similar to a standard Open dialog, which is covered in Chapter 10.
- If you would prefer to delete a broken alias instead of fixing it, click Delete Alias in the dialog that appears when you try to open it (Figure 12).
- If an alias is not broken but you want to reassign it to a new original anyway, you can click the Select New Original button in its Info window (Figure 18). I tell you more about the Info window later in this chapter.



**Figure 17** Use this dialog to select a new original item for an alias.



**Figure 18** The Info window for an alias includes a Select New Original button to change the original for an alias.



**Figure 19**  
Mac OS tracks the most recently used applications, documents, servers, ...

## Recent Items

Mac OS automatically tracks the things you open. It creates submenus of the most recently opened items in four categories—applications, documents, servers, and folders—making it quick to open them again.

### ✓ Tip

- You can specify how many recent items Mac OS X tracks in the Recent Items submenu (**Figure 19**) by setting options in the Appearance preferences pane. I explain how in **Chapter 8**.

## To open recent items

To open a recently used application, document, or server, choose its name from the Recent Items submenu under the Apple menu (**Figure 19**).

*Or*

To open a recently used folder, choose its name from the Recent Folders submenu under the Go menu (**Figure 20**).

### ✓ Tips

- Recent Items works with aliases, which are discussed earlier in this chapter.
- Working with applications and documents is discussed in **Chapter 10**; working with servers is discussed in **Chapter 20**.

## To clear the Recent Items or Recent Folders submenu

Choose Apple > Recent Items > Clear Menu (**Figure 19**) or choose Go > Recent Folders > Clear Menu (**Figure 20**).

### ✓ Tip

- Clearing the Recent Items or Recent Folders submenu does not delete any items.



**Figure 20**  
...and folders.

## Quick Look

Mac OS X 10.5's new Quick Look feature makes it possible to see what's in a folder or file without actually opening it. Instead, Quick Look shows a preview of the item within a resizable Quick Look window (Figures 22 through 24).

### To view a file with Quick Look

1. In a Finder window, select the item you want to view with Quick Look.
2. Click the Quick Look icon on the toolbar.

or

Choose File > Quick Look "*Item Name*" (Figure 21), or press  $\text{⌘} \text{⌘} \text{Y}$ .

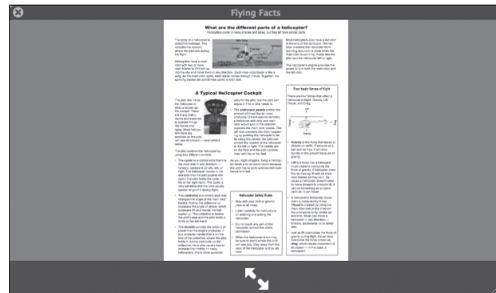
The Quick Look window appears as a charcoal gray, translucent window that displays the item's icon (Figure 22) or contents (Figures 23 and 24).

### ✓ Tips

- If you use Quick Look to view a multiple-page document, you can use a scroll bar to view any document page.
- If iPhoto is installed, you can click the Add to iPhoto button in the Quick Look window for an image file (Figure 23) to add the image to your iPhoto library.



**Figure 21**  
The Quick Look command displays a selected file or folder using the new Quick Look feature.



**Figures 22, 23, & 24** The Quick Look window for a folder (top-right), image file (bottom-left), and PDF file (bottom-right).



**Figure 25** In full screen view, Quick Look's preview fills your entire screen.

Close  
Exit Full Screen  
Add to iPhoto

## To browse the Finder with Quick Look

1. Open a Finder window for the folder you want to browse.
2. Click the Quick Look icon on the toolbar.  
or

Choose File > Quick Look “Item Name” (Figure 21) or press  $\text{⌘} \text{⌘} \text{Y}$ .

The Quick Look window appears.

3. Use standard Finder browsing techniques to select the items you want to browse. Each time a new item is selected, the Quick Look window changes to display its icon or contents (Figures 22 through 24).

### ✓ Tip

- I tell you more about navigating folders and selecting icons in **Chapters 2 and 3**.

