# Jargon buster

Modem
The gadget that converts the digital data used by your iMac into signals that can be sent along normal phone lines. The iMac has a modem built in, but you'll still need to connect it to the phone socket in the wall using the cable supplied.

Pre-installed
iMacs come with a variety of software already on the hard disk. This includes the system software, which the iMac needs in order to start up and run, and various applications (programs) like AppleWorks.
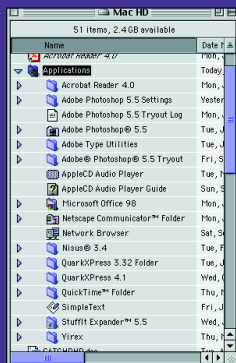
RSI
RSI stands for 'repetitive strain injury' and describes a painful condition suffered by many typists. It's often the result of bad keyboard postioning and awkward wrist angles.

Restore CD
This is a CD supplied with your iMac at point of purchase which will restore the pre-installed software in the event that it's accidentally deleted, corrupted or otherwise meddled with.

Install CD
Normally, your iMac will start up using the system software on the hard disk. If this fails for any reason, you can start up from this CD, which itself contains a (cut-down) copy of the system software.

What's in the box?

Rip off the tape and throw open the box. It's just like Christmas, isn't it?

Your iMac is right there in front of you in its sealed box. It's the moment of truth but it's not the three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle you might be dreading, and the box contains just the following six items:

● The iMac itself
● Keyboard
● Mouse
● Mains and modem leads
● CDs
● Documentation

If your iMac arrived in a factory-sealed box and you haven't found one of the above items, it's because you're not looking in the right place!

If you're buying a used iMac or an ex-demo model from a store, make sure they are all present and correct before leaving the place of purchase. While much of the software on the CDs is pre-installed anyway, you may need the Restore and Install CDs for sorting out possible problems in the future. The CDs also contain bonus software that's not pre-installed on the hard disk.

What if it doesn't work?
It's rare, but it might happen. If a fault develops some time after you bought the machine, the dealer can rightly insist that you take the matter up with Apple directly under the terms of your one-year warranty. But if the machine or one of its components is faulty straight out of the box, you're entitled to reject it under the Sale of Goods Act and claim a replacement or a refund. The onus is on the dealer to take care of it.

Where do you put it?
Obviously, you'll need to be within reach of a mains socket, but if you plan on using email and the Internet, you'll need to choose a spot close to a phone socket too. You can get telephone extension leads from any DIY or electrical store, though.

Make sure your iMac isn't facing a window directly, since the bright light reflecting back off the screen will make the display difficult to read. Don't position your iMac with its back to a bright window, either, since your eyes will find it difficult to accommodate the difference in brightness between the screen and the scene outside.

And, although the iMac's desktop 'footprint' is quite small compared to other computers, you'll need a foot or more of space in front of it for your keyboard, plus a few inches to the left or right for using the mouse. Many narrow 'computer desks' are unsuitable for any modern computer because they don't leave room for the mouse.

Top tips
You'll have spotted already that you can plug the iMac's mouse into either end of the keyboard.

So you plug it into the righthand end for right-handed use and the lefthand end if you're left-handed, yes? By all means... but if you find the loop of cable connecting the mouse with the keyboard just keeps getting in the way, you can connect it at the opposite end and run the cable along behind the keyboard.

When you first put it on your desk, the iMac screen is parallel with your chest rather than your line of sight, but you can tilt the monitor backwards and swing it forward with the hinged bar on the underside. This acts as a 'foot' for the iMac, tilting the whole unit backwards a few degrees for a much more comfortable viewing angle.

You can do a similar trick with the keyboard. Underneath there's a similar swinging bar which you bring forward to tilt the back of the keyboard upwards.

Easy, huh? If you just take a few minutes over choosing a location for your iMac and setting it up properly, you'll find it much easier and more comfortable to use for long periods.

Plug it in, turn it on

Now it's time to stop admiring the iMac's good looks and get down and get your hands dirty…

Okay, it's time to plug in the iMac and switch it on. But what goes where? Everything revolves around the twin USB ports on the righthand side of the machine, towards the back. USB is the newest standard for connecting computers and peripherals, like scanners, printers and, in the case of the iMac, keyboards and mice. There are two USB sockets in the iMac casing, but you'll only need one of them, for plugging in the keyboard.

If you're not going to use the other socket, where does the mouse go? It too uses a USB connection, but if you take a look at the iMac keyboard you'll see it has two USB sockets of its own, one at either end. The keyboard is, in fact, a USB 'hub'.

With the mouse connected to the keyboard and the keyboard connected to the iMac, all you have to do is put the mains lead into the back of the iMac, plug it into a wall socket and you're ready to go.

Starting up

To start your iMac, you can press one of two Power buttons: on the front of the iMac or the one on the keyboard.

The iMac will 'chime' as it starts up, and first you'll see a happy Mac face, then a Welcome screen and finally a row of icons will appear along the bottom of the screen as the system software loads. You'll know your iMac has finished starting up when you see the desktop and its icons and the menubar along the top of the screen. You'll probably hear that the audible hard disk activity during startup has ceased.

Startup takes about 30 seconds, and what's happening is that the iMac is doing a basic hardware check to ensure that all the components are working as they should. Next, it's loading the system software on the hard disk. Only when this has finished loading is your iMac ready for use.

Which OS do you have?

Depending on when you bought your iMac, it may come with operating system version 8.5 or OS 9. There's a new one coming out soon too. Apple is always developing the operating system to include new features, improve performance and reliability and make it easier and friendlier to use. iMacs are currently shipped with OS 9 (you can upgrade if you have an earlier version, but it's by no means essential), but version 10 is in the pipeline and promises to be a major redesign.

About This Computer

Mac OS 9

Version: Mac OS 9.0
Built-in Memory: 64 MB
Virtual Memory: 96 MB used on Macintosh HD
Largest Unused Block: 66.2 MB   ™ & © Apple Computer, Inc. 1983–1999

Mac OS   23.9 MB
Microsoft Word   9 MB

You can easily find out which version of the operating system your iMac has by choosing About This Computer from the Apple menu

Setup Assistant

If this is the first time you've run your iMac, it'll display the Setup Assistant, which is a series of screens asking for simple user information. Typing this information in now will configure your iMac with details and local information (UK keyboard settings, for example) as well as the current date and time. You can cancel the Setup Assistant and come back to it later. You can even enter the various settings manually, using the Control Panels, at your own leisure.

Do you want to get on the Internet?

○ Yes, I want an Internet account.
● I'll use my existing Internet service.
○ Tell me more about the Internet.
○ No, not right now.

Go Back   Continue

You'll see the Setup Assistant when starting your iMac for the first time

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Assistant
A step-by-step guide to carrying out what might otherwise prove complex or confusing procedures. Generally, you have to answer questions or choose from a simple list of options via a short sequence of screens.

OS (operating system)
The OS (operating system) is the 'interface' between you and the iMac hardware and the programs you install on it. It lets you and your software 'talk' to and control the iMac hardware.

Peripherals
The term used to describe plug-in computer gadgets or accessories, for example, cameras, scanners, printers and disk drives.

