

Drinking While Driving Your Mac

by Deborah Shadovitz

Deborah Shadovitz wrote a series of articles called Mac 101 and several have appeared in the KMUG Newsletter. This one was written as part of the Mac 101 series, but for some reason never published. Some of the hardware in the pictures will be a little dated, but the article is still a humorous discussion of a situation that we all face. ed.

I have a confession to make. I drink at my Mac. (So right about now you're either reprimanding me or nonchalantly saying something to the effect of, "so, who doesn't?")

Of course I know better than to risk spilling drinks anywhere near my beloved Macs. And heck... my Macs are my livelihood! So what's up? The simple truth is, sooner or later we all give in and want that water, soda, or iced tea enough to risk spillage.

Fortunately, necessity being the mother of invention, I found a solution to the drink-spilling worry. I'm sure I'm not alone in the urge to splurge with a drink here and there, so I figure its about time I share my brilliant find.

Deb's Drink by your Mac Solution



Here it is: my brilliant drink solution. See it? It's that Rubbermaid cup (3123 16 oz Sipp'n Saver™ Tumbler) over to the side.

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I had this cup from the days when I picked my friend's young son up at school and always had juice for him. One day it struck me that if it was designed to be spillproof I could bring it into my computer area. When the straw is down (and the lid is on correctly), nothing spills out.

Here's the test.

Of course, I tested this cup and its cover on my kitchen counter before ever bringing it near my Mac. You should test yours too. Maybe even each time you refill it.

I'm sure if you've got kids you know the trick. But for those of you who don't, just lift the straw to drink, then put it back down. Of course, you shouldn't move the cup anywhere over your Mac or keyboard and should not be leaning over the keys while you drink. Instead, lean back a bit, rest a bit, let your eyes move away from the screen a moment, and sip.

There are other sip-it staw cups too. I prefer this one because it is easiest to clean and holds an adult sized amount. You can also order extra staws, which are inexpensive and well worth having. I've also tried covers that go on soda cans, but when you open them to drink you're at risk.

With this particular cup, even when the straw is up, its spillage is very little or none at all. (And this cup fits perfectly in automobile cup holders too.)



You can find this and other cups at the Rubbermaid site, choosing Kitchen and then Servin' Saver® Litterless® Juice Boxes. I hear

Rubbermaid is newly coming to the UK (and more of Europe?) and I'm not sure about other places. If you happen to know of a similar cup by any other company in other parts of the world (I write from the US), please share this information by posting it below.

Alternatives

What to do when you've got a hot drink, like on a cold wintery day? One solution is a travel mug. Not the cardboard kind with the flimsy plastic lid, but the real ones with a handle you press to temporarily open a small sipping opening. I got one of these at the Apple Store. However, I've also seen better. I am not sure where you'd buy it, but here's the only mug I let near my equipment. It has an extra-

wide base and non-slip bottom. There's a protective lid with just a tiny hole to drink through. And it has an insulating cover too. (I took this picture on my carpet just so the cup shows up better. I don't normally keep it there when using it. The mug is empty in this shot, too, so it is not a spill test.) I don't fully trust this mug not to leak when sideways; it's just nice that chances are that it won't fall.

Other Precautions

There are other precautions I take too. One is that my PowerBook is on a CoolPad, so it's off the table top. If the drink did splash the keyboard, PCMCIA slot, or such, but the bottom and media



bays will stay dry.

The other is that my desktop Mac, CD burner, Internet

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Router, and printer are safely under my desk. They are placed so any spillage at either the front or back of my desk shouldn't hit the equipment.

True Spilled Drink Stories

I am proud to honestly be able to say that I've never spilled a drink on any computer equipment. But I've witnessed the effects of several spill accidents. I've seen the effects of coffee, tea, soda, and orange juice spilled on keyboards. I also saw the effect of a drink landing on a PowerBook keyboard. So in case you're not sold on not drinking by your Mac - and aren't inclined to look silly with a kid's sip-it cup, I'm regaling you with spilled drink stories.

One spill shorted out the ADB port on the right side of the extended keyboard. Power came through into the left ADB port, but didn't make it out at the right. As a result, a mouse would no longer work when plugged into that keyboard. This pretty much killed the keyboard's use. (Keyboard cost at least \$100.00 back then.)

When another spill on an extended ADB keyboard stopped keys from working, I took off all the key covers and ran it through my dishwasher on the top shelf. That fixed the keyboard but the owner (AKA father of the young spiller) was never happy with the feel of the keys after that.

