

# Book Review

*Greg Sharp, Sydney*

## **Mac OS X Support Essentials – Second Edition**

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### **A Guide to Supporting and Troubleshooting Mac OS X 10.5**

Reviewer: Greg Sharp, President of the Sydney Mac Users Group and Australian Mac Users Group

There are plenty of books out there promising to teach you the ins and outs of running Mac OS X 10.5, but very few do it as well as “Mac OS X Support Essentials”. It is no wonder that Apple has adopted this book as the official textbook for those wishing to become an “Apple Certified Support Professional”.

Firstly, I was pleasantly surprised to find that this book was written in a concise and easy to understand way. It includes ample illustrations and diagrams including flowcharts for troubleshooting problems and everything is laid out so well that any average Macintosh user would find it easy to follow. More than just a bunch of useful hints; this is a structured training manual. Each chapter even ends with a series of review exercises aimed to reinforce the concepts learned.

The “Mac OS X Support Essentials” book is divided into chapters that relate to learning outcomes. The following breakdown lists the lessons covered in the book –

1. Instillation and Initial Setup
2. User Accounts
3. File Systems
4. Data Management and Backup
5. Applications and Boot Camp
6. Network Configuration
7. Accessing Network Services
8. Providing Network Services
9. Peripherals and Printing
10. Startup Process
11. General Apple Troubleshooting (Appendix)

Anyone considering the idea of becoming an “Apple Certified Support Professional” can definitely save a bundle by using this book. Sure, you

still have to pay a small fee to sit the actual exam but you can save the cost of training by studying this book thoroughly and completing all the included quiz's (reference links are also included). In a world where it doesn't matter how much you know, and all that counts is that little bit of paper stating that you're certified, avoiding the need to pay a fortune on training classes is a godsend.

Even if you think you already know a lot about Macintosh's and Apples operating system, you're sure to find enough has changed in Mac OS X 10.5 to cause you more than a few problems when upgrading and this is where "Mac OS X Support Essentials" becomes such a vital tool.

Ask yourself, do you know the differences between the various User Account types such as Standard Users, Administrative Users, Guest Users, Sharing Users and Root User? Do you understand the difference between User Security Settings & Security System Preferences or the various FileVault caveats when setting up accounts with FileVault enabled?

Did you know that Mac OS X 10.5 has introduced a new feature in Disk Utility that enables you to dynamically repartition a drive without destroying any currently stored data on the drive? Find out how to do it and what partition schema doesn't support it.



Traditionally OS X has used a basic file and folder permission structure known as POSIX, which is a decades old UNIX style. However, Mac OS X 10.5 adds a new schema to the mix called Access Control Lists (ACL's) which allows more control of file and folder access. To complicate matters further there is no common standard for ACL's with Apple adopting a schema similar to but not identical to Windows systems. This adds more than a dozen unique permission and inheritance attribute types and an unlimited number of ACL attributes for any user or group.

Personally I found this section of the book very useful, since up until reading about these changes I'd had a lot of trouble understanding how best to implement this fine level of control as the Finder only displays a small subset of what ACL's are capable of. Fortunately "Mac OS X Support Essentials" includes a comprehensive section on File Management via the Command Line.

When it comes to Archiving and Backup, Mac OS X 10.5 has introduced a radical, yet oh so Apple like solution known as Time Machine Backup.

From a single click configuration, to a detailed configuration set to omit selected files and folders, Time Machine provides a way to go back in time to recover a previous versions or even deleted versions of your valuable data. That said, if something goes wrong what do you do then. Well “Mac OS X Support Essentials” includes a section on troubleshooting Time Machine that may help.

That said, this section could have covered things in a bit more detail. Perhaps a bit more of an explanation on what file types should be excluded from Time Machine backups would have been useful. For example, by omitting your Virtual Machines (if running software such as VMWare or Parallels) from your Time Machine backup regime you can stop your backup disk from filling up too. Overall though, this section was still pretty useful.

In fact there are way too many changes made to Mac OS X 10.5 that get covered in “Mac OS X Support Essentials” to list them all here, such as how to use Boot Camp Assistant, or how to configure VPN connections, VLANs, link aggregation, 802.1X wireless security etc but rest assured these and many other topics are explained fully.

In conclusion, I thought after having worked with Macintosh computers since the early 1990's that I knew heaps about the operating system I love so much but this book has opened my eyes to just how much more there still is to learn. I have discovered an amazing resource in “Mac OS X Support Essentials”, which along with the other titles contained in the Apple Training Series is teaching me something new every day. I couldn't rate this book highly enough and recommend it to anyone needing to offer support for Mac OS X 10.5.


Rating: 9.5 out of 10

*Thanks to Greg Sharp, President/Webmaster, Sydney Mac Users Group (SMUG) <http://www.sydney.macusersgroup.org> for permission to reprint this review.*

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