

Basic Black

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What is Basic Black?

Basic Black is a simple, incredibly efficient screen saver. It doesn't have whizbang graphics, and thus lets everything blast along at full speed. It's incredibly small - it takes up only four kilobytes of memory after it's loaded, or thereabouts.

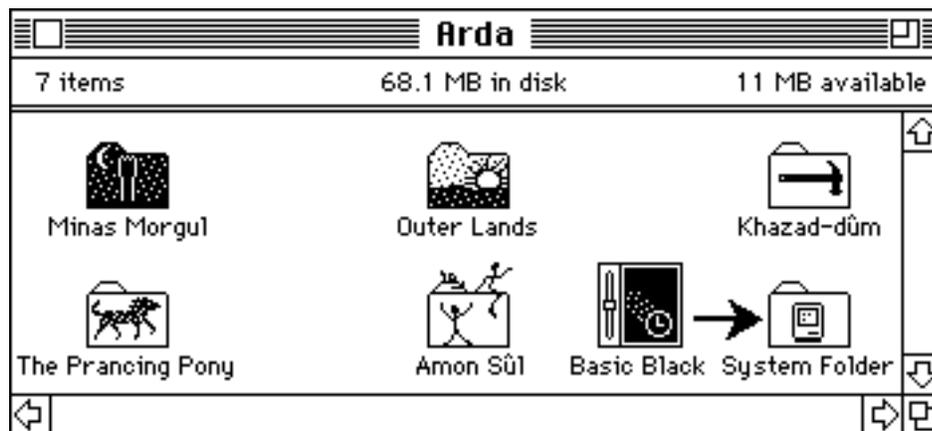
What does Basic Black cost?

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How do I install Basic Black?

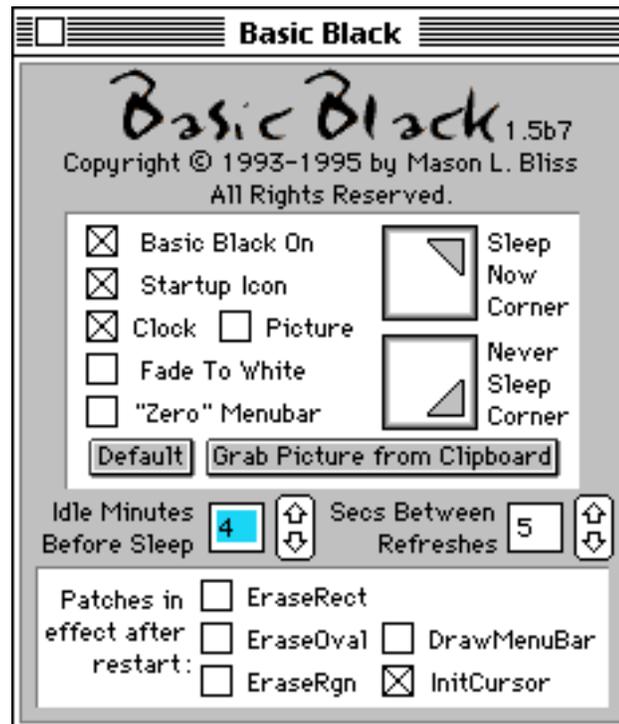
Just drag the Basic Black file to your system folder, and reboot.



Make sure to disable any other screen savers that you may have installed previously, as they may conflict with the operation of Basic Black.

How do I use Basic Black?

Basic Black is easily configurable. Just open the Basic Black control panel that lives in your Control Panels folder. It looks something like this:



Set it up to your liking.

Here's what the options do:

"[Basic Black On](#)" determines whether or not Basic Black will blank your screen after the specified amount of idle time.

"[Startup Icon](#)" determines whether or not Basic Black will display its icon during the startup process.

The "[Clock](#)" and "[Picture](#)" checkboxes let you determine what Basic Black does when it's asleep. If "Clock" is selected, the traditional Basic Black clock will be used. If "Picture" is selected, a picture will bounce around the screen. If neither is selected, the screen will simply black out.

