

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.

Should You Upgrade?

Your Mac is looking a little old and slow; you feel that it could do better. You've got three options. Should you stand pat? Buy a new Mac? Or increase the capabilities of your current Mac?

Ask yourself these three questions:

1) Can I do everything that I want to do as easily as it can be done?

If you answered yes to this question, you would be wise to stand pat. Of course, sometimes wisdom succumbs to lust for the new and cool (like mine did for the new PowerBook G4). If that desire is stronger than the pitfalls of expense, transferring files, needing to get new versions of software and/or hardware for compatibility and installing tons of it, then by all means, go for it!

However, if you answered no, go on to question 2.

2) Do I need to use new hardware or software that my current Mac can't handle?

If you answered yes to this question, there's no argument; you must upgrade. The question then becomes: In what way?

If you answered no; see question 3.

3) Do I have new goals and projects that my current Mac wasn't designed to do?

If you answered yes to this question, then ask: Would a new Mac do all that I need to do? If you have very specific tasks and goals, it may be better to add a second Mac for the new tasks rather than upgrading and trying to do everything with one machine. For instance, you may have an iMac that surfs the internet as well as you'd like, but for a new job you need a PowerBook that can travel with you. Adding the PowerBook will give you the portability your job needs without sacrificing the comfort of the familiar iMac.

If you answered no; see question 1.

Ways to upgrade, differ depending on your goals. Perhaps you need more memory to run a new piece of software. Unless your Mac is already stuffed as full of memory as it can be, this is an easy upgrade. RAM is very cheap right now (128MB for most Macs is only \$55.00) and adding RAM changes nothing else about your machine.

Like adding more RAM, adding additional hard drives for storage space can be simple on those Macs that can accommodate more than one. Most G3 and G4 towers can have as many as four separate hard drives. iMacs and PowerBooks cannot have multiple hard drives (not enough space) but can have small hard drives replaced with large ones. Hard drives are inexpensive these days. 30GB IDE hard drives start at \$145.00.

Many folks find that they need to upgrade their operating system (OS) for compatibility with new software. This upgrade should be done cautiously and only if absolutely necessary. Doing so can cause a cascade of other upgrades and change the way you interact with your Mac. If your Mac is over four years old and you need to upgrade beyond Mac OS 8.1, it would be best to buy new. G3s, G4s and iMacs, however are ready and able for Mac OS 8.5, 9 and X (ten).

If faster speeds are wanted, processor upgrades are available for most Macs. PowerMacs are the most cost effective Macs for processor upgrades. G3 and G4 upgrades are readily available and will give a substantial boost. These upgrades range from \$200.00 and are straight forward to install and cause no changes in the way you work with your machine (except it's much faster, of course!). Also add a larger, faster hard drive and your Mac may jump the equivalent of two generations for a fraction of the cost of a new machine.



X (10) Again—

Mac OS X (10) is almost here. We geekoid, wackos have been excitedly awaiting the release of the final, finished version of this new operating system for quite a long time. March 24 is the day! Should you be excited, too?

Mac OS X (10) has been our subject three times (January 2000, September 2000 and October 2000) and warrants such excitement because it is such a radical change for desktop computers.

There are four operating systems used on desktop computers: Mac OS (which we use), OS2, Windows (MSDOS) and Windows 2000 (NT). These are all proprietary operating systems *created* to be incompatible with anything not part of them.

There is another way. Desktop computers are not the only computers. The really sophisticated computers that actually run the world use an operating system called UNIX. This is the most powerful and trouble-free OS ever created (and the basis of it is free!).

UNIX runs the internet, the telephone system, universities, huge corporations and government agencies.

Until recently, UNIX was powerful, but so difficult to use that a computer science degree was necessary to understand it. Apple has taken UNIX and put a friendly Mac face on it. This is UNIX that the average person can use and control.

With OS X, we will have the speed and stability of UNIX without the need of geekie knowledge (darn!). This is great for the average user.

Very exciting, but hold off! As always, don't jump on a new OS until it has been out in the world for awhile to work out the inevitable bugs. I'll keep you informed with all the latest OS X news. Stay tuned.

March Tip—

When you launch your internet browser, it starts by showing you a web page. If you'd like to change that starting point, do this:

Netscape Communicator:

- 1) Go to the web page that you want to be your home page.
- 2) From the Edit menu, choose Preferences.
- 3) From the list of preferences, choose Navigator.
- 4) On the right side of the window notice a button labelled *Use Current Page*. Click it.

Internet Explorer:

- 1) From the Edit menu, choose Preferences.
- 2) From the list of preferences, choose Browser Display.
- 3) On the right side of the window there is a place to type in the address of the web page that you want to use. Please do.

That changes your home page.

California Computer Care

P.O. Box 9445

Santa Rosa, CA 95405

(800) 540-8989

help@calcompcare.com

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