

1. Learn keyboard shortcuts

It's hard to see what lies ahead at New Year, but while we wait to get a better view of Apple's VR Glasses, iPhone, car and Mac Pro plans, here are some good Mac resolutions to explore:

Most Mac applications offer a swathe of keyboard combinations you can use to get things done. As you develop finger memory for these shortcuts, you'll find that you become more capable of working with your hands flat on the keyboard. Not only that, but it saves you time, keeps you more productive, and can minimize damaging problems such as Repetitive Strain Injury. There are [dozens of shortcuts](#) to learn — a good place to start is to master the App Switcher using Command-Tab. Try and learn one of [these](#) every day until you learn them all.

2. Protect others

Install a virus checking application. So many Mac users continue to reject this idea, complaining that running virus checking software can impact system performance and that it seems rather unnecessary given the relative security of the platform. They may have a point, but no one in Apple's food chain should be complacent (including Apple), and it's not just about you — think about all those Windows and Android users you may accidentally spread malware in infected emails to. That's why it's a good idea to install a virus checker on your Mac and try to run it at least once a week — that way at least you know you're trying to be responsible. [AVG for Mac](#) is [Macworld UK's](#) most highly recommended (free version available) antivirus package; [Malwarebytes for Mac](#) is also popular. There are several paid solutions available.

3. Be more secure

The sad truth is that while we may start off using a perfectly configured Mac, over time we all change settings for one-off projects and in many cases, neglect to change them back. That means over time security and privacy protections may become slightly weaker than we thought they were. With this in mind, it makes sense that Mac users run through the basic security protection on their computers on a regular basis — see it as like a regular service for your car. These hints should [help you accomplish that](#).

4. Please, please, back up

I've lost count of the hours I've wasted attempting to recover people's accidentally lost data when a Mac develops a tech problem or a user makes a big mistake. All those precious digital memories can be destroyed in seconds when things go wrong, so we should back those memories up.

I've lost so many photos this way, including images of people I'll never be lucky enough to see in real life again. That's taught me the value of backup, but even with that information I still don't claim to be doing it especially well. At present, my backup routine involves a monthly SuperDuper clone to an external drive, Apple's iCloud and an online storage account for my work files. I know that isn't enough, but it does at least mean I have some protection.

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5. Keep a clean Mac

Do you have a tough time finding all those important files? When did you last update your item tags or thoroughly vet your file and folder systems to make sure all your information was still kept in relevant places? How often do you check your Downloads folder? Is your Desktop as heavily populated by digital detritus as a small village? How much time do you squander searching for items?

In a sense, it doesn't matter — you can always ask Siri or use Spotlight to seek out some of those files, so long as you can recall a little information

about their contents. If you're wise to it, you may already have begun using Tags to help you find digital assets that are useful across multiple projects. But the fact remains: The beginning of the new year is a good time to review all the files on your Mac, archive some of these and delete items you don't need. A new year always looks better with a manageable to-do list and a tidy Desktop.

6. Take control of your password destiny

Your passwords, particularly your Apple ID/iCloud and Mac passwords (if you use separate ones), are the keys to your digital life. That's why it is a really good idea to make sure to use complex passwords across all of your accounts and to replace and phase out any passwords that are identical, weak or formulaic. After all, even that second-rate web service you signed up for once may have asked for some personal information about you — and a hacker breaking through the weak password you chose to use the one time you used that service may then have enough data about you to link you up with information stolen elsewhere. Use strong passwords, use [unique passwords for everything](#), and use a password manager like [1Password](#).

7. Update regularly

Apple publishes regular software updates for all its products. At best, these updates include security, performance and feature improvements. The security and performance enhancements are particularly important, as systems that do not have these applied may be left vulnerable to all manner of online nasties. Software developers also ship regular application software updates. All of these are easy to install — just select File>App Store>Updates and install what is available.

8. Change is good

If you use your computer for long periods, then you may be putting yourself at risk of long-term physical problems, arthritis, RSI and more. Using your computer less may not be an option, but you can become smarter in how you do use it:

- Change your seat type and desk regularly — these small changes force your body to adopt a different posture, which helps prevent some physical problems.
- Change your input devices: Using the same mouse or keyboard forces your hands to adopt the same position for long periods of time. One good way to prevent this repetitive movement from becoming a long-term problem is to regularly use different keyboard and mouse combinations. If you use a notebook Mac, it's a good idea to use external keyboards and mice to supplement use of those built into the computer.

9. Stay away

Most of us are spending more time using our computers and mobile devices than ever. I don't think this is going to change — digital transformation means we must do so in order to remain productive. Within this context, it's unrealistic to expect anyone to stop using their Mac — but it is realistic to make sure to take regular breaks and to ensure that time spent using the computer is productive. Here's a few ways to help achieve this:

- *Use Do Not Disturb:* Working on a project and want to focus completely on the matter in hand? Option-Click the Notifications icon on your Mac. It should go grey. Now you won't receive any Notifications.
- *Stand up:* If you use an Apple Watch, you already receive regular reminders to stand up and move around at least once every hour. If you don't have an Apple Watch, why not install the [Stand app](#), which sends you similar reminders on your Mac.
- *Take a break:* It makes complete sense to take regular breaks. Apps such as [MacBreakZ](#) or [Recess](#) will watch what you do and remind you to step away from your Mac for a few moments. Apps such as [Focus Matrix](#) may help you focus more effectively by working in short, intense bursts.

10. Learn more

It's good to learn more about your Mac. You can explore [huge collections of Mac hints and tips](#), read books, [follow blogs](#), or even attend a couple of classes at your local Apple Retail store (the photography classes are particularly good).

11. Walk away

Switch off your social media. Shut down your computer. Go for a walk. Join a gym, take class, or just spend time with friends or family. We know tech addiction is real, and we tend to live increasingly atomized lives in which family members spend more time staring at a screen than at each other. News that Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey thinks it's a good idea to go on a [10-day silent meditation break](#) surely shows it's also important to invest a little of your energy in life beyond tech. Switch off, walk away and reconnect. ...

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