

# 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.

## 3 Things You *MUST* Know

1. Your hard drive **WILL** die.
2. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
3. First you choose it, then you use it.

That's a warning, an admonition and a computing, life philosophy.

Your hard drive **WILL** die.

*This is really serious!* Recently, several CCC members have lost everything because their computer's hard drive broke, and they had no back up copies of their files.

In time, all hard drives break. Usually they give no advance warning. Your Mac's hard drive stores all of your information and files. This is both the most important part of your Mac and the most fragile. The average hard drive lasts about five years.

Back when hard drives were expensive, they typically had five year warranties. Consumers have demanded less expensive hard drives, so manufacturing quality suffers. Most hard drives now have one year warranties (that is a good way to see how confident manufacturers are in their products). Because hard drives are now cheap and fragile, it is common to see them fail after only a year or two. And, because hard drives have much larger capacities, we have more valuable files to lose. Photos, videos, music, business records, diaries and reminiscences are filling our hard drives. When they break, all is lost. Forever.

*Unless you are smart or rich.* Smart people make back ups. A back up is an exact copy of your files that is then stored in a different location. So, if the hard drive breaks, is stolen or destroyed in a catastrophe, the precious files are safe. If you would be sad to lose that photo, email or document, make a back up copy.

Rich people are excused from making back ups because they can use the alternative. If you don't want to back up your files, you can always pay thousands of dollars to hard

drive recovery services such as *DriveSavers* in Novato. They've saved the bacon of countless users including George Lucas, Conan O'Brien, Sarah Jessica Parker, Jim Henson, Sean Connery and Isaac Hayes.

If you'd rather keep the thousands of dollars, make a good back up strategy. Take a look at the April 2006 CCC Newsletter (at <http://www.calcompcare.com/news9.html>) for more information about making proper hard drive back ups.

Don't let me say: "*I told you so!*"

*If it ain't broke, don't fix it.*

Soooo tempting! Upgrades tempt you constantly. Apple's *Software Update*, Microsoft's *Auto Update* and most software publishers offer attractive looking upgrades filled with promises, scare tactics and more.

Resistance is **NOT** futile. Upgrades exist for three reasons: to sell you something, to add new features and to fix problems. Sometimes all three at the same time.

Apple and Microsoft's automatic updates come to you at no monetary charge, but all upgrades exact a safety toll. No upgrade should be accepted blindly. You need to know three things about any upgrade:

- 1) Is it safe? Many upgrades contain dangerous bugs and errors.
- 2) Is it necessary? If you have no complaints about your software, why tempt fate?
- 3) Is it useful? That new upgrade may add nifty features, but if you have no use for them, why bother?

It takes a bit of effort to answer these questions about offered upgrades. If you do not have the time or inclination to do the research, please let me do it; that's my job. CCC members are welcome to email requests for information about any upgrade that they are considering. There will be no charge. Please include the name of the up-

grade, the publisher and the version number with your request. I spend hours every day researching new software and upgrade information to answer the three questions.

Apple's *Software Update* makes this easy. When *Software Update* pops up with its list of upgrades, don't accept them, do this:

- 1) With the *Software Update* window showing, hold down the *Apple* and *Shift* keys on your keyboard.
- 2) Type the number 3 key (the 3 above the letter *w* key). You may hear a clicky sound.
- 3) A new file will appear on your Desktop (or in your hard drive for OS 9 users). This file will be called *Picture 1* (provided no *Picture 1* file already is there).
- 4) Attach *Picture 1* to an email addressed to me: [help@calcompcare.com](mailto:help@calcompcare.com) and I'll investigate and suggest appropriate action.

First you choose it, then you use it.

No, it's not a Zen koan. This is the computer user's philosophy.

We all become stuck now and then when using our Macs. Frequently, the cause of the problem is one of timing. You tell Mac to do something or want to tell Mac to do something and can't figure out how. You've probably put the cart before the horse.

Perhaps you are looking at the list of email in your In Box. You want to print one and pull down the *File* menu and choose *Print*.

Something prints alright, but its not the email you wanted. You forgot your philosophy. **First you choose it:** click on the specific email you want in the list. **Then you use it:** Now you choose *Print* from the *File* menu.

Another example. You want to search for a lost file. You go to the *File* menu and there is no *Find...* command there! Look carefully. What menu is just to the left of the *File* menu? Is it *Finder*? It isn't, is it? You forgot your philosophy again. Finding things is a function of the *Finder*, so... **First you choose it:** click on the *Finder* icon in the *Dock*\*. **Then you use it:** Now you choose *Find...* from the *File* menu. *Voila*, the *Find...* command is right where it belongs.



Please keep these three ideas in mind. If you do you will happily save yourself from the loss of your precious files, buggy software misbehavior, confused head scratching and wasted time and money.

\* Or click on the Desktop to switch to the Finder in Mac OS 9 or X.

## February Tip

Three cool utilities:

1) **Tea Timer.** Did you ever want an "egg timer" for your Mac? You set it for any length of time from one second to



a billion hours. A polite alarm and message will appear when time's up. Free. For Mac OS X. Available from:

<http://www.herwig-henseler.de>

2) **Linotype Font Explorer X.** Mac OS X comes with a very basic font manager called *Font Book*, but *Font Book* is so limited as to be virtually useless.

There are several, capable, expensive font managers: *Suitcase Fusion*, *Font Reserve*, etc. Traditional type power-



house Linotype has added its own: *Font Explorer X* is also a full-featured font manager, however they made it Free.

For Mac OS X, 10.3.9 or later. Get it from:

<http://www.linotype.com>

3) **Pac the Man X.** The voracious Pac-Man and his girlfriend, Ms Pac-Man are ready to entertain you in old-style video arcade fun. Free. For



Mac OS X, 10.3.9 or later.

<http://www.mcsebi.com/>

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