

Speed and Memory enhancements made easy

Most of us continually add things to our Macs and our software environment. These additions take the form of new fonts, DAs, Control Panels and Extensions, etc. Ordinarily, because after all it is a Mac, we don't give much thought to the impact these additions may have on our operating system.

While most of us are familiar with the problems of Extension conflicts, we seldom realize that these many additions have two other effects on our OS. Speed is the first issue. What happens is that we add things incrementally, one piece at a time. We don't notice much degradation until one day we work on someone else's Mac and realize that ours has become a bucket of January molasses. Here are some speedups that you can do by simply reconsidering a bit how you work.

1. Never keep more Extensions or Control Panels loaded than you commonly use. If you haven't used that featured Extension in months, maybe you should remove it. It is hitting your operating system with a speed and memory penalty. Sure, it's small, but a dozen or so add up fast. Streamline.

2. Fonts. Yes, let's talk fonts. I have a drawer full of T-shirts that show a Mac font menu from shoulder to waist and the words "He who dies with the most fonts, wins!" Nice sentiment. But, fonts can drag a system down to a snail's pace in a hurry. There are several ways to minimize the effect, however.

- A. Only install those bitmap sizes needed by ATM. They are the 10 pt and 12 pt sizes. What, you're not using ATM? No excuse. Buy it and install it. It comes with a multitude of programs and is available from Adobe for a song. It allows you to throw away all bitmap sizes except the 10 and 12. That greatly speeds the loading of font tables when a program launches and reduces your font impact on system memory by as much as two thirds. Give ATM at least 128k partition, more if you use a lot of fonts in a document.

There is one caveat here. America On Line has specific bitmap font requirements that will render some of their title screens poorly if not met (unofficially the font is New York 18). There are some other programs, like certain Hypercard stacks, that require a full bitmap set of a certain font. It would pay to check with those programs you use most frequently to see if they have any special font requirements prior to executing this tip. If you encounter a 'rough' looking font in a program, don't panic (and don't call tech support). Just check the manual to find out what the font requirements are for that program and reinstall the needed bitmap sizes it requires. **There is apparently some controversy over this method. Nothing fatal will occur if this is implemented and the speed gain is well worth any potential difficulty encountered with a few programs. If you**

are traumatized by seeing an occasional odd splash screen, don't do this. If you manipulate fonts on a regular basis or have real speed problems, try it.

B. If you have more than 200 or so fonts, be aware that the MOS allows only 250 in a single suitcase file. FreeHand, among other programs, will bomb if more that 250 are loaded at a time. If you are loading directly into the Fonts folder on 7.1, this is a serious limit. The count is for the bitmapped versions also. Each point size and permutation counts. Its easy to determine, just open your bitmap suitcase and get the item count in the upper left of the window.

C. If you're a killer power font user and have thousands of fonts you need to be using a utility like Suitcase 2.0 (ver.2.1.4 is current as of 9/25/93). With this you should create a separate folder for each set of 200 or so fonts. That will allow you to certainly use them at will, but will not overdose the system's search capabilities as it might if all fonts were just dumped into a single directory. Above all, use the load and unload capabilities of Suitcase. You shouldn't ever have more than 250 fonts loaded at any one time. Load only what you use.

3. Watch the memory allocated to Extentions and Control Panels. Some of the more powerful ones can really give your memory overhead a beating. Give them enough room in which to work, but don't give them more.

4. Memory partitions for programs can be a fools economy if you're not careful. Tech support for a company will advice you that you can usually speed a program up and eliminate 'out of memory' dialogs by expanding the memory partition in the get info dialog. True as far as it goes. However, let me give you a typical scenario for disaster. A user has a Ilsi with 5mb of RAM. They decide that with 2mb being taken for OS they need to use Virtual Memory to achieve the lofty goal of having 10mb of memory. Whew, now we can open Quark, Freehand and Photoshop, right? Not exactly. Opening a program and working efficaciously are two different things. When you use virtual it does indeed enable you to open more programs, but, if you open a single program that takes more than the available organic (chips) RAM you will find yourself deep in mollasses again. If Quark in the above scenario has been bumped to, say 3200k (what Quark recommends, by the way) then you have the situation where the entire program cannot be loaded into RAM:

5,000kb
Total RAM
2,000kb
OS
3,200kb Quark
-200kb into Virtual Memory (disk)

This will mean a lot of disk accessing as Quark decides what part of the program it needs at the moment. Photoshop with its 6mb minimum is just too gruesome to describe if you put part of it to disk. Excellent program! RAM requirements are large.

It all goes back to the axiom, one never has too much RAM nor too much disk space. However, we must get along with what we can afford. That in mind, a routine inventory of your environment with the above items in mind may very well yield a boost in performance. Good housekeeping is just as important on the Mac as in the home.
Good Luck

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