

## Switch 101: Moving from Windows Explorer to the Finder

Last Modified: December 18, 2009

Old Article: 304723

Article: HT2512



### Summary

Although it may feel like you're entering a brand new world with your Mac, you'll be happy to know that many interface elements may feel similar to Microsoft Windows. For example, you still have a desktop and windows, you still access many functions from menus, you can still use keyboard shortcuts to accomplish tasks quickly, and more.

Below is a guide that shows how the Finder in Mac OS X v10.6 Snow Leopard is similar to the Windows Explorer.

### Products Affected

Mac OS X 10.6, Microsoft Windows

In Windows you use Windows Explorer to manage your files. In Mac OS X, you use the Finder to manage your files. You can search for files, copy files, move files, or delete files. You can also see file server connections, inserted DVDs, and other mounted file storage devices.

### Elements of the Mac OS X desktop and Finder, and their Windows Explorer equivalent

Here is a sample Mac desktop and Finder window (in Cover Flow view mode in Mac OS X v10.6), labelled so we can compare it to Windows. Some of the following Mac OS X features may not be available in Windows.



1. Apple menu - Similar to the Start menu in Windows; used to access functions such as Software Update (equivalent to

Windows Update), System Preferences (equivalent to Control Panel), Sleep, and Shut Down.

2. Menu bar - This is always at the top of your screen. It contains the Apple menu, active application menu, menu bar extras and the Spotlight icon. The Finder menu has items such as Finder Preferences, Services, and Secure Empty Trash.
3. Finder window close, minimize and zoom buttons – Just like in Windows but on the left. **Note:** Closing all application windows in Mac OS X does not always quit the application as it does in Windows. In Mac OS X every application menu has a Quit option that can also be invoked by using the Command-Q key combination.
4. Finder window View buttons – Equivalent to the options contained in the View menu of Windows Explorer.
  - Icon view - Similar to Windows Icons view mode, used to display the contents of your folder as a series of icons. Snow Leopard includes live icon previews that you can use to thumb through a multipage document or watch a QuickTime movie.
  - List view - Similar to Windows Details view mode, used to display your folder in a spreadsheet-style manner. Each folder can be expanded by clicking on the disclosure triangle just to the left of the folder. You can easily sort by file name, date modified, and so forth. Choose Show View Options from the View menu to add / remove attribute columns. You can change the sorting from ascending order to descending order and back again by clicking on the attribute column title.
  - Column view - Used to display the hierarchy of your hard disk where each column represents a folder.
  - Cover Flow view - Used to display the contents of your folder just like the Cover Flow used in iTunes. You can see live previews of images, documents and movies, and can thumb through documents and movies.
5. Quick Look button - Click it to view a Quick Look preview of the file you have selected.
6. Action Menu - Similar to right clicking an item in Windows Explorer, it will give you quick access to Finder functions for highlighted items, such as Get Info, Move to Trash, and Services.
7. Search Field - Similar to Windows Search, start typing a word or phrase and Spotlight will search your Mac for any matches.
8. Hide / Show Finder window toolbar & sidebar - Click it to hide or show the Finder window toolbar and sidebar.
9. Spotlight icon - Similar to Windows Search, click it to bring up the Spotlight search field, where you can search for anything on your Mac.
10. Back / Forward buttons - Just like in Windows Explorer, as you move to different places in the Finder window, you can use the back button to return one step back and the forward button to go forward.
11. Sidebar - Similar to the Task Pane in Windows Explorer, items are grouped into categories: Devices, Shared, Places, and Search For. The top portion has Devices and Shared that display whatever is connected to your Mac, such as a hard disk, iDisk, network share points, an SD memory card, or DVDs. The middle portion has Places which contains quick access to your desktop, Home folder—the folder named after your user account name, Applications, and Documents. The bottom portion has Search For which contains quick access to Smart Folders that will find any file on your Mac that was used Today, Yesterday, Past Week and document types like All Images, All Movies, All Documents.
12. Cover Flow content - Shows you a live preview of your files, where you can page through a document or watch a QuickTime movie.
13. The Finder application icon - Similar to Windows Explorer, click it to bring the Finder to the foreground or open a Finder window if none are already opened.
14. The Dock - Similar to the Windows Taskbar, it has quick access to the Finder and your most frequently used applications, folders, and files. With a single click the application, folder, or file opens.
15. Trash - Similar to the Recycle Bin, deleted items are kept here until you empty the Trash. You can also eject DVD's, SD memory cards, or external drives connected to your Mac by dragging them to the trash (discs will physically eject when you do this, other devices can be disconnected after doing this).

### Additional Information

See also:

- "Switch 101: On Windows, I used to..." for a matrix of Windows functions and their Mac OS X equivalent.
- "10.6: Mac 101 - Finder and the desktop" for more details about the Mac OS X v10.6 Finder and desktop.

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