In one case I received a call from a distraught user whose Mac felt like she was going crazy. She'd double-click her hard drive icon to get to a file and it would take a very l-o-n-g time for the hard drive to open. And when it did open, every folder on the hard drive was opened so there were tons of files to scroll past. All folders had to be closed. Other odd things happened too. After a few phone calls about odd behavior I realized the Mac was acting as if the Option key was being pressed. "Did

you spill anything on the lower left or right corner of the keyboard today?" I asked, certain that must be it. Nope, came the answer. Hummm... more thinking. Software to test. I asked again, "are you sure you didn't spill anything?" To make the long redundant part of this story short, this woman finally recalled that she had spilled coffee the day before. I knew it! She was certain the coffee had evaporated and didn't connect the spill to the problem. But the liquid under the Option key was a conductor, so as far as the Mac was concerned that key was pressed. This spill had a happy ending though. I just removed the Option key and one key to either side of it, then sprayed cleaner/degreaser on the bottom key mechanism. (You can get this spray at Radio Shack or your local electronics store. Just make sure it clearly states that it is safe for electronics.) It took a few treatments, but the keyboard returned to normal.

In another case, a user spilled tea on the keyboard. This time though the user knew to take out her can of cleaner/degreaser, remove the keys, then spray. (Well, at least she knew better than to spill coffee again. <g>)

The case of the spill on the PowerBook? No good news there. Dead PowerBook. (Should I mention that the owner/spiller never backed up the files?)

A friend just told me about one of his clients. The man was so frustrated by his no-longer-functioning keyboard that he tossed it at the monitor. "...he laid into the mac with the keyboard, severally damaging both in the process."

Conclusion

I'm not encouraging you to eat or drink near your Mac or other computer equipment. I'm not even saying its ok to. But if you're so-inclined, at least drink safely. One thing I can promise: you will knock over your drink someday - and its not worth the gamble. ●

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or the news servers in Microsoft's Outlook Express.

So if you can get the best features of AOL on the Web, what good is AOL? Because AOL screens its content, it's a reasonably safe place for your kids to surf. And it's a good starting point for users new to computers

and the Web. But it's only a starting point. Once you're comfortable with your Mac and the basic structure of the Web, it's time to take off the training wheels and save a few bucks in the process.

Contributing Editor CHRISTOPHER BREEN asks only that the Macintosh community support the principles of truth, justice, and the American way. ●

Twisted List: Five Crazy Things You Didn't Know About Apple Computer

By Martin Sargent

Think you know everything about the Apple Computer story? We'll see about that.

Jobs in Space

When Steve Jobs was chairman of the board at Apple Computer during the mid-1980s, he really didn't have all that much to do. So, with his usual arrogance, Jobs tried to convince NASA to let him ride along on the next voyage of the space shuttle. NASA said no, which turned out to be a very good thing for Jobs. The shuttle that he would have ridden on was the Challenger, which tragically blew up two minutes into its flight, killing all seven crewmembers.

The Magic Bus

In order to get the money needed to make the original Apple I circuit board, Steve Jobs had to sell his red and white Volkswagen Bus for \$1,500. Jobs was something of a hippie, even spending a lot of time at a commune in Oregon called the All One Farm. Fellow Apple brainchild Steve Wozniak contributed by selling an HP 65 programmable calculator for \$250.

Speaking of the cars of Apple

Wozniak's father once found \$250,000 worth of uncashed checks littering his son's vehicle like Big Mac wrappers. Woz's father is quoted as saying, "A person like him shouldn't have that much money."

What Jobs Wanted the Mac's Name to Be

Steve Jobs wanted to call the Mac the Apple Bicycle but didn't get any support from his collaborators. Still, when Jobs was touring the country demonstrating the Mac, his favorite line was that it was a "bicycle for the mind." Other names tossed around for the Mac included the Apple IV and Esprit.

Origin of the Apple Name

Steve Jobs came up with the name Apple when he was driving with Steve Wozniak, and The Woz has provided a few possible reasons for Jobs' selecting that name other than because it's easy to remember. Not long before Jobs told Woz what he wanted to name the company, Jobs had been at the All One Farm in Oregon where there were a lot of apple trees. Woz also suggested it could have been because Jobs was a music fan and wanted to name the company after The Beatles' record label, Apple Corp. If you look at the original Apple logo, you'll notice it's a picture of Sir Isaac Newton sitting under an Apple tree, so maybe Newton was the inspiration.

