

There have been several changes to Onyx, the highly regarded (five stars in VersionTracker) Mac OS maintenance, optimization and system personalization tool, since we last discussed it about 2 years ago. (<http://www.ashmug.com/Page.asp?NavID=9>)

I run Onyx every few months as a "tune up", and whenever I have slow performance or unexpected behavior on my computer. It doesn't fix everything, but it cures many problems of this sort.

On the downside, it has gotten slower since the OS 10.4 (Tiger) version. The OS 10.5 (Leopard) and OS 10.6 (Snow Leopard) versions take a lot more time to run - a half an hour or more.

However, there is a lot more good news:

- It is simpler to use
- It does more
- Onyx Help has been expanded to include very clear descriptions of what each option does

After downloading and installing the appropriate version (<http://www.titanium.free.fr/pgs/english.html>), here is how to get started.

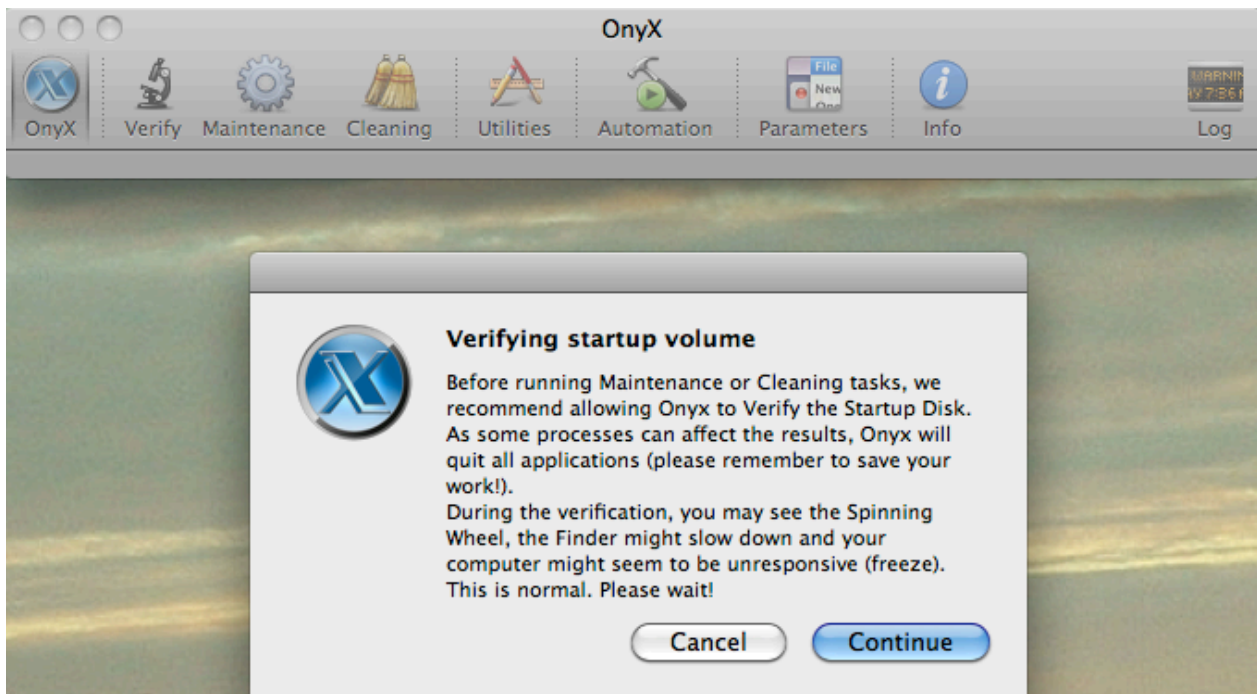
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When you launch Onyx, this is the first screen you will see.



S.M.A.R.T. stands for Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology. It is a sort of Check Engine Light for the hard drive. Not all hard drives have this technology, but click Continue anyway, it only takes a few seconds.

