

Should You Upgrade Your Mac OS X?

(covers Mac OS X through version 10.4.7)

All versions of Mac OS X, from 10.0 through the current 10.4.7, are referred to as "Mac OS X" or "OS X" or "OS 10". (When speaking, we would pronounce these as individual letters "o"- "s"- "x" or "o"- "s"- "ten"). Version 10.2 (pronounced "ten-point-two") was nicknamed "Jaguar". Version 10.3 was dubbed "Panther". Version 10.4 is called "Tiger". Version 10.5 is called "Leopard".



"Tiger" (version 10.4) retails for \$129 and contains over 200 new features (over Panther, 10.3)

Should You Buy Tiger?

The same advice holds true here as it has for most of the previous versions of Apple's Operating Systems:

- If your current Operating System version is working fine, you may NOT want to buy a newer version of Mac OS X.
- If you DO want all the latest and greatest "bells and whistles", you WILL want to buy the latest version of Mac OS X.
- If you purchase a new printer, scanner or digital camera, it may state that it "only works" or "works best" with Tiger. In this case, you'll want to purchase Mac OS 10.4.
- If you upgrade a program you're currently using, it may "only work" or "work best" with Tiger. Then, you'll want to buy Mac OS 10.4.
- **NOTE:** Before upgrading your Macintosh to Tiger, be sure to visit [this Apple web page](#) to see if your Macintosh model can handle Mac OS X 10.4.

Even if Apple shows your Macintosh model as being able to use Tiger, it may not be able to display all the special graphic effects. For example, Tiger displays a very realistic water-ripple effect whenever Dashboard is activated. However, older Macs do not have the hardware technology to handle this so you'll never get a chance to see it. So if this is something you'll want to see, you'll either have to upgrade your video card (if you own a "Tower" Macintosh model) or buy a new Macintosh. (This is another reason why I always buy "iMacs", for my own business and personal use... Every three years or so, it seems Apple comes out with an Operating System which my current Macintosh cannot fully handle. Since Apple's "Professional" line of Desktop "Tower" models is so expensive,

compared to their "Consumer" line, it's more cost-effective for me to buy a "Consumer" Macintosh. The other reason I don't personally buy any of Apple's "Professional" models is because they come with cutting-edge technology. Now, not every Macintosh model is perfect but Apple's Professional line of Macs seem (to me) to have more problems than they should. By the time those technologies filter down to Apple's Consumer line (the iMac), most of those problems are gone. I look at it as those Professional-line users testing the technology for those of us who wait until it's available in a Consumer model — thanks for putting up with any problems, so my Macintosh can work great!)





NOTE: Before installing any version of Mac OS X, be sure to visit [Apple's Firmware page](#) and do a search to see if your Macintosh requires a "firmware" upgrade. If it does, you **MUST** follow those instructions **BEFORE** installing MacOS X. If you don't, or if you don't perform the firmware update properly, you could render the entire Macintosh un-useable and it will have to be repaired!

Also... Whenever you upgrade to a "point number" change be sure to check the manufacturer's web site of your printer, scanner (if you have one) and any software which you have purchased to make sure that product will work with the new Operating System version. (A "point number" upgrade is when the number to the right of the first decimal-point changes from the version you currently have. (An example would be when you have 10.3.4 and want to buy 10.4. Another example would be when you have 10.1.5 and want to buy 10.3.)

All Current Macintosh Purchases

All new Macintosh models come with some version of Tiger (Mac OS X, 10.4). If your new Macintosh doesn't come with the latest version of Tiger, you can easily update it by downloading one of Apple's free updates. Keep in mind that you won't be able to upgrade to the next "point-number" upgrade unless you purchase that new version. In other words, if your new Macintosh comes with Mac OS 10.4.9 (for example), you won't be able to get version 10.5 for free — you'll have to pay for it.

— [Paul Rego](#)

			
Jaguar, 10.2	Panther, 10.3	Tiger, 10.4	Leopard, 10.5

Mac OS X Trivia

Here is a list of known Mac OS X Operating System names. As an example of how you can refer to your Operating System "version", you can call it 10.4 (usually spoken as "ten point four") or Tiger. Both refer to the same version.