"[Fade To White](#)" is mainly useful for PowerBook owners, for whom the color white is the monitor's "at rest" color.

"[Zero Menubar](#)" is a kluge to keep some old software from drawing things on the menu bar. You shouldn't use it unless you absolutely must, as it can cause problems with some software. (If you use commercial software that requires this kluge, then write to the authors and tell them to start supporting the After Dark-defined screen saver Gestalt calls.)

"[Idle Minutes Before Sleep](#)" lets you set the number of minutes of inactivity that must pass before Basic Black kicks in. "[Secs Between Refreshes](#)" lets you specify the number of seconds between

redraws of the clock or picture.

The sleep corner boxes let you decide which corners will have special properties. For example, in the picture above, the "[Sleep Now Corner](#)" is pointing up and right. As a result, if you move your mouse to the top right corner of your screen and let it sit for a second, your screen will fall asleep immediately. The "[Never Sleep Corner](#)" operates in a similar way, but if your mouse is in this corner, the screen will not fall asleep, even if the specified amount of idle time has passed.

The optional patches shouldn't be used unless it's absolutely necessary. The more you patch, the more system overhead there is. I typically leave the "[InitCursors](#)" patch in place, but I don't run any of the others. Basically, if you're running an older utility that puts something in your menu bar but doesn't check the Gestalt selectors *or* the menu bar height, you might need one of these patches.

The "[Default](#)" button replaces whatever picture you have selected with the default Basic Black logo and message.

The "[Grab Picture from Clipboard](#)" button takes the picture it finds on the Clipboard and bounces it around the screen in lieu of the clock.

When you change a setting (except for the optional patches), the change goes into effect immediately. (Note, however, that under systems 6.0.3 or earlier, you must reboot for any changes to take effect.)

Use the Source, Luke!

Basic Black's source code is available in a separate archive. Learn from it, but pay attention to the license that's included with it.

Note that to build the cdev project, you will need to supply the object-oriented cdev files provided with Symantec's Think C compiler, or a suitable equivalent. The project files are in Think C 5.0.4 format. (Yep, that's all I have right now.)

Trouble starting up?

If, when you boot your Mac, the Basic Black icon has a red 'X' over it, then Basic Black has encountered a problem it can't correct. If this happens to you, then go into your Preferences folder, in your System Folder, and trash the file names "Basic Black Prefs." This should solve your problems. (You may also need to do this if you're switching versions, and the format of the version you're switching to is incompatible with the preferences file that currently lives in your Preferences folder. This won't normally be a problem, though.)

If trashing the preferences doesn't help, then write to me and we'll get you up and running.

Known Conflicts

One of my beta testers has reported that Quicken 5 would occasionally quit unexpectedly when Basic Black woke up his screen. The problem could not be reproduced with any regularity, may not exist with Quicken 6 or newer. I don't know for certain, though. I'm guessing it's their problem, but I don't know for sure.

I've had a couple reports of crashes with Retrospect Remote. I've never been able to pin this conflict down, but it seems intermittent at best.

There have been reports that Basic Black ignores keystrokes while MicroSoft Excel is active. I haven't heard about this one in a while, so MicroSoft may have fixed their software. In any case, this is a problem with MicroSoft's code. MicroSoft doesn't follow the rules laid down by Apple for compatibility with the system, and consequently programs like Basic Black that expect applications to behave properly have several rude surprises ahead of them.

The NOW Utilities don't seem to check the After Dark-defined screen saver Gestalt selectors. Consequently, you must use the "Zero Menubar" kluge. This can be a problematic option to use, so I recommend writing to NOW Software and asking them to support the screen saver Gestalt selectors.

Why isn't it PowerMac Native?

The majority of what Basic Black patches belongs to the Event Manager, which, as of System 7.5.1 (and probably everything prior to Copland), isn't written in native PowerMac code. If I were to distribute a version of Basic Black that was PPC-native only, it would force mode switches when it ran, slowing your computer down. If I were to instead supply a fat version of Basic Black, the 68K routines would be chosen invariably, as the code they patch is still 68K and the Mixed Mode Manager tries to minimize mode switches.

