Basic Tips

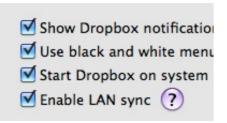
Invite Others to Get Free Space — [tips list]

One of the easiest and most used tips is taking advantage of Dropbox's referral system. For every friend you get to join Dropbox using your referral link, you'll get 250 MB of additional storage space. Dropbox will give you up to 8 GB 10 GB of additional free storage space and up to 16 GB for pro accounts!



Invite Friends

Local Area Network Sync — [tips list]



LAN Sync

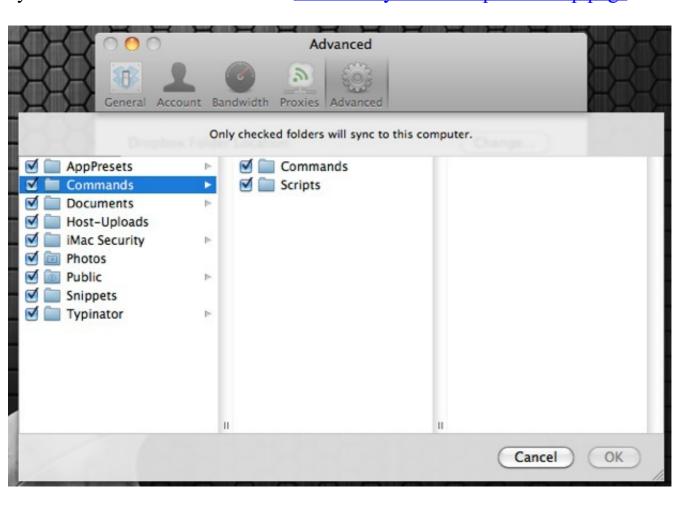
Local Area Network (LAN) data sync is a relatively new feature in Dropbox but might save you a significant amount of bandwidth if several of your computers live on the same network or "visit home" frequently. Make sure you have *Enable LAN Sync* checked in Dropbox's preferences to use this feature. When your computers are connected to the same network, they'll sync files that way rather than both uploading *and* downloading from the web.

You can read more about LAN sync via Dropbox's help page.

Selective Folder Sync — [tips list]

The Dropbox team is currently working on adding selective sync to the stable Dropbox app release, but if you'd like to try this feature out now, just download the <u>experimental build</u>.

Once you've downloaded the newer version of Dropbox, navigate to its *Preferences*, then the *Advanced* tab. Click *Selective Sync...* and select the folders you do or don't want synced. You can read more about <u>selective sync via Dropbox's help page</u>.



Selective Sync

Read Books on Your Mobile — [tips list]

A popular use for Dropbox is actually reading eBooks on mobile phones such as the iPhone. Of course this isn't limited to PDF eBooks as you can view many more file types. Install the app for your respective mobile device, then simply access the files you'd like to view. See Mac.AppStorm's guide to using Dropbox on the iPhone for more information.

You can also favorite the files you'd like to be able to access offline!

Force Download Files __ /tips list/

If you'd like to share a file with someone else or perhaps download one of your own files

rather than view it directly in the browser (like a PDF), you can simply add "?dl=1" to the end of a public link. Doing so will force the file to download rather than attempt to be viewed within your browser.

Distribute Apps — [tips list]

Because Dropbox uses such a smart filesystem, duplicate files aren't uploaded to the server if they're already there, not just for your account but for the whole Dropbox filesystem. For example, if you want to upload a disk image of a new app you just found named "MyNewApp.dmg" and someone else has already uploaded that app, it will be instantly available on the server and won't be uploaded from your computer.

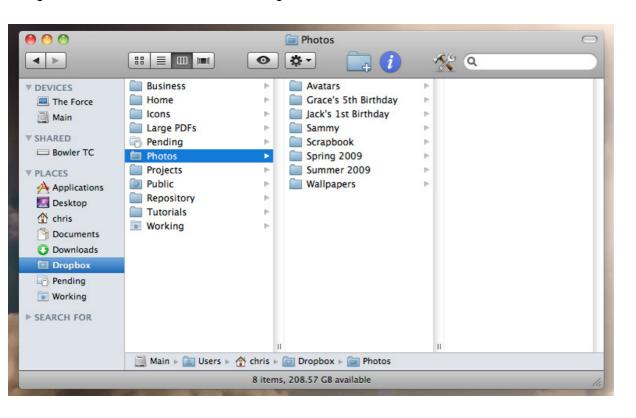
This is great because many of the disk images you're likely to want synced for installation on your other computers have already been uploaded. The disk images will immediately sync and download on your other computers, ready for you to install.

Advanced Tips

Share Photo Galleries — [tips list]

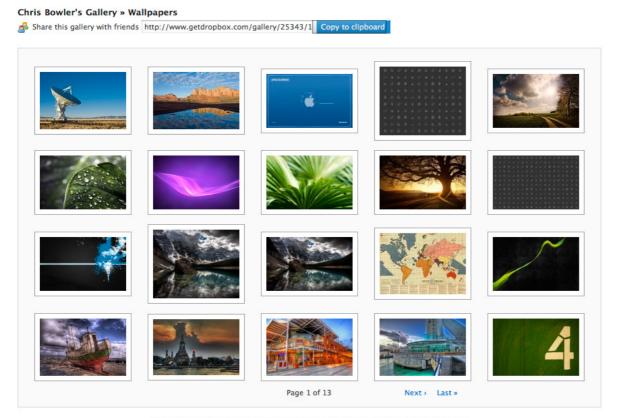
There are already many tools out there for sharing photos with your family abroad, but Dropbox is another good solution. It's definitely one of the easiest to use.

