

One of the best things about Macintosh is the wide variety of high quality freeware and shareware apps available for it. Apple's commitment to a standardized user interface and the availability of free, high quality programming tools have fostered the hobbyist developer eco-system. Here is the latest crop of great freeware for the Mac.

Note: The advent of the App Store has changed things somewhat. Many formerly free programs are now available in the App Store for a buck or two. I expect many more developers to follow suit, which means that these free apps may be an endangered species. Get them while you can.

This year I am not providing a DVD with the programs on it because it's almost guaranteed to be out-of-date by the time I burn it. Furthermore, many of these programs offer different versions depending on the release of OS X you're using. For best results, download the latest version of the program designed for your OS when you get home. I've provided links for each of the programs so you can get them in a click of the mouse.

**1. Alfred (App Store) <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/alfred/id405843582?mt=12>**

Let's start with a program new to the list. Alfred follows in the footsteps of the classic Quicksilver (which is no longer in active development). For people who never want to take their hands from the keyboard (or dig through a hierarchy of folders to find a file) Alfred will launch any program, open any document, or find anyone in your address book with a few quick keystrokes. Easier and faster than Spotlight, I install Alfred on every system I use!

**2. Google Earth <http://earth.google.com/> and Google Earth Plugin**

Surely by now everyone knows about this amazing program. Now you can navigate the seas, travel through a 3D landscape, and add 3D to Google maps with the browser plug-in.

**3. Sketchup <http://sketchup.google.com/>**

Another great free program from Google. You can use Sketchup to learn about 3D design and create 3D models of your own for woodworking, interior design, and more.

**4. Growl <http://growl.info/>**

A quintessentially Mac utility. Many other Mac programs use Growl to notify you when an event happens: new tweets, new mail, completed file transfer, and more. When you install Growl aware programs they'll automatically use Growl for notifications.

**5. iStatPro <http://www.islayer.com/apps/istatpro/>**

A Dashboard widget (yes some people still use the Dashboard!) that gives you stats about your system's status. There's also an inexpensive iPhone app which will give you remote access to your system info.

**6. Evernote <http://evernote.com>**

There are many notebook programs for the Mac - hard to believe that this program, which started on Windows, is the best of them all. It's not as elegant as many of the Mac-only contenders but it's free, and it works across Macs, Windows, iPhone, iPad, Android phones, and the web. It also integrates seamlessly into your workflow. I keep everything in Evernote (except passwords. For that, stay tuned.)

**7. TextWrangler <http://www.barebones.com/products/TextWrangler/>**

BBEdit's baby brother. Text editors are usually considered the province of programmers and web designers, but everyone needs to work with text from time to time.

Textwrangler's powerful grep-based search and replace, built-in FTP, and text munging capabilities can really come in handy. I know many people who even use TextWrangler for their day-to-day writing.

**8. Chrome <http://google.com/chrome>**

OK I'll say it, the best browser for the Mac isn't Safari, or Firefox, it's Google's Chrome. Chrome is based on the same open-source Webkit framework as Safari, but it's faster, more stable, and more secure. Chrome extensions give Chrome many of the features of Firefox and its clean UI, built-in bookmark syncing, and incognito browsing make it best in class. You'll probably have more than one browser on your system but Chrome is my choice for day-to-day surfing.

**9. Rockmelt <http://www.rockmelt.com/>**

Rockmelt is Chrome+. A version of Chrome that includes many features that will appeal to people who live in Facebook or Twitter. Rockmelt is Chrome for extroverts.

**10. Sparrow <http://sparrowmailapp.com/>**

Apple's Mail is pretty close to perfect, but if you are a Gmail user you might prefer the features of Sparrow Mail. It's a little lighter weight, lives in your menu bar, and supports Gmail features like Priority Mail and Gmail's keystroke commands. It's free for now (while in Beta) but may not be for long, so snare this bird while you can.

