

MacBook Setup Essentials

For College Students

(as of macOS Mojave 10.14.6)

August 2019

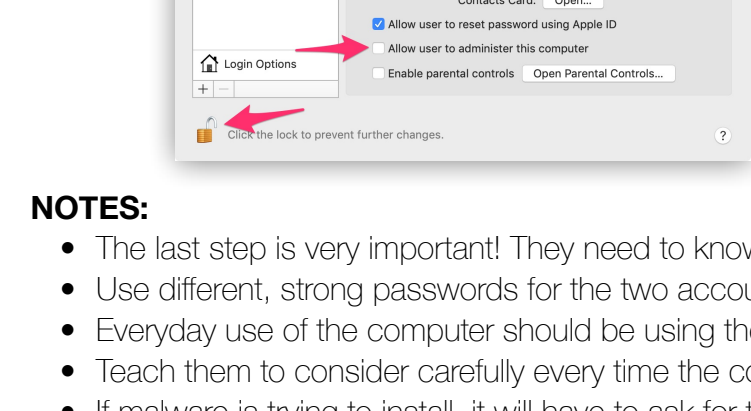


Apple MacBooks are very popular with college students, but a little planning and configuration is required for the best experience. A student moving away to college might be the first time they have full control over their own computing experience: installing apps, protecting their privacy, creating good passwords, avoiding viruses & malware, and backing up their data.

These are my suggestions for setting up a MacBook, MacBook Air or MacBook Pro for any college student to simplify their computing experience.

1 Create separate Admin and Standard User accounts

To help prevent accidentally corrupting the system files or malware getting installed, it's always safer if the user isn't logged in as an administrator on the computer. As long as their main account only has Standard access, anything nefarious doesn't have Administrator access to the computer's files.



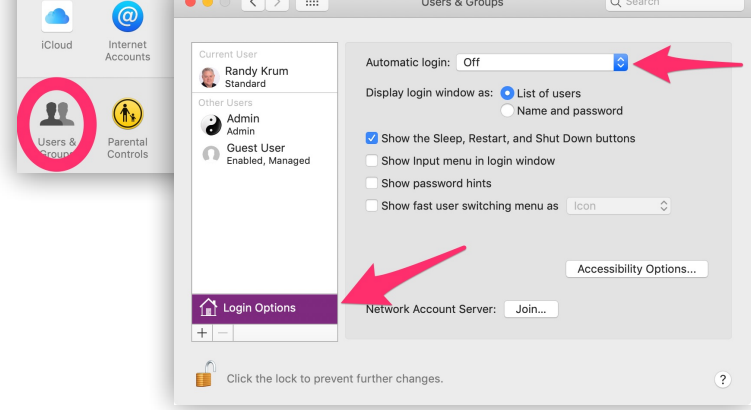
1. System Preferences > Users & Groups
2. Click the Lock and enter your password to unlock
3. Click the "+" to create a new user
4. Create the new Admin user profile
5. Turn ON "Allow user to administer this computer"
6. Select the student's main user profile
7. Turn OFF "Allow user to administer this computer"
8. Make sure the student knows both passwords

NOTES:

- The last step is very important! They need to know both passwords!
- Use different, strong passwords for the two accounts
- Everyday use of the computer should be using the main Standard User account
- Teach them to consider carefully every time the computer asks for the Admin password
- If malware is trying to install, it will have to ask for the Admin password
- They will also need the Admin password to install new software, application updates, or delete applications

2 Turn OFF Automatic Login

It's convenient, but dangerous. If the laptop is stolen, it will automatically login for the thieves also. So, it's better to make sure this feature is turned **OFF** and require them to login each time they use the laptop.

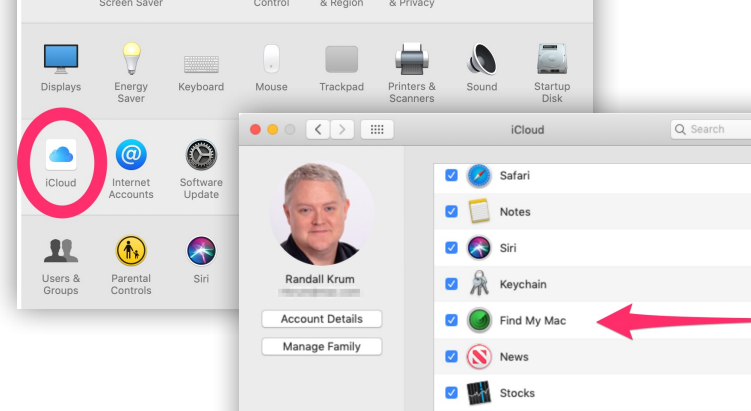


1. System Preferences > Users & Groups
2. Click the Lock and enter your password to unlock
3. Click the "Login Options" button
4. Select OFF for "Automatic Login"

NOTE: If you have an Apple Watch or one of the newer MacBooks with TouchID, you can login faster, but still maintain security by keeping Automatic Login turned OFF.