Rather than taking a long time to upload files to a remote service, you can simply drag files from your computer or favourite photo management application (iPhoto, Picasa etc.) and drop them in a folder under Dropbox's Photo folder.



Creating galleries is as easy as creating some folders.

Dropbox automatically creates a gallery that is available for people to see. All you need to do is right click on a folder of images and copy the public gallery link. Email the link to those you want to share with.



Chris Bowler made this gallery simply by dropping files into a folder on their computer.

Get your own public gallery with Dropbox.

The simple, yet elegant galleries are a nice touch.

Shown here is a nice example of this usage. It's the gallery of the folder where I save all my wallpaper files. You can see it in action (and take anything you like) from here: my wallpapers.

Consolidate Your iTunes Library — [tips list]



Keep your music up to date on all your machines.

Rather than sharing your iTunes library all your family's computers by keeping the files on a

server or shared hard drive, simply keep it in your Dropbox folder. Ensure that your Dropbox account is setup on all the desired computers and then access the same library with all the same meta data (ratings, genres, album covers etc.) from everywhere.

Of course, unless your music library is very small, this option would require one of the paid accounts. 2 GBs of storage is not enough to hold most music collections.

Password Synchronization — [tips list]



Do the same with all your passwords.

Similar to the iTunes tip, you can do the same thing with your passwords. If you use a tool like <u>1Password</u> or <u>RoboForm</u>, you know how nice it is to have all of your passwords in one place.

But when working on your spouse's machine or your computer at work, suddenly you have to remember all those passwords again.

Use Dropbox to sync the application on multiple computers.

Create Your Own Digital Scrapbook — [tips list]

Because Dropbox sits right within the operating system and has nice web galleries for images, it's a good solution for a digital scrapbook. Similar to a service like <u>Ember</u>, simply snap images and websites that inspire and copy them to a folder under the Photos in Dropbox.

Due to the nice thumbnails, you've got a great digital scrapbook that is available on the web and accessible via mobile devices as well. Click here for a great illustration of this idea.

Keep Your Firefox Profile in Sync — [tips list]

One thing I always disliked doing was trying to keep my Firefox items in sync across multiple computers. I've tried other solutions like <u>Xmarks</u>, but the easiest fix is to use Dropbox.

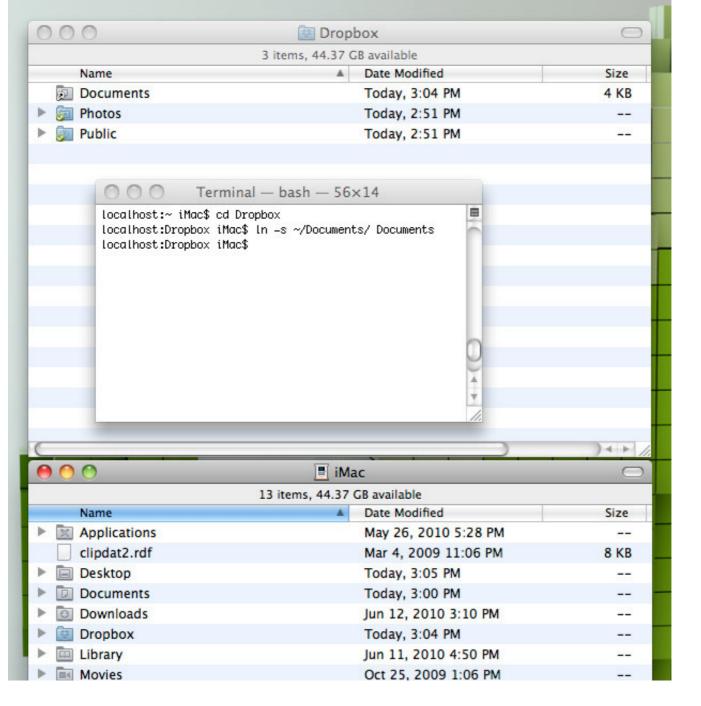
<u>This way</u> everything is synced — bookmarks, themes and extensions. Set up the browser the way you want it on one computer and enjoy that configuration on all your machines.

Use Dropbox As Your Documents Folder — [tips list]

A simple "trick" but a great one for sure. Many people use their documents folder to store and access some of their most frequently used files, often times the most important too. Many friends and family seem to miss this directory during backups — somehow. Setting your Documents directory to be located in your Dropbox directory will keep all your files safe and secure, not to mention synchronized with other computers you may use frequently.

Mac

To do this in OS X, open Terminal and navigate to your Dropbox directory (Type: cd Dropbox). You'll now need to create a symbolic link to your Documents directory (Type: ln-s ~/Documents/ Documents). That's it! You're done! You can see in the screenshot below, a new "directory" appears with a black arrow on the icon. This is to indicate that it is a symbolic link, which we've set to point to your Documents directory. Dropbox will now begin synchronizing the files within that directory.