**11. Flip4Mac <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/player/wmcomponents.msp>**

When Apple stopped supporting the Windows AVI video format in QuickTime Flip4Mac was born. A QuickTime extension for seamless AVI playback, Flip4Mac is a must have. There's a paid version but if you don't create or edit AVI files you don't need it.

**12. Perian <http://perian.org/>**

Video file formats are a confused tower of Babel. If you frequently download video only to find that QuickTime refuses to play it, you need Perian. Perian bundles a large number of video codecs into a single preference pane. Get it now and you won't have to worry about video codecs ever again.

**13. VLC** <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/>

This cross-platform video player is ugly, but it plays files QuickTime just can't including popular bittorrent formats like Matrushka (MKV) and MPEG2. You can also use it to playback Flash-based video streams (like mine) in a much more CPU efficient manner. Many of the people who watch TWiT Live do so using VLC. (see [http://wiki.twit.tv/wiki/TWiT\\_Live#Streaming\\_with\\_VLC](http://wiki.twit.tv/wiki/TWiT_Live#Streaming_with_VLC))

**14. Movist** <http://code.google.com/p/movist/>

Movist is a better movie player that works with the Apple remote, has a full screen nav mode, and can play more formats than QuickTime.

**15. Hulu Desktop** <http://www.hulu.com/labs/hulu-desktop>

It won't work outside the US but Hulu is a great way to watch TV shows and movies from Fox, NBC, and others. It works with Hulu Plus, too. This is essentially a desktop version of the Hulu web site but it's a little nicer and supports the Apple remote.

**16. Plex** <http://plexapp.com/>

If you come to my talk about turning a Mac mini into a home theater PC you'll see Plex 9 in action (thanks to Plex expert Wally Cherwinski). Plex started as a port of the Xbox Media Center software, but it's grown into a full-bore media management monster. You'll also want to install the Candleair driver for your Apple remote <http://www.iospirit.com/labs/candelair/>.

**17. Handbrake** <http://handbrake.fr/>

But what if you have a video on your computer, or DVD, and you want to play it on your iPad or iPod? Handbrake will transcode from almost any format into formats compatible with most any device. If you have VLC installed (see App 13) then Handbrake will also rip DVDs and shrink the movie into a smaller, more portable size.

**18. Adium** <http://adium.im/>

If you use an Instant Messenger, whether it's AIM, Yahoo, Facebook, MSN, or Google Talk, Adium is a better way to stay in touch with customizable UI and audio, multi-platform support, and file transfers, Adium is an easier way to IM.

**19. Dropbox** <http://dropbox.com> 2GB free

This is the most mind-boggling useful utility ever, and especially handy if you use a Macbook Air, iPad, iPhone, or any device with limited space. Dropbox is a little like Apple's iDisk in that it syncs your files to the cloud and then back to any other computer logged into Dropbox, but the newest 1.0.10 version adds selective folder sync making it much more practical than iDisk. Many Mac and iPad programs have built-in support for Dropbox. Get the free two gigabyte account, but don't be surprised if you end up paying for more.

**20. Clementine Music Player** <http://www.clementine-player.org/>

Clementine is the Mac version of the Amarok music library and player. Amarok was designed to replace iTunes on Linux, but in some ways surpasses it. Syncs with iPod and iPhone, if iTunes is getting you down, get down with Clementine.

**21. Celtx** <http://www.celtx.com/>

Got a script inside you waiting to get out? Or maybe you just want to storyboard the video of your trip or plan your next comic book creation. Celtx is an open-source multimedia scripting and pre-production tool that's loaded with goodies. Widely used by filmmakers and film students, it's hard to believe this program is free.

**22. Tagr** <http://www.entwicklungsfreu.de/>

A quick and simple way to add tags to your MP3s.

**23. Virtual Box** <http://www.virtualbox.org/>

Sure you can pay for VMWare Fusion or Parallels Desktop, but why? Virtualbox from Sun lets you run Windows inside OS X for free. It lacks some of the bells and whistles of the paid programs, but is more than adequate for most uses. If you just need to run a Windows or Linux program now and again, this is the best way to do it.

