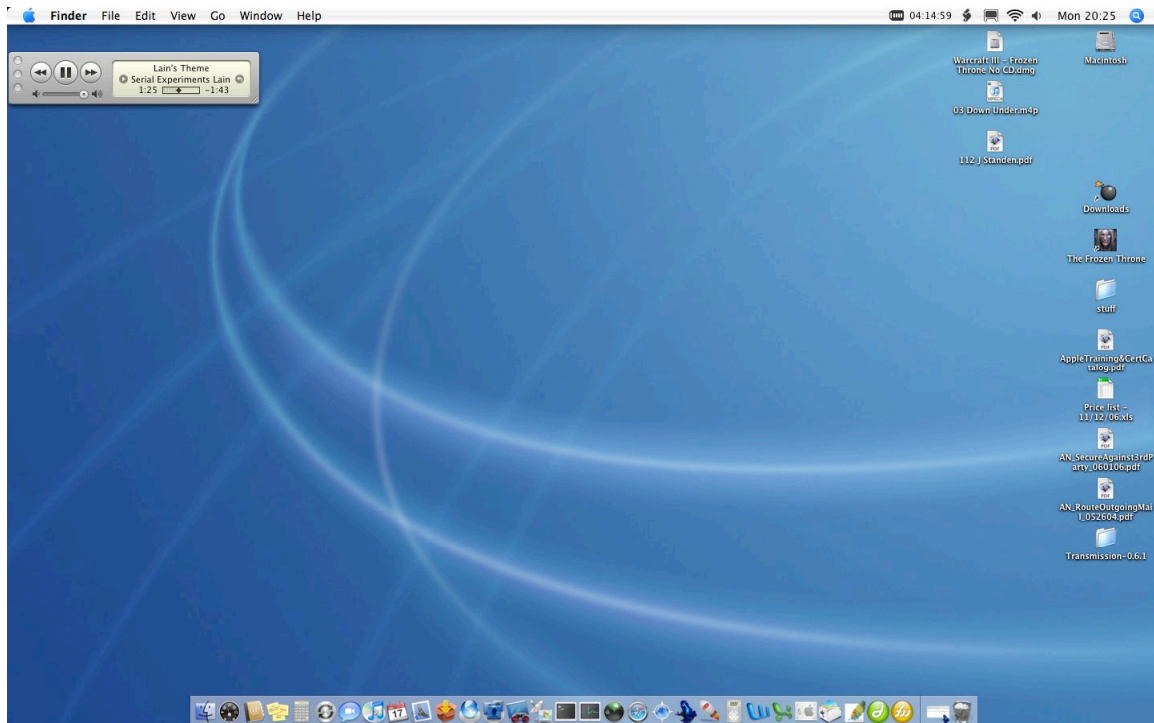# Lesson 2

Up and Running with OS X

The desktop is the easiest thing to recognise in OS X. It is the area that you first see when you successfully start the operating system. It is the area that a user can use to store files and access programs or applications from.

Below is an example of what the desktop can look like on a computer running OS X. However, it is highly customisable and does not have to look like this at all…

The main areas of the this screen are:

1. The Apple menu
2. The toolbar
3. The toolbar icons
4. The Dock
5. The background area

Introducing the Apple menu

The Apple menu is the blue Apple icon at the upper left corner of the desktop area. It is primarily used to switch the computer to sleep, restart the computer or turn the computer off.

However, it is also used to find out more about your computer, log the current user out, access recent items and change the placement of the Dock. It can also be used to access Software Update and to access System Preferences.
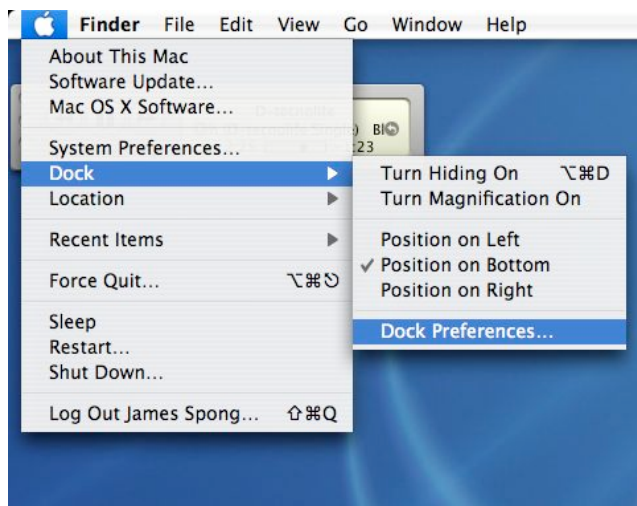
Introducing the Dock

The Dock is one of the main innovative items of OS X. It is primarily used to be able to quickly and easily access your favourite applications, files and folders. The main thing to remember about the dock is that it is separated into 2 sections; applications on the left and files/folders on the right.

