

How to Set Up Your New Macbook Air

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We love the Macbook Air. Especially the 11-inch version, which sets a new standard for what a portable computer should be like. Our base level Macbook Air 11-inch was purchased this spring as a replacement for a unibody [Macbook 13-inch](#), enticed by the thoughts of how easily it travels (TSA doesn't require you to remove it from your carry-on luggage at security checkpoints, though some may still ask you to).

Though it serves most people quite well, it fell short for us in a couple ways. With the base level having only 2 GB of RAM (should have gone with 4 GB), a 64 GB SSD hard drive (should have gone with 128 GB), and the 1.4 GHz Core 2 Duo processor being a bit outdated and anemic, dabbling with many applications, running Parallels and storing all of our files was a problem.

With Apple releasing an update to the Macbook Air this summer, after only six months, it was time for us to upgrade. Thankfully, the same 11-inch form factor we love is still available, but now with an optional dual-core 1.8 GHz Intel Core i7 processor, 4 GB of RAM, and an optional 256 GB SSD. Throw in a backlit keyboard, a thunderbolt port and the OSX Lion system update, and we were sold.

Migration options

Apple provides a tool called "Migration Assistant" that you can use to more easily migrate from one computer to another using a [USB drive](#) or a Time Machine backup. Though this saves a lot of time by moving all of your apps, data and settings to the new machine, it can also move some of the problems you may have had. For this reason, we always migrate manually. Note that if you do use Migration Assistant, Apple has released two updates that help with Lion compatibility, so make sure to apply them first.

Manual migration

Preparing for a manual migration involves collecting all of the programs and installation codes on a USB drive (remember, the Air doesn't have a built-in optical drive) where you can easily install them one by one. You'll also need all your data organized and ready to go as well. We use Dropbox to store our roughly 50 GB of data, so it was easy to copy it to the new computer.

Upgrading

When the new machine arrived, we first made sure all updates were applied, and then started installing software. Dropbox was first, which copied all our data to the new computer. We sync our Address Book, Mail and Calendar through Dropbox, so we configured all three programs to see Dropbox, and all of our info was available. Then one by one, we installed and configured each of the apps.

Keep in mind

We knew that Apple's OSX Lion would have some [compatibility issues](#). For us, this included an old Canon scanner, which will need to be replaced with something newer. Make sure you have the latest versions of all your software. We found this necessary with Intuit's Quicken Essentials software, which didn't work until we applied an update to it.

Start using the new computer immediately, but keep the old computer around and running. This will allow you to find any missing pieces which can be copied if needed. You can also refer to settings you were using on the old machine when setting up the new one. Once we ran everything on the new machine for a few days, we felt comfortable reinstalling the original OS on the old machine to prepare it for sale.

Results

We couldn't be happier with our new setup. The new Macbook Air 11-inch is just as svelte as the first, but now functions as a serious computer. We now have space for all our data, as well as programs such as Microsoft Office and Adobe Photoshop that we use daily. And Parallels? Yes, it installed with no problems, and runs Windows 7 like a dream. In fact, Windows 7 starts faster on this machine in Parallels than it does on our PCs, booting to usability in a little more than 20 seconds. The only downside we're seeing is in battery life. Where the original 11" would get around 5 hours, the new one averages a little over 4 hours. It may be that we haven't perfectly tuned our settings yet, so your mileage may vary. For us, the extra money and effort was worth it.