


## Appendix for Chapter 16: Enabling the Root Account

As noted in *Mac OS X Leopard: The Missing Manual*, there’s one secret account that has complete freedom to change, move, or totally ruin everything on your Mac. It’s a tool of last resort for system administrators (and of first resort for hackers).

There’s very little reason to enable the root account anymore, though; anything you can do as the root account holder (the *superuser*), you can also do with the *sudo* command in Terminal far more simply.

Still, if you’re a system-customization freak who enjoys poking around in Unix commands at the lowest levels of the operating system, here’s how to enable the root account. (There are actually several ways, but this is the technique most people use.)

1. **In your Applications→Utilities folder, open the Directory Utility program. Click the  in the lower-left corner of its screen.**

A dialog box asks you for an administrator’s name and password. After all, you wouldn’t want ordinary underlings fooling around with the superuser account.

2. **Type your name and password, and then click OK.**

You’re in. (If you’re not an administrator, then you probably shouldn’t be using the root account.)

3. **Choose Edit→Enable Root User.**

If this is the first time you’ve performed this particular surgery, you’ll be asked to “enter a new password for the root user”.

4. **Type the password in both of the bottom Password boxes. Click OK.**

Your work is done here.

5. **Quit Directory Utility.**

You’ve just brought the dormant root account to life.

6. **Log out (or click the Fast User Switching menu and choose Login Window). Log in as *root*.**

That is, when the login screen appears, click Other User (a choice that magically appears once you’ve turned on the root account). In the first text box, type *root*. In the second, type the password you made up in step 4. Click Log In.

That’s it—you arrive at the desktop, where no matter what you do, no error messages regarding access privileges or ownership will interrupt the proceedings. In the words of

every movie hero’s sidekick, “be careful out there.”

When you’re finished going about your business as a root user, immediately log out again. It’s important to rule out the possibility that some clueless or malicious person might wander up to the Mac while you’re still logged in as the superuser.

In fact, if you don’t anticipate needing your superuser powers again soon, consider turning off the root account altogether. (Just repeat steps 1 and 2 above. In step 3, choose Edit→Disable Root User.)