The next screen will be



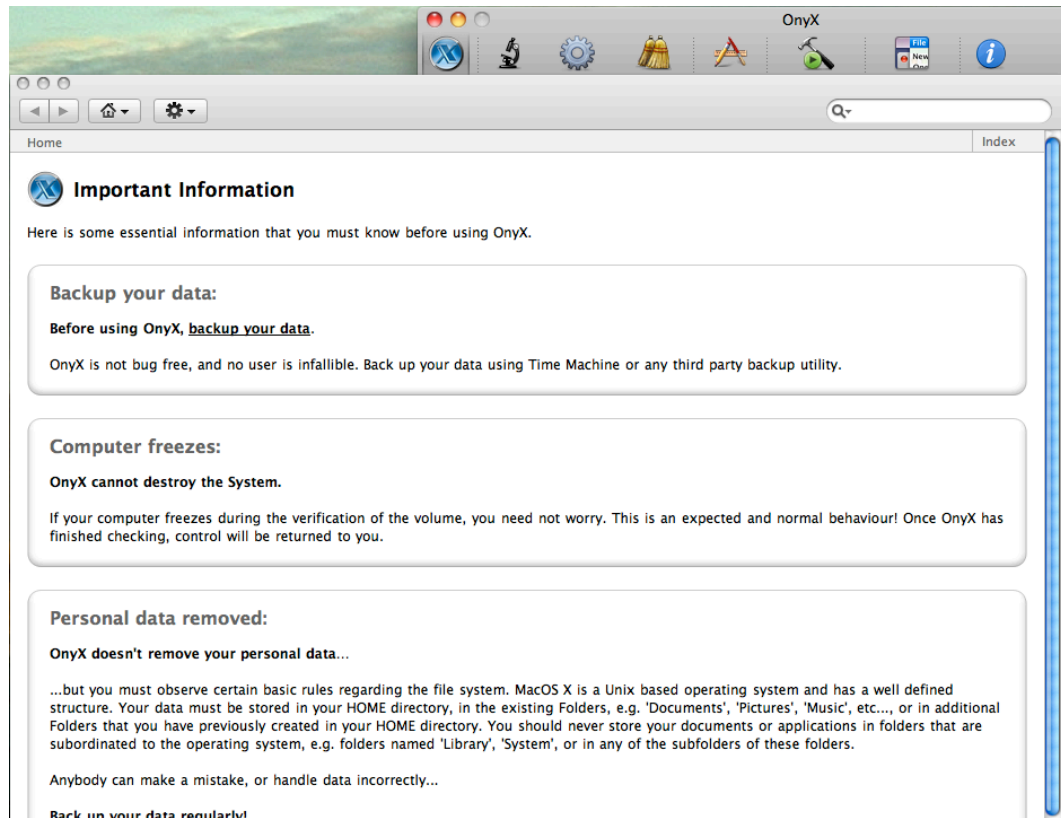
This may take up to a half an hour, but should be done. Note that onyx will quit all applications before verification, so save your work.

If Onyx finds a problem with your hard drive, it will give you instructions for repairing it. (Usually starting your computer from your system install DVD and running Disk First Aid.)

On the next screen you will have to enter your administrator password to continue.



