

# How to get Automator working with iTunes 10

An error in the way that Automator checks iTunes' version number breaks many existing workflows. Here's how to fix them.

**W**e've published a number of Automator workflows in the past, including some invaluable ones for iTunes. With the release of iTunes 10, a problem has emerged in the way Automator compares the minimum version requirement of an action. It misinterprets 10.0 or higher as insufficient to run the action.

The result is that many iTunes-related actions become unavailable, and your existing

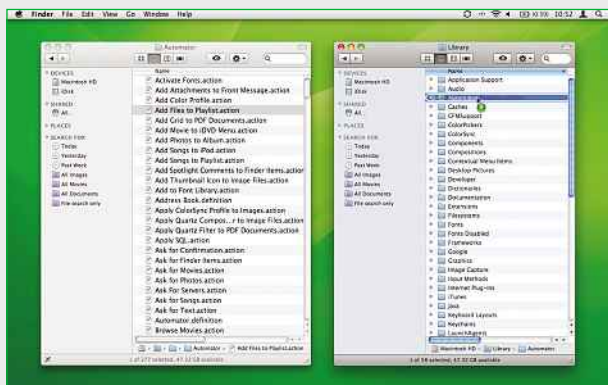
workflows will be rendered unusable. That includes the 'Add to iTunes as a Spoken Track' service that comes with Snow Leopard, and that now warns that a couple of required actions are missing.

Although this has slipped through Apple's net and there isn't an official fix as yet, you can remedy the situation with a little tinkering under the hood. Here's what you need to do to get those actions working with iTunes 10.



**Alan Stonebridge** spends his working life in front of Macs – and they've taken over his free time, too.

**Kit required** Property List Editor or TextWrangler



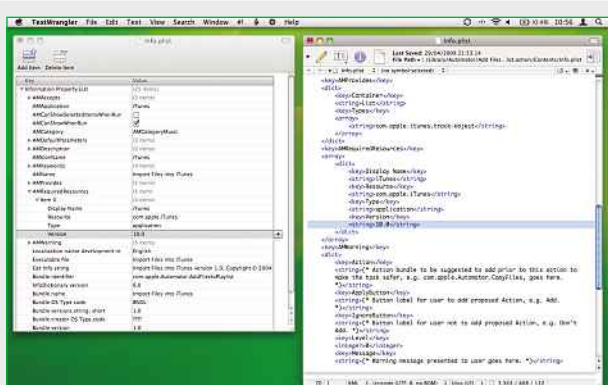
## 1. Make a copy of the required actions

Many of Automator's actions are stored in /System/Library/Automator. Select the ones you need and copy them to /Library/Automator. Don't alter the files where they are or remove them from that folder. Automator will ignore those and use the copies that you'll amend in a moment.



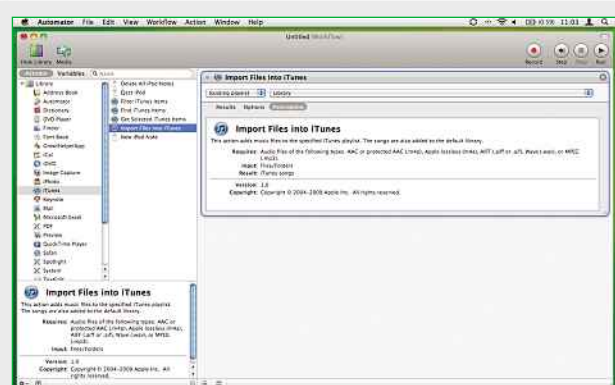
## 2. Open the file used for version checking

Right-click a copied action and choose Show Package Contents. Look inside the Contents folder for a file named Info.plist, which Automator uses to determine compatibility. It can be opened in Property List Editor, part of Apple's developer tools. It's just an XML file, so you can use TextWrangler (free from [bit.ly/twrangler](http://bit.ly/twrangler)), too.