Create OS X Symbolic Link to Documents Directory

Windows

In Windows Vista or Windows 7, right click on your "My Documents" folder and select the *Location* tab. Next, click *Move*... and proceed to selecting the location of your Dropbox directory. Simple!



Changing the location of the My Documents directory.

Sync Your iTunes Library Across Multiple Computers — [tips list]

As both an iTunes user and someone who uses multiple computers, it's frustrating to keep multiple systems (such as a laptop and desktop) with the same iTunes library. Dropbox makes easy work of that though. Start by moving your iTunes library to a folder within your Dropbox directory.

Next, start iTunes holding shift (Win) or option (Mac), which will force iTunes to let you create or choose a library. Select *Choose Library*... and proceed to selecting the location of your library (now located within your Dropbox directory).



Choose Library

If you have a large iTunes library you'll likely need a larger Dropbox subscription plan.

Theft Recovery — [tips list]

If you're worried about your computer being stolen, you can easily use Dropbox to perform silent reconnaissance in the even it is stolen. You'll then have a greater chance of retrieving your stolen computer.

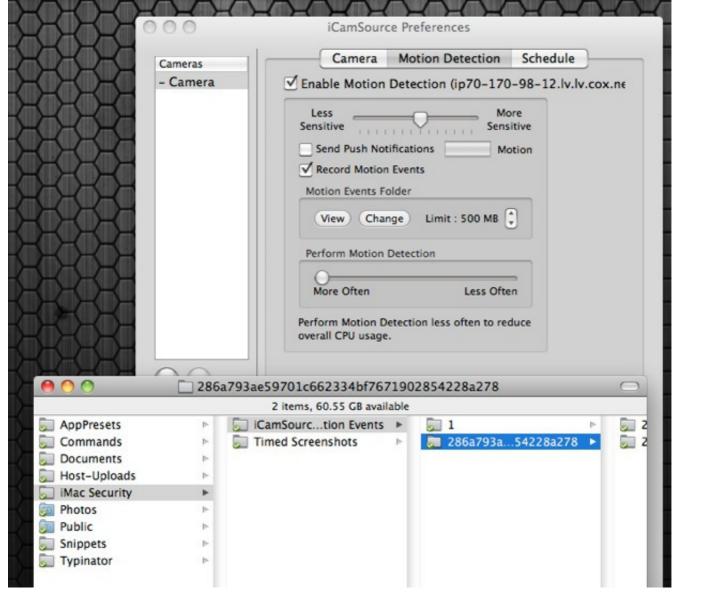
To do this you'll need to install a keylogger and/or screenshot applications and set the applications to log the data they collect to your Dropbox directory. If your computer *is* stolen then you'll be able to monitor every key they push and even collect screenshots of whatever they might be doing. This would greatly increase the chances of recovering your computer.

You could alternately setup a security application that would use the computer's web camera to intermittently capture pictures, storing them in your Dropbox directory. You would then get a mugshot of your computer's thief! (see next tip) Also, <u>using tip #24</u>, you can obtain additional information with other apps via remote control using Hazel.

Home/Office Security — [tips list]

Taking the last tip a step further, you can install web cameras around your home or office and set them set to capture images at desired intervals. Set those images to be stored in your Dropbox directory so you can quickly see if anything is happening.

I've setup iCam, an app that uses my computer's web camera to detect motion; once it does it will begin taking snapshots which are stored in my Dropbox directory. My iPhone is notified that my computer has detected motion and I can quickly view the new snapshots (or a live video feed with the iCam iPhone app) and notify the police if necessary.

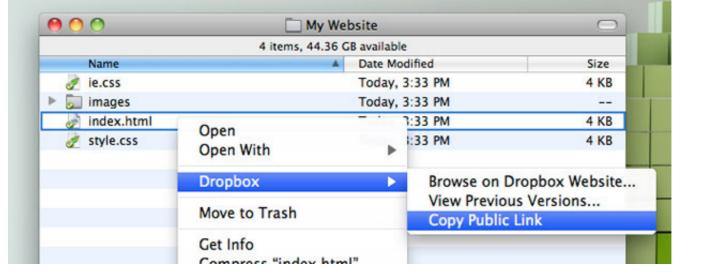


iCam Motion Detection

It's certainly a cheaper alternative than expensive security systems that do the same thing!

Website/File Hosting and Sharing — [tips list]

If you're a web designer, you might really appreciate this one. Using Dropbox, you can easily share images and other files with its public URL feature. But, you can also share full websites (in flat HTML/CSS) for purposes such as client proofing or maybe just showing of your new project.



Public URL

PHP Dropbox Uploader — [tips list]

So, you store your files on your Dropbox but many other people you know might not be using Dropbox yet still want to send you files somehow. With the PHP Dropbox Uploader you can add a file upload form to your website to allow your visitors to upload files directly to your Dropbox account.

Multiple Dropbox Instances — [tips list]

You might already be using Dropbox for personal use but maybe you need another instance of Dropbox to access another account for some reason. Maybe one for work and one for personal?

- Multiple Dropbox Instances on UNIX Systems (Linux or OS X)
- <u>Using Dropboxen for Multiple Dropbox Instances on Windows Systems</u>

Making Dropbox Portable — [tips list]

If you're not always on the same computer while you're at school, work or elsewhere (maybe a coffee shop?), you could access Dropbox's web interface — or you could just install <u>DropboxPortable</u> on your USB flash drive. Once you pop your flash drive into a computer your files will be synced. Access your files as necessary and the changes will be synced for access again elsewhere. Just be sure your files have finished syncing before unplugging the flash drive.