- Cheetah = version 10.0
- Puma = version 10.1
- Jaguar = version 10.2
- Panther = version 10.3
- Tiger = version 10.4
- Leopard = version 10.5

Stable OS X Versions At A Glance

The highest version of the Macintosh Operating System is:

Mac OS 10.4.7 (known as "Tiger")

- **NOTE:** After running 10.3.9 on my iMac for a few weeks, I have had a few problems: First came the Java problem, which Apple quickly fixed. Next the Mail program doubled every Inbox message. After that, my "Adobe Photoshop Elements 3" lost some of its menuitems — I could not Quit the program or Open any files. I finally had to re-install the entire program!

Although some Macintosh models (iMac, eMac, etc.) MAY work better with a particular version of the Operating System than another Macintosh model, the following information was derived from personal experience and reading reports on Macintosh news sites — your results may vary. (The information below is specifically for Apple's "Consumer" Macs — iMac, eMac and iBook.)

Mac OS X versions known to be worthwhile:

- 10.1.5
- 10.2.3, 10.2.6
- 10.3.1, 10.3.4
- 10.4.1, 10.4.2, 10.4.5, 10.4.6, 10.4.7 (especially for non-Intel-based Macs)

Mac OS X versions known to be NOT at their best:

- 10.0 (Said another way...Any version before 10.1)
- 10.2.2, 10.2.4, 10.2.5
- 10.3.0, 10.3.2, 10.3.9
- 10.4.0

Mac OS X "plateau" versions:

- 10.0.4*, 10.1.5, 10.2.8, 10.3.9, 10.4.7

I'm using the word "plateau" here to identify those versions which are the highest in that series. In other words, you cannot upgrade to a higher version unless you pay for the next major release. For example, if you are using Mac OS 10.1.5 this is the highest version you can install in your Macintosh without paying for 10.2, 10.3 or 10.4.

* Apple's web site is not clear on whether the Mac OS 10.1 update must be paid for. Reading through their Support pages, Mac OS 10.0.4 is available for downloading, but to update from 10.0.4 to 10.1.1 you need the *"10.1 update CD"*.

When hearing or reading about someone's negative experiences with a particular version of the OS X Operating System, be sure you know the following before following their recommendations:

- If they installed Panther (Mac OS X 10.3) on their Macintosh, did they format (erase) the hard drive first? When Panther was first released, there was a lot of dialog between experts and early adopters on this subject. When the smoke cleared many people thought there was a problem with the Panther Installer program (on the CD) and several problems were traced to this one point. By formatting the hard drive before installing Panther, many people avoided most of the quirks encountered by those who didn't.
- Did he or she use "Terminal" at any time? Terminal is a program which allows you to perform brain surgery on the OS X Operating System. Although I have done some programming in the past, I will not use and do not recommend using Terminal. Yes, Apple created the Terminal program and they do include it with every new Macintosh and with every copy of Mac OS X but it's not for the novice. Even in the hands of a programming expert, they risk modifying part of the Operating System which may hinder positive results when Apple provides future upgrades.

— Paul Rego

When "Nice" Is Not Helpful

Whether you take your Macintosh to an Apple-authorized dealer, hire someone to fix your Mac at your location or have a family member troubleshoot your Macintosh, be sure they don't change your Operating System to something you don't have.

Besides being illegal, this "helpful" practice is not very helpful to the Mac's owner. Why?... Here's what can happen. Let's say you take your Macintosh to an Apple-authorized dealer for repair. When you pick up your computer the technician tells you he had to re-install the Operating System. Instead of replacing it with the same one that was in there, he upgraded it to a newer version. Let's say you were using Mac OS 8.6 and now you have Mac OS 9.0.

At first, you think this is a great idea. "They upgraded my Macintosh for free. Normally I would have had to pay \$90 for that upgrade."

Later, you discover that some of your programs don't work properly under Mac OS 9. However, you put up with the annoying quirks and find ways to work around other minor problems.

One day your Macintosh develops more serious problems so you ask a friend to fix it. She tells you the Operating System has become corrupted and needs to be reinstalled. She asks you for the Mac OS 9 CD, so she can fix your Macintosh, but you don't have it. The only way to fix the Macintosh now is to reinstall the Mac OS 8.6 Operating System which originally came with your computer. Although you won't lose any programs or documents, you have gotten used to using Mac OS 9 and now your Macintosh has to go back to an older System.

Maybe you purchased a digital camera, scanner or printer which requires Mac OS 9. Now that your Macintosh has to go back to Mac OS 8.6, you won't be able to use that new item.

You get the idea.

Some versions of Apple's Operating System are free. Others require a purchase. Upgrading someone's Operating System to a "paid upgrade" version is not only illegal but not very helpful to the person you're helping.

-- Paul Rego