VNC Example OS X

**out of date**
This information applies to old versions of OS X. Use Screen Sharing instead on any modern version of OS X.

Tunneling the server over SSH may still be a good idea if you are feeling particularly cautious.

OS X 10.5

On newer macs running OS X 10.5 (Leopard):

- the built-in client/server encrypts passwords and keystrokes, and *can be set to encrypt everything*, so an SSH tunnel may not be necessary
- to turn on the vnc server, all you need to do is to enable *Screen Sharing* in System Preferences > Sharing, that turns on vnc.
- to launch the vnc client, from the Finder choose Go > Connect to Server... and enter the address in the form `vnc://hostname/`, for example `vnc://nocardia.bio.brandeis.edu/

VNC using SSH tunneling to older Macs

This is a set of old example instructions for setting up a VNC server on your OS X desktop and connecting to it through an SSH tunnel, so that you can have a remote desktop session that looks pretty much identical to sitting at your Mac. See also VncExample. These instructions assume that you wish to access the session that is showing on the console of the computer, not your own private X Windows session. These instructions should be appropriate even with firewalls in place; the only incoming port that needs to be open is the SSH port (22).

Terminology

- **localbox** The (name or ip address of the) machine you want to view the results on.
- **remotebox** The (name or ip address of the) OS X machine you want the Xserver to be local to.
- **localdisplay** The number of the display you want on the localhost.
- **remotedisplay** The number of the display the vncserver picks.
- **localport** `localdisplay+5900`
- **remoteport** `remotedisplay+5900`

Steps

Install OSXvnc

1. download OSXvnc
2. start the application OSXvnc
3. configure the preferences
   a. under General > Password, set a password
   b. under General, set a display or port number. These are `remotedisplay` and `remoteport` respectively.
   c. under Sharing, check the box next to *Allow only local connections (require SSH)*
   d. under Startup, set up appropriately. VNC is more useful if the server is actually running when you try to connect to it.
4. click Start Server

Configure SSH tunnel

1. On localbox setup the ssh tunnel.
   a. On a computer running openssh (linux, Mac OS X, etc.) use one of the following commands
      - `ssh -Nfn -L localport:127.0.0.1:remoteport user@remotebox`
      - `ssh -L localport:127.0.0.1:remoteport user@remotebox`
   b. for Windows, see under VncExample
2. On localbox, start up a vncviewer.
   - on OS X, you might use Chicken of the VNC. Enter the following
     - host: localhost (the literal string "localhost")
2. port: localport  
3. passwd: whatever you created in OSXvnc.  
4. display number: localdisplay  
   • for other platforms, see VncExample

3. To disconnect, just shutdown your vncviewer on localhost.  
4. To reattach, just connect again as in step 5.

Scripts

You might save a little script like this one to avoid having to re-reference this page:

#!/bin/bash
ssh -Nfn -L 5901:127.0.0.1:5900 karelsf@chameleon.bio.brandeis.edu
open /Applications/Chicken\ of\ the\ VNC.app

-- KarelSF - 28 Apr 2004 (rev 18 Nov 2008)