## 3. Change the minimum version requirement

In Apple's tool, look for AMRequiredResources in the left column. Expand it and Item 0 within to find a key named Version. Double-click its value and change it to 10.0. In TextWrangler, search (Cmd-F) for AMRequiredResources. Look for the Version key below it. Change the value in the line that follows to 10.0. Save the file.

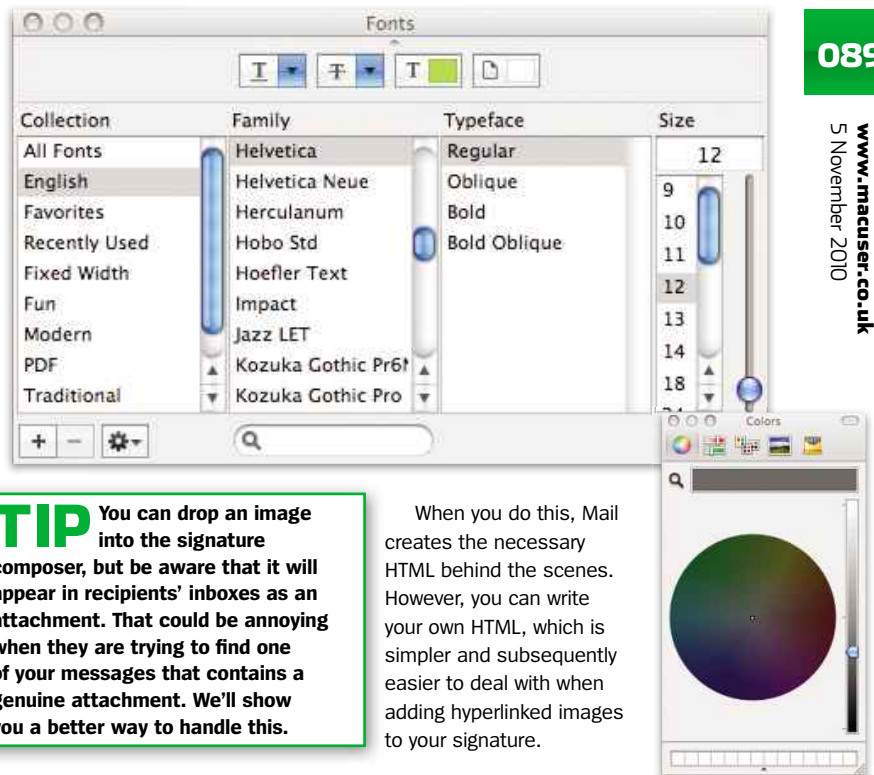


## 4. Lather, rinse, repeat as needed

Quit and restart Automator. It will ignore the original copy of the action and use the modified one in /Library/Automator. This will appear in the Music or iTunes category (depending on your chosen view). Repeat these steps for any other iTunes-related actions required by your workflow and you'll be back in business.

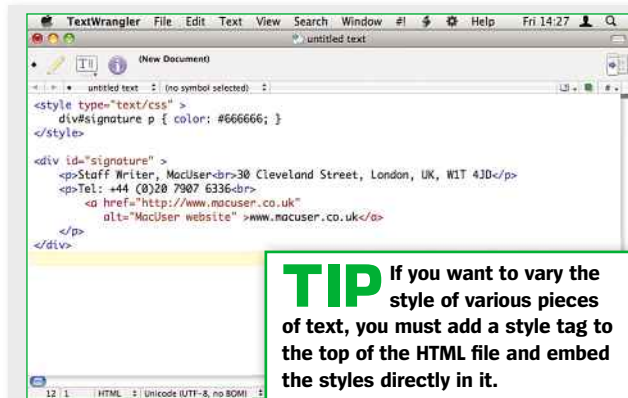
## 2. Ways to style up text

The only type-related setting under the Signatures tab forces the text to use your default email style. However, the regular Mac OS X shortcut for calling up the Fonts window (Cmd-T) works here, so you can change weights and colours of different parts of the signature. To turn any text into a link, select it, then choose Edit > Add Link and type the target address, including the 'http://' prefix.

