6 Disk Utility changes in El Capitan

Disk Utility has stayed more or less the same for years, but Apple has given the Mac power user's much-loved maintenance tool a big overhaul in El Capitan, making it look different and removing familiar tools, including the popular "Repair Permissions" command.

New look

Gone is the box-like Disk Utility of yesterday to be replaced by a more colorful edition providing at-a-glance information of how you use your disk.

This means you can see just how much of your Mac is consumed by Apps (blue), Photos (red), Audio (orange), Movies (green), and everything else, aka "Other" (yellow). You can also see how much (or, in my case, how little) space is free (white). This is pretty much the same view as you'll find in About this Mac under the Storage pane.

Disk Utility launches with this view and offers five choices to reach its remaining tools in its top bar: First Aid, Partition, Erase, Unmount and Info.

Repair permissions

The lack of Repair Permissions shouldn't matter too much, according to Apple. The company claims that in El Capitan, "System file permissions are automatically protected, and updated, during Software Updates. The Repair Permissions function is no longer necessary."

All the same, this will be a shock to Mac users who have traditionally made use of Repair Permissions as an essential first step to troubleshooting.

Apple's decision to make this an automatically applied OS-level operation, part of

the new System Integrity Protection built into the OS, means Mac users shouldn't need to do it themselves any more. Overall, I think that's a good thing, as inexperienced, new or less technically minded Mac users won't need to learn how to use the tool; its benefits will already be applied.

First Aid

Disk Utility can no longer verify a disk before running first aid, so you can't check disk health. In essence, this means that if you think your disk needs some maintenance, you must run the whole thing. Disk Utility must be able to unmount the drive or you receive an error message.

Hang on, where's RAID?

In what could be seen as another sign of Apple's shrinking interest in the pro markets, Apple has removed the capacity to support multi-disk or RAID arrays from within Disk Utility. Now you must use the command-line tool or third-party solutions to accomplish this. That's a fairly big change, and likely to upset some pro users – in fact, it already has.

Burn out

If you ever used Disk Utility to handle your CD or DVD burning sessions, you can't do so now, as this feature has been removed, reflecting the removal of disk drives from across the Mac range.

Disk images

Disk Utility remains the go-to tool for handling disk images. Most of these functions remain unchanged, so you can continue to create a disk image from any folder or any selected mounted volume, for example. One significant change is that you can no longer just drag disk images from the Finder into Disk Utilities; instead, you

must choose the relevant image using the File>Open Disk menu.

One more thing...

The best Mac maintenance tool Mac users now have in their archive is Recovery Mode. To access this mode, restart your Mac while holding the Command and R keys. From here you can access a range of useful maintenance tools to help keep your Mac in shape. For other ideas please take a look at this (already now in need of updating) Mac tech support guide.

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