Sets: Pre-defined file lists

Conflict Catcher let you switch from one set — a canned list of startup files in a specific on/off combination — to another simply by holding down a letter key or by choosing from a menu. In fact, Conflict Catcher comes pre-installed with a few useful sets that may help to illustrate the principle:

• Standard. This is the set you'll use for most purposes — the everyday set you've tweaked to perfection.

• Mac OS 8 Base. (Instead of "Mac OS 8," you'll see the name of whatever system-software version you're currently using.) In times of troubleshooting, this can be a useful set. It turns off any add-ons you've installed since the day you bought the Mac, leaving nothing on except the extensions and control panel that came from Apple. Only the most basic functions of your Macintosh are left intact — no faxing, no screen saver, no Microsoft Office, just your CD-ROM, printing, Internet, and a few other features. (The Mac OS 8 All set is similar, but includes a handful of additional files.) Conflict Catcher doesn't let you make changes to these "system-software only" sets.

This "Base" set is a good one to use when you're about to install any new software onto your Mac.

• Disable All Startup Files. This set's purpose is to turn off all extensions, just as though you'd held down the Shift key when the Mac was starting up.

But after several months of using Conflict Catcher, you may wind up creating a few new sets of your own, such as "CD-ROM only."

How to define a new set

1.
From the Sets menu, choose Save Set As.

You arrive at the Create Set dialog box. This dialog box is where you specify attributes of the set you're about to create:

• its name

• what it controls (usually Startup Files, but sometimes plug-ins or other Mac files), its Startup Key (a letter key you can press as the Mac is starting up to switch to this set), whether or not this is the Default set (selected automatically every time you turn on the Mac, unless you're holding down the Startup Key for a different set), and whether or not this is a PowerBook

set (becomes active automatically whenever your laptop is using a particular power source).

•   Change Location Manager — Do you use Apple's Location Manager control panel? If so, choosing a location's name from this pop-up menu makes Conflict Catcher switch to that location when you startup with this particular Conflict Catcher set. (If you don't have Location Manager installed, these options are unavailable.)

•   Play sound: If you've specified a startup key to hold down as the Mac starts up, Conflict Catcher can play a sound whose name you've chosen from this pop-up menu. When you use a startup key to change sets, the sound lets you know that Conflict Catcher has gotten the message, and that you can now lift your finger off the key you've been holding down.

•   Disable New Files — Suppose you add new extensions next week. Should Conflict Catcher make those new files part of this particular set?

In general, Conflict Catcher leaves anything new you install on. If you'd rather keep this set in its pure, virginal condition, however, turn on the Disable New Files checkbox. (Doing so doesn't prevent you from turning files on yourself. It simply means that the first time you install something new, it will start out, in this set, turned off.)

•   Locked — When you lock a set, you're telling Conflict Catcher that you don't want this particular arrangement of files disturbed under any circumstances. (The built-in Conflict Catcher sets, such as "Mac OS 8 All," are locked sets.)

2.
Click OK to return to the Conflict Catcher window. Turn on or off files as desired for this set.

3.
Choose Save Set from the Sets menu.

How to change sets

All right: you've spent a Saturday afternoon creating a few useful sets. How do you specify which set your Mac uses to start up from?

In several ways:

•   Choose a set's name from the Conflict Catcher Finder menu. This menu is the tiny CC icon in the upper-right corner of your screen. Tip: If you'd like to choose a new Conflict Catcher set and restart right away, hold down the

Option key as you choose the set's name from the CC menu.

• Hold down a letter key as the Mac is starting up. If you've previously defined a startup key for each set, as described in the previous section, you can change sets automatically as the Mac starts up by holding down the associated key. You'll see the name of the new set at the top of the window, and you'll hear the sound you associated with this set (if any).

• Open Conflict Catcher and choose a different set name from the Active Set pop-up menu. While this is the longest method of changing sets, it's also the only one that lets you adjust which files are on and off in the process.

Managing your sets

It's easy to duplicate, delete, print, or even change the settings associated with your sets. Just choose Edit Sets from the Conflict Catcher Sets menu. The Edit Sets dialog box appears, offering buttons that let you create, duplicate, edit, delete, or print information about your sets. You can even import or export set information for use on other Conflict Catcher-equipped Macs.

Comparing sets

Fool around with your Macintosh long enough, and it will happen: you'll wind up with two sets of extensions. One works great, the other crashes your Mac — but at a glance, you can't figure out the difference.

Sure, you could painstakingly compare one set against the other. Fortunately, Conflict Catcher makes this comparison process much easier, as follows:

1.
From the Active Sets pop-up menu, choose one of the two sets you want to compare.

If one of the two sets is already selected when you open Conflict Catcher, skip this step.

2.
From the Sets menu, choose Compare With Set.

A dialog appears, listing all of your sets. (You'll even see the name of the active set listed here, thus letting you compare a set with itself.)

3.
Double-click the name of the set you want to compare against.

At first, you may think you've just returned to the main Conflict Catcher window. If you look at the names of the files closely, however, you'll see that a few of them appear in gray, underlined type. These are the files that differ between the two sets you've specified.

If you don't see anything that's in gray, underlined lettering, then one of the following conditions may be at work:

• The sets are identical after all.

• Some files are gray and underlined, but they're currently hidden because their "flippy triangles" are closed. Click the tiny triangles so that they point downward to reveal the hidden files.

• You're trying to compare two sets that can't be compared. For example, you might be trying to compare one set that governs extensions and control panels with a set that governs only Web browser plug-ins. Obviously, there's no overlap between the two.

To end the comparison, getting rid of the underlined text and getting on with your life, choose Stop Comparing Sets from the Sets menu.