Startup
All computers, including both PCs and iMacs, go through a startup sequence which includes basic hardware checks and then the loading on the system software. This process can be called bootup too.
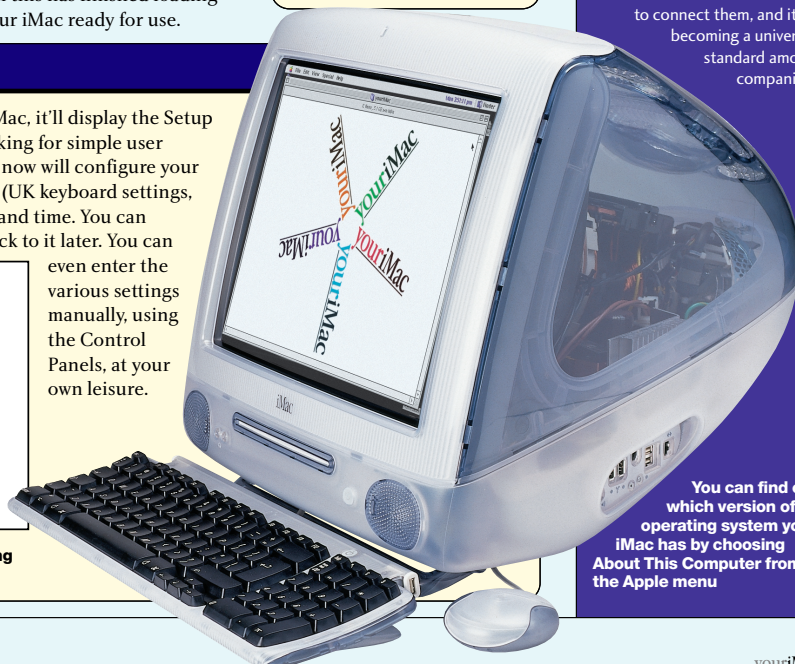
USB
USB stands for universal serial bus and it is the simplest type of connection for peripherals. You don't have to switch the iMac off to connect them, and it is becoming a universal standard amongst companies.

You can find out which version of the operating system your iMac has by choosing About This Computer from the Apple menu

Jargon buster

Cursor
The on-screen pointer you use to select objects and open menus. Its appearance may change according to the software you're using and what you're doing at the time. In a paint program, for example, it might turn into a brush symbol.

Text insertion point
A potential source of confusion when you're just starting out. You use the mouse to click at the point in your document where you want to start typing. The insertion point stays where it is, even though the mouse pointer carries on moving around the screen. Any text you type will appear at the insertion point, rather than the current mouse pointer position. In this screenshot you can see that we have put the text insertion point in at the end of the line. The cursor will still move around the screen as normal but text will be inserted at that point.
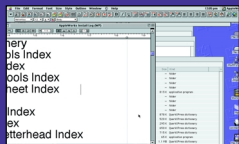
Drag and drop
You 'drag and drop' files from one folder to another, for example, or 'drag and drop' objects (pictures, say) from one document to another. You 'drag' the object (holding the mouse button down), and 'drop' it (or let go) when it's in the right position.

Optical mouse
A mouse which uses a light sensor to detect movement rather than a rubber ball and switches. Theoretically more accurate and precise, an optical mouse also has no moving parts to clog up with dust and gunk. The older-style pebble mouse which originally came with an iMac is not optical. You can tell because it has a ball.

The mouse

Not a furry rodent, this mouse will quickly become your best friend

If you've never used a mouse before, you'll find it takes a little getting used to. If you have, you'll find it hard to imagine controlling a computer without one.

At first, it seems almost magical. You move this small, pebble-like object on your desktop and a pointer moves on the screen as you do it. Before long, it becomes second nature. You can perform a wide variety of operations using its single button. These operations include clicking, double-clicking and dragging.

Move the mouse pointer over an object and click once to select it. Here we've clicked on our hard disk to check its properties (Get Info, File menu)

Clicking
Clicking is used for selecting objects and opening menus. For example, you can click on the Macintosh HD icon on the Desktop, then click on the File menu and then the Get Info option to find out various things about it (size, free space and so on).

If you're using a drawing program or Web page creation software, you'd click on an object to select it so that you could change its appearance or properties.
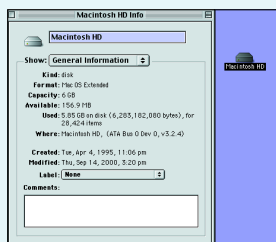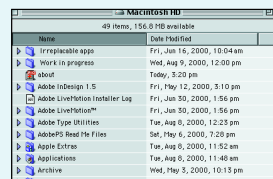
Double clicking
Double clicking, by contrast, makes things happen. If you double click on the Macintosh HD icon on the Desktop, it opens a window showing the contents of your hard disk. If you double click on an application icon, it starts that application. If you double click on a document, it opens that document. Simple eh?

Dragging
Dragging moves things around or changes their size. You drag an object by positioning the pointer over it, pressing the mouse button and then moving the mouse without releasing the button. For example, you can move a document from one folder to another by dragging it. And you can also change the size of a folder window by dragging on the box in the bottom righthand corner.

You can move windows around by dragging on their title bars. (You'll find out much more about windows, menus, icons and folders over the next few pages.) Why not have a quick practice now?

The pebble mouse
The vast majority of *Your iMac* readers will have a pebble mouse that looks like this. It was either loved or hated, but it is generally accepted that the new optical model is an improvement.

Mouse species
Until the arrival of the new iMacs this year, the iMac mouse has always been circular. It looks and feels nice, but has a drawback: you can't feel which way is forward, and this makes it more difficult to control the pointer accurately. This mouse was modified to include a small indentation right at the front of the button, which made a big difference, but if you own one of the older mice you can achieve a similar effect using a small piece of tape or a label, positioning it just where your fingers naturally fall, right at the front of the mouse button.

Double click on applications to start them, on documents to open them and on folder or disk icons to display the contents

The Desktop

You may have heard the term before but don't know quite what it means. Here we explain the ins and outs of the Desktop

The Desktop is your working area, where you lay out and organise the things you're working on. It contains icons for your hard disk, the Trash and other items 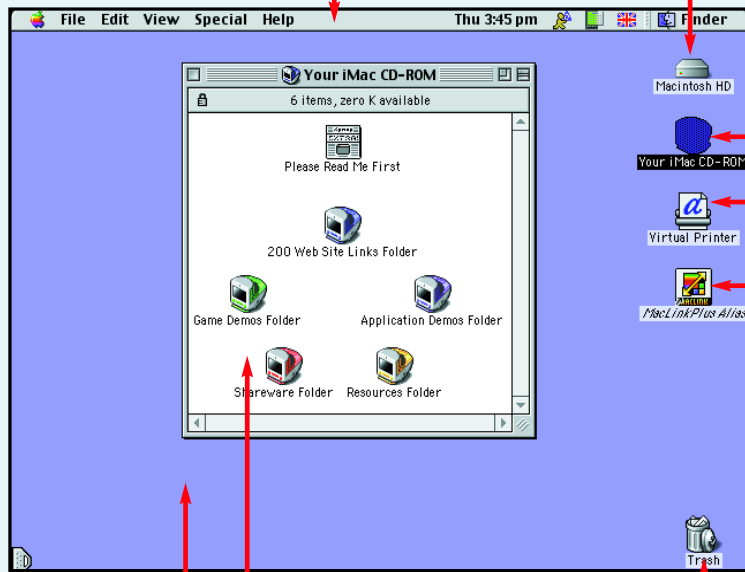as we've seen, but you can also often see the desktop 'behind' any open windows and, indeed, you can return to it by clicking on any part of it you can see. And here's a tipe for you: if you click on the desktop, then choose Hide Others, your desktop is magically cleared.

Returning to the Desktop can help you stay orientated, especially if you're running several applications at once. It's a great place to store files or folders. Don't use it as a dumping ground though, or your iMac will become a mess!

Jargon buster

Finder
This is the part of the operating system you see. It's the program you use to organise your files and folders and to start other programs. The Finder is always running in the background as an integral part of the operating system software.