3 Turn on iCloud: Find My Mac

Find My Mac work similarly to Find My iPhone, and might help find a lost, stolen or misplaced MacBook. It only works when the laptop is connected to WiFi (since the laptop doesn't have a cellular connection), but there's a chance that it could help find your student's missing computer.

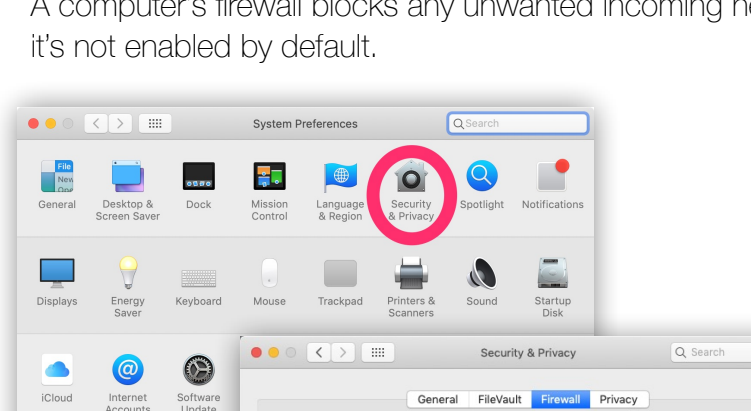


1. System Preferences > iCloud
2. Click the checkbox to turn ON Find My Mac

NOTE: This also turns on the Guest user account. If someone steals the MacBook, the Guest account allows them to login and connect to a WiFi network without a password. If they do, Find My Mac will then be able to find the stolen computer.

4 Turn ON the Built-In Firewall

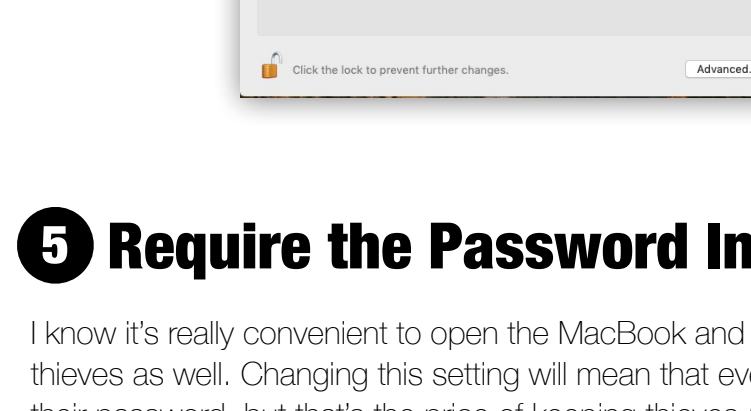
A computer's firewall blocks any unwanted incoming network connections. Macs ship with a built-in firewall, but it's not enabled by default.



1. System Preferences > Security & Privacy
2. Click the Lock and enter your password to unlock
3. Select the "Firewall" tab
4. Click the "Turn On Firewall" button

5 Require the Password Immediately After Sleep

I know it's really convenient to open the MacBook and immediately start working, but don't make it that easy for thieves as well. Changing this setting will mean that every time they open the MacBook, they'll need to type in their password, but that's the price of keeping thieves (and their roommate) out of files, emails, passwords, etc.