**24. Rightzoom** <http://www.blazingtools.com/downloads.html>

This little utility does one thing, but if you like full-screen windows it's invaluable. Turn on Rightzoom and windows zoom to use the entire screen every time.

**25. Skype** <http://skype.com>

If you don't have Skype installed, run don't walk to the Skype web site and download it. Skype lets you make free voice and video calls to anyone else using Skype (on Windows, Mac, iPhone, Android, and Linux) anywhere in the world. You can also use Skype to make inexpensive calls to phones worldwide. I spent 49 minutes talking to my business partner in the States while we were in Montevideo and it only cost a few bucks. Skype does the best job on both audio and video of any of its competitors. Get it for the iPhone, too.

**26. MacFuse** <http://code.google.com/p/macfuse/>

This tool is a little geeky, but it can come in handy if you need to read or write Windows hard drives. A must for Bootcamp users.

**27. Transmission** <http://www.transmissionbt.com/>

BitTorrent has a reputation as a piracy tool, but it's also used legitimately by many folks who can't afford big bandwidth bills, including Linux distributions and TWiT in the early days. Transmission is the fastest, most flexible BitTorrent client.

**28. Boxer <http://boxer.washboardabs.net/> DOS Emulator**

If you, like me, fondly remember the days of DOS games like Doom and Commander Keen there's good news, Boxer brings DOS back to the Mac. Boxer comes with four games to get you started but there are thousands of others out there for the free download. Try <http://gog.com> for an amazing array of great games. Or just enter the DOS command prompt and mess around.

**29. Appfresh <http://metaquark.de/appfresh/> OR Appupdate <http://gkaindl.com/software/app-update>**

Keeping OS X up-to-date is easy, but what about your apps. You could open them one by one or use one of these programs to create a list of apps, widgets, plug-ins, and preference panes that need updating automatically. Install all the updates with a single command (but don't try it onboard ship!)

**30. Cyberduck <http://cyberduck.ch/>**

Panic Software's Transmit is the king of FTP programs, but Cyberduck is the free alternative that does more. With support for Google Docs and Amazon's S3 this is the go-to file transfer program. A must if you've got a web site.

**31. OnyX <http://www.titanium.free.fr/download.php>**

Did you know there are gigabytes of space being wasted on your computer with temp files and caches? Clean them up and keep your system running light with Onyx. Onyx also gives you access to a huge array of hidden or buried system settings and can run regular maintenance routines. It's the swiss-army knife of utilities.

**32. The Unarchiver <http://wakaba.c3.cx/s/apps/unarchiver.html>**

Apple builds ZIP and GZip unarchiving into OSX but there are many other archive formats that aren't supported. Unarchiver handles them all, plus gives you better control of what happens when you double-click an archive file. Another app you should install on every new Mac.

**33. Netnewswire <http://www.newsgator.com/Individuals/NetNewsWire/>**

If you visit a lot of different web sites to get your news and information, or use Google Reader to collect them all, Netnewswire gives you a desktop newsreader with many useful features like AppleScripting, a clipping bin, and full sharing capabilities net. Very handy for offline news reading.

**34. Colloquy <http://colloquy.info/> or X-Chat Aqua <http://sourceforge.net/projects/xchataqua/>**

Internet Relay Chat, or IRC, is older than the web itself and still widely used by people to communicate, ask questions, or just hang out together. Colloquy is a little more Macish, X-Chat has more advanced features. If you want to try out IRC, visit my chat room: irc.twit.tv - you'll find us in the #twitlive channel.

35. **Superduper** <http://www.shirt-pocket.com/SuperDuper/SuperDuperDescription.html>

This is a must have backup utility. Superduper will make a bootable image of your entire drive, which is a lifesaver if you ever have a hard drive crash. It can also be used to backup individual files and folders. The built-in scheduler means you can set up your backup and forget it. I use Superduper to keep my systems backed up to a central networked harddrive. Much more flexible than Time Machine.