Icon
The iMac provides a 'graphical' interface. Folders and files are depicted as visible objects, or 'icons'. You can drag icons around in order to move them from one place to another.
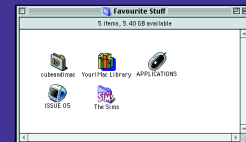
Application
Another word for a software program. Every file or document on your iMac has a corresponding application which is used to open and edit it. Think of files as the things you create, and applications as the things you create them with.

AppleWorks is just one of the products you get with your iMac. It's a collection of applications in one package

Volume
Another word for 'disk'. The iMac's built-in hard disk drive is a 'volume', and so is a CD-ROM you insert. If you plug in other types of drive like floppy and Zip drives, the disks you insert are 'volumes' too.

Window
You do all your work in 'windows'. These are like real windows, and they let you see into folders and disk drives. When you open, for instance, a word processor document or a digital photo, it opens in a window.

Menu bar
Menus are used by just about all iMac applications, and they're accessed by a menu bar like this, running along the top of the screen. The menu bar contains a row of menu headings, and you click on a menu heading to open its menu

Hard disk
Everything on your iMac is stored on your iMac's built-in hard disk, even the items on the Desktop. You can double-click it to open a window displaying the contents (you'll find out more about windows, icons and folders over the next few pages)

CD-ROM
You'll only see this icon if you've put a disc in your iMac's CD-ROM drive. Double-click on the CD to show contents. When you drag the CD-ROM icon into the trash, the disc is ejected and the icon disappears

Printer icon
You may see other items on your desktop. This, for instance, is a printer icon, and you can sometimes drag your documents to this icon to print them instead of opening the documents themselves and printing from within the relevant application

Desktop background
Choose from many different background colours, textures and even images. Open the Apple menu, choose Control Panels and then the Appearance option on the submenu which pops up. Click the Desktop tab, and you'll see a list of patterns. Click Place Picture. You can even select any image on your hard disk to use as a background

Trash
The place where you throw items you no longer need. It doesn't get emptied immediately, though. Indeed, you have to manually empty the Trash. It's rather like a wastepaper basket or dustbin: handy for people who throw things away and then regret it later

Folder window
This is the window which appears when we double-click on our iMac's hard disk icon. It displays a list of the files and folders stored on our hard disk. Practically everything you see and do on your iMac happens in windows of one form or another

Alias
An Alias is like a shortcut to an item stored somewhere else. Indeed, if you've used PCs running Windows 95 or 98 you'll be familiar with 'shortcuts' already. This is the iMac equivalent

Jargon buster

Dialog
Dialogs are widely used in iMac applications. They're windows which list a series of options and controls for deciding on everything from the formatting of the text in a word processing program to the size of your digital photographs.

Palette
A palette is a kind of cross between a window and a dialog. It offers the kind of options and controls you get in a dialog, but stays open and floating on the screen all the time so that it's constantly accessible.

Pop-up menu
Dialogs and some application windows offer menus of their own, quite separate from the main menu bar. They're usually indicated by a downward-facing arrow, click on the arrow, and the menu pops up (or down, to be more accurate). Below is an example of a pop-up menu on your desktop. Set this up via the View menu. You'll see an As Popup Window option.
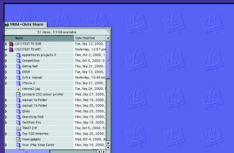
Button
Dialogs usually contain at least two buttons – OK and Cancel. You click the OK button to apply the settings you've chosen and the Cancel button if you change your mind. Many applications rely heavily on buttons.

Toolbar
As well as menus and dialogs, many applications use toolbars to speed up common operations. Like the menu bar, toolbars run across the top of the screen. They contain rows of buttons which you click on once to carry out specific actions (as opposed to choosing actions from a menu).
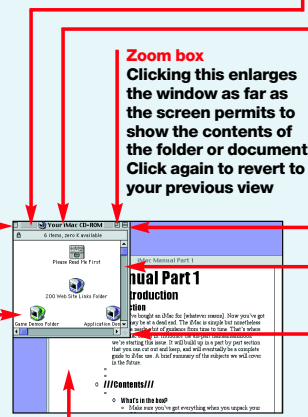
Windows
An integral part of iMac life, using your windows will soon become second nature

Get used to windows because you'll be using them frequently with your iMac. As with real windows, they allow you to see what's going on inside. You can see all files in each folder.

Active window
You click on a window to make it 'active'. The window behind this one is 'inactive', and we can't do anything with it until we click on it

Title bar
A window's title bar shows the name of the folder (if it's a folder window) or a document (if it's a document window. You can drag anywhere on this ribbed bar to move the window around

Zoom box
Clicking this enlarges the window as far as the screen permits to show the contents of the folder or document. Click again to revert to your previous view

Collapse box
Click on this to collapse the window to its title bar – useful for getting the window out of the way to access windows or items underneath it. Click again to expand the window

Close box
Click this box to close the window if it's a folder window or close the document if it's a document window

Finder window
This is what you see if you double click on your hard disk icon, or on a folder icon. It displays the contents of the disk or folder, which may be files/documents or further folders

Scrollbar
If the window's not large enough to show all contents, the scrollbar becomes active. Hold the pointer down on the up/down/left/right arrows to scroll around, or drag on scroll boxes

Document window
When you open a file using an application, it appears in a window like this. They can be moved and resized

Size box
Drag on this to resize the window

Menus
Menus are lists of options which come from the bar at the top of the screen

Get to grips with menus and you won't go far wrong. They show you what's going on in each application and you can find every function in the menus.

Menu bar
Every application, including the Finder (the part of the iMac's operating system that you see and work with) has a menu bar. You click on one of the menu titles to open that menu

Menu
A list of options, grouped according to general function. The File menu handles functions relating to opening, closing and saving files. Move the mouse pointer down the list and click the option you want

Disabled item
When a menu item is 'greyed out', it means it's unavailable because it applies to an option or function not available at that particular time

Ellipses
When you see a row of three dots (ellipses) after a menu option, it means that choosing that option will open a dialog box where you need to make further choices
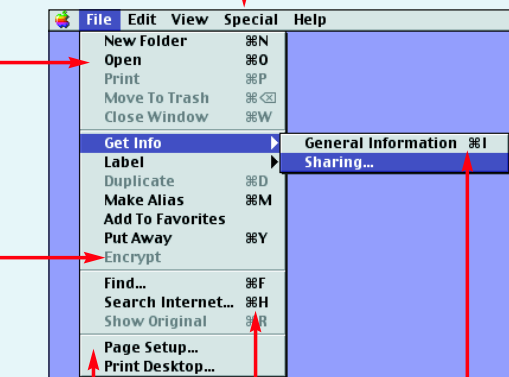
Keyboard shortcut
Some menu options are so useful and they are needed so often that program makers have included keyboard shortcuts. Press the keys indicated as above

Submenu
Where you see a right-facing arrow next to a menu option, this means that option opens out into a further 'sub' menu when you move the mouse pointer over it

The Apple menu

The Apple menu is your access to many functions and controls in your iMac

I t may well be small and quite easy to overlook but it's also very important. Don't miss the apple symbol in the top lefthand corner of your screen. Here we tell you how it will be useful to you in the coming weeks.

