Opening a file in another Application

Why to do it; How to do it.

Presentation to MacFundamentals Workgroup
of Brookdale Computer User Group
Presented on Wednesday, Dec. 12, 2007
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Some background on Opening Files

- It's easy as click-click on a file icon, and an application opens it up.

- Your Mac keeps track of which applications opens which documents.

- How does it do this?

First, a little history...

- The old Apple operating system, from System 7 on to Mac OS 9, used an invisible (to the user) database called the desktop file to keep track of which applications opened which files.

- Another part of the system was special 4-character type and creator codes embedded in each file. (These are no longer relied upon).

- Often, the desktop file would need to be rebuilt, because it would become corrupted, meaning you could no longer double-click on a file to open it in the correct application because the Finder could no longer figure out which app to pick to open it.

Now in Mac OS X

- Mac OS X uses an invisible database file called the Launch Services database to keep track of which apps open which files.

- Files are now identified by the 3- to 4-character suffix at the end of the file name, rather than any hidden code (this is the UNIX way of doing it).

- Launch Services is hidden in the bowels of the folder called System, and is best edited by using the Terminal. In other words, don't even try to do this if you don't know what you are doing.

But I want to open a file in another app! What do I do?

1. You can temporarily open a file in another application.

2. You can permanently change which application opens this particular file.

3. You can permanently change which app opens this file and all others like it.

But first, why do this?
Is it allowed?

- There is no application police out there, monitoring which apps you use to open which files (at least, as far as I know, there is no application police...).

- However, some apps can only open certain files, while other apps can open many different kinds of files.

- Just about all apps that create their own files can open the files they create.

Examples:

- **Adobe Photoshop** can open a wide variety of image files, as well as its own .psd format: .jpg, .gif, .png, .tif, .eps, .pct, .bmp, and several others.

- **Adobe Illustrator** can open a variety of file types, including: .eps, .pdf, .ps, .svg and .swf.

- **Adobe InDesign** can open its own format – .indd – plus a couple related formats, and those made by their competitor, Quark.

More examples:

- Microsoft Word for Mac opens its own .doc files, Rich Text Format files (.rtf), text files (.txt), unicode text, DOS text, (but not the new .xdoc format made by Word 2007)etc.

- TextEdit opens .doc files, .txt files, .rtf files and the new Word 2007 .xdoc format.

- NeoOffice and OpenOffice opens all of above, plus its own format, plus more.

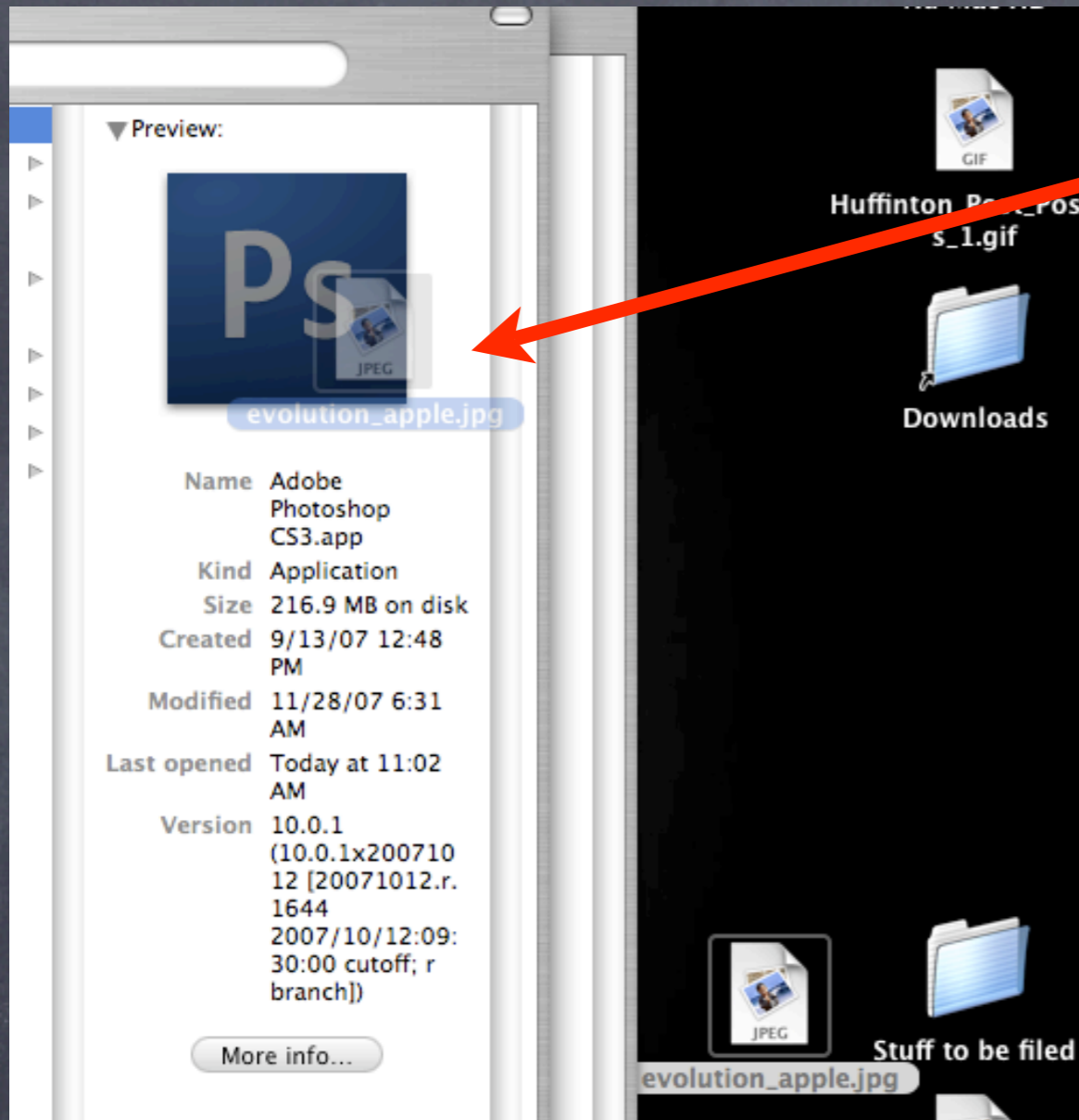# Valid reasons for opening a file made by one app in another app

