

MAC LESSON #115

CREATING A PASSWORD-PROTECTED (ENCRYPTED) DISK IMAGE

An encrypted disk image requires a password to open or become available (to "mount"). That means better safety and security for your private documents. It's easy to do, and you can easily move files to or from an encrypted disk image. Here's what you need to know to use this very handy tool.

Click on Go on the Finder Menu Bar and then open Utilities. Now open the Disk Utility icon. Now click on File on the Disk Utility Menu Bar at the top of your screen. Click on New and then on Blank Disk Image.

Enter a name in the Save AS field. This is the name OS X Tiger will use for the disk image (.dmg) file. You can change the Where: default, which is Documents. The Where: box determines where the new image file will be stored.

Next, choose a size for the new blank image file. The default for my Mac Book Pro is 40 MB, which should be plenty. Finally, you'll need to choose a format. The default setting is read/write and you can leave it at that.

Finally, click on the up or down arrow to the right of Encryption: and then select AES-128 from the pop-up menu. If you leave Encryption: set at None, your new image file won't be encrypted.

Click on Create and then enter and verify a password in the dialog box that appears. This password can be up to 255 characters long. Your password will be saved in your keychain by default, or you can deselect "Remember password (add to keychain) if you don't want that. You should store the password in the keychain both for convenience and for reducing risk of password loss.

Click OK and you're finished.

One final word of caution here. If you forget your password, the data stored in the encrypted disk image will be irretrievably lost. If you have saved the password in the keychain file, it will be available to you there. It's a good idea to back up your keychain file from time to time.