Apple menu
This is a single menu offering access, via sub-menus, to your favourite applications, documents, folders and tools. Open it by clicking on this apple symbol to the far left of the menu bar. It's visible at all times

Custom items
You won't find these items on your iMac's Apple menu because we put them on this ourselves. That's the beauty of the Apple menu: you can put what you like on it. All you have to do is place the item (or an alias) in the Apple Menu Items folder in the System Folder
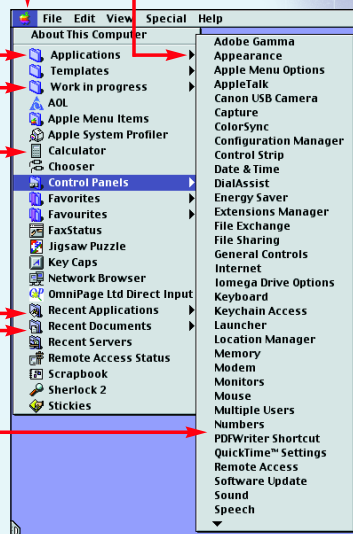
Recent Applications/Documents
The iMac keeps track of the last 10 software applications you used and the last 10documents you opened. They're listed in these submenus, and it's often easier to find them here than to track them down on your hard disk

Calculator, Key Caps and other accessories
You'll find various handy utilities on the Apple menu. Key Caps, in case you're wondering, opens a window where you can find and use special characters like mathematical symbols and foreign accents

Control Panels
Control Panels are used to configure aspects of iMac hardware, the operating system and the applications you've installed

Sub-menus
These arrows indicate Apple menu options that lead to sub-menus

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Control Panels

There are a few elements of the Control Panel which are essential to know

Appearance. One of the great things about the iMac is the amount of control you have over the interface. This is one of the iMac's most complicated Control Panels, but there's lots to play with here.
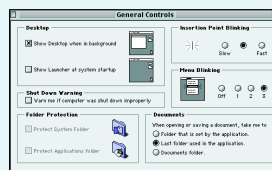**Control Strip.** You may have noticed the Control Strip along the bottom of your screen. This strip offers fast access to many of the controls offered by the Control Panels. It has its own Control Panel for setting its various display options.
Date and Time. You use this Control Panel to set the current time and date. iMacs are

shipped around the world, so you'll also need to tell it which country you live in so that it works in the right time zone. Set it up to allow for British Summer Time automatically.
General Control. Use this Control Panel to set the rate at which the insertion point blinks (hey, it matters to some people)! You can also choose the folders that applications default to when opening or saving documents.
Mouse. Is your mouse too fast? Having trouble getting used to this double-clicking lark? Novice users will find this

Control Panel useful because it lets them slow the mouse down until they get used to it.
Sound. You can use this to change the Alert sound your iMac makes when it wants your attention. You can use it, too, to check your speaker balance, and switch audio input between the CD-ROM drive (which you can use for audio CDs) and the in-built microphone.

Get your insertion point to blink faster. Anything's possible!

Jargon buster

Apple Menu Items
This is the name of the folder in the System Folder that contains all the items you see on the Apple menu. Unlike other menus, you can put whatever you like on the Apple Menu, making it a rapid route to all your most frequent daily activities.

Defaults
Defaults are preset choices in dialogs and menus. For example, your printer will be set to a 'default' paper size which you'll have to override if you want to use a different size.

Extensions Manager
Control Panels and System Extensions are individual components that are loaded along with the operating system when you start up. Sometimes you may need to disable one or more of these components, and the Extensions Manager Control Panel lets you choose which.

Alias
An Alias is a shortcut to a file, application or folder stored somewhere else on your hard disk. Aliases are especially useful for placing on the Apple menu, so that you've got quick access to your favourite items without having to take them out of your nicely organised filing system (more on this in a few pages).

Theme
Like Windows 95 and Windows 98 on PCs, the iMac can now be set up with desktop Themes, which are matching desktop backgrounds, fonts, sounds and colours. To apply Themes all you have to do is click on Appearance in Control Panels.

Text insertion point
A potential source of confusion when you're just starting out. You use the mouse to click at the point in your document where you want to start typing. The insertion point stays where it is, even though the mouse pointer carries on moving around the screen. Any text you type will appear at the insertion point, rather than the current mouse pointer position.

Jargon buster

Extensions conflict
The more software you have installed, the greater the possibility (it's still pretty remote, though) of an extensions conflict, where two System software components from different software publishers conflict with each other and cause problems either with the operating system or your software.

Font
A character style. You can get serif fonts where the characters have little tails, sans serif fonts without the tails, heavy fonts with thick characters, and condensed fonts and so on.

Install
Software applications these days are a whole collection of files, some of which may have to be stored in specific locations on your hard disk. Applications come with installers which place these files in the correct places (some may need to go in the System Folder) automatically.
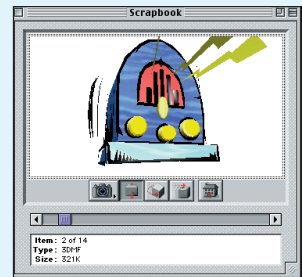
The System folder

The System folder should not be tampered with willy nilly, Here's why…

The System folder contains the whole of your iMac's OS software and various other important applications, utilities and files needed to keep it running smoothly.

It's stored on your iMac's internal hard disk. Double click on the hard disk icon on your Desktop and scroll down the list of files until you come to it.

Take a look at our annotated diagram to find some of the more significant files and folders it contains. The fact of the matter is, though, that if you don't understand what the System folder does, you should leave it alone. If applications need to install files in the System folder, they'll do it automatically, and the operating system itself fetches and manages the data in the System folder without any intervention on your part.

Why does the System folder contain so many files? Because modern computer operating systems are 'modular'. It's more efficient to build them out of many interdependent modules rather than one big file. Think of your iMac's system software as a jigsaw puzzle.

The only time you need to fiddle with the contents of the System folder is if your iMac or its software is playing up. You can resolve Extension Conflicts by manually disabling System Extensions but you need a bit of experience for this.
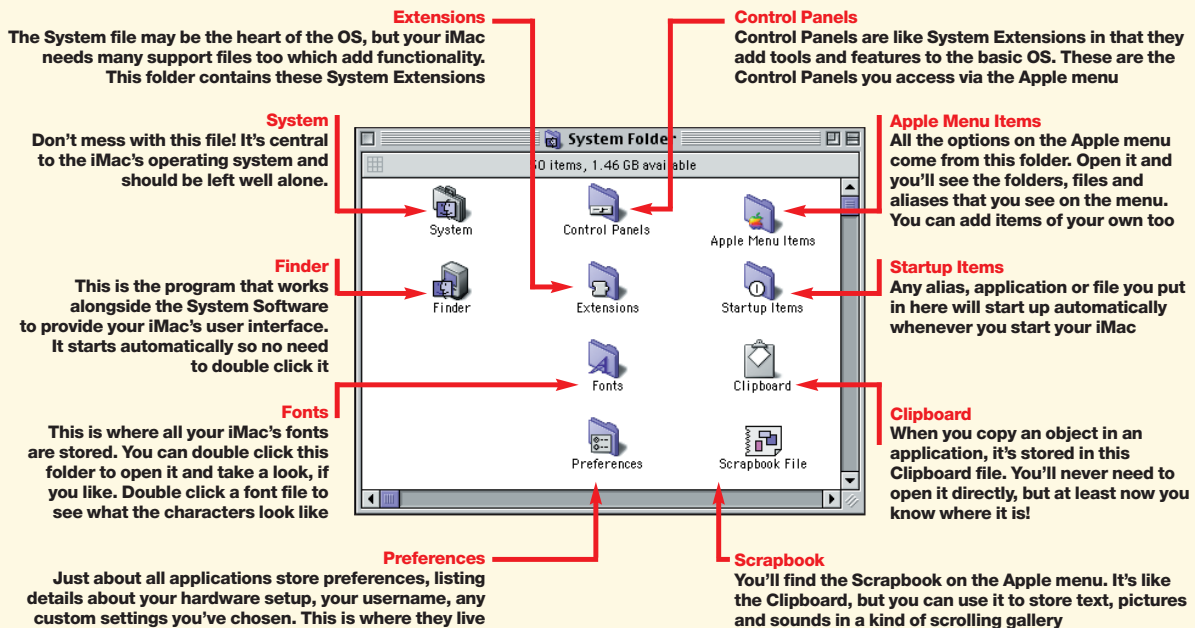
You may be called on to install fonts, Control Panels or Extensions manually. It's easy! You just drag them on to the System folder icon and they're automatically inserted into the appropriate folder inside it.

