

Product Information

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Shareware Fee: \$15

System Requirements

Power PC-based Mac with Mac OS 8.0 or higher

In case you and your Sherpa guides have just returned from another assault on the South Face of K-2 and have been out of touch for awhile, let me remind you: we love our Macs because (Fill in your favorite reason here.) and we can customize them to our heart's content without getting into too much trouble. If you are the type who can't leave well enough alone, but might be a bit put-off by ResEdit, and want everything on your Mac to reflect your personality (a scary thought for some of us) you might like to try out the adventure of Icon Tools by Alberto Ricci and Alessandro Levi Montalcini.

Icon Tools is a Contextual Menu Manager plug-in that allows you to create, modify, customize, rotate, invert and mark your Icons. For users of System 8 and above, the Contextual Menu Manager is a control-click menu of actions that can be customized to save time, mouse movement and keyboard strokes. I have to admit that I had not used the Contextual Menu very much until I began the review for Icon Tools, and I find it is a very powerful tool available to all Mac users that should not be overlooked. You can use the Contextual Menu to create folders, change desktop settings, make aliases, move items to the trash and many other repetitive chores. There are a number of helpful plug-ins available (like Icon Tools!) that you can use to customize your Contextual Menu Manager. Version 1.6 of the Icon Tools package has been redesigned to take advantage of the new 32-bit icons available with the release of System 8.5. Preview icons now look much better, and you can now apply transparent or translucent icon stamps.

Icon Tools comes as a package complete with its own installer. Simply launch the installer and restart and you're ready to customize. To use Icon Tools, control-click on any icon and a menu of Icon Tools will be displayed. You can then choose the method of changing the Icon. As you can see in the examples on the right, you can take the wonderful ATPM apple icon and frame it, add a small "stamp" to it to indicate that it's our favorite reading material, or go crazy and mark it with eyes, smileys, stars and trademark stamps. It's so easy to use you might find yourself getting carried away! The smaller stamps can be moved to any position on the icon with a handy palette that appears when you select a stamp to use.

Another handy use for Icon Tools is creating individual preview icons for pictures, sounds, movies, and desktop patterns. On the right are two examples of what can be done with a desktop pattern clipping and a regular text document. You can create preview icons for desktop patterns to easily see what the pattern looks like, and customize text icons to indicate subject, importance, under construction, or whatever you need to more easily be able to spot important documents or folders. Icon Tools also allows you to put any smaller icons on your desktop using the “minimize” command. That way aliases of all your favorite applications could be put on the desktop without using too much room.

There is no way for me to list all of the possible features and uses for Icon Tools in this small review, so my recommendation is to grab a copy of Icon Tools and try it out for yourself! It is easy to use and won't get you in any trouble, unless you overdo it and render some of your icons totally unrecognizable! In that case, there's always a “reset icon” command to restore sanity. Icon Tools will appeal to anyone who wants their Mac to have that “custom” look. It can also actually speed up your work by making it easier to locate files and folders. I now can't live without it.

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