Note Dock items are opened with only one click and not two.

                Applications   Files/Folders

You can change the way the Dock behaves easily in OS X. You can 'drag and drop' applications, files and folders into the Dock to keep them there for easy access. You can also lift items out of the Dock to remove them. This does not delete the item, but simply removes the 'alias' to the item.

To change the location of the Dock, simply access the Apple menu and hover over the Dock entry.

To change other aspects of the Dock, such as scaling preferences and animation preferences, access the Dock Preferences at the bottom of the Dock menu.

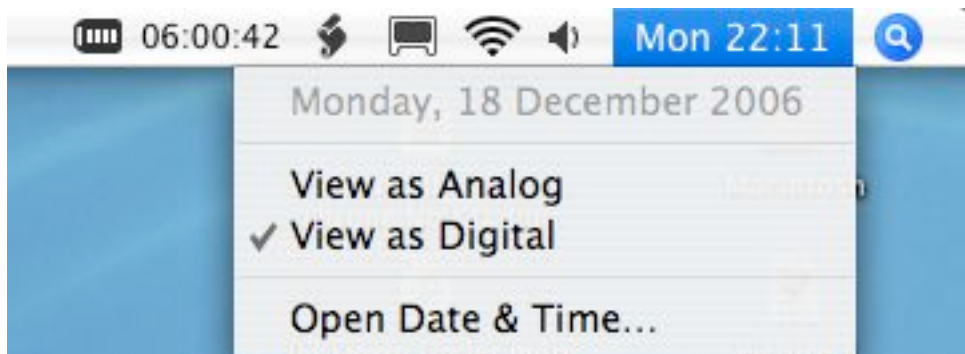## Introducing the Toolbar and the Toolbar Icons

The Toolbar in OS X is where many of the in-depth features of the Operating System and other programs reside. Here you can access 'application specific' settings, such as application preferences and each application's help function.

When using OS X, you will notice that the toolbar changes for different applications and that it is easy to tell which application is in use because the application name will be in **Bold** in the upper left corner, next to the Apple Menu icon.

In the upper right hand corner are the toolbar icons. These can be a mix of both 'application specific' and 'system wide' icons and can be enabled (usually) in the preferences of each application. Toolbar icons are useful for applications that are used frequently or are of informational use, such as the volume level and the date and time feature, shown below.

You can access these icon's preferences by clicking them and using the menus that drop down, shown below.
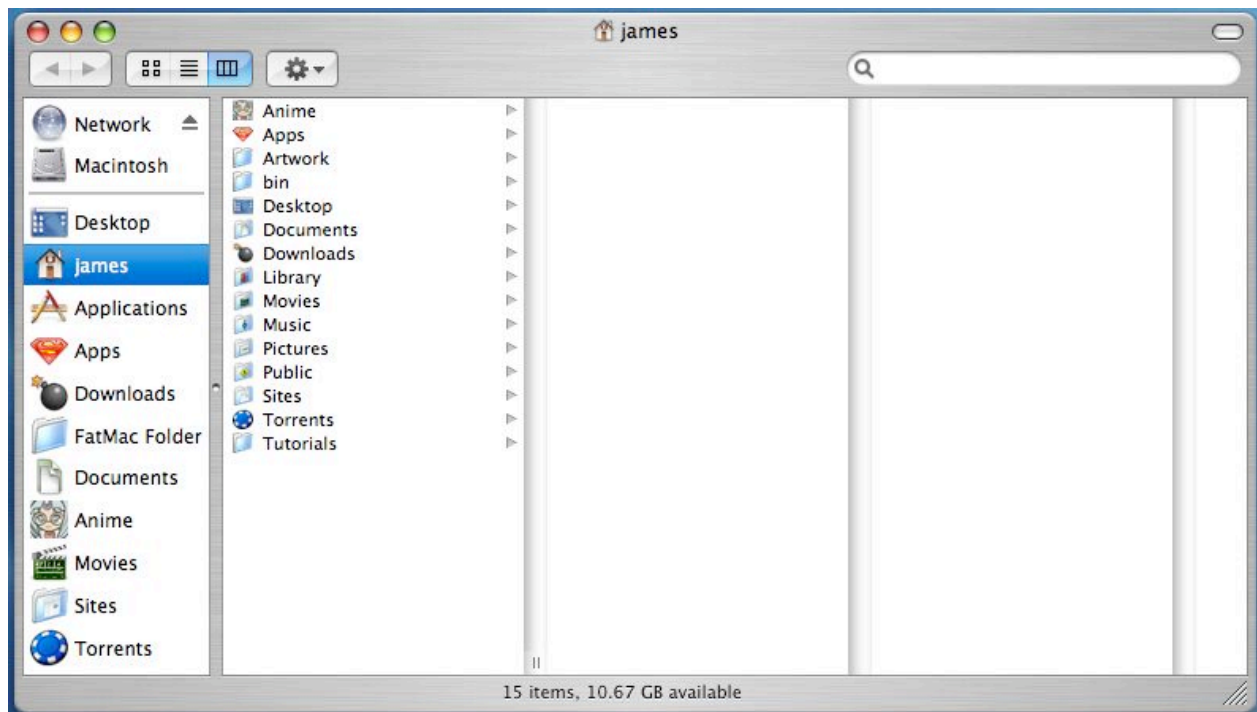
The Finder

If there were only one item that could be used on the Dock – it would be the Finder. The Finder is basically the application that is used when a user navigates to a folder, file or application – it is the gateway to all of the elements of your computer.

