

DEL by Michael Eilers

DEL [The Usenet Gets Me Quakin', Part I](#)

A few friends of mine chuckle, laugh, or just shudder visibly whenever I start a sentence with, "I read on Usenet a few days ago..." "Use-LESS net, you mean!" they remind me, affecting attitudes of great disdain, as if they didn't get their start as newbies using "trn" in a Unix shell, which they did.

DEL Sometimes, I think they are very, very right. However, I have never been one to throw in with nay-sayers without looking at the other side of the issue. And honestly, I think Usenet can be pretty damn useful at times. I intend to back up that statement with proof, and lots of it.

DEL You'd pretty much have to be cowering in a hole in the ground to miss the fact that Quake has been released on the Mac, and that Quake-related Usenet articles are slowly taking over all of the c.s.m.games groups, from .action to .strategic and even in .misc. From this fine flood of posts I have gleaned a great number of tips, tricks, and other such useful stuff as to make your Quaking experience an unalloyed indulgence in pure mayhem and gore. Here you shall learn how to coax speed out of a slowpoke machine, how to tune your nifty TechWorks Power3D card, the lowdown on transparent water, and many other such things.

DEL A word about attribution: unfortunately it is not practical or wise for me to put sources and e-mail addresses with all of these tips and tricks, as many of the sources are missing due to bad quoting practices, munged e-mail headers and on-line aliases like "Mithril the StormBringer." If I mention a tip that you think of as "yours", please e-mail me immediately and I'll give you attribution; otherwise assume all the tips to follow just came from the Usenet community at large.

DEL [Performance Tips](#)

DEL Ah, no other game needs speed quite the way Quake does. A stunning piece of software, yet one that can bring a 604e to its knees (or a Pentium II, for that matter) on a daily basis. Here are a few of my fave tuning tips (for Power3D tips, see the 3Dfx Quake section below)...

DEL Turn off Virtual Memory, File Sharing, Appletalk, and set your sound to 22 kHz: basic procedure for any processor-intensive game, but it seems to help a lot for Quake especially. You can do all this and still play TCP/IP games, BTW. Trim your extensions as well, removing

hogs like Apple Guide and MenuTasker.

Buy more memory: Not really a tip, just general advice—if you have a Power Macintosh, then you should have 32 MB at a minimum, and need 48 for just to get the latest Netscape browser running. Give Quake as much as you can, but leave 2 MB between Quake and your System heap (i.e. if you have 32 MB and an 8 MB System heap, give Quake 22 MB at most. Otherwise you risk crashes when Quake loads shared libraries or uses Open Transport.)

Use your Options: Bruce Burkhalter went to a great deal of trouble making a Mac-like and friendly set of Options controls, so use 'em! Turn off Flames to gain a few fps in room with torches; turn on line-skipping to hide that blurry double-pixel effect. Crank down the active screen size to gain speed at the loss of screen real estate. Fool around, the possibilities are many! Which leads to my next trick...

Pseudo-Hi-Rez Mode: one of my very favorite tips. If you normally play in 640x480 pixel-doubled (320x240) with line skipping, here is how to get better-looking gameplay with no loss of fps. Go to Options/Screen and pick 832x624 as your screen size. Then, making sure the “double pixels” and “skip lines” boxes are checked, go over to the miniature monitor display and grab the red box and start dragging. Make the window 420x220—instant letterbox format! When the monitor re-syncs, the line-skipping will be much less noticeable, and because the Macintosh is faster at drawing horizontal pixels than vertical ones, you gain screen size without losing frame rate.

TCP/IP tip: for some strange reason, the screen size you use is related in some way to the sensitivity of Quake to packet loss on the Internet. Several posters swore that the best way to play Quake smoothly over TCP/IP was to shrink the screen to 512x384 using the “-” key while the game is in progress. I have no confirmation of this, but it is definitely a fact that the higher frame rate you play with, the better your online experience will be.

More TCP/IP tips: if you are playing a particular game you want to stay in, but are suffering pretty severe lag, try quitting and re-joining the game; this seems to clear out bad packets and may get you a smoother connection—or not.

[TechWorks Power3D/3Dfx Tuning Tips](#)

3Dfx Quake is a port of GLQuake, and as such has many built-in tuning options accessible from the command line. There are several cool features turned off by default, and a few small tweaks you can use to get a little more speed out of your card.

Turn Shadows On: I'm not sure why this is off by default, because it is one of the coolest things about 3Dfx Quake, and it doesn't hurt your frame rate at all. Just add

`r_shadows 1`

to your autoexec.cfg file.

More GL Tweaks:

`gl_finish 0`

seems to give about a 1.5 fps increase. Similarly,

`gl_round_down 0`

and

`gl_keptjunctions 0`

seem to give a small increase, but be warned—this causes noticeable visual degradations on my machine, such as small white “stars” flickering as I move and holes in the seams between large polygons.