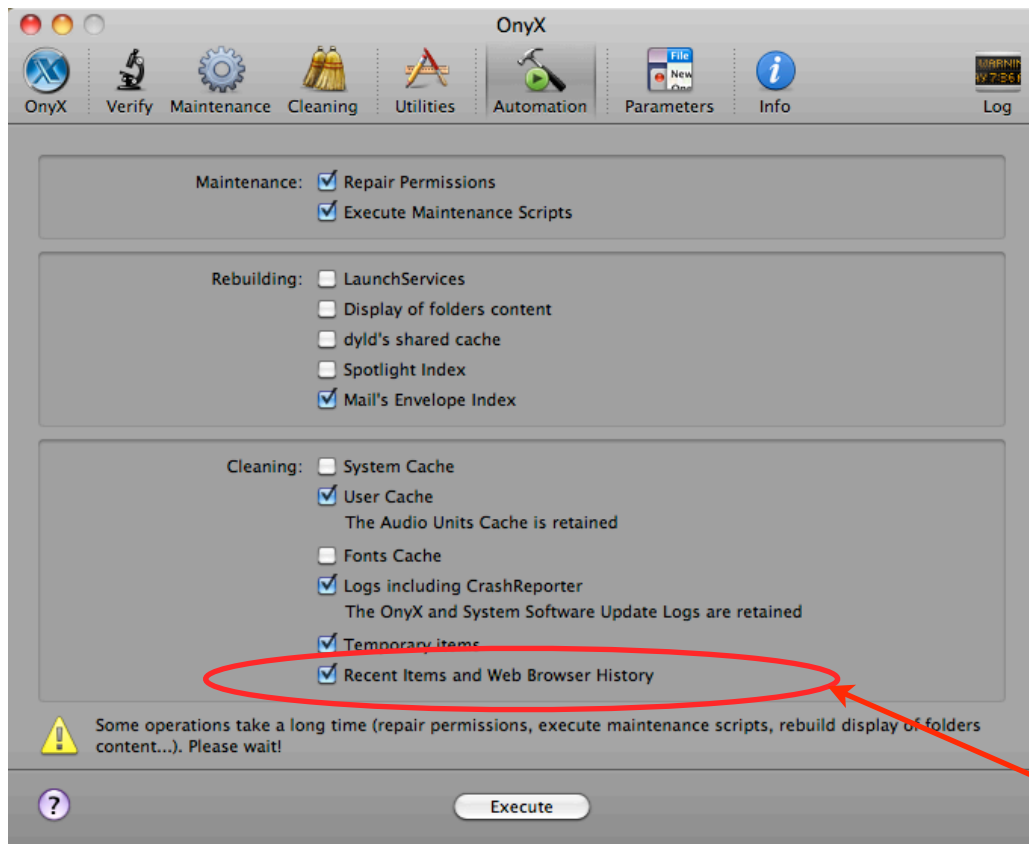
The next thing that will come up is the "Lawyer Screen" warning you to back up your data just in case something goes wrong, and describing some things that you should and shouldn't do, and things that Onyx can and can't do.



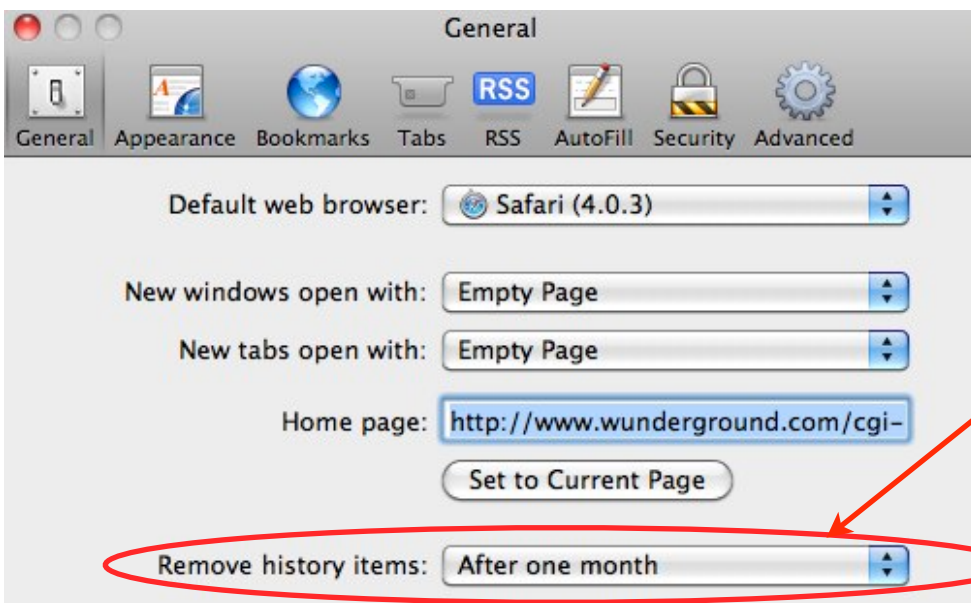
If you get tired of seeing this every time you run Onyx, this page also tells you how you can disable it in Onyx Preferences.

The next screen gets you to the main options screen which is similar to the one you got to directly in the previous versions of Onyx.

The good news here is that everything you need to do routinely is now included under Automation.

