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Putting Information at Your Fingertips with Dashboard

While using your Macintosh, you may suddenly need to look at a calendar, a clock, a weather forecast, or a calculator. Rather than reach for

a paper calendar, a clock, a newspaper weather forecast, or a pocket calculator, you can use your Macintosh to display these items using a program called Dashboard that comes with every new Macintosh.

Dashboard provides a variety of simple programs, called *widgets*, that you can pop on the screen at any time and make disappear at a moment's notice. You can be typing in a word processor, run Dashboard to view a calendar or sport score, and then shove Dashboard out of the way again to keep working in your word processor. If you need information at your fingertips, you'll find Dashboard a valuable asset when doing anything with your Macintosh.

Project goal: Learn to use and modify Dashboard to view different types of widgets on the screen.

What You'll Be Using

To learn how to display simple programs on the screen, you'll be using the following:

- > The Dock
- > Dashboard
- > The Safari web browser

Starting Dashboard

The Dashboard program starts and manages miniature programs called widgets. A *widget* performs a single function, such as displaying a calendar or calculator on the screen. Every time you want to use a widget, you have to start Dashboard.

You can start Dashboard in three ways:

- > Press F12.
- > Click the Dashboard icon on the Dock.
- > Double-click the Dashboard icon stored in the Applications folder.

As soon as you start Dashboard, every widget currently loaded into Dashboard will appear on your screen, as shown in Figure 15-1.



FIGURE 15-1: Every time you start Dashboard, widgets appear on the screen.

- **NOTE:** Some widgets won't work without an Internet connection, such as the weather forecasting widget.

To tuck all widgets out of the way and exit Dashboard, choose one of the following:

- > Press F12.
- > Click the mouse anywhere on the screen except on a widget.

Adding and Removing Dashboard Widgets

Each time you start Dashboard, it displays a handful of widgets on the screen, such as the Calculator, Calendar, and Clock widgets. In case you don't need a certain widget, such as the Clock widget, you can remove it and replace it with another widget that you find more useful, such as a widget that tracks stock prices.

You can add or remove as many widgets as you want, although the more widgets you display, the more crowded your screen appears. At the very least, you'll need at least one widget to appear when you start Dashboard. You can choose from the following default library of Dashboard widgets:

- > **Address Book** Lets you search for a person stored in your Address Book
- > **Business** Lets you search the Yellow Pages for a business (requires an Internet connection)
- > **Calculator** Displays a four-function calculator
- > **Dictionary** Lets you look up words in the Macintosh dictionary or thesaurus
- > **ESPN** Displays the latest sports news and scores (requires an Internet connection)
- > **Flight Tracker** Lets you track flights by airline or cities (requires an Internet connection)
- > **Google** Lets you type a word or phrase to search for with Google (requires an Internet connection)
- > **iCal** Displays a calendar and any events you've scheduled in iCal
- > **iTunes** Lets you control iTunes to play, pause, rewind, or fast-forward
- > **Movies** Displays currently playing movies, show times, and theaters (requires an Internet connection)
- > **People** Lets you search the White Pages for a person (requires an Internet connection)
- > **Ski Report** Displays ski conditions at your favorite ski resort (requires an Internet connection)
- > **Stickies** Displays sticky notes for typing and saving notes
- > **Stocks** Displays delayed stock prices (requires an Internet connection)
- > **Tile Game** Displays a simple game for sliding tiles to create a picture
- > **Translation** Translates words from one language to another
- > **Unit Converter** Converts units of measurement, such as from inches to centimeters
- > **Weather** Displays a six-day weather forecast (requires an Internet connection)
- > **World Clock** Displays a clock for the time zone of your choice

Adding Widgets to Dashboard

To browse the Dashboard library of widgets and choose one to appear on your screen, do the following:

1. Press F12 to start Dashboard. Dashboard displays its widgets.
2. Click the plus button that appears in the lower-left corner of the screen. Dashboard displays its current library of widgets at the bottom of the screen, as shown in Figure 15-2.



FIGURE 15-2: The Dashboard library contains additional widgets to display.

3. Choose a widget that you want to display when Dashboard starts, and drag and drop the widget anywhere on the screen. (You can also click a widget to place it in the middle of the screen.) The widget appears to create ripples when you release the left mouse button.
4. Repeat the preceding step for each additional widget you want to appear when Dashboard starts.
5. Click the close button in the lower-left corner of the screen when you're done adding widgets to the screen.

Removing Widgets from Dashboard

You can customize Dashboard by adding new widgets or by removing current widgets that you may no longer need. When you remove a widget, you're just stopping the widget from appearing—you don't physically erase the widget from your hard disk.

Here's how to remove a widget:

1. Press F12 to start Dashboard. Dashboard displays its widgets.
2. Click the plus button that appears in the lower-left corner of the screen. Dashboard displays close buttons in the upper-left corner of every currently displayed widget, as shown in Figure 15-3.



FIGURE 15-3: Clicking the plus button displays close buttons on all widgets on the screen.

3. Click the close button of a widget that you no longer want to appear when you start Dashboard. The chosen widget disappears. (You can always add this widget back to Dashboard later if you want.)
4. Press F12, click the Dashboard icon on the Dock, or click anywhere on the screen except on a widget to make the widgets disappear.