## To switch to full screen view

Click the Full Screen button at the bottom of a Quick Look window. The screen turns black and fills with the Quick View window (Figure 25).

### ✓ Tips

- A button bar appears in full screen view (Figure 25) so you have the same options you would have in the Quick Look window.
- If the button bar disappears, move the mouse pointer to display it again.
- To leave full screen view, click the Exit Full Screen button (Figure 25) or press  $\text{Esc}$ .

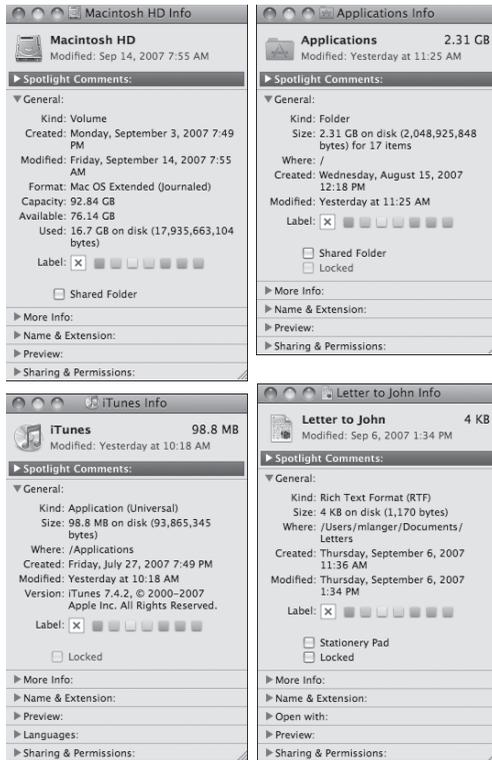
## To close the Quick Look window

Use one of the following techniques:

- ◆ Click the Quick Look window's close button (Figures 22 through 24).
- ◆ Choose File > Close Quick Look (Figure 26).
- ◆ Press **⌘** **⌘** **Y**.
- ◆ In full-screen view, click the close button in the Quick Look window's button bar (Figure 25).



**Figure 26** When the Quick Look window is open, the Close Quick Look command appears on the File menu.



**Figures 27, 28, 29, & 30** The Info window for a hard disk (top-left), folder (top-right), application (bottom-left), and document (bottom-right).

## The Info Window

You can learn more about an item by opening its Info window (Figures 18 and 27 through 30). Depending on the type of icon (disk, folder, application, document, alias, and so on), the General information in the Info window will provide some or all of the following:

- ◆ **Kind** or type of item.
- ◆ **Size** of item or contents (folders and files only).
- ◆ **Where** item is on disk.
- ◆ **Created** date and time.
- ◆ **Modified** date and time.
- ◆ **Format** of item (disks only).
- ◆ **Capacity** of item (disks only).
- ◆ **Available space** on item (disks only).
- ◆ **Used space** on item (disks only).
- ◆ **Version number** or copyright date or both (applications only).
- ◆ **Original location** on disk (aliases only).
- ◆ **Color label** assigned to the item.
- ◆ **Stationery Pad** check box (documents only) to convert the file into a stationery format file, which is like a document template.
- ◆ **Locked** check box to prevent the file from being deleted or overwritten (folders and files only).

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**Figure 32**  
Choose Get Info from the File menu.

## To open the Info window

1. Select the item for which you want to open the Info window (**Figure 13**).
2. Choose File > Get Info (**Figure 32**), or press **⌘I**.

The Info window for that item appears (**Figure 29**).

## To enter Spotlight comments in the Info window

1. Open the Info window for the item you want to enter comments for (**Figure 30**).
2. If necessary, click the disclosure triangle beside Spotlight Comments near the top of the window. The window expands to show the Spotlight Comments box.
3. Type your comments into the Spotlight Comments box (**Figure 33**). They are automatically saved.

### ✓ Tip

- As discussed in **Chapter 4**, you can set a window's list view to display comments entered in the Info window.