The Scrapbook is on the Apple menu. Store pics, sounds and text
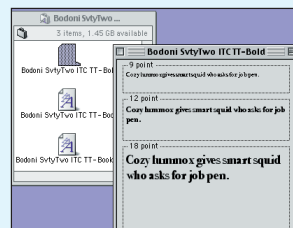
Double click on a font and double click on one of the font files. You'll see a preview of how it looks

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System folder contents

These are by no means all the files and folders you'll find in your iMac's System folder, but they're some of the most important.

Extensions
The System file may be the heart of the OS, but your iMac needs many support files too which add functionality. This folder contains these System Extensions

Control Panels
Control Panels are like System Extensions in that they add tools and features to the basic OS. These are the Control Panels you access via the Apple menu

System
Don't mess with this file! It's central to the iMac's operating system and should be left well alone.

Apple Menu Items
All the options on the Apple menu come from this folder. Open it and you'll see the folders, files and aliases that you see on the menu. You can add items of your own too

Finder
This is the program that works alongside the System Software to provide your iMac's user interface. It starts automatically so no need to double click it

Startup Items
Any alias, application or file you put in here will start up automatically whenever you start your iMac

Fonts
This is where all your iMac's fonts are stored. You can double click this folder to open it and take a look, if you like. Double click a font file to see what the characters look like

Clipboard
When you copy an object in an application, it's stored in this Clipboard file. You'll never need to open it directly, but at least now you know where it is!

Preferences
Just about all applications store preferences, listing details about your hardware setup, your username, any custom settings you've chosen. This is where they live

Scrapbook
You'll find the Scrapbook on the Apple menu. It's like the Clipboard, but you can use it to store text, pictures and sounds in a kind of scrolling gallery
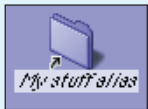
Icons

When we say icons, we don't mean world leaders. Read on and find out…

Everything on your iMac is represented by an icon, but how do you tell one type of file from another, and how do you organise these icons?

For a quick guide to recognising icon types and what they mean, take a look at our annotated illustration. But whatever icons represent, you can move and organise them in much the same way.

To move an icon to another place on your desktop, for example, you click on the icon and, still holding down the mouse button, move the mouse and release the button when the icon's in the right place. To rename an icon, click on it once and wait for a few moments. The name will be highlighted ready for you to type over it.

You can move icons from one folder to another simply by opening both folder windows and dragging the icon from one to the other. We'll go into more detail about organising your folders in the next section.

Aliases are special types of icons. They're not real items at all, merely shortcuts to folders, files or applications. To create one, click on an icon and choose Make Alias from the File menu. Put the alias wherever you like, and double clicking it has the same effect as double clicking the original item.

You can recognise an alias by the little shortcut arrow to the bottom left of the icon and the fact the icon name is in italics

Which OS do you have?

Folder
Double click on a folder icon and it opens a folder window where you can see the contents.

Document/file
Double click on a document or file and your iMac will find the right application to open your document ready for viewing or editing. Most applications generate documents which have readily-identifiable icons, like the big blue 'W' which is used for Microsoft Word.

Application
Double clicking an application's icon starts that application.

Open folder/file
When an icon is greyed-out, it means the item is already open.

Choose your view

When you double click on a folder icon to view its contents in a window, you can display those contents in one of three ways via the View menu.

View as Icons
This is the view most people use, displaying the icons we've been describing

Button view
Useful for those who aren't used to iMacs or mice. You only have to click on them once to activate them

List view
This is the view favoured by most iMac experts. The icons are smaller but you see other information too

Trash

Store your waste in the Trash and only delete it when you're sure it's rubbish

Down in the bottom righthand corner of your Desktop (unless you've moved it) is the Trash icon. This looks and behaves just like a normal dustbin. When you don't want things anymore, you just drag them onto this icon and they disappear into the Trash. Easy eh?

You can see when there's stuff in the Trash: the icon changes. The lid slips down over the side and all your rubbish is bulging out. The thing is that the bin men don't come round to empty the Trash, and you have to do it yourself via the Special menu.

Don't be in a rush to empty the Trash, though, because you may need to recover stuff you've thrown away by accident. To find out what's in the Trash, just double click its icon. You can then drag stuff back out if you need to. Many iMac users only empty the Trash when they run out of hard disk space.

When the Trash is empty (far right) and full (to the left) and Trash contents

Jargon buster

Button
Computer software designers have standardised on on-screen gadgets and how they work. Icons need to be double clicked to 'activate' them, while buttons only need to be clicked once. Easy to get used to.

Document
A word usually used to describe word processor files, digital images, spreadsheets and other things you create and save.

File
File is a broad term for just about any single item (except a folder, which is just a container) on your hard disk. You can have document files, application files, preference files and so on.

Highlighted
When you click on an icon, it changes colour (it's highlighted' to show that it's ready for moving, renaming or other operations. It's like highlighting text in a word processor document to change it.

Thumbnail
Sometimes icons aren't enough to help you identify files. That's why some image-editing programs generate icons that look like miniature renditions of the picture itself. These are called Thumbnail images (well, they're sort of thumbnail-sized) and are widely used for previewing files before you open them.

Alias
An Alias is a shortcut to a file, application or folder stored somewhere else on your hard disk. Aliases are especially useful for placing on the Apple menu, so that you've got quick access to your favourite items without having to take them out of your nicely organised filing system. Click on the icon itslef once and go to Make ALias under the File menu. Drag the alias to wherever yo want it to be.
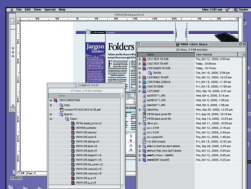
Cut out and keep

Jargon buster

Active window
Only one window can be active, i.e. on top of the rest and ready to use, at any one time. You click on any part of a window to make it active so that you can, for example, create a new folder in it, or move some of the contents.

Contextual menu
A fancy term for the shortcut menu which appears when you hold down the Control key and click inside a folder window. You can create new folders using this menu, amongst other things.

Directory
This is another word for folder. You're most likely to hear PC owners talking about directories, which is a leftover from the days when computers accepted text input only and dinosaurs walked the earth.

Hierarchical folders
Normally, you double click on folders to view their contents in a new window. If you choose List view, though, you can expand their contents in a tree-like structure by clicking the little right-facing arrows before the folder names.

Volume
Another word for disk. The iMac's hard disk is a 'volume', as is any CD-ROM you insert. Effectively, though, they work like folders, with icons you double click to examine the contents.

System folder
As we said a couple of pages previously, the System folder is an important part of your iMac. However, make sure you know what you're doing before you start meddling with its contents as you may inadvertently delete some files or folders which are essential to your iMac's functionality.

Folders

Folders are like those in filing cabinets, except these never get full to bursting

Folders are central to the way you and your iMac store things. We've seen how the iMac uses the System Folder to store and sort components of the OS, but the rest of the hard disk is free for you to organise as you wish.

Folders are containers. When they're closed, you just see the folder icon. When you double click on them to open them, you see the folder contents displayed in a window.

These contents can include various files and folders. In fact, there's no limit on how many folders-within-folders you can create. But where do you start? Double click on your iMac's hard disk icon on the Desktop

and you'll find there are many folders and files there already. Any more programs you install will add folders of their own.