There are two things that will have to happen for a native version of Basic Black to appear. First, Apple will have to supply a native version of the Event Manager. This will happen eventually. Second, I'll have to lay my hands on MetroWerks CodeWarrior Gold, which, even at the educational price, is out of my reach right at the moment. I do intend to produce a native version at some point, but it won't be terribly soon.

For more information or to report bugs...

If you come across any bugs, you can reach me at mason@acheron.middleboro.ma.us on the Internet or 1:109/370.6 on FidoNet. You can also obtain the most recent versions of my software through the World Wide Web, at <http://www.cis.umassd.edu/~mason>.

I maintain a simple distribution list for Basic Black. If you're interested in being on it, send me mail, and I'll add you to the list. Everyone on the distribution list receives new versions through the mail, and they typically receive new versions before they're available on the archives.

If you want to beta test new versions of Basic Black, and thus get the new stuff before anyone else, email me.

About the author...

This is me:



I write quality Mac software as a hobby, which is why you're reading this right now. If you want to find out more about me, or more about other software I've written, check out my web page. I'm putting together a page of stuff I've written and released. It's available at <http://www.cis.umassd.edu/~mason>.

Beta Tester Appreciation Section

Many thanks to my beta testers, who never cease in their unending quest to find obscure and bizarre bugs. Basic Black wouldn't be what it is without them.

My beta testers are, alphabetically by first name: Ammon J. Skidmore, Anthony Chan, Bill Levering, BrandonT, Charles W. Snyder, Jr., Dave, David Oberst, Jeffery A. Schneider, E.J. Chichilnisky, Farokh Irani, George J. Pappas, Harris Leiter, Herwig Henseler, Ian Crew, Jason Holtzapple, Jeremy Keens, Jonathan Pool, Kenneth L. Williams, LOTTSIM, Loyd Mowry, Mark Andrew Nassy, Mathew Wilkins, Matt Christian, Michael Lapson, Michael R. Erb, Michael W. Leach, Mike Edwards, Mike van Lammeren, Nick Burgoyne, Norm Harris, PACS.AUX, Paul Smallwood, Phil Hudson, Philip Wheelock, Ralph Henry, Richard Sima, Rickard Andersson, Robert Pellerin, Ron Hirsch, Rwanderman, Schei Lars, Thomas Reed, Tony VanderLee, and last, but not least, Wendy Taller.

If you're a beta tester and I've missed you, write to me. If you're not a beta tester, but you'd like to be, write to me - the more beta testers I have, the more problems we find and fix prior to shipment.

Translator Appreciation Section

I want Basic Black to be accessible to everyone. To this end, friends of mine have donated their time and effort to translate the Basic Black documentation and interface to languages other than English, thus making Basic Black much more accessible to speakers of the languages in question.

I'd like to thank Robert Pellerin for translating Basic Black into French and for being an invaluable and most useful beta tester for quite some time now. I'd also like to thank Kate Lawrence for translating Basic Black into Spanish and for being generally cool.

If you're reading this, and you're skilled in a language other than English, write to me... I'd love to have Basic Black available in as many languages as possible. I'm particularly interested in finding folks who can translate the documentation into Japanese and German for me, but all languages are welcome.

Recent changes...

1.5.1: Fixed bug where "Grab Picture From Clipboard" would crash some Macintoshes.

Made version checking in the cdev more rigorous so as to prevent a possible crash if the 1.5.1 control panel is run while 1.4.1 or earlier is currently installed.

Manual now distributed in the form of a WriteNow document. It's better this way, as well as being easier for me, even if it is a slightly bulkier format. (But then, I've always been rather wordy anyway, so my docs have always been big!)

1.5: Screen redrawing on color Macs is now accomplished by resetting the bit depth of each attached monitor. This fixes the problem where floating windows would not redraw properly when Basic Black woke up.

Basic Black now makes use of a preferences file, rather than storing preferences internally.

Consequently, users will no longer have to re-enter their preferences when switching versions. The pasting of pictures is now supported, as an alternative to the bouncing clock.

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