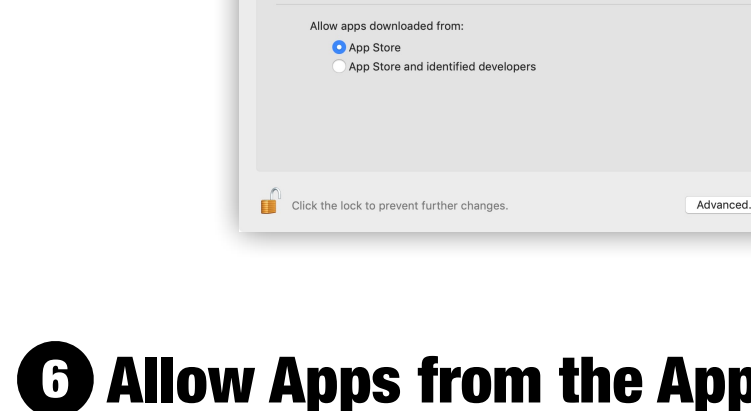


1. System Preferences > Security & Privacy
2. Click the Lock and enter your password to unlock
3. Select the "General" tab
4. Choose "Immediately" for the Require Password option

NOTE: The latest MacBook models also have the ability to unlock with a fingerprint using TouchID or unlock with an Apple Watch. You would still set to require a password immediately, but these options would make opening and getting to work much faster.

6 Allow Apps from the App Store ONLY

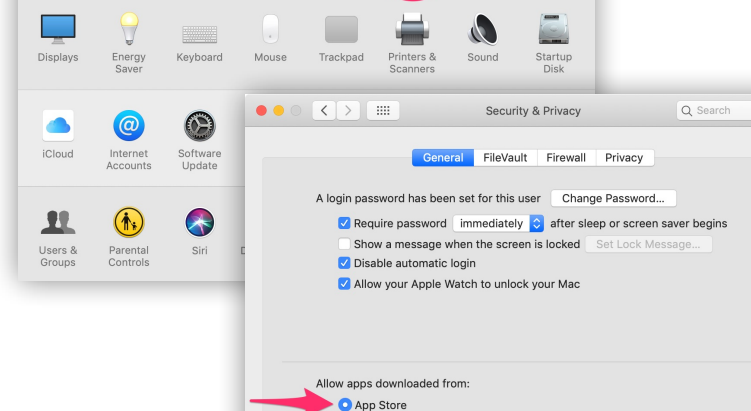
This sets the default behavior to only allow applications from the official Apple App Store to be installed. When your student does come across an application they need to install from outside of the App Store, they can change this setting.



1. System Preferences > Security & Privacy
2. Click the Lock and enter your password to unlock
3. Select the "General" tab
4. Choose "App Store" for "Allow Apps downloaded from:"

7 Turn on iCloud Drive for Desktop & Document Folders

Many students with a new computer are not good about organizing their files into folders, and many files just end up on the Desktop or in the Documents folder. This option will sync files in those common locations to their iCloud account online.



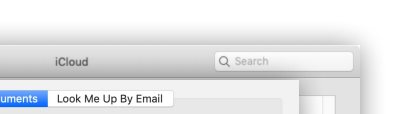
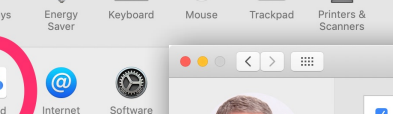
1. System Preferences > iCloud
2. Click the checkbox to turn ON iCloud Drive
3. Click the "Options..." button
4. Click the checkbox to turn ON Desktop & Documents Folders

NOTE: The 100 GB of iCloud Drive will be stored on the Mac. If you have enough space, other documents will be stored only in iCloud when space is needed.

8 Install a Password Manager

Your student needs to start good password habits early, especially a different password for every website. Over time they will have to remember hundreds of passwords for websites, school services, software licenses, and more. Choose a reputable password manager, and teach them how to store their login credentials securely. This is the best long term solution!

These are currently my recommendations as the best options for a password manager on the Mac:



1Password.com

LastPass.com

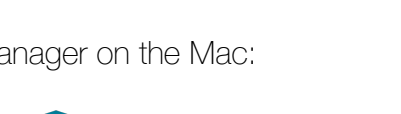
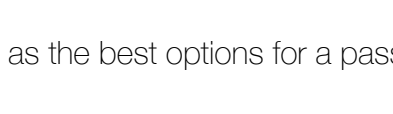
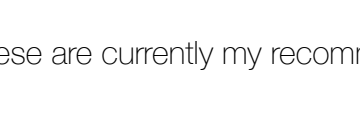
dashlane.com

NOTES:

- Most web browsers will offer to store your usernames and passwords, which is convenient but not secure.
- These apps also have Family Plans so you can manage private and shared passwords with your student
- Password managers also allow you to store other personal information securely like credit card numbers, software license codes, drivers license numbers, passport info and even secure notes.
- Apple's Keychain application is built-in and free, but I find it difficult to use and it doesn't share with family. Feel free to try it out and see what you think.