Why not create a folder called My Stuff on your hard disk, and store stuff there? By the way, you can't fill folders up. Just because the icons are all the same size, it doesn't mean the contents are too. Folders expand to accommodate everything, until there's no space left on your hard disk.

Where am I?
The only trouble with complex filing systems and space available on your iMac's hard disk is that it can be easy to get lost if you're not highly organised.
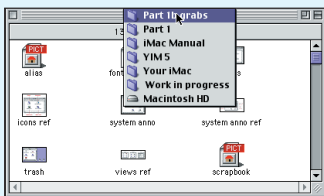
Find out where the current folder is by Command, clicking on its name
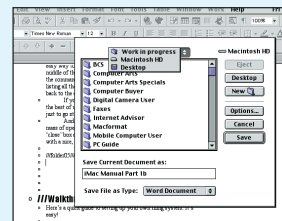
When saving files, you get to 'navigate' the filing system as you choose a place to save them

For example, you may have a folder window open, but no idea at all where that folder is in your filing system. There is an easy way to find out, though. You see the name of the folder in the middle of the title bar at the top of the folder window? Hold down the Command (Apple) key and click on it. Down pops a menu listing the 'parent' folders the current folder is stored in.

If you do get lost in your own filing system, the quickest way to re-orientate yourself is often just to go straight back to the Desktop and start again.

And here's another tip for you: if your Desktop is just a mass of open windows, hold down the Option key and click on the Close box of any of them. This will close the lot, leaving you with a nice, clear Desktop.
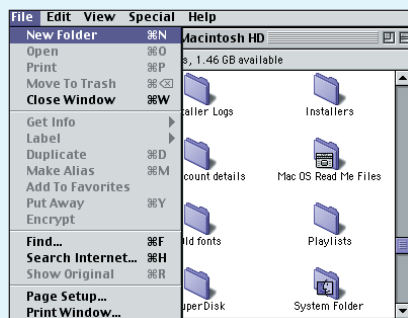
Get yourself organised!

Here's a quick guide to setting up your own filing system. It's easy!

1 First, you need to create a new folder on your hard disk. Double click the hard disk icon to open its window, then choose New Folder from the File menu.

Creating folders is an easy way of filing and it prevents your iMac from getting messy
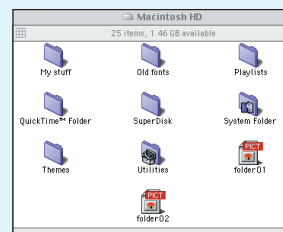
Congratulations! Now you know all there is to know about creating folders. So simple!
2 By default, new folders are called 'untitled folder'. You'll want to change that, won't you? The name will already be highlighted, and you can simply start typing a name of your own choice. If the name's not highlighted, click on the icon just once and wait a couple of seconds. If you double clck by mistake, it will open and you'll have to wait, close it down and then start again.
3 Now it would be nice if our new folder was on the Desktop so that we don't have to double click on

Call your folders whatever you like, but make it logical. Click and drag to move around

the hard disk icon to get to it. Easy. We just drag it from the hard disk window on to the Desktop. Now you know how to move folders.
4 To create new folders within your folder, double click its icon to open it and then use the New Folder command on the File menu again. To add items to your folders, open the folder they're currently in and just drag them across.

Keyboard shortcuts

Why reach for your mouse when you can save a bit of energy with shortcuts?

The iMac's mouse is a busy creature. Nearly every activity involves clicking, dragging and pointing, and you could be forgiven for thinking that the mouse is indispensable.

For many operations it is. At other times, though, it's not necessarily the quickest way to do things. Experienced iMac users soon realise it's quicker to tap a couple of keys than to move the mouse around.

Try opening a folder window and then clicking on the File menu. See the New Folder option? Ah yes, and do you see the Command, N symbols alongside it? That means you can activate that option by holding down the Command key while you hit N on the keyboard. Hey presto! A new folder.

It's standard practice for software designers to display alternative keyboard shortcuts so that, as you gain experience with the software, you can start to remember the shortcuts and save yourself some time.

Certain keyboard shortcuts are standardised across all kinds of software. Take a look at our Favourite shortcuts table. You'll see that many shortcuts rely on the Command key. (It's often written as Command because the symbol on the key itself isn't always easy to reproduce in print.)

The Command key is a so-called Modifier key. You use it in conjunction with other keys to modify what they do. There are other modifier keys on the iMac keyboard. See table below to see what they're called.

You'll also spot an Esc key in the top lefthand corner of the keyboard. The Esc key is often used to interrupt a running process, and one of its more notable uses is in the shortcut for quitting an application that has stalled, or 'hung'. You can force quit such an application by hitting Alt, Option, Esc at the same time.

At the same time? Really? No, that's quite difficult. In fact, when you use a keyboard shortcut, you hold down the first key in the series, then the second and so on, releasing them all at the same time when the action's been carried out.

And what about the row of function or F keys running along the top of the keyboard? What are those for? Well if you open the Keyboard Control Panel, you'll find out. Hit the Function Keys button and you'll find out you can assign any item on your hard disk to any key. You could assign your 'Work in progress' folder to the F1 key. Anytime you need to open the folder, hit that key.

Lastly, the new Apple Pro keyboard, shipped with new iMacs, has extra keys. Just above the numeric keypad, you'll find easy-access volume controls, and a CD-ROM eject key. There are now 15 Function keys instead of the 12 we described, and they're larger too.

You can assign folders, files and applications to your iMac's F keys

Jargon buster

Finder
The Finder is the application that lets you manage files and folders, launch applications and so on. It's the bit of the operating system you 'see', and it's always running in the background even when you're hard at work in other applications.

Force quit
If a program has stalled, or 'crashed', it's stopped working, which means you won't be able to quit it either using the menus or the Command, Q shortcut. The Alt, Command, Esc keyboard shortcut bypasses this to force the application to quit.
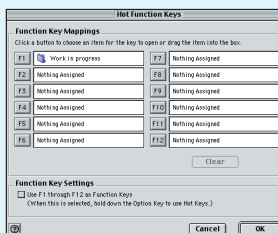
Function keys
The row of keys running along the back of your iMac keyboard. They can be programmed with your own shortcuts.

Modifier key
A key which 'modifies' the behaviour of other keys to give you additional options and commands. The Shift, Control, Alt and Command keys are all Modifier keys.

Numeric keypad
The 'mini-keyboard' positioned just to the right of the iMac's main keyboard. It has the numeric keys and mathematical operators like +, -, = and so on. These keys are on the main keyboard too, but if you're using a spreadsheet, it's convenient to have them laid out like this, as you would with a pocket calculator, for example.

Our favourite shortcuts

Shortcut	Function	Shortcut	Function
Command, N	Creates a new file or, in the case of Finder, creates a folder in the current window	Alt, Command, Esc	Forces a stalled application to quit
Command, O	In an application, this shows a dialog where you can choose the file you want to open	Option, drag	Creates a copy of an object as you drag it, instead of simply moving it
Command, S	Saves the current file if you're working in an application	Option, Command, drag	Creates an alias of a folder or file etc in the Finder
Command, A	Selects everything in the window, whether it be a folder or an application	Shift, Command, 3	Captures a 'screenshot' of the entire display and saves it to the hard disk
Command, Q	Quits the current application. If you're working in the Finder, this has no effect.	Shift, Click	If you hold down the Shift key you can select objects lots of objects at once

Jargon buster

Sleep
'Sleep' only half powers down your iMac. It goes into a standby mode where the screen goes black and it consumes a lot less power. You can re-activate it with a simple mouse click, and it comes back to life far faster than if you'd shut it down and then restarted it. You can leave your documents and applications open, too.