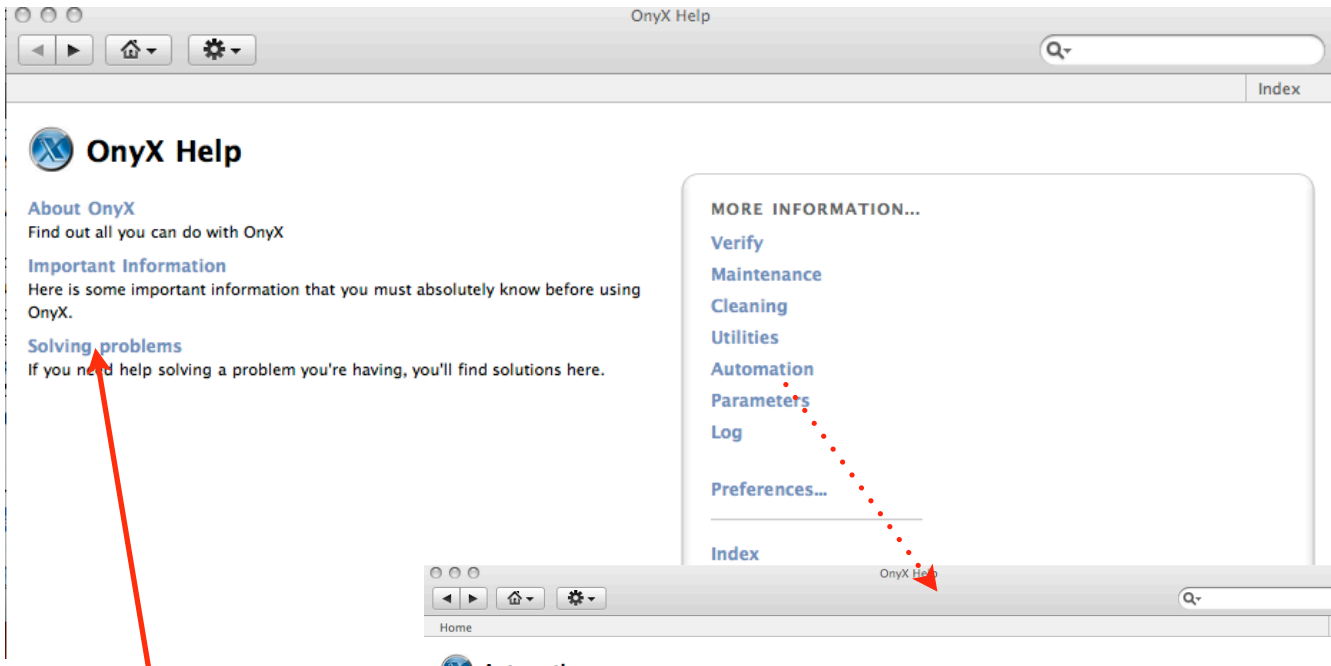


The functions shown above are the defaults, and are safe to use. Some of the others can have unintended consequences and you should read about them in Onyx Help (see p. 5) before using them.