- You don't have access to the app used to create a file, but you do have access to another app that will open that file.

- The file in question doesn't open in the app that created it – especially if it suddenly has generic, or white, icon – and you want to see if it will open in another app.

- Can you think of any other reasons?

Okay enough why; How about How?

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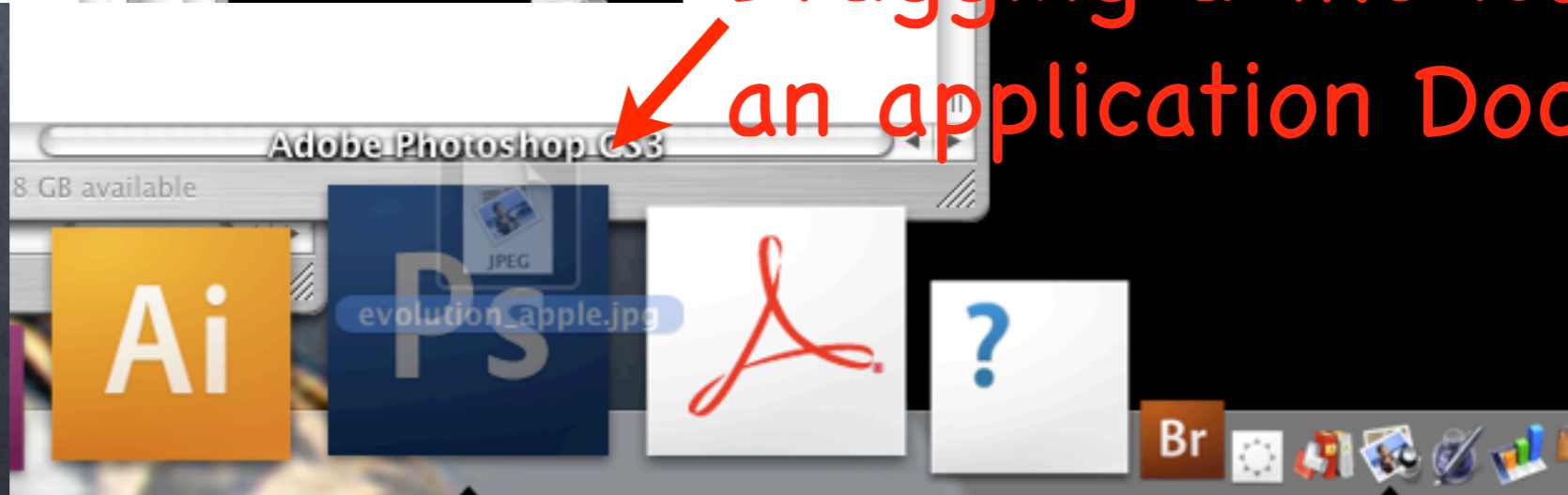
Opening by dragging to an application icon

1. Make sure you can see the icon for the application that you want to open a particular document.

2. The app icon can be in a folder like Applications, or it could be an alias on the desktop, or it could be on the Dock.

