

# California Computer Care

News,  
Views,  
Tips and  
Cool Techniques  
for CCC Members

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We  
speak  
Geek,  
so you  
don't  
have to.

## DSL or Cable?

This is the most common question we get these days. Everybody seems to be fed up with traditional modems and the phone system for internet access. DSL and Cable promise a cure to slow connections, dropped connections, busy signals, traffic congestion, neuritis, neuralgia and back aches. But, what are DSL and Cable?

DSL is short for Digital Subscriber Line. Originally this meant that you were subscribing to an always open telephone line for 24/7 instant access to the internet. This is still sometimes true but not always.

DSL is much faster than a regular modem; up to 50 times faster if you are willing to pay extra for it. A standard, home and small business DSL account will be more like six to ten times faster. DSL can be so much faster because the DSL signal is sent through regular phone lines at a higher frequency than a 56K modem can use. A nice side benefit is that because this higher frequency does not interfere with regular phone signals, the same phone line can carry the DSL and phone traffic simultaneously. If you are currently using a second phone line for the internet, DSL will allow you to get rid of the second line and still be on the internet and talking on the phone at the same time.

DSL is not available everywhere. A disadvantage of the high frequency DSL signal is that it cannot travel as far as a regular phone signal, so to have DSL you must be within three miles of the phone company's central office. Also, the farther you are from the central office, the slower your connection will be.

DSL is offered by many Internet Service Providers (ISP) and pricing and services offered are variable. It pays to shop around. To help you with that, there is a very good

web site with information (technical and pricing) and user reviews of hundreds of ISPs. Go to <http://www.dslreports.com>.

Cable uses your TV cable system to provide internet service. Because this line is already in your home, installation is easy and free from your cable TV provider. While DSL is *theoretically* faster than cable, cable is much faster than DSL in real world use. Reliability is also usually better.

Cable is not affected by distance and Pac Bell's advertising to the contrary, line sharing is equally a problem for cable and DSL (note the fine print in Pac Bell's ads), but, really, it's not much of a problem for either.

Like DSL, cable is not available everywhere. Many TV cable companies have not upgraded their equipment to be able to provide the service. Cable is available in most of Eastern Marin County and parts of Sonoma County. Check with your cable TV provider for availability information. Pricing averages \$40-\$50 per month.

The only major problem with cable is that you have no choice of ISP. The ISP for a cable system will be either the cable provider itself or a contracted company.

**CCC Recommendation:** Go DSL if you are close to the central office, do not have access to Cable, want to use a specific ISP or are a business serving web information out of your office. Word of warning: Do not use Pacific Bell as your ISP.

They are disorganized and error prone and have poor technical support.



Cable is ideal for home use. Go cable if speed, reliability and cost are paramount.

Either way, it beats a modem, big time!

# A Warning...

Every so often a piece of software is released with a really nasty bug; here's the latest.

**IomegaWare 2.7** has a dangerous "feature" that is sure to get you in trouble. (IomegaWare is the software that comes with every ZIP and JAZ drive) Version 2.7 has just been released (older versions do not have *THIS* problem) and features a new Uninstall option. **DO NOT USE UNINSTALL!**

Uninstalling older versions of new software is usually not necessary, but some folks like to do so to make sure of a fresh start. Unfortunately, *IomegaWare 2.7's* Uninstall command will "uninstall" more than old versions of *IomegaWare*. Users have reported losing whole folders of non-Iomega files and it has damaged, but not deleted, other critical files. This software could render your Mac inoperable.

The rest of the *IomegaWare 2.7* software is fine. If you must use *IomegaWare 2.7*, just avoid the Uninstall option. Fortunately, it would be almost impossible to use Uninstall unintentionally. Please call CCC if you have any questions. (800) 540-8989.

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# Mac OS X The Adventure Continues

While **Mac OS X Public Beta** continues to run smoothly on George III, there are a few things that this unfinished software cannot do.

**Printing to Inkjets.** OS X can print fine to networked laser printers that use Apple's Laserwriter drivers (that's close to 95% of networkable laser printers). It just can't print to inkjet printers. This isn't an OS X problem, it's just that inkjet printer manufacturers like Epson, Hewlett Packard and Canon haven't written OS X compatible software yet. They have all said that they will, but they have also said that they won't release such software until the final, finished version of OS X (probably this spring). Until then, none of my four printers can print from Mac OS X.

**Use SCSI devices.** Mac OS X cannot yet see or use external SCSI scanners, hard drives, printers, etc. My SCSI scanner and printer are just not there to OS X. Apple has promised SCSI support for the final version.

**Multiple Network Cards.** I use two ethernet cards in George III so as to split

my office network from my DSL connection. OS X can see multiple network cards, but Kingston doesn't make OS X software for my second card. The Kingston card is out of production, having been replaced by newer models that eventually will have OS X software, so no OS X software will be made for my card. Ah, well. That means that when I'm using Mac OS X, I can have internet or network but not both at the same time.

**ZIP-a-dee-doo-dah.** In the same vein, Iomega has not yet developed Mac OS X software to make my built-in ZIP drive work. When they do, I hope they do a better job than 2.7!

## October Tip—

Netscape Users, watch those email boxes! If they get overfilled, all manner of oddities will ensue. Every three months, do this:

- 1) Open *Netscape Messenger* (that's the email part of Netscape).
- 2) Go through your Inbox and Sent folders and Delete any unnecessary emails.
- 3) From the File menu, choose Empty Trash Folder. You're done.