Sync Your iCal Calendar — [tips list]

You could pay \$99 per year for a MobileMe account, or you could just use Dropbox to sync your iCal Calendar just as easily.

From your primary computer you'll need to open Terminal and enter the following, which

will move your iCal Calendars folder into your Dropbox folder.

```
mv ~/Library/Calendars ~/Dropbox/
```

Next you'll need to tell iCal where to look for the calendars using the following, which creates a symbolic link to your calendars (on Dropbox) for iCal to access.

```
ln -s ~/Dropbox/Calendars/ ~/Library/Calendars
```

All that's left to do is setup any additional computers to access the calendars now stored on Dropbox. To do so, simply enter the above line on your other Macs, again creating symbolic links for iCal to access your calendars.

Dropbox needs to be running on all the computers you want to sync iCal with.

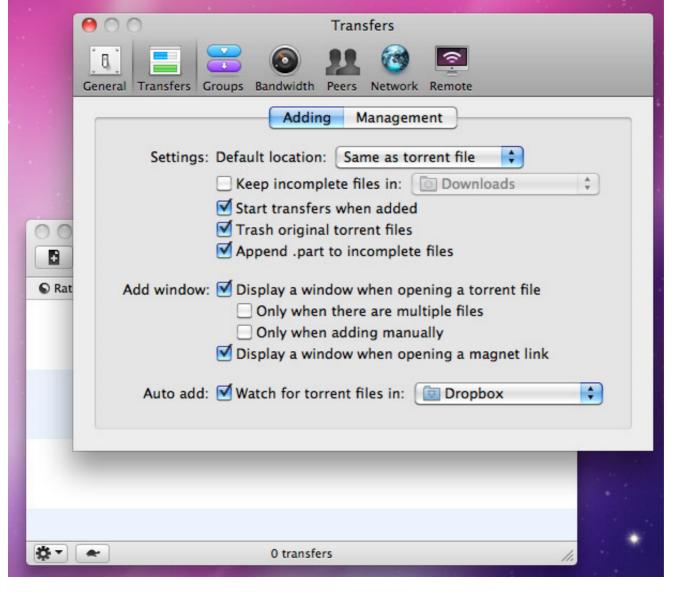
Using Dropbox & Eye-Fi for Instant Image Viewing — [tips list]

You might've heard of Eye-Fi memory cards with built in Wi-Fi that allow you to snap pictures and have them automatically uploaded to your computer — directly from your camera. You can set your Eye-Fi upload directory on your computer to be located within your Dropbox directory, which would then allow you to snap pictures with your camera and immediately view them on your mobile phone or computer.

Sync .torrent Files and Auto-Start Downloads — [tips list]

One of the most popular uses for Dropbox, submitted by you guys, was to sync .torrent files from one system to another, which would then automatically download them. Those of you not already doing this might be wondering how this is accomplished, well here's how.

You need to first setup a BitTorrent client capable of automatically loading .torrent files from a specified directory. Snag a major client (BitTorrent, Transmission, uTorrent, Vuze) and you'll be good. Once you've setup a capable BitTorrent client, you'll need to set it to watch for torrent files in a specified directory. I've selected the main Dropbox directory in the screenshot below but you may want to specify a sub-directory.



Transmission Autostart Downloads

Your client may be a little different but they'll all have similar settings. Note that I've also selected the option to delete the original torrent files once they're no longer needed. Now you'll be able to start your .torrent downloads at home while you're at work, school or elsewhere.

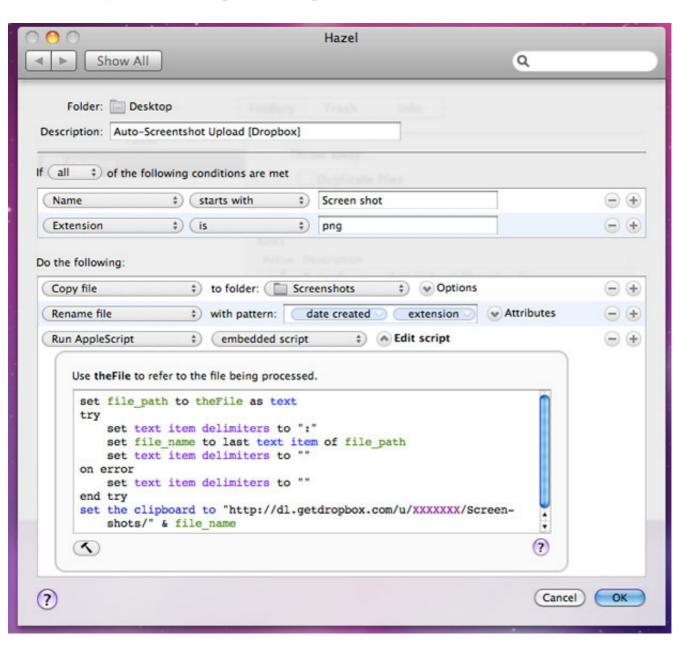
Automatic Screenshot Sharing with Hazel [Mac] — [tips list]

Perhaps my favorite new trick with Dropbox is combining the power of <u>Hazel</u> to create some very helpful workflows. I share screenshots *frequently* in my day to day workflow and a simple Hazel rule will copy screenshots I create into a folder I specify within Dropbox, then copy the public URL to my clipboard to quickly share with others.