9 Install a Productivity Suite

Your student needs to choose a productivity suite of applications to write all of those class papers and do their homework! This decision may be based on what the school requires, their budget for software and your experience so you can support your student when needed.



Free to install from the Apple App Store

Many schools provide a free license to students

Free online applications Working offline is possible

NOTES:

- Apple's iWork applications for the Mac and iOS are free to install from the Apple App Store
- G Suite applications are also free, but are online applications. Working offline requires extra effort.
- For Office 365, many schools provide a free license to students while they are attending. Check your school website for details.

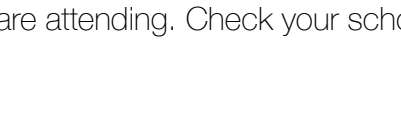
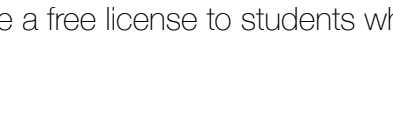
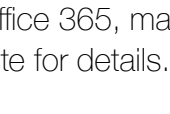
10 Setup a Backup Routine

A hard drive crash, the laptop gets stolen or the just accidentally delete a file. Data loss happens and the only way a backup can help is if you set it up beforehand. The 3-2-1 backup rule is a revered and time-honored backup strategy, but I've modified it to my 3-2-1-0 Backup Strategy.

The 3-2-1-0 Backup Strategy

3. Three copies of your data: your MacBook hard drive plus two others
2. Two different devices or storage media: external hard drive, SSD drive, USB drive, SD card, or the cloud
1. One copy is offsite in another location or in the cloud
0. Zero user interaction necessary, completely automated! No one has to remember to make a backup!

These are currently my recommendations as the best options for a backup application on the Mac:



Apple Time Machine
External drives
(Built-in application)

Backblaze.com
Cloud & external drives

Carbonite.com
Cloud & external drives

NOTES:

- Don't confuse Apple iCloud (from Step 4) with a true backup application. iCloud is an online mirror image of the files on the laptop, so if you delete a file on your computer, it will be deleted from iCloud as well.
- However, iCloud will still have a copy of all the files if the computer is stolen or the hard drive crashes because they were never deleted. They would be available to download to a new computer or hard drive.
- True backup applications keep backup copies of multiple versions of your files so a user can retrieve an earlier version if the current file is corrupted or lost.

11 Consider Cloud Drive Storage Options

Your student will need more than the free 5GB that Apple provides with every iCloud account. Consider the cloud storage options as secondary protection in case of disaster, and they also make the files accessible across multiple devices (laptop, tablet, phone, etc.). All of these options have a free tier to start with, and then paid tiers to add more storage when necessary.

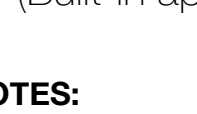


iCloud.com
5GB Free
Multiple Paid Levels
(Built-in application)

Dropbox.com
2GB Free
2TB paid level

Google.com/drive
15GB Free
Multiple paid levels

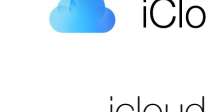
Onedrive.live.com
5GB Free
Multiple paid levels



Apple Family Sharing: Special note about Apple's Family Sharing option. If you have multiple Apple users in your household, you can setup Family Sharing and share one paid 200GB or 2TB storage plan with all of your family members, including your student. When you share a storage plan, your photos and documents stay private and everyone keeps using their own accounts with iCloud—just like when you have your own storage plan. You simply share the space available in the iCloud storage plan with your family members, so you only have one plan to manage.

NOTES:

- Apple's iCloud Drive is built-in, so no additional applications are required. However, the 3rd party storage offerings have more features depending on your paid level.
- Depending on your choice of Productivity Suite in Step 9, additional cloud storage space may be included. For example, some Microsoft Office 365 plans include additional OneDrive storage space.
- The 3rd Party applications create a new folder in the MacBook Home folder so any files and sub-folders saved in this new folder are automatically synced to the cloud storage space.
- It's good practice to teach your student to start saving all of their school files in the cloud storage folder.
- Make sure your backup settings include the cloud storage folder!



Data Visualization & Infographics