In any case, The Beatles' record label didn't appreciate Apple ripping off its name and approached the computer company. Apparently, some secret agreement was made allowing Apple to continue to use the name so long as they never started making music products. In 1989, Apple started offering products that could synthesize music, which resulted in a lawsuit from Apple Corps. The suit was settled in 1991 for \$26.5 million. As a side note, Apple gave Yoko Ono and Sean Lennon Macs when they debuted in 1984 and used an image of John Lennon and Yoko during its "Think Different" campaign.

The Third Founder

We've all heard that there was a fifth Beatle (lots of Beatles connections here), and there was also a third founder of Apple -- a painfully unlucky man named Ron Wayne. Wayne, who created the original Apple logo of Sir Isaac Newton sitting under a tree, was given 10 percent of the company stock when he, Jobs, and Wozniak founded the company. But that 10 percent share also made him responsible for 10 percent of any debts the company incurred. Wayne got scared that the Apple wasn't going anywhere, so he sold his share of the company for \$500 and reportedly bought a coin shop. ●

Mac 911

By Christopher Breen

Recalling the stirring challenge of John F. Kennedy, ask not what the Macintosh community can do for you, ask what you can do for the Macintosh community. In this month's Mac 911, I lend a hand with mapping PC files to your preferred Mac applications. I also offer bold advice on how--and how not--to speed up your dial-up connection, and help you find a better bargain than AOL.

Icon Remember

Q. I'm having some trouble with a client's TIFF files, which she created in the Windows version of Adobe Photoshop. When I load the files, they bear the PictureViewer icon, and they open in that application as well. I'd prefer that they open in Photoshop when I double-click on them. Is this possible?

DON MACKENZIE

Fremont, California

A. Why, yes, it is. Apple's oft-overlooked File Exchange control panel is this problem's cause and solution.

Mac OS is fairly accommodating about opening files created on a PC--sometimes too accommodating, as your conundrum illustrates. In this case, Mac OS has determined that PictureViewer, the graphics-viewing application included with QuickTime, shall open all TIFF files created on a PC. And no, it doesn't matter that the user created these files in Photoshop for Windows. PictureViewer is eager to open those Photoshop files and will do so until you make some adjustments.

These include opening the File Exchange control panel and clicking on the PC Exchange tab. In the resulting window you'll see a long list of PC file extensions-- .aifc, .bat, .dot, and .tif, for instance--assigned to Mac applications such as QuickTime Player, SimpleText, Microsoft Word, and PictureViewer. Scroll down this list and you'll see that the .tif extension is assigned to PictureViewer.

To change the assignment, simply highlight the file extension you want to alter and click on the Change

button. When you do, the Mac will ruminate for a bit before presenting you with the Change Mapping window, which contains a list of the applications on your Mac. You should scroll down until you find the appropriate application--Don, you'd choose Photoshop at this point--and click on Change to reassign the default application (and icon) for that file type. When next you place a PC Photoshop file on your Mac, it should display the Photoshop icon and launch Photoshop when you double-click on it.

Modem Maximization

Q. Is there a way to speed up my PowerBook modem's dial-up connection?

ZAHID RASHID

Karachi, Pakistan

A. An excellent question, Zahid, and one we've bandied about quite a bit in Macworld.com's Troubleshooting forum. Some forum visitors have suggested there's little one can do to speed up a sluggish modem connection, while others have offered the idea that with the right tool, you can make your modem perform seemingly impossible feats of derring-do. Let's try to separate fact from fiction.

To begin with, your 56-Kbps modem will never, ever reach its maximum speed in North America (and many other delightful spots around the globe), because U.S. government regulations prohibit dial-up modems from exceeding 53 Kbps. In fact, in most cases you'll be lucky to see them top out at 48 Kbps.

So is there anything you can do to speed up your connection? Maybe. Start by making the cleanest connection possible between your PowerBook and the phone jack. Avoid plugging the phone cord into phone-line splitters and devices such as surge protectors and answering machines. Channeling your line through this mishmash of stuff can add noise, which can cause more data-transfer errors, slowing your connection. Line noise also comes from electrical appliances and AC power cords, so if you can better isolate your PowerBook and accompanying phone cord, do so. Long phone cords can also degrade the phone signal, so use a shorter cord if possible.