You'll need to download Hazel if you haven't already and create a new rule. If there's a Windows equivalent of Hazel, let us know in the comments and I'll update this section with the Windows version as well.

Once you're in Hazel, create a new rule. I've named mine **Auto-Screenshot Upload** [**Dropbox**]. Create two conditions that will recognize the screenshot(s) on your desktop, followed by three actions.

- 1. Copy the file to the *Screenshots* directory, located within your Dropbox's *Public* directory.
- 2. Rename the file with a custom pattern (I've set the date created and extension).
- 3. Run an AppleScript that will copy the uploaded screenshot URL to your clipboard. You'll need to replace the user ID in the URL with your unique ID (replace the "XXXXXXXX" with your ID). To find your ID, view a file's public URL; your user ID directly follows "https://dl.dropbox.com/u/".



Auto-Upload Screenshots with Hazel

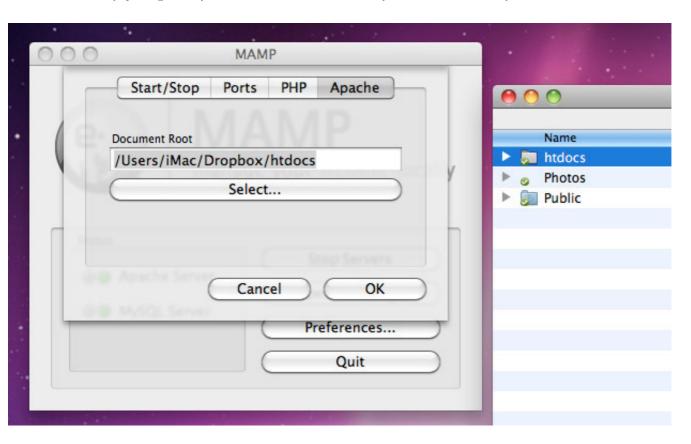
You can easily use Hazel to monitor a Dropbox directory and execute tasks based on files you add to Dropbox remotely!

Sync XAMPP/MAMP Directories for Testing and Development — [tips list]

If you're a web developer, you likely work with multiple platforms. I personally develop for the web on a Mac, but testing is also done on Windows. Many developers use apps like XAMPP and MAMP for development but it takes extra time to copy over your testing files from one system to another. Let Dropbox do the work and sync your files while you do more

important things.

To accomplish this, simply change the location of XAMPP and MAMP's default root directory to be located within your Dropbox directory. As you work on your files on one system, the changes will be accessible on other systems you've set this up for. You'll be able to easily jump on your Windows/Mac system and test your new website.



MAMP and XAMPP

A big benefit to a setup like this is you'll always have access to your development files via Dropbox's web interface.

Version Control — [tips list]

One of Dropbox's greatest features is version history. With a free account you'll get 30 days of file version history, plenty for most people. If that's not enough though, you can get unlimited file version history with paid accounts. You'll never have to worry about losing progress again!



Version History

OneNote Sync & Collaboration [Win] — [tips list]

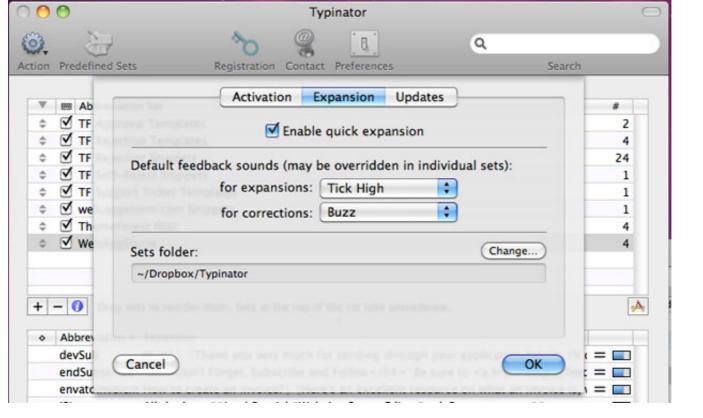
The OneNote users out there will be happy to hear it's a snap to sync and collaborate on OneNote notebooks using Dropbox. To do this, create a new notebook, set the folder location within Dropbox, set the sharing type to be used with multiple people in a shared folder on "this computer". You'll want to select this option so OneNote will display changes made from any computer on the fly.

With this setup, you can move from computer to computer (that has this setup) and edit your OneNote notebook(s), even if you leave the app open on another computer. You could also use this setup to allow others to collaborate with you live.

Synchronize Text Expansion Snippets — [tips list]

Among the plethora of apps people use Dropbox to sync settings, resources and files, my most recent favorite has to be synchronizing text expansion snippets. I recently took a short trip away from home and shortly after leaving I realized I hadn't copied over my text expansion snippets to my laptop. I was horrified because I rely on these to speed up productivity quite a bit. With Dropbox that's no longer an issue.

I'm using Typinator but many other text expansion apps can be easily setup with Dropbox. Simply change the location of your libraries to a location within Dropbox. Some, like TextExpander, even support it natively!