Lighting Tips: 3Dfx Quake has a new lighting style, using transparent orange spheres to indicate “glowing” objects like lava balls and flying rockets. However, this oh-so-cool effect comes at a price: the Quake weapons no longer light up dark spaces like they did before! Type the following in your autoexec.cfg to get the “old” Quake lighting style back (this does not have a noticeable effect on frame rate):

`gl_flashbend 0`
`r_dynamic 1`

Faster Netplay: finally, a good way to keep netplay smooth during those 16-player games is to turn down the texture quality of other players in the game, so the card doesn’t work as hard when there are a few targets on the screen at a time. All you need to see is their pants color anyway, right? So just add

`gl_playermip 2` (can be up to 4)

to your autoexec, and then score a few frags for the Mac OS!

Bugs

As with any first release of a game, particularly one as ambitious as Quake, there are a few wrinkles to iron out. Here are some work-arounds for known Quake problems:

The Printer Port Purge: several posters had a problem with Quake jump-starting their printer and wasting a few pages with garbage output. The way to solve this is: turn off Appletalk on your system (using the Chooser), or hold down the Option key as you double click Quake. At the command line, type “-notalk” (including the dash, no space.)

Crackly Sound: Users of Power Macintosh 7200s or systems built around that motherboard (such as the PowerCenter Pro series) might experience crackling sound or hissing during the game, especially when using the TechWorks Power3D card. Again, two ways to solve this one: Go to your Monitors and Sounds control panel and turn your Sound Output Quality down to 11 KHz, which does not affect quality of CD playback, or Go to www.powerwatch.com and download the PCI Timing Update extension if you have a Power Computing machine, or go to ATI’s site (www.atitech.com) and download this drivers package if you have a 7200 system—you need the ATI Catalyst Sound extension.

Demo Crashes: for those unlucky (or unwealthy) few who have not yet bought the full version, you might be experiencing crashes with the Quake demo, especially just as it tries to load a level. Add “r_subdiv16 0”(including spaces) to your autoexec.cfg file to avoid this.

Launch-and-Lock with IPX: This is my own personal tip, with no confirmation from the Usenet. On my system, if I load MacIPX (installed with Quake) then 3Dfx Quake will lock up on launch about 25% of the time, before it can even re-sync the monitor. Removing this extension (which you only need to play over Kali or with a locally-networked PC over Ethernet) solved the problem for me.

Not a bug, but definitely a 1.0 thing: IP domain names (i.e. inficad.quake.server) do not work—you must use IP numbers to connect over TCP/IP; also, modem-to modem does not

work and has been disabled.

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DEL [Autoexec.cfg Tricks](#)

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I know, I know, Mac users hate the very idea of having to mess with a ..cfg file—that's why we're here on the Light Side of the Force! But Quake is an extremely flexible game, if not the most flexible ever, and tweaking it can make things a lot of fun. Just use SimpleText to edit your Autoexec.cfg file (found in your "id1" folder inside the Quake folder).

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DEL Add Mouselook: a very, very basic tip, but utterly necessary. Add "+mlook" (no spaces) to your autoexec file immediately! Trust me, you want to learn to play this way—all the true fragmiesters do this. Learning to knock your jumping friends out of the sky with the rocket launcher is a totally vital skill just not available to keyboard players. If you are a previous Marathon player, make sure to check "Invert Mouse" in the Options dialog, to avoid any unnecessary brain-retraining.

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DEL Multiple Prefs: if you use expansion packs or Total Conversion modifications in Quake, you can save a separate group of settings/tweaks with each one. Just put an Autoexec.cfg file within the folder of the mod you are using, and drop that folder on the Quake application to launch. Watch out for custom config.cfg files that come with some conversions and downloads—they can muss up your monitors and sound settings, though not permanently. My usual routine is to open custom config files and copy out the newly-bound keys (look for anything with "bind" that looks out of the ordinary) to a new autoexec.cfg file, and then delete the config file.

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DEL Advanced Super-Bonus Tip: if you want to have some custom autoexec tweaks for an expansion pack or mod, but don't want to have to copy and paste your normal autoexec commands into the new one, do this: Make a copy of your original autoexec file and put it into the folder of the conversion/level/expansion pack. Rename it autoexec.cfg.orig. Then add this line to the top of the regular autoexec.cfg file: "exec autoexec.cfg.orig". (Thanks to Matt Haffner for this trick!)

DEL More next month, including tips on transparent water with 3Dfx, netplay tips, where to find the best Quake mods, and much more!

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DEL If you have a tip to add to the list, don't be shy! Just mail me with your info.