3. Click on the document icon to select it, then drag it onto the app icon with which you want to open it.

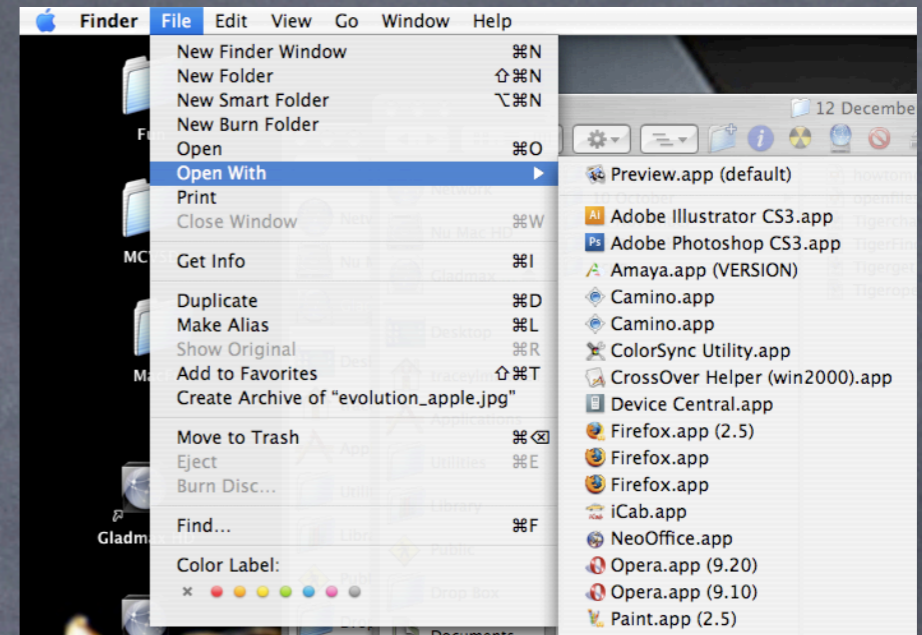Dragging a file icon to an application icon.

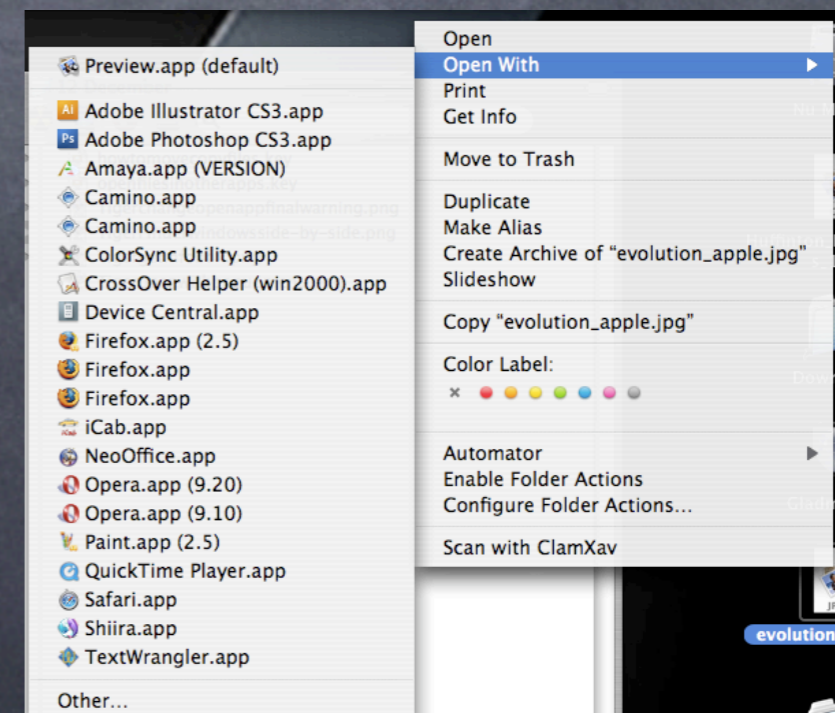Dragging a file icon to an application Dock icon.

