How to not run as an administrator

A lot of programs and computer configuration options are tied to a user account. Switching to a completely new user account will likely result in a lot of wasted time reconfiguring applications and moving data around. Instead, we recommend that you demote your existing account to a standard user and create a new administrative account to use when needed. The exact steps for this process for OS X 10.6.5 are listed below. The steps should be very similar for other versions of the operating system.

1. Open System Preferences
2. Go to Accounts
3. Click on the “+” to add a new account
4. Enter an account name and password, and click on Create Account
5. Check “Allow user to administer the computer”
6. Select the account listed under “My Account”
7. Uncheck “Allow user to administer the computer”
8. Restart the computer for changes to take effect.

There is also a video walkthrough of this process available if any of the above steps are unclear.

Scenarios

After following the above set of steps, some tasks may not work right away because administrative access is required. Anytime administrative access is required, a dialog box will open prompting you to authenticate with an administrative account. An example of how this process works with an application install is shown below.

Install a new application

For developers

With the setup above, managing services within a terminal session requires that you first su to an administrative user, and then use sudo from within that session. This is because only administrators are allowed to run sudo by default. To allow your non-administrative account to run sudo instead, you simply need to add your account to the sudoers file. For increased security, restrict your non-administrative account to only be able to use sudo with the specific applications and commands necessary.