

# KEYMAC

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## JOURNAL

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### *The First Phone Number on the List*

“Gee, you’re president of the Mac computer club? You must know a lot about Macs,” went the conversation at a local restaurant recently.

“No,” I replied, “I just was in the wrong place at the right time, and they gave me the job.”

Sure, it’s fun doing this. There is significant “feel good” about helping others learn and have fun too. Also, there is the opportunity to have my phone number be first on the list that you call when you have an issue you think I can solve. Now, the really smart ones call Wayne Walker first, but many call me.

Prospective and new members often call me because Margret Nordquist has done an excellent job the last few years getting our user group publicity in the local press. I get a shot at convincing someone to come to a meeting, or come to another even though they think they embarrassed themselves with too many questions at the first meeting they attended.

Then the call comes that inquires “surely you must know why AirPort in my basement is not recognized by my laptop on the second floor.” Or, “you always use the projector at the meetings, so you must know the secret to making mine be recognized.” And, “my computer died and AppleCare says to take it in for service. Where should I go?”

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# KEYMAC JOURNAL

## Easy Steps to Mac Video Viewing Goodness

Have you ever gotten a video file in email that you couldn't play? Has someone sent you a link talking about the "hilarious" movie, and when you go there, you find out you can't view it? If so, then this article is for you. It's time you got in on all the fun, isn't it? I mean, it's your *right* as an American citizen to waste just as much time as anyone else watching a [bulldog skateboard](#) or [some nameless guy lip sync to the Numa Numa song](#). Well, friends, the KeyMac Journal is here to help. In three easy steps we'll get you back to wasting time quickly and easily.

Before we do that, however, a little background. When video and sound get prepared for the computer, it is digitized in a very specific manner. There are many ways of doing this, and as in so many things technological, there isn't any one standard method. In order for your Mac to play a video file, it has to understand the code/decode process connected with that individual file. This bit of computer magic is wrapped up in small pieces called codecs (short for code/decode).

QuickTime, which is the main video player system for the Mac, comes with many codecs pre-installed. However, it doesn't have all the ones you might need, and new codecs are continually being invented. So what we need to get your Mac to understand these non-native file formats is to install more

codecs. This is a messy process on the PC side, but as you might expect, it is fairly easy on the Mac side. Let's get started.

### *Flip4Mac*



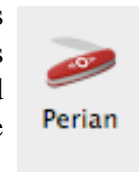
This software installs the necessary pieces for the Mac to play Windows Media files. These files usually end in .wmv (windows media video). There is a pro level of Flip4Mac that allows you to create and edit Windows Media files on the Mac at a reasonable price, but if you're only interested in playing these files and not creating them, then the program is free. You can [download it here](#). Once installed, Flip4Mac will show up as a System Preferences file in the Other section. The default configuration will be perfect for most people, but there are some settings the power user may want to tweak. Also, be sure and allow it to check for updates from time to time, as video is an evolving standard. At this time, Flip4Mac requires Mac OS X 10.3.9 or above.

Flip4Mac will probably take care of the vast majority of video issues, but if you are still getting files that you can't play, go on to the next step for more powerful help.

### *Perian*

Perian bills itself as "the Swiss army knife of QuickTime components," and it lives up to its name. It will install codecs for many of

the remaining formats floating around such as DivX and lesser used flavors of AVI. As we've come to expect by now, Perian is free and easy to install. You can [download it here](#). Perian also shows up as a System Preferences pane under the Other category.



### *Adobe Flash*

Flash is the video *lingua franca* of the web. Flash comes pre-installed as part of Safari, so most likely you already have it and it's working tirelessly in the background. However, occasionally Flash can become corrupted or become upgraded so that you may not be seeing the latest formats. It's a good idea to verify that you have Flash installed and working correctly. To do that, [go to this page](#). If everything is working correctly, you will see the text "Adobe Flash Player is installed" along with your version number. (As of this writing, the current version is 9,0,115,0.) If this does not display correctly, you can [download the Flash player here](#).

By following these three easy steps, you will be solving 99.99% of all your video files issues, and you can get back to watching the really important stuff on the web and in email, like [this crucial video](#) or [this one](#).

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## Leopard Upgrade Tips

Now that version 10.5.2 of Leopard is out, the vast majority of the bugs have been squashed. Even the most conservative upgraders can start planning to migrate to Apple's newest operating system. Here are some important tips to make sure you have a smooth upgrade process.

### 1. Check Requirements.

Ensure that the Mac you intend to upgrade meets all the requirements. [Apple lists the requirements for Mac OS X 10.5 here.](#)

**2. Upgrade third-party applications.** The last thing you want is to have a successful upgrade from Tiger to Leopard only to find out that you can't use crucial programs. Update these programs first. Make sure that there is a Leopard compatible update for any program that simply must be part of your life after the upgrade. Consider deleting permanently anything that cannot be upgraded. If a software company still intends to upgrade their program but hasn't completed it yet, that's one thing. But if it is an older program (e.g. AppleWorks) that will never be Leopard compatible, then it may be time to let go.

**3. Make a bootable backup.** Ok, let's be real here. Not everyone has the capability of making a bootable backup. You may not have an external hard drive of sufficient size to copy your internal drive for instance.

