

Macintosh Learning Center

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Laguna Woods Town Centre
Laguna Woods Village Community Center, 3rd floor
Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday thru Friday

Reviewing Fundamentals & Basics: Understanding and using an *alias*

The dictionary definition for the word “**alias**” includes: “*a false or assumed identity*”. In computing, “*it is an **alternative name** that will link to a file, folder or application, etc.*”

An **alias** is an empty icon that represents the real thing. You create an alias for convenience so you don’t have to go **find the original file** that may be stored several folders deep in its hierarchical order. Or, you can create several aliases, of the **same original file**, and place them in different folders for your easy access. You can make aliases of applications, forms, documents, folders, utilities, games, etc.

Here is how to **make an alias**... first step is to **highlight** any **original file icon** by doing a single click on it. Then **choose one** of these ways to produce the alias icon:



1. go to **File** menu, select **Make Alias**
2. press **command L** keys on the keyboard
3. place cursor over original icon, press/hold the **control** key, press mouse button, pop up menu appears, click on **Make Alias**
4. (*any icon showing in an open window*) place cursor over original icon, press/hold mouse button, hold down **command option** keys, then **drag icon** to another folder or the Desktop... next, release mouse button first and then release keys to produce the alias

Drag the alias icon to **wherever** you want to place it. **Rename** the title if you would like, it does not have to say “alias”. You can also change the **icon graphic**. These changes **will not** affect the original file **icon or title**.

But, you should understand that if you click on an alias icon to **open a file** (*or other item*), and then make **data changes**, those changes **will actually be made on the original file**.

Some related information you should know about the use of an alias:

- An alias is not a **duplicate** of a file. It is just a **link** to the original file.
- If you **trash** an alias, you **don’t delete** the original...the original is still stored on the HD.
- If you put an item into a **folder alias**, the item actually gets **put into** the original folder.
- You can **move** or **retitle** an alias. The Mac will still **find the original** and open it.
- Even if you move or retitle the **original file**, the alias can still find and open it.
- If you **trash the original** file, the Mac **does not automatically** delete any of the aliases you created for that file. When you double click an alias whose original has been trashed, you will get a message telling you the **original item cannot be found**.

You can usually identify an **alias** by looking for the **small arrow** clue in lower left corner of the icon. **original**  **alias** 

Nowadays, your new Mac comes with some aliases already factory installed. They do not have “alias” in the title, and they do not show the small alias arrow as a clue, however, they really are simply links to the **original icons** that are stored somewhere on your HD.

Examples of this are items appearing on the **Dock**, the Finder window **sidebar**, and the Finder window **toolbar** (*toolbar is like a 2nd Dock*).