## To lock an application or document

1. Open the Info window for the item you want to lock (**Figures 18 and 27 through 30**).
2. Turn on the Locked check box.

### ✓ Tip

- Locked items cannot be deleted or overwritten. They can, however, be moved.



**Figure 33** Enter comments for an item in the Spotlight Comments section.

## Compressing Files & Folders

Mac OS X's file compression feature enables you to create compressed copies of items sometimes called *archived files* or *archives*. Compressed files take up less space on disk than regular files. You may find them useful for backing up files or for sending files to others over a network or via e-mail.

### ✓ Tips

- In previous versions of Mac OS X, the compression feature was known as the archive feature.
- The compression feature uses ZIP format compression, which was originally developed as a DOS and Windows PC format. As a result, document archives created with this feature are fully compatible with DOS and Windows PCs.



**Figure 34** To compress an item, begin by selecting its icon.



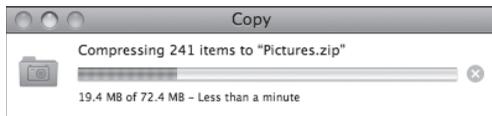
**Figure 35**  
Choose the Compress command from the File menu.

## To compress a file or folder

1. Select the item you want to compress (Figure 34).
2. Choose File > Compress “*Item Name*” (Figure 35).
3. Wait while your computer creates the archive. While it works, a Copy status dialog appears (Figure 36). When the dialog disappears, the archive file appears in the same location as the original as a .zip file (Figure 37).

### ✓ Tips

- In previous versions of Mac OS X, you compressed files with the Create Archive command on the File menu. This is the same command with a different name.
- You can compress multiple items at once. Select the items, then choose File > Compress *n* Items (where *n* is the number of selected items). When the archive appears, it will be named Archive.zip.



**Figure 36** A copy progress dialog like this one appears when you compress an item.



**Figure 37**  
The compressed file appears with the original.

## To open a compressed file

Double-click the compressed file. The compressed file’s contents are uncompressed and appear in the same window as the compressed file.

## Undoing Finder Actions

The Mac OS X Finder includes limited support for the Undo command, which can reverse the most recently completed action. Say, for example, that you move a file from one folder to another folder. If you immediately change your mind, you can choose Edit > Undo Move (Figure 38) to put the file back where it was.

### ✓ Tips

- Don't depend on the Undo command. Unfortunately, it isn't available for all actions (Figure 39).
- The exact wording of the Undo command varies depending on the action and the item it was performed on. In Figure 38, for example, the command is Undo Move of "Letter to John" because the last action was to move a document icon named Letter to John.
- The Undo command is also available (and generally more reliable) in most Mac OS applications. You'll usually find it at the top of the Edit menu.

### To undo an action

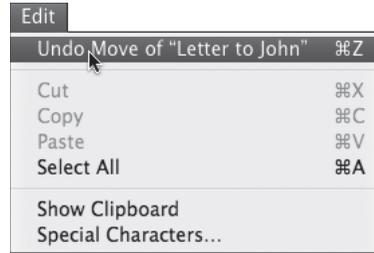
Immediately after performing an action, choose Edit > Undo "*action description*" (Figure 38), or press  $\text{⌘} \text{⌘} \text{Z}$ . The action is reversed.

### To redo an action

Immediately after undoing an action, choose Edit > Redo "*action description*" (Figure 40). The action is redone—as if you never used the Undo command.

### ✓ Tip

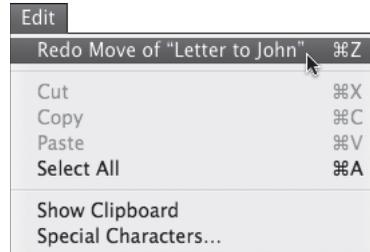
- Think of the Redo command as the Undo-Undo command since it undoes the Undo command.



**Figure 38** The Undo command enables you to undo the last action you performed.



**Figure 39** If an action cannot be undone, the words *Can't Undo* will appear at the top of the menu in gray.



**Figure 40** The Redo command undoes the Undo command.