Cock a keen ear and evaluate the quality of your phone

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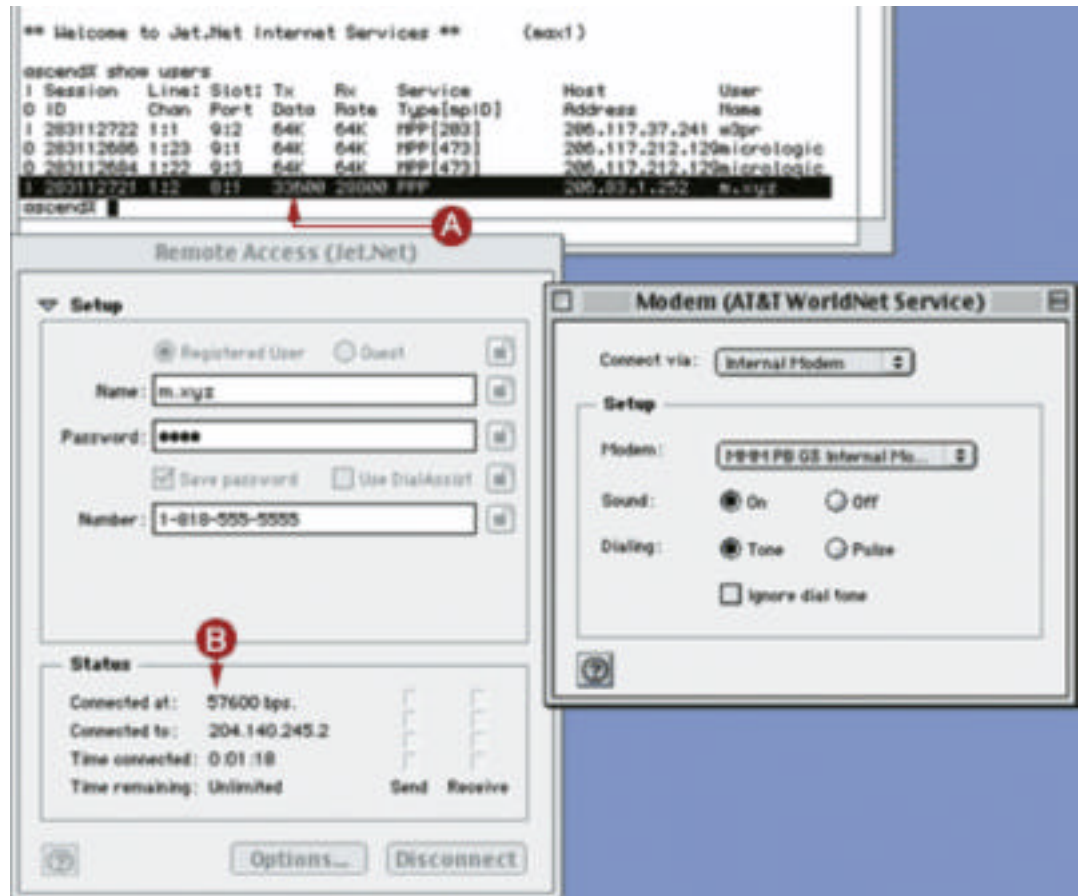
line. Connect a telephone to that line, dial 1, and listen for noise. If you hear a lot of hissing or crackling, give your phone company a call and report that you have a dirty line that interferes with your voice calls. Don't introduce the phrase data calls into the conversation, because phone companies have to maintain line quality only good enough for voice calls.

Finally, try to connect locally. A local number gives you a better chance at achieving a more direct path to the receiving modem. If a connection is through lots of different lines and equipment, it's likely to slow down.

I'll also report what won't help you: a product from macintosh.com (www.macintosh.com) called Modem Magic. This \$35 collection of modem scripts is aptly named: like all magic, its power is based more on illusion than on reality.

Many users visiting the Macworld.com Troubleshooting forum have recommended Modem Magic, so we decided to put Macworld Contributing Editor Mel Beckman to the task of testing it. Mel runs his own ISP and was therefore in a position to see Modem Magic's effects from both ends of a dial-up connection. Mr. Beckman reports, "After extensive testing with many different modems under controlled conditions, I can conclusively demonstrate that most, if not all, Modem Magic scripts deliberately force a high reported connect speed, hiding the actual, usually slower, connect speed from the user."

Beckman goes on to say that Modem Magic can even



Black Magic Jet.Net's log shows that our test modem has connected at 33,600 bps (A), yet Modem Magic falsely reports the connection speed as 57,600 bps (B).

make throughput worse, "because the speed trick necessarily impedes compression, causing overrun buffers and flow control to kick in." To read his complete report on the dubious benefits of Modem Magic, go to www.macworld.com/2001/07/13/reviews/modem.html.

