

Port Report

All current Macs sport these standard ports:

USB, Firewire 400, ethernet, video out, modem, audio line out and microphone. Here is an explanation of these mysterious terms.

What's a port?

A normal (non-geek) person would call a port, a socket. Just like the electric wall sockets that we plug lamps and blenders into, computer sockets are used to plug in accessories like speakers, printers and external hard drives.

With the exception of audio line out and microphone, all of your Mac's ports have different shapes making it impossible to plug the wrong plug into the wrong socket (port) without intentionally forcing it in.

USB

Universal Serial Bus ports are the most used ports on our Macs. USB comes in two varieties: USB 1.0 and USB 2.0. Both types of USB ports and plugs are identical, so there is no reason to be concerned about which is which. USB is used to connect accessories that do not need to communicate with your Mac at high speed. Keyboards, mice, digital still cameras, Palm handhelds and printers all use USB ports and plugs. Most Macs have two to five USB ports included.



Firewire

Firewire ports are intended for accessories that need to send lots of information to your Mac as quickly as possible. Digital video cameras, external hard drives, scanners and the *iPod* make use of Firewire ports. Firewire comes in two varieties: 400 and 800. Unlike USB, the Firewire varieties are different, so the ports are different shapes and sizes to pre-



vent accidentally plugging the wrong device into the wrong port. Firewire 800 ports only appear on professional level Macs.

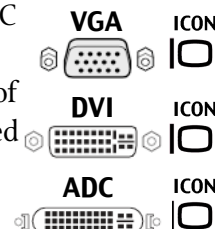
Ethernet

The ethernet port is used to connect your Mac to a computer data network. That network can be as simple as an ethernet cable strung from your Mac to another Mac in the same room, or as complicated as the internet. If you have DSL or cable, high-speed internet access, you are using the ethernet port to connect your Mac to the DSL or cable modem.



Video out

There are four common Mac video out ports. VGA, DVI and ADC ports are used to connect monitor screens. Which of these is used is determined by the manufacturer of the display screen (if the plug on the display's cable fits a port on the Mac, all is well).



The fourth video out port is called a mini-VGA port. The mini-VGA port is used to connect TVs, VCRs and video projectors while doing lectures and presentations.



It is rare to find all four video out ports on a single Mac. Usually only two of the four will be available with adapter plugs necessary to accommodate the missing ports. No matter how many video out ports you have, you can attach a separate monitor to each one (and you can add extra ports with optional accessories). Professional grade Macs are able to show a different picture on each attached screen, the same picture on each screen, or one huge picture that spans several screens (and your mouse can happily run smoothly from one to the next).

Modem

The modem port is a telephone modular jack like the one on the kitchen wall into which you plug your telephone.

The modem port is used to connect to the telephone network for dial-up internet access and faxing. Use a standard modular phone cable available at Radio Shack or most hardware stores.



Audio line out

This port is often called the headphone port as it is most often used to connect Walkman style headphones for private listening when your Mac is used as a music or DVD movie player. However, the audio line out port can also be used to connect external speakers (for better sound quality than the Mac's built in speakers) or a tape recorder to record sound from your Mac.



Microphone

The microphone port is missing from several Mac models that were released from 2000 to 2002. Special USB adapters were to be used by those Macs. Most Macs, however, have a microphone



port. As the name suggests, the microphone port is used to connect an external microphone for recording sound (lectures, music, grandpa's stories, etc.). The microphone port can also be used to connect directly to a sound source like your stereo system, radio or electronic music keyboard.

Exotics

Some Macs have rare, exotic ports for specialized uses like optical audio in and out or wireless network antennas. If you find a port on you Mac that is not mentioned here and want to know what it is and what it is used for, contact me. I'll happily give you an explanation that probably rambles into more detail than you really wanted.

A reminder.

CCC

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January 1, 2005

Thank you for your continued support.

Nov — Dec Tip —

Three nasty, winter computer hazards:

Cold— Your Mac can happily work in temperatures colder than you would like, but it has a weakness. If your Mac has been, unpowered, in a very cold environment and then meets warm air (ie. an *iBook* left in a cold car that is brought into a house), condensation will form inside the Mac that can cause damage. Always let your Mac warm to room temperature before turning it on.

Brown outs— Winter storms can mean inconsistent electricity. If you notice the room lights dim, your Mac is not getting enough power. Shut it down until things stabilize.

Black outs— Your Mac really hates this! If you have a Powerbook or iBook, black outs are of small concern (you can't recharge the battery), but for desktop Macs, a black out instantly forces a shut down. This can damage your Mac's hardware, software or both. Avoid using your Mac during heavy storms or other times when black outs may be likely to occur.

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