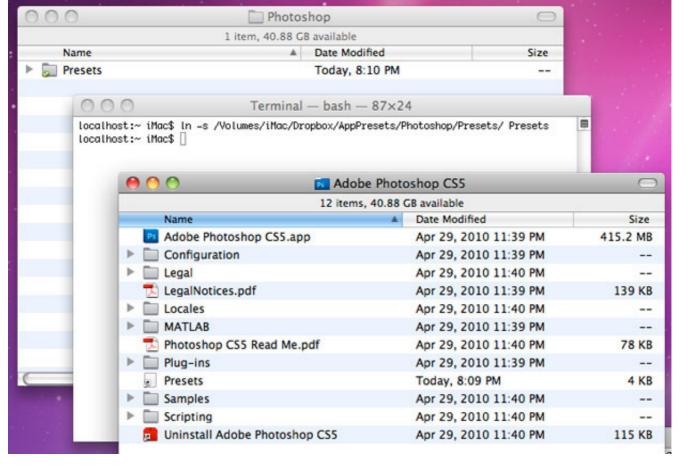
Typinator and Dropbox

Synchronize Design/Development Resources (Photoshop Presets, etc.) —

[tips list]

Many of us are designers and/or web developers, and as such we use a huge amount of varying resources over time. Working on multiple systems, especially in distant locations, can make it a pain to keep all those resources always accessible.

Throw Dropbox into the mix and you can easily keep your graphics, app preferences and other resources in sync between your systems. For example, many of us use Photoshop and likely piles of related presets. To keep these in sync between systems, simply copy your Photoshop Presets directory over to your Dropbox directory and create a symbolic link to it named "Presets". Place this symbolic link in your Photoshop app directory in place of the original Presets directory.

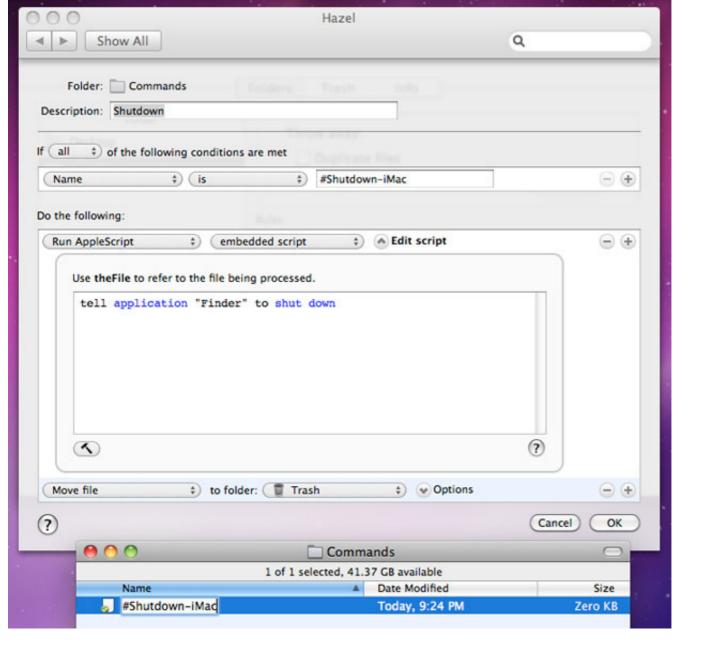


Presets Sync

Now when you make changes (like adding or removing brushes), they'll be identical on all the systems you've set this up on. You'll have to repeat the setup process for each app you want this to work for but it only takes a second!

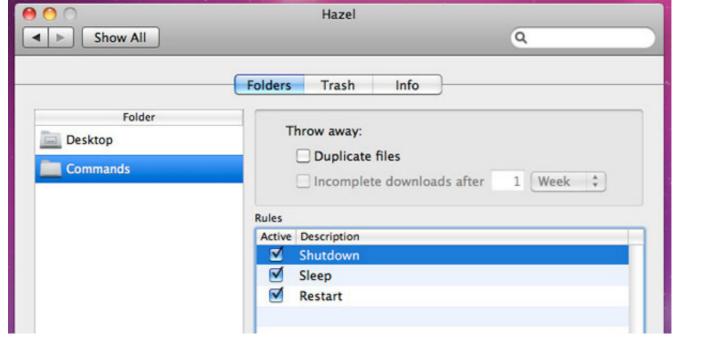
Shutdown, Restart or Sleep Your Computer with Hazel [Mac] — [tips list]

You can easily control your Mac remotely using Hazel, Dropbox and a touch of AppleScript. Create a new Hazel directory to monitor and create a new Rule. I've named this rule **Shutdown**.



Control Computer with Hazel - Shutdown

I've set Hazel to recognize a specific file name, run an AppleScript, then delete the file once complete. The next time I forget to shutdown or sleep your computer, or maybe I'll just need to restart it remotely, I can simply drop a file with a specific name to accomplish this. I've created three rules for each action.



Computer Action Rules

Remotely Control Your Computer with Hazel [Mac] — [tips list]

Taking the previous tip a little further, we can control more aspects of our Mac such as collecting system profile information, getting your computer's current IP, opening or closing apps, etc. Follow the same steps as described in the previous tip and use the following scripts to accomplish each task.

If you have some great AppleScripts that would work great with a combination of Dropbox and Hazel, let us know in the comments below. Thanks!