36. **Cocoanut battery** <http://www.coconut-flavour.com/coconutbattery/>

Sure OS X will tell you how much battery you have left, but Cocoanut battery will tell you so much more, including battery capacity, age, temperature and number of charge cycles.

37. **Caffeine (App Store)** <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/caffeine/id411246225?mt=12>

The cure for sleepy Macs. Most of the time you want your Mac to sleep when it's not being used, but for those times, like presentations, when you want your system to stay away, Caffeine is a simple but handy solution. Click the coffee cup in the menu bar to enable and disable Caffeine.

38. **GrandPerspective** <http://grandperspectiv.sourceforge.net/>

What's using all that space on your hard drive? GrandPerspective shows you a graphical representation of used space so you can find the file hogs and eradicate them.

39. **AppCleaner** <http://www.freemacsoft.net/AppCleaner/index.php>

Mac users have it much better than Windows users when it comes to uninstalling apps. Usually it's sufficient to delete the app file. But increasingly programs are sticking parts of themselves in hard to find places. For this App Cleaner comes in handy. It finds all the traces of a program and deletes them. Just drag the main program icon to the AppCleaner window and AppCleaner does the rest.

40. **Menu Meters** <http://www.ragingmenace.com/software/menumeters/index.html>

Do you really need an 8-core CPU or are you barely using two? How much RAM is enough? Menu Meters gives you a real time readout of CPU, RAM, and Network utilization in the menu bar.

41. **ClamXAV** <http://www.clamXav.com/>

42. **Sophos Anti-Virus** <http://www.sophos.com/products/enterprise/endpoint/security-and-control/mac/>

Do you really need an Anti-Virus on the Mac? Probably not today - there still aren't any Mac-specific viruses in the wild - but there's no need for a false sense of security. Targeted attacks may indeed be levelled against you specifically, and the day will come

when Macs aren't free from malware. ClamXAV is a venerable Linux app that's been recently updated for the Mac. Sophos is a well-known security and anti-virus company that makes a pretty good product, too.

**43. MAMP** <http://www.mamp.info/en/index.html>

OS X comes with the Apache web server, but that's not enough if you want to develop web apps on your Mac. MAMP puts a full stack of software on your Mac, Apache, PHP, MySQL and more so that you can use your machine to develop for the web or try out web apps locally. MAMP keeps to its own folder, so it doesn't impact existing software and is easy to start and stop or even delete.

**44. Papparazzi** <http://derailer.org/paparazzi/>

Want to snap full web pages? Little Snapper is the best paid program - it's what I use for my presentations, but Papparazzi gets the job done for free. A sparse UI comes with its own webkit-based browser.

**45. Magical** <http://www.charcoaldesign.co.uk/magical>

Want more control of the date and time in your menubar? How about a tear-off month calendar? Magical can do it. You can change the font and color, too.

**46. Wakoopa Tracker** <http://social.wakoopa.com/>

Here's a great way to find out what I and others are using on our Macs. Install the Wakoopa tracker and others will be able to see what you use, and for how long. Web apps are tracked, too. Follow me on Wakoopa - I'm ChiefTWiT!

**47. Twitter (App Store)** <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/twitter/id409789998?mt=12> or **Seismic Desktop 2**

This is the official Twitter app - originally known as Tweetie until Twitter bought the parent company. Now that it's on the App Store it's even slicker with Growl notifications and fancy keyboard shortcuts.

**48. Mindnode (App Store)** <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mindnode-for-mac/id402397683?mt=12>

Mindmapping is a great way to brainstorm. There are many mindmapping apps for the Mac, but this is the only free one and it's plenty to start with. Think of it as an outliner in two-dimensions. There's a pro version and an iPad/iPhone app, too. Mindnode exports your mindmap in all the standard formats for use with other programs.

**49. Macports** <http://www.macports.org/> (requires Xcode developer tools)

This is one app that gives you access to thousands of UNIX apps. Macports has taken the place of Fink as the best way to install UNIX software on the Mac. You'll need to install the free developer tools first - they're on your OS X install CD or you can download them from <http://connect.apple.com> - and you use Macports in a terminal command line, so it's not for the novice user, but the range of available software is astounding.