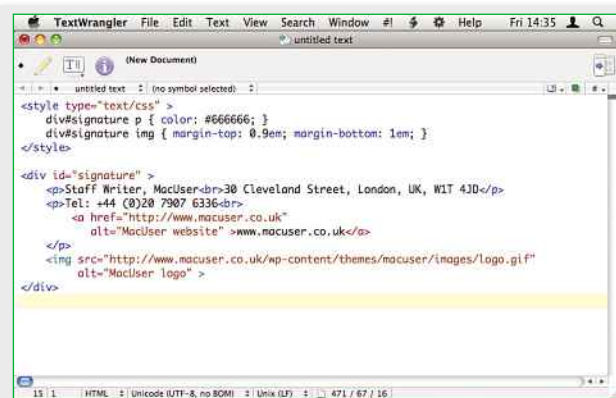


**TIP** You can drop an image into the signature composer, but be aware that it will appear in recipients' inboxes as an attachment. That could be annoying when they are trying to find one of your messages that contains a genuine attachment. We'll show you a better way to handle this.

When you do this, Mail creates the necessary HTML behind the scenes. However, you can write your own HTML, which is simpler and subsequently easier to deal with when adding hyperlinked images to your signature.



**TIP** If you want to vary the style of various pieces of text, you must add a style tag to the top of the HTML file and embed the styles directly in it.

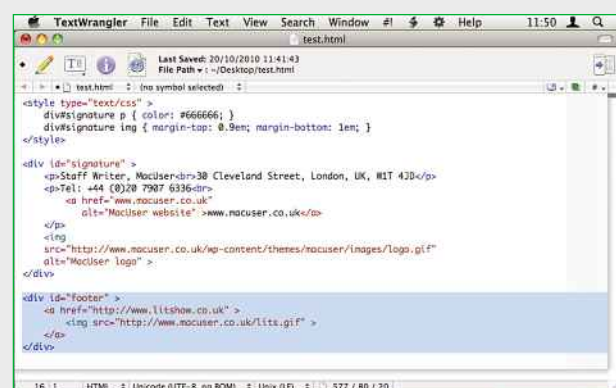


## 4 Add an image

All that's required to add an image to your signature is the regular `<img>` tag. After the top part of our signature, we've added a *MacUser* logo. We've referenced a copy that's stored online; email clients will pull the image from the web and display it in the message. This avoids the issue we mentioned earlier whereby messages appear to contain important attachments.

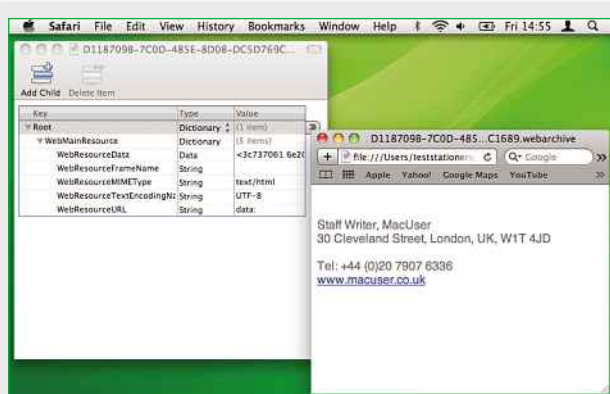
## 5. Add an image that links to the web

We're writing our own HTML because Mail is poor at adding links to images. Create another signature in Mail, drag an image into it, select the image and use Edit > Add Link as in Step 2, then send a message containing this signature to yourself. The markup that changes the pointer into a hand is unreliable – sometimes it will change, but often it won't, and recipients might pay no attention if it requires more than a click.