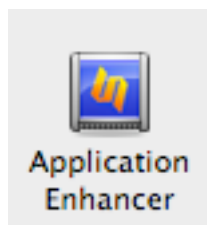
One could also argue that this step is optional. I upgraded

both my computers without making a backup first. On one of them, I had no issues. On the other, I had issues and a backup would have saved me, yet I was still able to recover and go on without a backup.

However, working without a backup is like a tightrope artist working without a net. If something goes horribly wrong, the only thing that will save you is having a bootable backup. Conversely, if you have this backup you are completely protected.

If you're prevented from making a backup because you do not have an external hard drive, there's good news. External hard drives have never been cheaper. Prices on these drives are extremely reasonable. Plus, one of the best features of Leopard is Time Machine, and you'll want an external drive for that after everything goes well with your upgrade, so now is the time to finally purchase one.

I recommend the software SuperDuper for making bootable backups. It's very affordable at only \$27.95, and it is extremely easy to use. [You can find SuperDuper here.](#)



**4. Remove Application Enhancer.** *This step is absolutely*

*crucial. I can't emphasize this enough.* Check your computer for a System Preferences file called Application Enhancer, and remove it completely before upgrading to Leopard if you find it. To check for APE, go under the Apple to System Preferences, then look in the Other section to see if it lists Application Enhancer. If it is present, you'll need to read the detailed Apple note I link to below on how to remove it.

Some upgraders have encountered the Mac version of the Windows Blue Screen of Death, also referred to on the Macintosh as the Blue Screen of Nothingness. What would happen is during the process of upgrading it is normal for the Mac to show nothing but a blue screen as the software is being upgraded in the background, but for the unfortunate people who encountered the Blue Screen of Nothingness, the screen would hang and *never* progress beyond this point. This problem was eventually traced to users who had Application Enhancer installed. This single System Preferences file is the anti-Leopard.

Application Enhancer (APE) is a small program by Unsanity that supports the use of haxies, small hacks to the operating system of the Macintosh. These hacks change the code in ways that Apple does not support. APE is most notably used by a program called ShapeShifter (which changed the look of the Mac interface, another program by Unsanity) and as part of the support software for some Logitech devices.

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The bottom line is that your upgrade to Leopard will not install correctly if APE is present. [Here is a detailed Apple note on how to handle this problem.](#)

Even if you get bitten by upgrading with APE installed, all is not lost. As outlined in Apple's article, you can perform an "Archive and Install" upgrade which archives your old system and installs a fresh new one on your computer. The downside of this method is you will lose the settings in the system and the purchase information for some third-party programs will have to be reinstalled. If you are like me, you may have trouble finding some of this information. Some vendors now make it easy to retrieve lost registration codes and some don't. I had to repurchase a couple of programs as I wrestled with this issue. But...I didn't have a bootable backup, and I've already explained how dangerous that can be.

**5. Immediately upgrade to 10.5.2 after installing Leopard.** This is just as true for people who are upgrading to Leopard as it is for people who just bought a new Mac with Leopard already installed. Let's say you've upgraded to Leopard and everything went smoothly. Not so fast, you're not done yet. Next, before you do anything else, use the Software Update feature of the System Preferences to immediately upgrade all the Apple software. The most important update here is the update to 10.5.2 Leopard, but really none of them is unimportant.

The reason why you want to get from 10.5 (which is what will be on the Apple Mac OS X Leopard disk) to 10.5.2 right away is because you want to take your software from buggy to stable as soon as possible.

For those who have bought a new Mac, use the Migration Assistant to move your programs and settings as your first step with your new computer, then upgrade to System 10.5.2. Do not put it off until later.

Following the five steps outlined in this article will help smooth your transition path to the world of Leopard.

## President's Message

(Continued from page 1)

That last one, actually, was today's call. Our President Emeritus and co-founder Jack Leitch blew up another one <grin>, and asked my advice on which of the Apple service solutions I recommend. If you are not willing to go to Atlanta to one of the Apple stores there, I would go to Irradiance Technologies, an Apple Authorized Service Provider, in Asheville. I have been there several times, and used their service twice. They truly know what they are doing and they generally do it quickly. Doug, Matt, or Travis are the names • 828-670-7900 • 278 Smokey Park Highway • M-F 9 – 6, Sat 10 – 3.

Feel free to call me if you need help.

Gene

## KeyMac Club Schedule for '08

### OS X Meetings

All Mac OS X meetings are in the Keowee Room – of course, we thought so last week also only to find out we had been moved.

- April 1st 10am Keowee Room
- May 6th 10am Keowee Room
- June 3rd 10am Keowee Room
- August 5th 10am Keowee Room
- September 2nd 10am Keowee Room
- October 7th 10am Keowee Room
- November 4th 10am Keowee Room

### General Meetings

- March 18th 1:30pm Jocassee Room
- April 15th 10am Keowee Room
- May 20th 10am Keowee Room
- June 17th 10am Keowee Room
- July – no meetings
- August 19th 10am Keowee Room
- September 16th 1:30pm Keowee Room
- October 21st 1:30pm Keowee Room
- November 18th 10am Keowee Room
- December – no meetings – Holiday Party  
December 9th at the Club