If you'd like to see for yourself how fast your modem connection is, regardless of your software, you can find detailed instructions at www.macworld.com/2001/09/howto/modem.html.

Limited Multiple Users

Q. After configuring my Mac to use Multiple Users (in Mac OS 9), I've tried to get Microsoft Word to work in a limited account. However, when I launch Word, I receive an error message that reads, "Microsoft Visual Basic cannot start program," and then Word quits. What's going on?

"FRED"

Macworld.com forums

A. I'm afraid you've discovered one of a handful of Multiple Users' shortcomings. You see, Multiple Users lacks a

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certain subtlety. If you set up a Limited or Panel account, Multiple Users blithely bars access to folders that may be necessary for certain applications to function. Such is the case here.

My guess is that you installed Microsoft Office and then--without running Word for the first time--set up this Limited account. When any component of Microsoft Office runs for the first time, Office flings a number of files into various places within the System Folder. Because Limited users don't have access to the System Folder, Office can't install these necessary doodads, and you see this inevitable error message. The workaround is to open Word in the Owner account. Once you've done so, it should launch properly from any user account.

Rather than backtracking this way, you'd do well to think ahead before configuring Multiple Users. For instance, keep in mind that Limited and Panel users can't configure the Startup Items and Shutdown Items folders in Mac OS 9 and earlier. This means Panels users can't use the Launcher at all and Limited users can use it only if the Owner creates an alias of it in the Startup Items folder (inside the user's folder). Likewise, Limited users who want Stickies to appear at startup must have an alias of Stickies in the Startup Items folder within their user's folder.

AOL Alternative

Q. America Online (AOL) recently increased my monthly fee to \$24, and I'm starting to wonder if I couldn't do better elsewhere for less money. I'm still a little unsure of my Mac skills, but is it that difficult to make the transition from AOL to a "real" ISP?

PETER NANCE

Salt Lake City, Utah

A. While I believe America Online offers some real benefits and convenience--particularly to new computer users--I agree that it is a bit difficult to swallow this price increase when AOL has traditionally treated Mac users like poor relations. The Mac versions of AOL's software inevitably trail months and months behind the Windows releases, many areas of AOL are useful to Windows users only, AOL's browser is weak and slow, and AOL continues to handle e-mail attachments from other ISPs poorly. I firmly believe that with a little knowledge and pointers to some helpful sites around the Web, you can

do as well--or better--with another, less expensive ISP.

Let's start with an alternative ISP--EarthLink (404/815-0770, www.earthlink.com). There are many worthy ones, but EarthLink has some distinct advantages. It's easier to configure than many of its competitors. It's a nationwide service, so you'll have a better chance of finding a local number when you're visiting Aunt Vilma than if you sign on with Big Joe's ISPs-Is-Us. It also provides 6MB of storage space for a personal Web page, offers round-the-clock tech support, and supplies the software you need to get on the Web--all for \$22 a month.

What will you miss if you abandon AOL? Other than the derisive sneers you get from your computer-savvy friends when you mention that your e-mail address ends with aol.com, very little. AOL's Instant Messenger--an application for sending live messages back and forth to your buddies--is now available outside AOL. The free Netscape Communicator (<http://home.netscape.com/browsers>) includes it.

You can duplicate the experience of seeing the day's headlines and weather the instant you log onto AOL by designating any of hundreds of Web portals as your home page. These pages--such as Apple's My Apple Start Page--act as a gateway for other information sites and provide such niceties as the day's headlines, sports scores, weather, financial news, and entertainment tittle-tattle.

Using a portal, you can also create a personalized stock portfolio and track the progress of your stocks, much as you would on AOL. Excite, via My Apple Start Page, offers stock tracking, as do a host of other portal sites, including Netscape (<http://my.netscape.com>) and Yahoo (<http://my.yahoo.com>). These sites, like AOL's, allow you to create and maintain an online calendar. Many portals offer personalized e-mail accounts as well.

One feature introduced in AOL 5.0 is You've Got Photos--a way to process and view your photos online. Ofoto (www.ofoto.com) and Snapfish (www.snapfish.com) offer this kind of service. As for AOL's bulletin boards, you'll find more lively, knowledgeable, and uncensored discussions in the Web's many Usenet newsgroups--accessible via newsreaders such as Newswatcher (many flavors of which you'll find at www.macdownload.com)

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This month's newsletter editor was Joe Williams



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