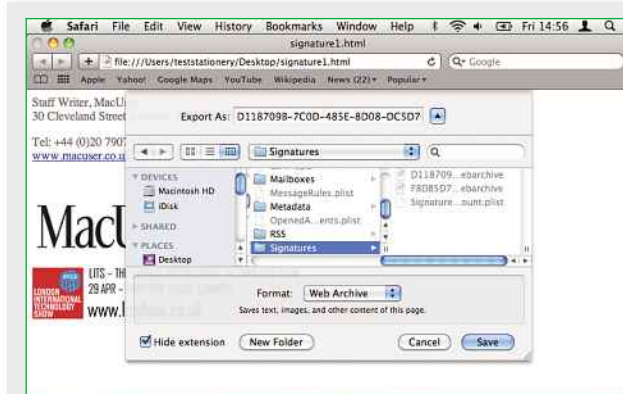
## 6. Hand-code a hyperlinked image

Here, we've picked up with the HTML we'd created by the end of Step 4. We've added another image below the signature and enclosed it in an anchor tag, just like we did for the text in Step 2. Save this file somewhere with the .html extension, then open it in Safari to check everything appears as you want it to.



### 7. The required format for signatures

Mail stores signatures as Web Archives. Browse to ~/Library/Mail/Signatures and you'll see one for the signature that you've already created within Mail. If you've got Apple's developer tools installed, opening this file in Property List Editor will reveal that it contains other information than just your plain HTML (shown above), which is why it's stored in the Web Archive format.



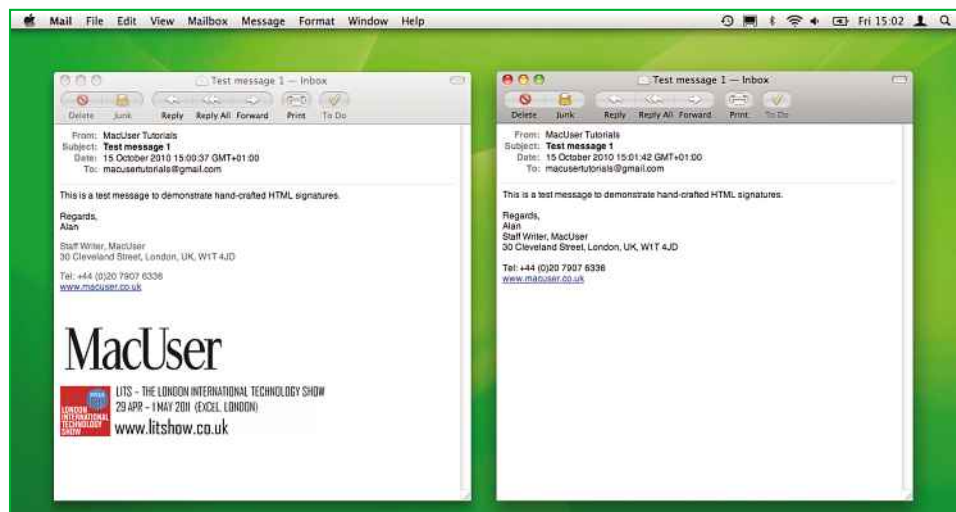
### 8. Convert your HTML to a Web Archive

Open the same Web Archive in Safari and you'll see the signature's contents. Now, open your HTML signature in Safari and choose File > Save As. In the next pane, set the format to Web Archive. If you've already set up several signatures in Mail, make sure you know which of the Web Archives in the Signatures folder relates to the one you're creating and overwrite it with this file.

### 9. Test your signature

Quit and reopen Mail, then create a message that includes your new signature. It may take a second or two for your web-hosted image to appear in it. Send this message to yourself. When it arrives, Mail should display the HTML version (the first message shown to the right).

It also includes a plain text version for mail clients that are set to display that format. To see how the message appears in them, choose View > Message > Plain Text Alternative. If you choose View > Message > Raw Source, you'll see how the message is structured to contain different messages for HTML and plain text email clients.



### 10. Add time and date information in text format

Another thing that's worth considering is adding dates and times of events shown in a graphic as text beneath the graphic, rather than in an alternative attribute, since that text might not be displayed by email clients that block images. The code on the bottom right shows how we've done this, with more of the same simple HTML tags.

This also makes it even easier for people to add things to their calendar, at least with intelligent email applications such as Apple's, which turn the text into a link to that date in iCal on the Mac (top right) and to the Calendar on iOS devices (bottom left) just by clicking or tapping.

