

HOW TO CONFIGURE YOUR MAC'S FIREWALL

Every Mac ships with a built-in [firewall](#) - a service that can be configured to disallow information from entering your Mac. But what is a firewall, and why do you need to use it on your Mac?

Firewall Crash Course

Every time you request information from the Internet, such as a web page or email message, your Mac sends [data packets](#) to request the information. Servers receive the packets, and then send other packets back to your Mac. This all happens in a matter of seconds. Once your Mac has reassembled the packets, you'll see something, like an email message or web page.

A firewall can help prevent *bad packets* from entering your Mac. Hackers love to run automated applications that can scan thousands of computers (including your Mac) for [open ports](#) that can be exploited. To ensure that random individuals do not gain unauthorized access to your Mac, you should enable Mac OS X's built-in firewall. It will close your Mac's open ports and disallow random network scans.

Turning on and Configuring the Mac OS X Firewall

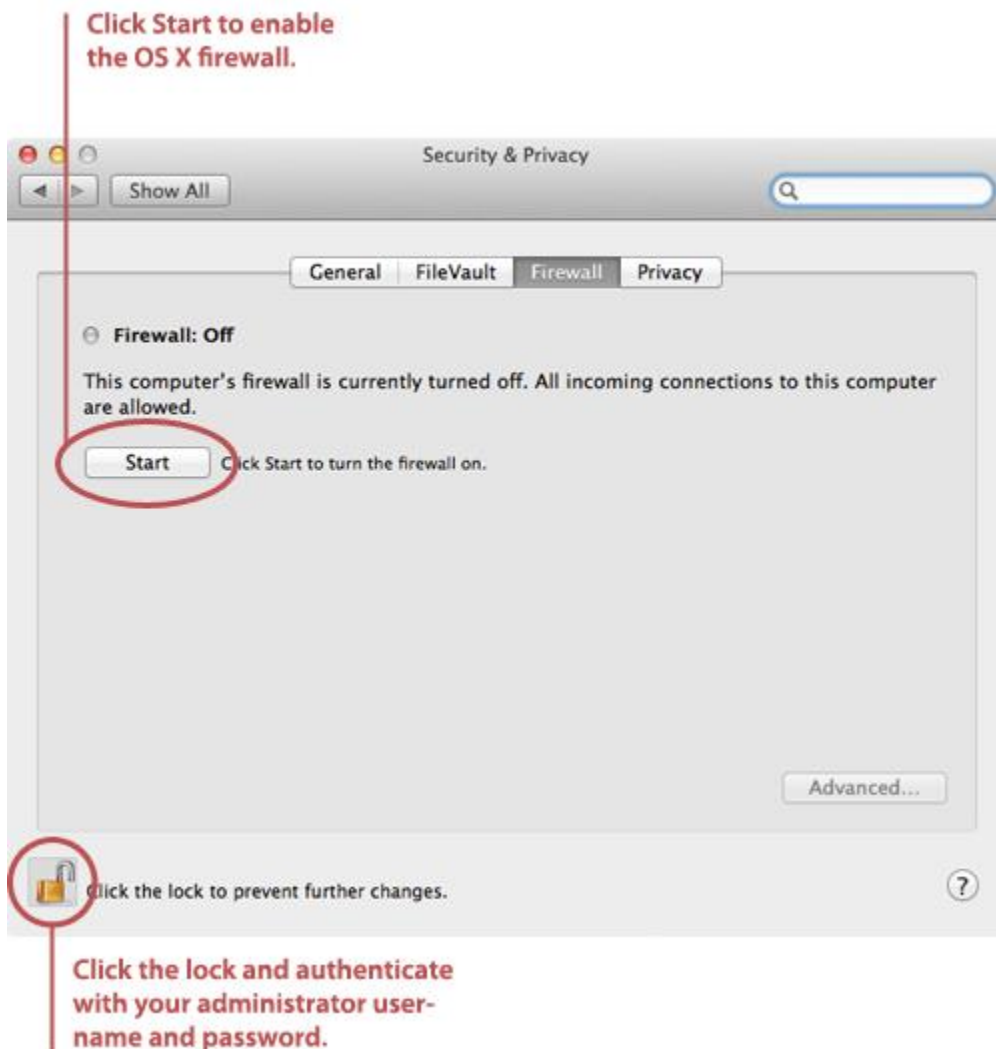
Here's how to turn on and configure your Mac's built-in firewall:

1. From the Apple menu, select **System Preferences**. The window shown below appears.



2. Select **Security & Privacy**.

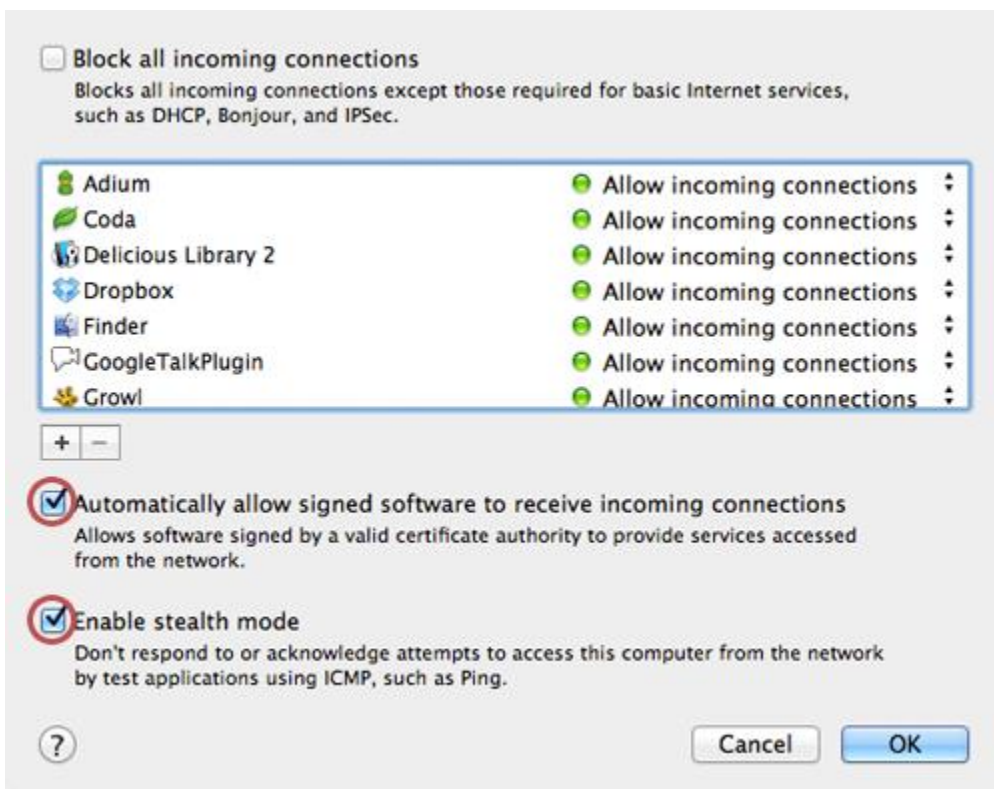
3. Click the **Firewall** tab.
4. Click the lock icon and authenticate with your administrator username and password. The window shown below appears.



5. Click **Start**. The firewall turns on - you'll know it's enabled when you see the green light and the **Firewall: On** message, as shown below.



6. Click **Advanced**. The window shown below appears.



7. Select the **Automatically allow signed software to receive incoming connections** checkbox. This allows the applications on your Mac to communicate with the outside world.
8. Select the **Enable stealth mode** checkbox. This prevents your Mac from responding to port scans and ping requests.
9. Click **OK** to close the Advanced settings.
10. Close System Preferences. Your Mac is now protected by the built-in firewall!

Final Thoughts

There are several third-party firewall applications available for Macs, but we don't recommend that you purchase them. Mac OS X's firewall utilizes the same industry-standard UNIX technologies that are used to protect web servers. If you're paranoid and want a beefier firewall, [bone up on your UNIX skills](#) and write some custom rules for your firewall. Leave the third-party firewall applications on the shelf, where they belong!

Source : <http://www.macinstruct.com/node/165>