1. **Electric Sheep** <http://electricsheep.org/>

Pure eye candy. According to its docs, "Electric Sheep is a distributed screensaver, which means that everyone who runs the screensaver also participates in its creation. While the screensaver is running, your computer will contact the server to download animations." When you first run it Electric Sheep will merely display a blank screen, but give it some time and the fireworks will begin. Press the right arrow key to go to the next animation or let them rotate automatically. My favorite Mac screen saver.

2. **Formulate Pro** <http://code.google.com/p/formulatepro/>

Ever wanted to annotate or add your signature to a PDF? This program opens most PDFs and lets you annotate them and paste in images. I use it to fill out PDF forms and sign PDF agreements. Once you've finished the document "save" it by printing as PDF.

3. **Kindle** <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/kindle/id405399194?mt=12>

Even if you don't have a Kindle you can read Amazon's electronic books on your iPad, iPhone, and Mac. The Kindle software has all the features of the Kindle reader, including Whispersync which jumps you to the last page read no matter where you read it.

4. **DropCopy (App store)** <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/dropcopy/id403411542?mt=12>

Another interesting App Store discovery. Dropcopy puts a drop zone on your desktop. Drag files to it to copy them to any other Dropcopy enabled computer on your local network or any computer using SFTP or your iPhone. An easy way to copy files to your other Macs or your web server. You can also send text messages.

5. **Audacity** <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

An open source classic. Audacity is an audio editor with lots of capabilities. You can record, edit, process, and save sound in all common formats including MP3.

6. **Letterbox** <http://harnly.net/>

A simple plug-in for Apple Mail that makes it much nicer for today's wide screens. When enabled Letterbox rearranges your Message view into three columns. It can also make some cosmetic usability changes to Mail. Change settings, or disable Letterbox, in your Mail settings.

7. **NeoOffice** <http://www.neooffice.org/>

Who needs Microsoft Office, or even Apple's iWork? NeoOffice is a Macish interpretation of the free and powerful Open Office with a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation manager, drawing program, and database that can read and write Microsoft's formats and many others. Handy for that colleague that keeps sending you Word files.



1. **Steam for Mac** <http://store.steampowered.com/browse/mac>

This program single-handedly gave Mac owners a defense against Windows users who claim that their platform is better for gaming. Steam is the wildly popular Windows gaming center that offers a huge variety of games, many of them now Mac compatible. And there are more games coming all the time. Watch for specials - many of the games are steeply discounted during sales.

2. **Skitch** <http://skitch.com/>

Skitch is a must-have screen capture, graphics editing, and image sharing tool great for bloggers and anyone who needs to whip up graphics quickly. You also get free image storage. The paid version (\$15/year) adds web page capture and other editing features.

3. **Geektool** <http://projects.tynsoe.org/en/geektool/download.php> **Geeklets**  
<http://www.macosxtips.co.uk/geeklets/>

Ever want to put your system logs on your desktop? Or a calendar? Or your to-do list? Geektool is exactly what it says it is: a tool for geeks. Use the system preference pane to embed text files, image files, or the results of shell commands into your desktop. I use it with Gina Trapani's todo text (<http://todotext.com>) to keep my to do list where I can see it. Check out the pre-built geeklets to get an idea of what's possible.

4. **Cloudapp** <http://www.getcloudapp.com/>

Want to share files with friends? Cloudapp will share any file with anybody with a custom URL. Drag a file to the menubar then paste the generated URL in an email. It's that simple. You can share files, bookmarks, and printed documents. A variety Raindrops adds Cloudapp sharing to popular Mac apps like iTunes and iPhoto.

5. **Lastpass** <http://lastpass.com>

And here is your bonus app - the best for last. Lastpass that is, a must have password keeper that's better than the rest. Lastpass is highly secure and totally cross platform and with plug-ins for all the major browsers, even on the iPhone and iPad, it's very easy to use. Never forget a password again, and use strong passwords for everything. Supports secure notes, too.