Collect System Profile Information

The following AppleScript will collect your system's full profile information, including IP address and other internet/network settings. A text file with the information will be created, named with the current date and time. If your computer is stolen and you have this setup with Hazel, you can collect valuable information that might help retrieve your computer.

You should replace "~/Dropbox/iMac\\ Security/iMac_System_Profile_" with the directory you'd like the text file to be stored in and the first part of the name (in this case "iMac System Profile", the rest being a date stamp.

```
set curDate to (do shell script "date +%Y-%m-%d")
set curTime to (do shell script "date +%I.%M.%S.%p")

do shell script "/usr/sbin/system_profiler > ~/Dropbox/iMac\\
Security/iMac_System_Profile_" & curDate & "_" & curTime & ".txt"
```

Get Current IP

If you need to collect the current IP of your home computer, you can use the following AppleScript to find it and save it to a text file.

You should replace "~/Dropbox/iMac\\ Security/myip_" with the directory you'd like the text file to be stored in and the first part of the name (in this case "iMac_System_Profile_", the rest being a date stamp.

```
set curDate to (do shell script "date +%Y-%m-%d")
set curTime to (do shell script "date +%I.%M.%S.%p")
do shell script "curl --silent http://checkip.dyndns.org > ~/Dropbox/iMac\\
Security/myip_" & curDate & "_" & curTime & ".txt"
```

Open Any Application

Want to remotely launch an app on your home computer? The following script will pull the name of an app that you choose from a text file using the process mentioned above with Hazel. You can launch any app so long as you know its name.

For example, mine is setup such that when Hazel recognizes a new text file starting with "#Open_" within a specific Dropbox directory, it will take the second part of the text file name and launch the appropriate app. To launch Safari, I would use a text file named "#Open Safari".

```
set file_path to theFile as text
try
    set text item delimiters to ":"
    set file_name to last text item of file_path
    set text item delimiters to ""
on error
    set text item delimiters to ""
end try
set theApp to text ((offset of "_" in file_name) + 1) thru -1 of file_name
tell application theApp to activate
```

Quit Any Running Application

Forget to close an app on your home computer before leaving? The following script will pull the name of an app that you choose from a text file using the process mentioned above with Hazel. You can quit any app so long as you know its name.

For example, mine is setup such that when Hazel recognizes a new text file starting with "#Quit_" within a specific Dropbox directory, it will take the second part of the text file name and quit the appropriate app. To quit Safari, I would use a text file named "#Quit_Safari".

```
set file_path to theFile as text
try

    set text item delimiters to ":"
    set file_name to last text item of file_path
    set text item delimiters to ""
```

Take Screenshot

To take a single screenshot, use the following AppleScript.

You should replace "~/Desktop/Screen\\ shot\\" with the directory and name you'd like the image file to be stored in and the first part of the name (in this case "Screen\\ shot\\", the rest being a date stamp. This script works for dual screen screenshots.

```
set curDate to (do shell script "date +%Y-%m-%d")
set curTime to (do shell script "date +%I.%M.%S.%p")

set loc to "~/Desktop/Screen\\ shot\\ "
set f to ".png"
set ss1 to loc & curDate & "\\ at\\ " & curTime & f
set ss2 to loc & curDate & "\\ at\\ " & curTime & "_2" & f
do shell script "screencapture " & ss1 & " " & ss2
```

Take Timed Screenshots with 30 second Delay

Maybe someone stole your computer and you'd like to take screenshots every 30 seconds for a certain period of time? Use the following AppleScript to do so. You can change the delay time between repeat runs, as well as the number of times the script should re-run itself.

You should replace "~/Dropbox/iMac\\ Security/Timed\\ Screenshots/Screen\\ shot\\ " with the directory and name you'd like the image file to be stored in and the first part of the name (in this case "Screen\\ shot\\ ", the rest being a date stamp. This script works for dual screen screenshots.

```
repeat 2 times
    set curDate to (do shell script "date +%Y-%m-%d")
    set curTime to (do shell script "date +%I.%M.%S.%p")

set loc to "~/Dropbox/iMac\\ Security/Timed\\ Screenshots/Screen\\
shot\\ "
    set f to ".png"
    set ss1 to loc & curDate & "\\ at\\ " & curTime & f
    set ss2 to loc & curDate & "\\ at\\ " & curTime & "_2" & f
    do shell script "screencapture " & ss1 & " " & ss2
    delay (30) -- delay 30 seconds
end repeat
```

Public Link to Avatar For Quick Changes — [tips list]

If you frequent several forums or other sites that you use an avatar with, you'll likely know

it can be a giant pain to change your avatar on each site. Put your avatar in your Dropbox Public directory and use the public link to it on the sites you frequently visit. Any time you want to change your avatar you can easily swap it out in Dropbox and it'll change across all your sites.

