y son is a teacher in Tennessee and they have recently moved there. I would like to buy him a modem for his Mac, so we can keep in touch via e-mail. I had mentioned this to him once before and I thought he had said he needs a special cable. Can I buy him any Hayes-compatible modem and then just get him the interface cable for his Mac or will the standard connector work that will come with the modem? — Dave Higgens, via the Internet.

ny external Hayes-compatible modem will work with any Mac OS computer, provided it has the appropriate cable. There are internal Hayes-compatible modems available in the PC world but, since they are almost all ISA (Industry Standard Architecture) cards, they don't work on Mac OS computers which have never used this expansion architecture.

There are also Mac OS specific modems, including internal PowerBook models, modems which plug into the ADB port and internal NuBus card-based modems. For the purposes of this discussion, however, we'll consider only external Hayes-compatible devices.

External modems normally have a DB-25 or a DB-9 port labeled "serial," or "RS-232," which is the port used to connect to the serial port on the computer. PC serial ports almost always use DB-9 connectors but Mac OS computers have, since the days of the Mac Plus, used a mini DIN-8 connector for both serial ports. Herein lies the essential difference between a cable connecting a Hayes-compatible modem to a PC and one connecting the same device to a Mac: cables for PCs are DB-25 (or DB-9) to DB-9 while cables for Mac OS computers are DB-25 (or DB-9) to mini DIN-8.

Although non-hardware handshaking cables are becoming rare, it's worth noting that Mac specific cables come in both hardware handshaking and non-hardware handshaking flavors, much as PC-specific cables do. Ask for hardware handshaking cable specifically before laying down your cash.

Finally, if you are looking to purchase a new modem, it is probably worth buying a Mac specific model in any case. The difference in price between a modem packaged for PCs and one packaged for Macs is insignificant and oftentimes they are identically priced. Buying the Mac specific package saves you the bother of purchasing the required cable separately and the Mac specific package almost certainly comes with Mac OS software. This commonly means software which makes it possible to send and receive faxes from the Mac but occasionally includes communications and networking software as well. — BF.

an I add an external monitor to a Color Classic and use an accelerator or is the LC processor direct slot going to limit me to one or the other? — David Merrett, via the Internet.

onnet Technologies, MicroMac Technology and DayStar Digital all make accelerator cards for the 030 PDS found in the Color Classic but none of them offers a card with a "pass-through" option which would allow two cards to be installed in the slot.

PSI Direct did offer an 030 Bus Adaptor Card for the IIsi and this card did make it possible to add an FPU and a 64 Kb cache to the IIsi while still leaving the PDS free for use with general purpose cards such as those for Video or Ethernet. However, these Bus Adaptor Cards don't work with the Color Classic.

Meanwhile, Sonnet Technologies continues to offer its QuadDoubler series of CPU replacement cards, which swap the 040 CPU in Quadra and Centris models (except the Quadra 605) with a faster chip. These accelerator cards rely on the original 68040 being socket-mounted to the motherboard. As a consequence they leave the PDS free on models which support this upgrade but don't work at all on 030-based machines such as the Color Classic.

I'm afraid you will have to choose between a video card (for that external monitor) or an accelerator card. — BF.

have a Mac at home but my office forces me to use a Compaq laptop. My Mac has an external CD 600e CD-ROM drive. I am told that there is a way to connect the CD 600e to the laptop so that It will read Windows CD-ROMS, but no one can tell me exactly how to do it. — Mitch Lustig, via the Internet.

ou didn’t mention a specific model but I presume you don’t have an LTE 5000 series machine, since these come with Compaq’s MultiBay expansion slots, which allow for a second battery, extra hard drive or CD-ROM drive to be installed. If you do have an LTE 5000 series notebook, I’d suggest it will be significantly less hassle to acquire an internal CD-ROM drive for the MultiBay than attempting to get the CD 600e working, even if acquiring such a drive means running the gauntlet of your company’s acquisitions department.

With any other Compaq laptop, you need two things: a SCSI port and driver software which makes it possible for the PC to access and use the CD 600e drive attached to said SCSI port.

Adding a SCSI port to a PC notebook requires the use of a PC Card (formerly PCMCIA) SCSI adaptor. There are several companies making these but the only one I’m personally familiar with is Adaptec’s SlimSCSI Type II PC Card host adaptor.

This card, which is approved for use with Compaq notebooks according to the company’s PC Card Solutions List, comes with standard SCSI connectors and cable, and supports a wide range of SCSI devices under DOS, Windows 3.1, Windows 95, OS/2 and Windows NT 3.5.1.

Among the CD-ROM drives supported by the drivers included with the card are drives based on Matsushita mechanisms, which includes the Apple CD 600e.

Theoretically, therefore, a SlimSCSI Type II Card from Adaptec <http://www.adaptec.com> can communicate with Apple’s quad-speed CD and you’ll be able to play Windows and DOS CDs on your Compaq.

I stress the theoretically, however, since I’ve not been able to find anyone who has attempted such a deed. Moreover I don’t have access to a SlimSCSI card and notebook PC to test this myself. — BF.

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