

Mac Matters - The Newsletter of New to Mac



Should I update my OS?

I'm often asked this question and my answer is (hopefully!) always the same. All computers will run best with the operating system that they were launched with. If you look at the specifications of the machines Apple currently sells you will see the speed of the current crop of processors, the amount of memory they now come with and the fact that most are now using Solid State Discs which are much faster than the old style hard drive with spinning platters. If you compare this with the specification of your machine, you can see the potential for how slow it would be if you update to the latest operating system.

Another way of looking at it is how old is your machine and does it *just* meet Apple's requirements for running the OS. My laptop for example is one of the oldest that will run Yosemite (it's a 2007 machine). With Snow Leopard it flies but with Yosemite it's like trying to run through treacle!

However, if you've already updated to a version of the current OS, should you update to the latest version of it? The answer to that is almost always yes. For example, as I write, Yosemite, the current OS, has just had the release of version 10.10.5. Apple's stance is that it is recommended for all Yosemite users and they mention a few of the fixes or improvements it contains. This one specifically fixes issues that Mail had with some mail servers. I'm hoping it fixes the issue of Mail trying to update your settings and getting it wrong so that it stops working!

Looking after the pennies.

I don't know how you keep track of your money or even if you do at all but financial control is a task the computer is ideally suited to. Many people use a spreadsheet for this but for me there's too much risk of making a mistake in your calculations which would then lead to incorrect balances so I use a dedicated accounting program.

The one I use is called Home Accountz (yes, the "z" is correct). I've used that and its predecessors since the early 90s when it was only available for Acorn computers and then when I moved to Mac in 2002, had to keep the old Acorn going as at that time, it was available for Windows but not yet Mac.

As soon as a Mac version became available, I bought a copy. I've offered to demonstrate the program to various groups over the years but until recently there's been insufficient interest to make it worthwhile. However, one group expressed an interest and were amazed at how simple it is to use - not at all like accounting! - and how versatile it is, so much so that ten of them decided to buy a copy. As I know the company well, I asked if there was any chance of a discount. It normally costs £40 but if you're interested, next time I see you, let me show you how it works and I can give you a promotion code to get 25% off.

Now, spending the pennies!

It's not unusual for someone to ask me how to free up space on an iPad or iPhone as it's become full. Of course you can't buy more memory for these devices and Apple expect you to store all your stuff on cloud based storage. OK, there's lots of it available at no charge but you do need an internet connection to be able to use it.

Wouldn't it be nice if you could use a USB stick with mobile devices - well, you can. One of the stumbling blocks is that mobile devices don't have a filing system in the same way that 'normal' computers do. To get round this, anyone wanting to market a USB stick for them has to write something to take the place of one.

There are several on the market now but one of the neatest I've seen is the iBridge from a company called Leef (www.leefco.com/ibridge). It's shaped like the letter J with a conventional USB plug for your Mac on the 'long' end and a lightning connector of the other. When connected to your mobile device, it curls round the back out of the way. You have to download the free app that controls it but then you can transfer files to and from your Mac or move files stored internally in the apps on your mobile device onto it to free up space.

Restrictions? Well, not many but Apple have not allowed the camera to save to an external device so you'd have to save to Camera Roll then move photos over to the iBridge. There is a simple camera app provided but it's not as good as the Apple one. If you've bought music protected by DRM then the Content Viewer of the app cannot play it so these would have to stay in iTunes on your device. Most films would be protected by DRM so won't play off the iBridge. And finally, it won't store games or apps.

Some of you may find one of these useful but for me, I'll stick to cloud storage. For that reason, all of the above is from research and reviews, not from personal experience. Oh, and as it's a lightning connector, they won't work with older mobile devices that have the thirty pin connector.

Current Amazon prices range from £44 for the 16GB model to £145 for the 128GB one.