Open a document in another app by menu item

1. Click on the document icon to select it, then go to File>Open With, and in the pop-out menu, select the app you would like to open the file, or...

2. Right-click or control-click on the document icon, go to the Open With... menu item in the contextual menu, and select the program.

Does the file open?

- In either case, the file should open in the app you selected.

- Using the Get Info method means less chance of using an app you think should open the file, but will not.

- If it doesn't, obviously there is a problem. We covered this in a previous presentation.
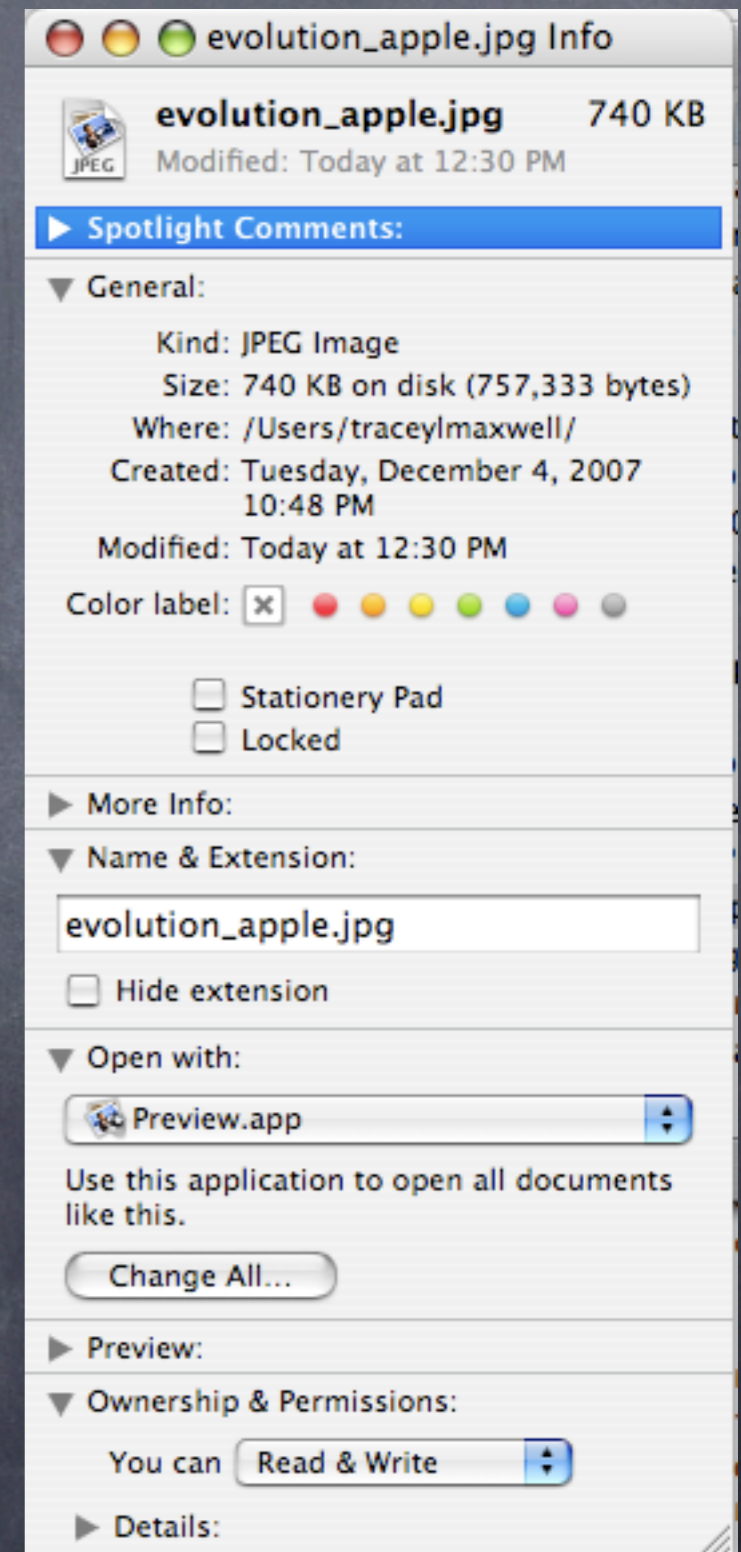
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I want this to happen all the time for this file.