Rearranging Widgets on Dashboard

After you've added new widgets or removed some from the screen, you may want to move widgets around to display them the way you like best. Here's how to rearrange widgets:

1. Press F12 to start Dashboard. Dashboard displays its widgets.
2. Move the mouse pointer over a widget that you want to move.
3. Drag the mouse to move the widget to a new location on the screen.
4. Release the left mouse button when you're happy with the new location of the widget on the screen.
5. Press F12, click the Dashboard icon on the Dock, or click anywhere on the screen except on a widget to make the widgets disappear.

Customizing Widgets

Some widgets allow you to customize the type of information they display. For example, the World Clock widget lets you choose a specific city, so you can view the current time in New York or Paris; the Stocks widget lets you decide which stock quotes you want to display; and the Weather widget lets you choose to display the forecast for a specific city, such as San Diego or Chicago.

Although you can't customize every widget, such as the Calculator widget, you can customize many of them. Here's how to customize a widget:

1. Press F12 to start Dashboard. Dashboard displays its widgets.
2. Move the mouse pointer over the lower-right corner of the widget you want to customize. An *i* button appears, as shown in Figure 15-4.
3. Click the *i* button. The widget appears to flip around to display various options for customizing its appearance or functionality, as shown in Figure 15-5.



FIGURE 15-4: You can customize any widget that displays an *i* button in its lower-right corner.



FIGURE 15-5: The backside of a widget displays options for customizing how the widget behaves.

4. Click or choose any options for changing the appearance of the widget, and then click **Done**.
5. Press F12, click the Dashboard icon on the Dock, or click anywhere on the screen except on a widget to make the widgets disappear.

Finding More Widgets

Although Dashboard includes a library of widgets from which you can choose, you can always find more widgets on the Internet that you can download and install. To find more widgets, visit one of the following websites:

- > Apple (<http://www.apple.com/downloads/dashboard/>)
- > Dashboard Widgets (<http://www.dashboardwidgets.com/>)

Here's how to download and install a widget:

1. Start the Safari program and visit a website that offers Dashboard widgets.
2. Click the widget you want to download and click **Download**. A Downloads window appears, showing you the progress in saving your chosen widget to your Macintosh. When the widget is finished downloading onto your hard disk, a dialog appears, asking if you want to install the widget in Dashboard, as shown in Figure 15-6.



FIGURE 15-6: As soon as you've downloaded a widget, a dialog appears, asking if you want to install the widget in Dashboard.

3. Click **Install**. Your widget appears on the screen and asks if you want to keep the widget or not.
4. Click **Keep** (or Delete).
5. Move the widget on the screen where you want it to appear.
6. Press F12, click the Dashboard icon on the Dock, or click anywhere on the screen except on a widget to make the widgets disappear.

Erasing Widgets

The only widgets you can erase from your hard disk are those you've downloaded and installed from the Internet. Here's how to erase a downloaded widget from your hard disk:

1. Press F12 to start Dashboard. Dashboard displays its widgets.
2. Click the plus button that appears in the lower-left corner of the screen. Dashboard displays its library of available widgets.
3. Click the **Widgets** icon. The Manage Widgets widget appears, as shown in Figure 15-7.



FIGURE 15-7: The Manage Widgets widget lets you erase additional widgets you may have installed.

4. Click the red minus button that appears to the right of the widget you want to erase. (You cannot erase any of Dashboard's built-in library of widgets.) A dialog appears, asking if you want to send your selected widget to the Trash.
5. Click **OK**.
6. Click the close button of the Manage Widgets widget to make it disappear.
7. Press F12, click the Dashboard icon on the Dock, or click anywhere on the screen except on a widget to make the widgets disappear.

Additional Ideas for Using Dashboard

Some widgets can be useful (Calculator or World Clock), while others can be for fun (Ski Report or Movies). If you regularly need to consult a calendar or an address book, you may find the iCal and Address Book widgets particularly useful.

The Address Book widget lets you type all or part of a name to search for contact information about a person or company stored in your Address Book, as shown in Figure 15-8. By using the Address Book widget, you can view your stored contact information without the nuisance of starting Address Book, searching for a name, and then quitting Address Book when you're done.

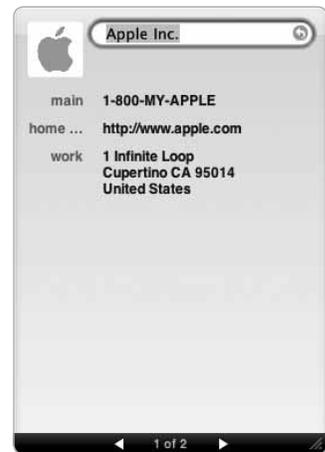


FIGURE 15-8: The Address Book widget lets you search for names and contact information without starting and quitting the Address Book program.

The iCal widget can be handy when you want to review any scheduled events (appointments) for the day. Rather than start iCal and browse through your scheduled events, just display the iCal widget on Dashboard. Each time you click the iCal widget, it toggles between three states, as shown in Figure 15-9:

- > Displays today's date
- > Displays today's date and a monthly calendar
- > Displays today's date, a monthly calendar, and today's scheduled events



FIGURE 15-9: Clicking the iCal widget toggles the calendar appearance.

By using widgets, you'll find Dashboard handy for displaying information that you need quickly while using your Macintosh. By taking the time to customize Dashboard, you can make your Macintosh more useful and convenient than any other computer you've used in the past.