Restart
Restart is a useful option when the system software or one of your applications has become a little unstable. It happens from time to time, and you'll usually be told when it's a good idea to quit your work and restart.

SuperDisk
A type of disk drive made by Imation and others that accepts both ordinary floppy disks and special SuperDisks. The latter are the same size as a floppy disk, but store a massive 120MB of data instead of a floppy's meagre 1.44MB. You can get SuperDisk drives that plug straight into one of your iMac's USB ports.

Plug-in
A special file that you place in an application's folder that extends a piece of software's function. Programs such as Photoshop and iMovie use plug-ins a lot.

Zip
A very popular disk drive format. Zip drives are relatively inexpensive (under £100) and, like the SuperDisk drive, plug straight into an iMac's USB port. The cartridges hold 100MB of data, and cost between £7 and £8 each. They're more widely used than SuperDisks and, in terms of cost-per-megabyte, offer similar value.

Inserting discs and shutting down

Don't forget that your iMac can also play music CDs, show films and much much more

Your iMac is pretty self-contained. It comes pre-installed with a whole heap of software, and there's plenty of space on the hard disk for saving files. But you still need your CD-ROM drive for playing audio CDs and for installing new software.

Inserting a CD
You insert a CD in one of two ways, depending on how old your iMac is. With the earlier models, you press the button on the front of the CD tray. After a few moments, the tray slides out and you can load a CD.

Double click on it to take a look at the contents of your CD or it may open automatically. If it's an audio CD, it'll start playing of its own accord.

If you've got a newer iMac, there's no CD tray at all. Instead, you get a slot-loading unit just like those fitted to in-car hi-fi systems. You slide the edge of the CD into the slot, and the iMac grabs it and sucks it in the rest of the way.

Ejecting
Ah, but how do you get your CD out again? To eject a CD, you have to drag its icon on to the Trash icon. The iMac will then whir briefly and eject your CD. This applies to both older iMacs and the slot-loaders.

The hard disk in your iMac is actually a hard disk 'drive', you insert CD-ROMs into your iMac's CD-ROM drive, and you

can buy various plug-in USB drives too, including floppy disk drives, Zip drives, SuperDisk drives and more.

They all work in much the same way, where the iMac has to 'mount' a disk before its icon appears on the desktop. Also, you get it to 'unmount' the disk by dragging it to the Trash.

Shut Down or Sleep?
That's how you eject disks when you've finished with them, but what's the proper way to switch off the iMac itself?

Don't yank out the power lead because, while you may get away with this in the short term, it does computers no good at all. They have to do a 'shut down' procedure to ensure your data is saved and the hardware's not subjected to abuse.
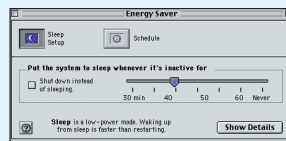
With Energy Saver Control Panel, your iMac will sleep when not being used

There's more than one way of shutting down your iMac. (Though the methods may vary according to which iMac you have and which version of the operating system you're using.) The usual way is to close files and applications so

When you insert an audio CD, it starts playing automatically. Enter track information and playlists using the Apple Audio CD Player

you're back at the Desktop, then choose Shut Down from the Special menu. Or press the Power button on the monitor. This closes all your files and applications and shuts down in one go (you'll be warned if any of your files haven't been saved and given the chance to do it).

Or you can press the Power key on the keyboard. This is a little more useful because it gives you a whole series of options. You can Shut Down, Restart, Sleep or Cancel.

Saving your energy
The iMac's Sleep mode is a smart idea in our energy-conscious world, but you don't have to send it to sleep manually. If you open up the Energy Saver Control Panel you'll find you can get your iMac to send itself to sleep after a fixed period of inactivity.

And, in case you use your iMac to receive faxes, you can schedule it to start up and shut down at times which suit you.
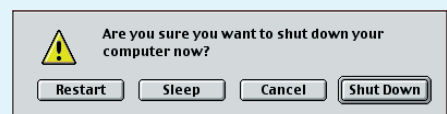
If you shut down your iMac using the Power key, you can restart, or choose Sleep mode instead

Control Strip

Keep our frequently used applications in one neat place so that's they're easily accessible but don't clog up the desktop

W e mentioned your iMac's Control Strip in the Apple menu and Control Panels section earlier. It's the little handle you see in the bottom lefthand corner of your screen.

Click on this handle and the Control Strip opens out. Click on the handle again (now at the far righthand end of the Control Strip) and it retracts back into the corner again.

If you don't see the Control Strip, that's because it's been disabled in the Control Strip control panel. You can open this control panel via the Apple menu, and you'll spot that it

also lets you choose a font and size for the pop-up Control Strip menus, and even a keyboard shortcut for showing and hiding the Control Strip.

What's it for?

The Control Strip is provided so that you get much faster access to some of the most commonly-needed iMac options. Here, you'll find buttons which do the same thing as Control Panels, but they're very much easier to get at.

Take a look at our iMac's Control Strip in our annotated diagram. We say 'our' iMac, because your machine's Control Strip may look different, depending on the settings you've chosen and the software you have installed (some programs install buttons on the Control Strip, like our SoundJam MP3 player, shown in the picture). A Control Strip

takes up none of your Desktop space unless you're using it at the time. Indispensable!
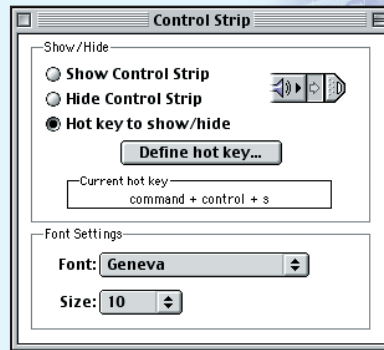
Configure your Control Strip via the Control Panel. Assign a keyboard shortcut it and change the fonts used for pop-up menus

Buttons on the Control Strip display a pop-up menu when you click on them. Some apps add their own Control Strip buttons
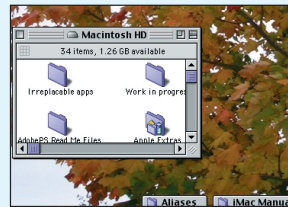
Pop-up menus are brilliant for quick access to certain folders. Go to View on the Desktop menus and click on As Pop-up Menu

Jargon buster

Pop-up
You don't just find menus on the menu bar. You can also find them within dialogs and palettes and on the Control Strip. These are called pop-up menus, although they can pop up and down.

Handle
Many objects you'll see on the screen have handles. You drag on handles to move or resize objects. You drag on a window's Resize handle to make it bigger, for example, and the Control Strip's handle to change the length.

MP3
A special compressed file format for music. It squeezes tracks into around a 10th of the space needed by an audio CD track, which makes it very popular for Internet music downloads.

Sleep mode
If your iMac's to be left unused for any length of time, you can configure it to 'go to sleep' automatically, or send it to sleep manually via the Control Strip. This darkens the display and spins down the hard disk.

Internet account
Before you can surf the Net you need to set up an account with an Internet Service Provider. You'll also need to configure your iMac with the account details.

A quick tour of your Control Strip

These are by no means all of the files and folders you'll find in your iMac's System Folder, but they're some of the most important.