- OK, you can change which app opens this particular file, by default, meaning when you double-click on this document's icon, another program of your choosing will always open this file.
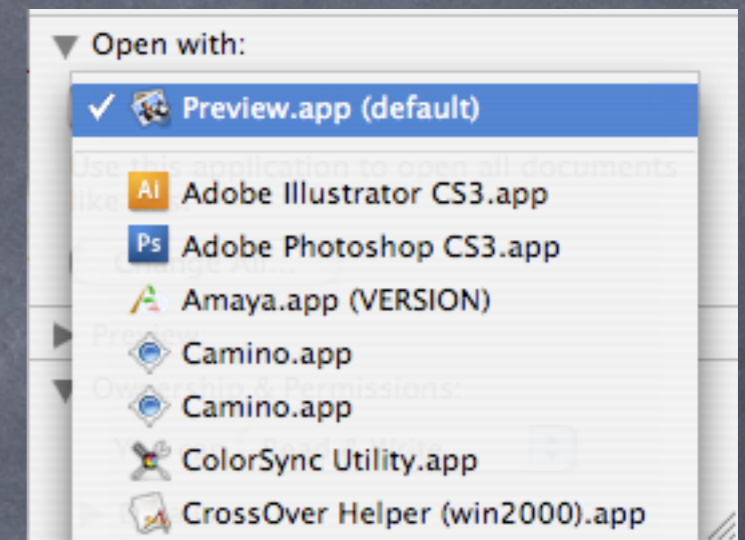
- To do this, Click on the document icon to select it, then go to File>Get Info to open its Get Info box, or right-click or control-click on its icon, and in the contextual menu, select Get Info. **(continue to the next slide)**

Selecting the default application

3. In the Get Info dialog box, go to the Open With... section, and click on the pop-up menu there, which should show you all the apps that Mac OS X thinks can open this file.

4. Select the program from the list you want to use to open the file.

5. Close the Get Info box. This will change the default application.
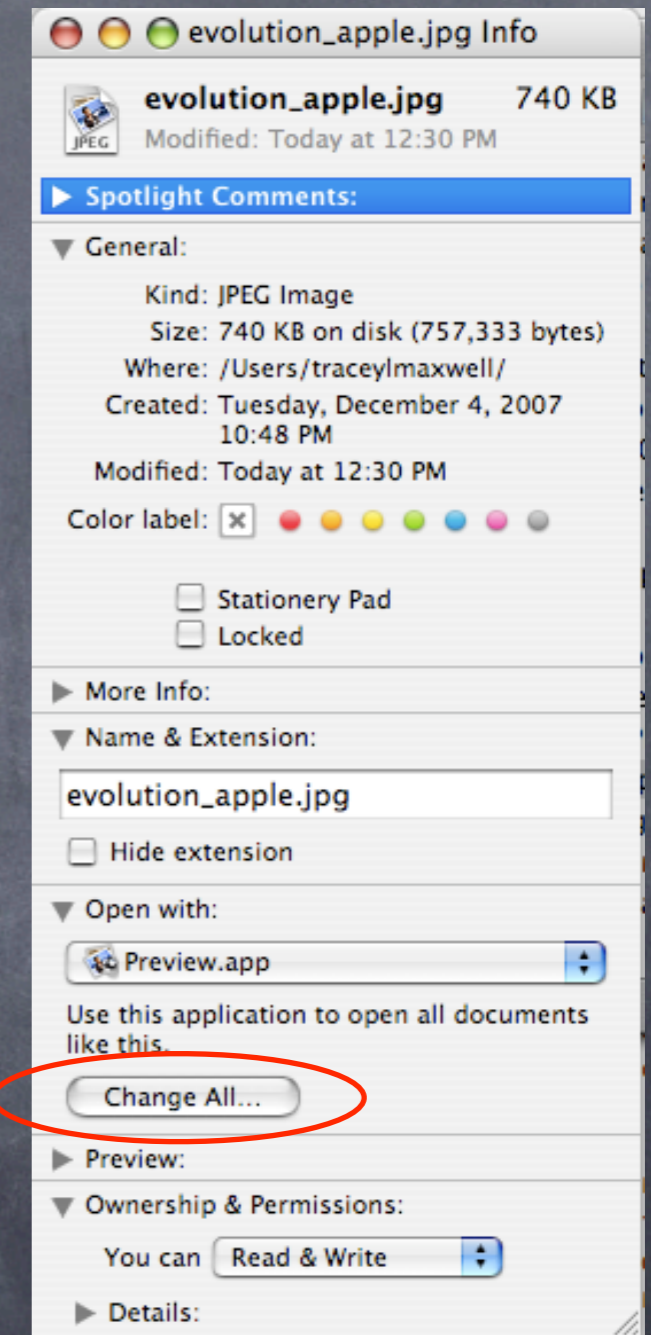
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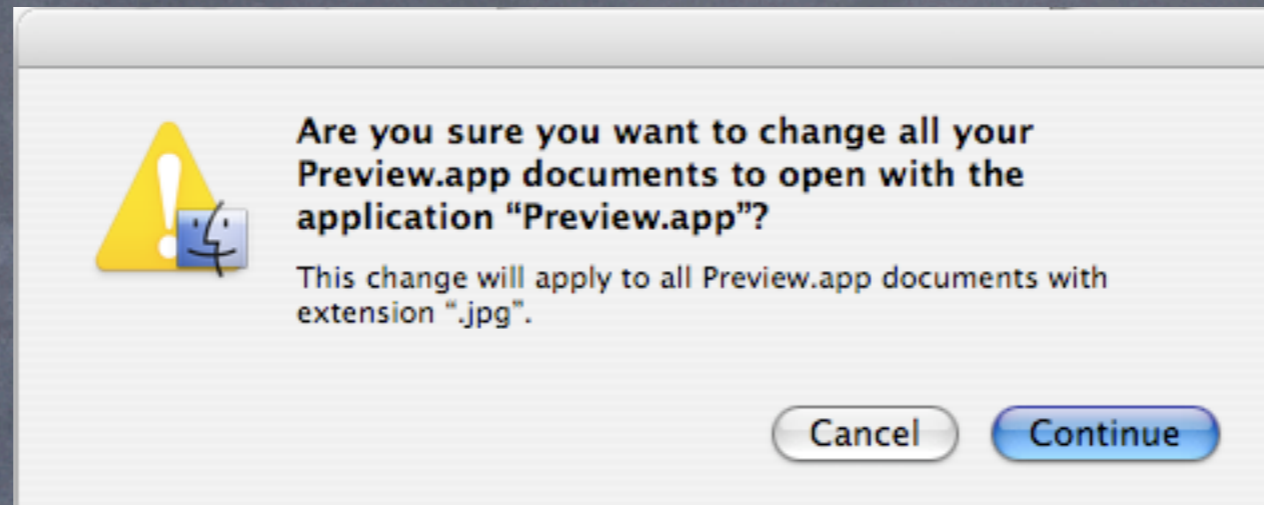
OK, I want all files like this to open in...