The Finder icon is always on the Dock, is always the first item on the left, and is always turned on (as shown by the black triangle underneath the item on the Dock). If you click the icon once, a Finder window will be opened and will show you your 'home directory'.

The Finder icon as shown in the Dock.

Below is an illustration of a typical Finder window. Here the user's home directory is shown. A home directory is the area where all of the files and preference information specific to one user are kept by OS X. It should be used to store all of a user's documents, music, movies and pictures.

On the left of the folder listing is the sidebar – here, links to commonly used files and folders are kept for easy and quick access. From the sidebar, a user can also browse the 'root' level of the computer and browse any network computers, if possible.

At the top are the forward and back buttons, the action button (which lets you create folders and burn folders) and the view button, which lets you change how you view files and folders in the Finder.

At the top right hand corner is the finder search bar. Enter a word or string of words here to start the 'Spotlight' engine search. The Finder will return a list of matching objects and their location. Click on an item to see further details or double click on it to open the item.
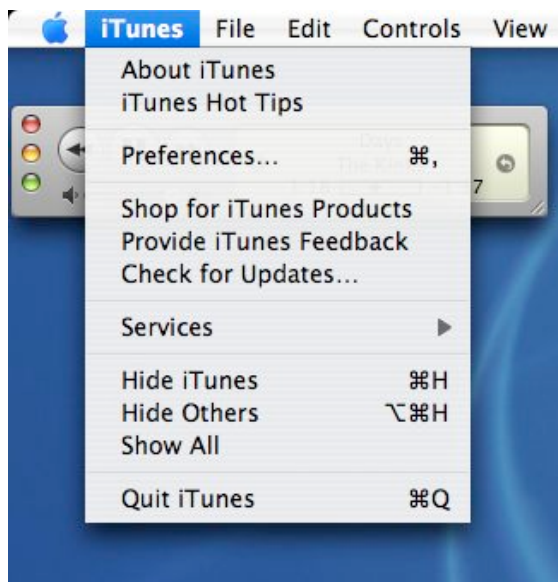
Hot Keys and Modifier Keys

One of the major differences between a standard Apple computer and standard Windows PC is that Apple computers only have one mouse button. This is because Mac OS's in the past have used what are called **modifier keys** to access the same sort of features that you would on a pc with the right mouse button. This was put in place so that users could actually save time with not having a second or third mouse button.

The modifier keys on OS X are the ⌘ (apple) key, the alt key and control key. At first it may seem strange, but with practise using the modifier keys becomes second nature and enables a user to perform functions that would otherwise take longer.

Try it yourself!! Have a go yourself at seeing what functions you can perform by using the modifier keys. Hold down a key and press 1) a file, folder or application in the Dock 2) the desktop background area and 3) a file or folder on the desktop.

Also designed to save time, Apple has an extensive set of **Hot Keys** that use a combination of modifier keys and a letter key to perform a function. Each application has its own set of hot keys and each action is listed next to its respective menu command in a drop down menu, as shown below.

Here, you can see that the iTunes preferences can be accessed by pressing '⌘ ,' together, whilst to hide the iTunes program '⌘ H' can be pressed. To hide all other programs, '⌥ ⌘ H'
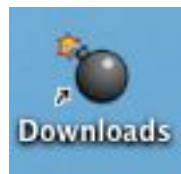
A good list of standard Apple hot keys that can be used in many different programs can be found, listed as 'handout 1'.

Aliases

You have probably used what OS X calls aliases on a number of occasions, but never realised it. They are called shortcuts in Windows XP and are often called the same thing in OS X.

Aliases are basically links to the real file that they represent, i.e. a user could have their documents folder in their home directory (which is the correct place to have it stored) and an alias to the documents folder placed on the desktop. This keeps the real folders away from sight when they are not needed, but easy to access when they are needed – another way in which OS X helps speed up a user's workflow.

Alias files and folders look different to their real counterparts because they have a small arrow pointing upwards from the bottom left hand corner (shown below). A user can place aliases in the Dock, on the Desktop and in other folders and in the sidebar of the Finder window.

On the left is an alias folder, whilst on the right is a 'real' folder.

Note When an alias file or folder is deleted the original is left untouched, only the **link** is deleted, so you can rearrange your aliases as often as needed without hassle.