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Technical bulletin

About the Mac OS Root User

This document provides you with information about the root user in Mac OS® X and Mac OS X Server and describes how you enable root user login in Mac OS X, which is disabled by default.

Important:

- If you are unfamiliar with the meaning of *root user*, you should read this entire document to learn important precautionary information. You must have an Administrator user name and password to complete the steps below.
- If you are using Mac OS X Server, root is enabled by default. The advice provided below about disabling root access (if you do not need it often), does not apply to Mac OS X Server, because root access should always be enabled. For more information, see *Mac OS X*, *Mac OS X Server: Password Does Not Work as Expected After a Change (technical document 106361)*.

This document includes the following sections:

- About the Root User
- Enabling the Root User
- Logging In as Root
- Disabling the Root User
- What Is the Root Directory?

About the Root User

In UNIX®-style operating systems, the user named *root* is a special user that has read and write privileges to all areas of the file system.

Use the root user account only for specific administration or monitoring tasks. After you complete a task as the root user, you should log out of Mac OS X and log back in using a normal or Administrator account. Disable root access if you do not use it often.

Warnings:

1. Only the owner of the computer or its designated administrator(s) should have Administrator status or the root password.
2. Any Administrator can become the root user or reset the root password.
3. A root password should be difficult to guess and contain both numbers and letters within the first eight characters.
4. A root user can read files owned by other users.
5. The root user can relocate or remove required system files and introduce new files in locations that are protected form other users.

Enabling the Root User

1. In the Ddck, click the **Finder** icon.
2. From the Go menu, choose ⌘ **> Applications**.
3. Open the **Utilities** folder.
4. Open the **NetInfo Manager** utility.
5. In the NetInfo Manager window, click the lock icon.
6. Type the name and password of an Administrator user, and click **OK**.
7. For Mac OS X 10.2, choose **Security > Enable Root User**.
   For Mac OS X 10.0 and 10.1, choose **Domain > Security > Enable Root User**.
   Note: If you have not previously set a root password, the NetInfo Error alert dialog box, which indicates that the password is blank, may appear. If this alert dialog box appears, click **OK**.
8. Type the root password that you want to use and click **Set**.
9. Type the password again and click **Verify**.
10. To prevent changes, click the lock icon.

Logging In as Root

In Mac OS X 10.2:

1. If you are logged in to Mac OS X, choose ⌘ and log out.
   If you are logging in from a list of user names that includes pictures, click **Other**.
2. In the **Name** box, type `root`.
3. In the **Password** box, type the password that you defined in *Steps to enable the root user*.

In Mac OS X 10.0 to 10.1.5:

1. After you have enabled the root user, you must log out from Mac OS X and log back in as the root user.
   Note: By default, in the latest versions of Mac OS X you can choose your user name from a list of user names. In earlier versions of Mac OS X, it was necessary to type your user name in the provided user name box. To select between these two methods of logging in, select **System Preferences > Login**. Since the root user does not appear in the user name list, type `root` in the **User Name** box.
2. To enable Mac OS X to display user name and password boxes at login:
   a. Choose ⌘ **> System Preferences**.
   b. Choose **View** ⌘ **> Login**.
   c. Click the **Login Window** tab.
   d. Select the **Name and password entry fields** option.

3. To log in as root:
    a. If you are logged in to Mac OS X, log out.
    b. In the **Name** box, type `root`.
    c. In the **Password** box, type the password that you defined in *Steps to enable the root user*.

Disabling the Root User

1. From the **Utilities** folder, open **NetInfo Manager**.
2. Click the lock icon.
3. Type the name and password of an Administrator user, and click **OK**.
4. In Mac OS X 10.2, choose **Security > Disable Root User**.
   In Mac OS X 10.0 and 10.1, choose **Domain > Security > Disable Root User**.

What Is the Root Directory?

The term *root* is used in two distinct ways: the *root user* and the *root directory*.

The root directory is the highest directory level of a disk. The files and folders that you see when you double-click your hard disk icon are the contents of that disk's root directory.

A user's short name is also the name of his **Home** directory. The root user shares its name with its own **Home** directory, which is the first (or highest) level of the disk directory.

The Finder and the Terminal show different contents for the root directory. Some items in the root directory are not visible in the Finder. Users familiar with UNIX command lines may use the Terminal utility to view the entire contents contained in a directory.

Notes:

1. A directory is represented graphically as a folder. You may know your **Home** directory as *Home folder*. The terms folder and directory are generally interchangeable.
2. The root user does not appear in the **Users** pane of System Preferences.

About Creo

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