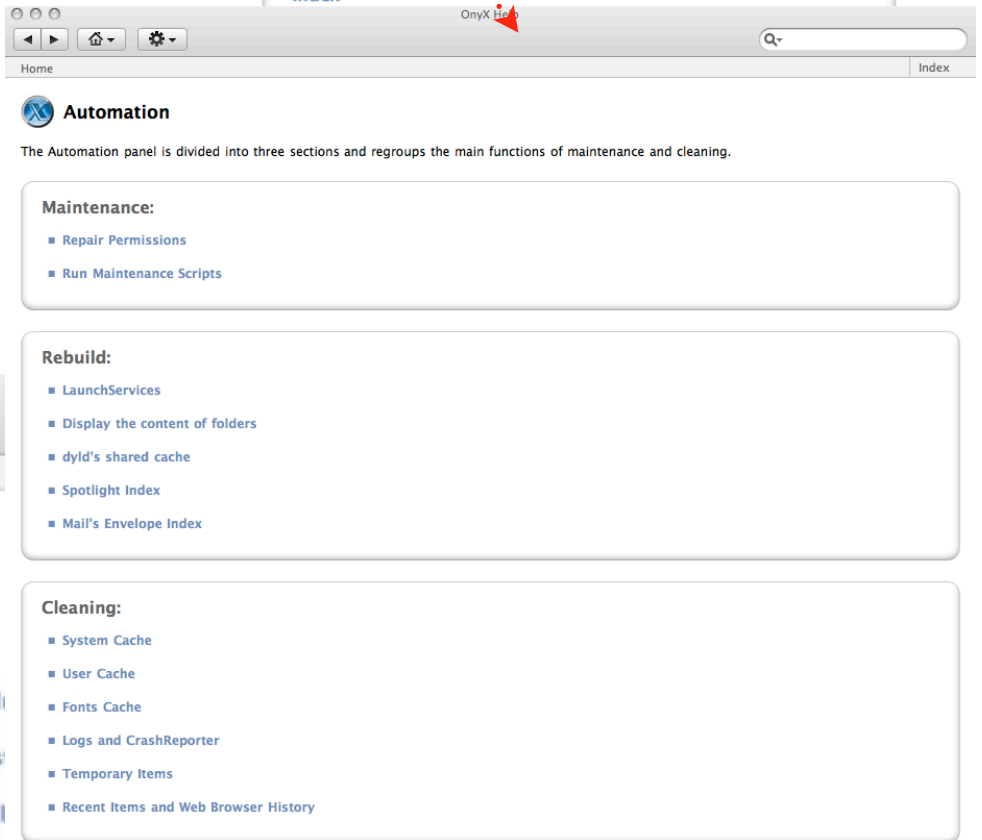
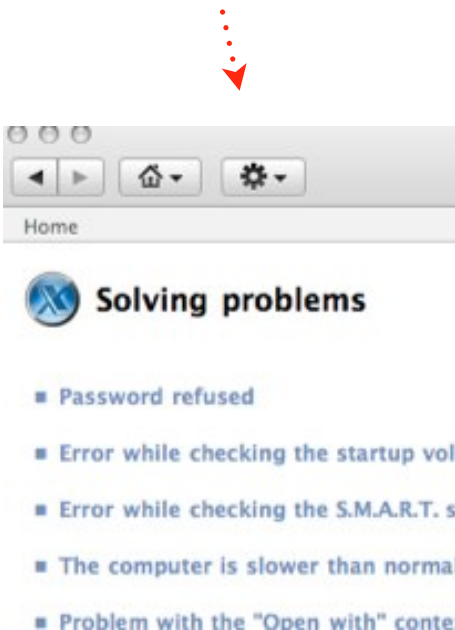


The only change I usually make is to uncheck "Recent items and Web Browser History". I find a better way for keeping it from getting too large and slowing down Safari is to go to Safari/Preferences/General and limit it to a month or less

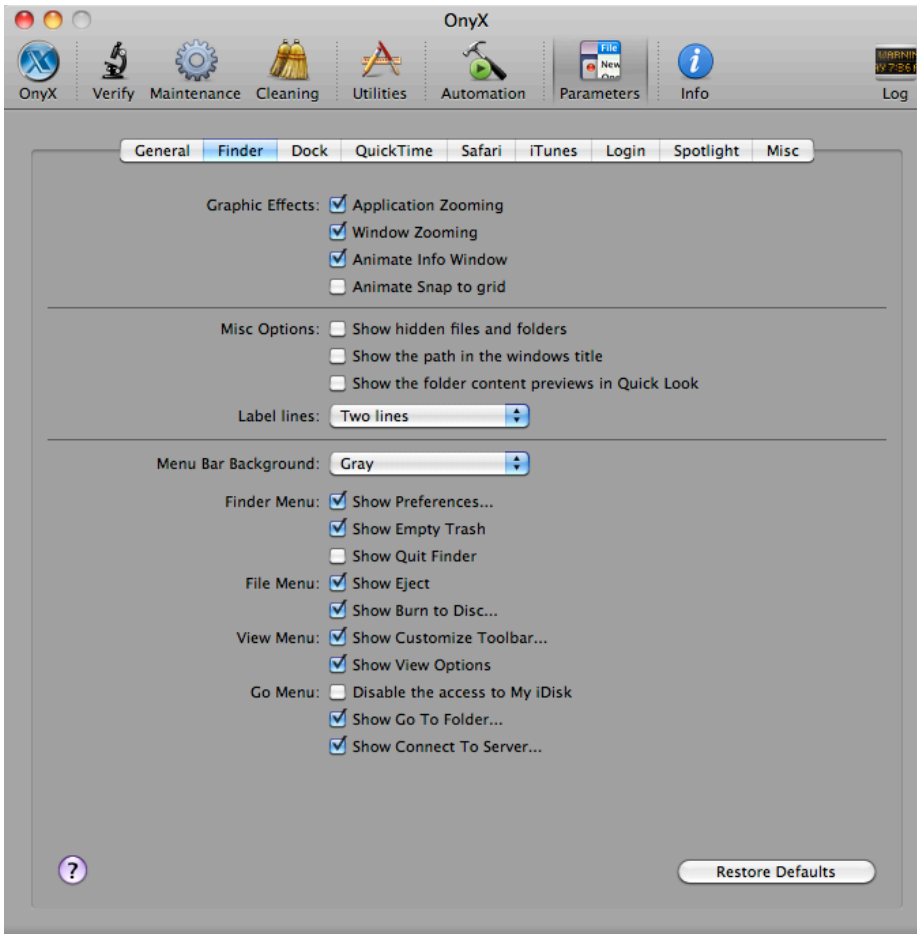
Generally there is no need to go into Cleaning or Maintenance unless you have a specific problem to address. **And unless you are a very advanced user, stay away from Utilities altogether!** There are many, many options in Cleaning and Maintenance, some of which can get you into trouble. If you are going to use any of them, consult the extensive Onyx Help first and be sure you know exactly what will happen. You can search in the Help search box for the specific item you are considering using.