- Warning: This is a major step. You could make changes to how your Mac operates that cause unintended, negative consequences ... like Mac OS X not running correctly after doing it.

- If you are sure you know what you are doing, and you accept the risk, then here's how to do it. In fact, you almost did it before.

Here's how to change which app opens all files of a certain type

- Select the file, then go back into its Get Info box and go back to the Open With... section.

- See the button labeled "Change All..."? Click on it. Don't worry, you get one last chance to escape.
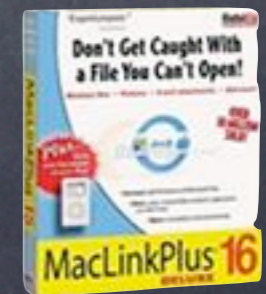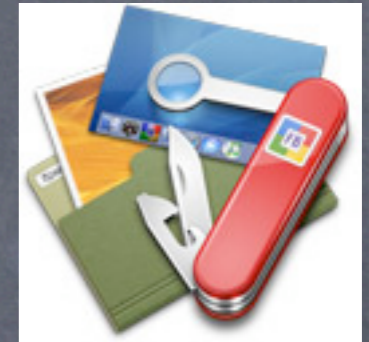
Your last chance to escape!

Are you sure you want to change all your Preview.app documents to open with the application "Preview.app"?

This change will apply to all Preview.app documents with extension ".jpg".

Cancel   Continue

- You must click "Continue" to make the change permanent.

- If you are not an administrative user, you will be asked to enter an administrative password to get permission to continue.

Alternatives

- Instead of using Apple's all-or-nothing approach, try a shareware utility called File Buddy, which will alter characteristics of sets of files, like all files in a folder.

- Here's the link: http://www.skytag.com/filebuddy/

- Another alternative? MacLinkPlus (yes, that old warhorse is still around). Here's the link: http://www.dataviz.com/products/maclinkplus/

That's all, folks!

Thank you for your time and attention.