Synchronize Chat Logs — [tips list]

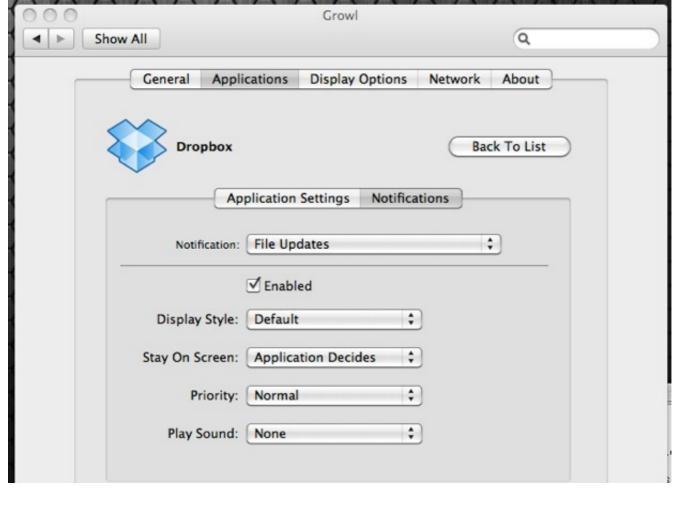
If you're a big chatter you'll likely want to access your chat logs on whichever system you might be using. I personally use Skype in my day to day workflow so I'll use that as an example here.

Before you start, make sure Skype isn't running. Next, you'll need to move Skype's "main" chat history files into the Dropbox directory. Then create a symbolic link to your Skype history files (now in the Dropbox directory) and place that in place of the files you just moved. On your additional systems you'll then remove the Application Support directory for Skype and replace it with a symbolic link to the files now in Dropbox.

It's not recommended to run Skype in multiple locations at once, which can cause file conflicts.

File Edit Notifications with Growl — [tips list]

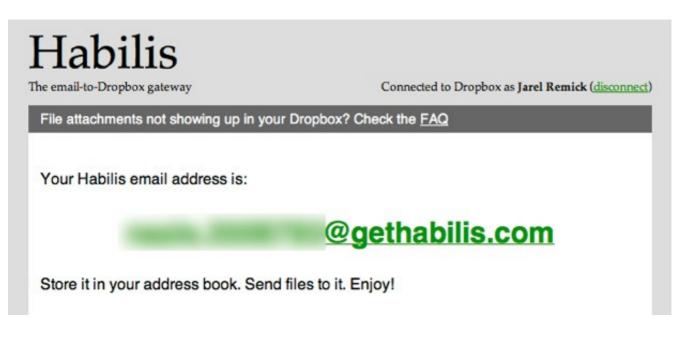
If you use Dropbox to collaborate on files frequently and you're a <u>Growl user</u>, you can quickly setup Growl and Dropbox to notify you when files have been changed. It's an easy way to be notified when your colleges are working on files within Dropbox.



Dropbox Growl

Send Files to Dropbox via Email — [tips list]

Want to email files into your Dropbox account? Use http://gethabilis.com or http://sendtodropbox.com to setup a free, unique email address that's connected to your Dropbox account. When you email attachments via the custom email address you're assigned, the files will be uploaded to your Dropbox account.



Sync Clipboard — [tips list]

Moving from one computer to another can be a pain if there is information on the prior computer's clipboard that you needed. Thanks to Dropbox, however, if you use a clipboard management app you can keep your clipboard data synced between computers for quick and easy access at any time!

I use iClip to manage my clipboard data so I've created a symbolic link to iClip's data so the clips will now be synced with Dropbox.

In terminal, move iClip's database directory to your Dropbox directory, then create a symbolic link to the directory in the Preferences directory.

```
mv ~/Library/Preferences/iClip\ Clippings.clipdb ~/Dropbox/
ln -s ~/Dropbox/iClip\ Clippings.clipdb/ ~/Library/Preferences/iClip\
Clippings.clipdb
```

On additional computers, just replace the the iClip database directory with the symbolic link (the last command in terminal).

Sync Coda Books, Plugins & Site Previews — [tips list]

If you use <u>Coda</u>, a popular coding app, on multiple computers, you can sync Coda's books, Plug-ins and Site Previews across computers.

In terminal, move the Coda application support directory into your Dropbox directory, then create a symbolic link to the directory in the Application Support directory.

```
mv ~/Library/Application\ Support/Coda ~/Dropbox/
ln -s ~/Dropbox/Coda/ ~/Library/Application\ Support/Coda
```

On additional computers, just replace the Coda application support directory with the symbolic link (the last command in terminal).

Share Yours!

I know there are still more tips and tricks being used with Dropbox, so if you have any that we don't have listed here, let us know in the comments below and we'll add them to the list. Thanks!



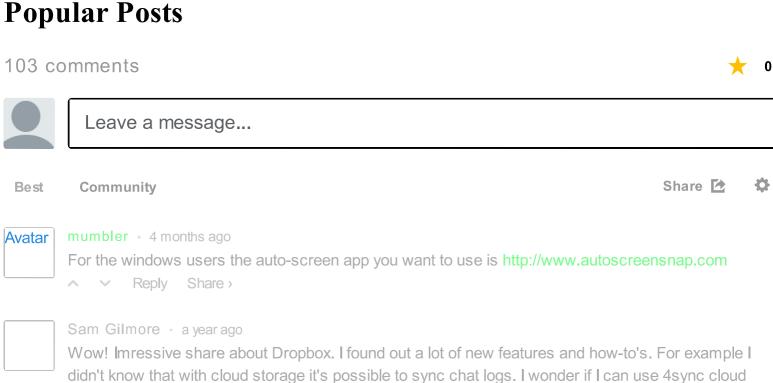
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