There is also a useful section in Help for solving a few specific problems.



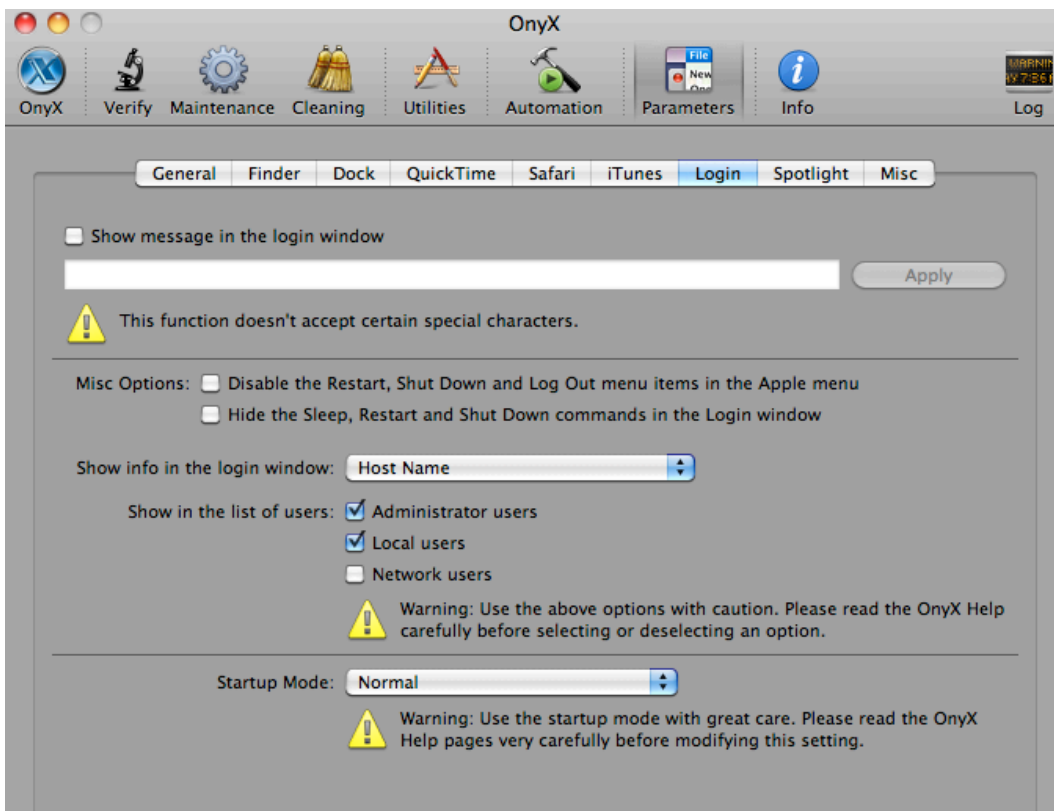
A very powerful part of Onyx is the Parameters section. This allows you to customize many, many appearance and function aspects of OS X and the applications Safari, Quicktime and iTunes.



Here are the options for the Finder, for example.

To get to this section quickly, just cancel the S.M.A.R.T. check and the hard drive verification when you start up Onyx.

Most of these will not get you into any trouble, that is, you can always just go back into Onyx and change them back if you don't like what they do.



The ones that can get you into trouble are flagged with a warning.