Energy Saver/sleep options
Use this pop-up menu to configure your energy conservation options or even send your iMac to 'sleep'

Set display colours
You'll want your iMac's display set to the default 'millions' of colours, but you can reduce this number too

Internet connection options
When you set up an Internet account, it appears on this list (we have several). You may need to disconnect manually when you've finished surfing

Close box
Click this box to shrink your Control Panel back into the left-hand corner of your display

Drag handle
This handle is always visible. Click it once to switch between the extended/ collapsed view

Audio CD controls
When you insert an audio CD, your iMac will start to play it automatically. You can start the Audio CD Player, or use the Stop, Start and Skip on this pop-up menu

Set display resolution
The default iMac screen size, or 'resolution' is 800x600 pixels. You can choose 640x480 pixels, or 1,024x768 pixels

Volume control
Don't waste your time looking for a volume knob on your iMac! Open this pop-up menu instead and move the slider to change the volume level

Jargon buster

Alert
A special window that pops up to explain implications of a choice you're about to make, the dangers of carrying out a command or just to provide information about what's happening. When you've read the message you simply close the window or click an OK button.

Pixels
The individual blocks of colour that collectively make up the images you see on your screen. By default, your iMac's display is set to a resolution of 800 pixels across by 600 down.

Tab
The iMac uses special windows called dialogs when it needs to get further information from you. These dialogs are often split up into individual screens. You click on a button rather like a folder tab to switch between them.

Theme
Your iMac's desktop, fonts, colours and window styles can be packaged up and distributed as a single 'theme'.

Customise your Desktop

Personalise your iMac so that it's your and only yours with holiday snaps as backgrounds and groovy fonts

We mentioned how to customise your iMac earlier. Here's more on how you can change your iMac to suit the way you use it.

Why not create a Desktop background? You can do this with a scanned photo, a digital camera image or an image downloaded from the Net. Open the Appearance Control Panel via the Apple menu, click Desktop and then Place Picture.

Alternatively, you can use an image-editing program like PhotoDeluxe to resize the image so that it matches the display size (800x600 pixels by default). This means that you don't have to fiddle with the positioning options.

Change your fonts
While you have the Appearance Control Panel open, click the Fonts tab. You'll find you can change the menu bar, menu, dialog and other fonts used by your iMac, and you can change the size they're displayed at too.

Change your colours
Fiddle with colour schemes by switching to the Appearance tab. The Appearance menu lets you apply overall 'looks' to your menus, icons, controls and so on, and you get the Apple Platinum appearance provided as standard. It's also possible to download 'themes' from the Internet, though. These are created by programmers and designers around the world.

Using themes
If you click on the Themes tab itself, you'll see previews of all your installed themes, and you can apply them from here too.

Indeed, you can create your own custom themes by manually changing the options in the Appearance Control Panel's other tabs and then clicking the Save Theme button in this one.

Change your sounds
In the Sound tab, you'll find that you can apply the Apple Platinum sound effects to events like menus opening, windows being moved, clicking and dragging options and more.

If this cacophany of sound gets a bit too much for you, you can switch off the effects you don't want by clicking the checkboxes in this window.

Smart scrolling
The last tab, called Options, controls (amongst other things) the way the scrollbars and arrows are displayed in windows. Normally, the scroll arrows are placed at opposite ends of the scrollbars.

This is logical, but it means you've got to keep moving your mouse to scroll one way, then the other. The alternative is to opt for Smart Scrolling, where arrows are placed next to each other at the bottom of vertical scrollbars and at the righthand end of horizontal ones.

It takes a bit of getting used to, and it's not as logical as the usual arrangement, but Smart Scrolling does actually save you time and effort in the long run so give it a go.

The Appearance Control Panel

The Appearance Control Panel (in the Apple menu) lets you do all the finishing touches, like font changes, colours, Desktop patterns and the sound setup.
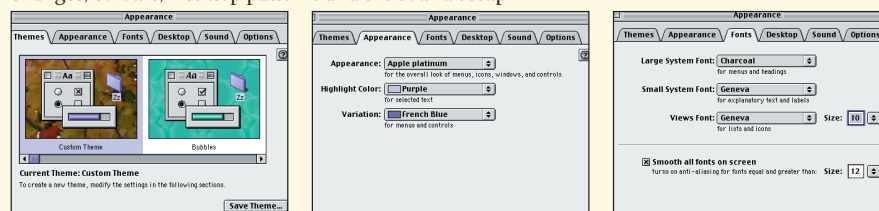
1 Themes tab displays your installed desktop themes, letting you switch and save your own

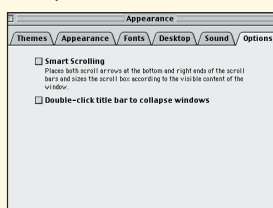**2** The Appearance tab changes colours and the look of windows, icons, menus and pointers

3 Use Fonts tab to change fonts and text sizes in menus, windows, alerts, icons and folder contents
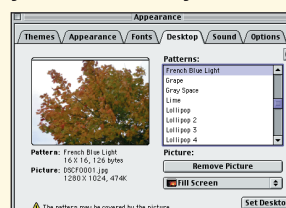
4 Use a pre-installed Desktop pattern or one of your own digital images via the Desktop tab

5 Click Sound tab to have sound effects applied to menu selecting and other operations

6 Options controls how scroll bars are displayed and shrinking rules of title bars

Customise your folders

You can view folders and their contents in many ways. Whatever's easiest on the eye

We looked briefly at how folders worked earlier, demonstrating how you set up and organise your own filing systems. Here's how to customise the way your folders look and behave so your information isn't organised, it's easy to browse and locate too.

List view basics

One of the first things expert iMac owners do is switch their folder views from the standard Icon view to List view. You'll find these options on the View menu. Items in your folders are
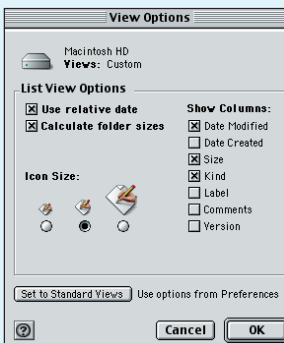
Choose which columns to display in List view via View Options

shown as single-line entries rather than icons, and these entries include the name of the item, the date it was modified, its size and what type of file it is.

Information is arranged in columns, and you can 'sort' folder contents alphabetically by their name, according to the date they were last changed, their size and their type. You do this simply by clicking on the column heading you want to sort the contents by.

Changing your columns

Sometimes you may find the information won't fit within the column width. The names of some of the files and folders, for example, may be too long. That's easily fixed. You drag the dividing line between the column headings to the left or right (the cursor changes appearance when the mouse pointer is in the right place).

You can even choose which information is displayed in these columns. To do this, choose View Options from the View menu and choose which columns to display by checking their boxes in the list.

Changing icon sizes

What's especially neat, though, is that if you really want the best of both worlds – chunky, colourful icons AND detailed information – you can have it. Still in the View Options dialog, simply pick one of the three available icons sizes by clicking the radio button which is directly underneath.
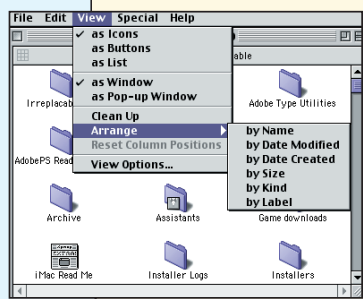
Hierarchical lists

The cleverest thing of all about the iMac's List view, though, becomes apparent when you click one of the right-facing arrows next to a folder. The folder opens out to display a 'sub-list' of all its contents. Any folders within this sub-list will also have arrows which can be clicked on to display the contents of that folder too.

By double clicking the Hard Disk icon on your desktop, you

can display the contents of your hard disk as a hierarchical list within one window.

List views are just one way of exploring the contents of your iMac. See the boxes on this page for three more display/navigation tips.

Arranging icons

If you've been dragging your folder icons around in Icon view and you've left them in a mess, use the Clean Up option on the View menu to line them all up again. And you can use the Arrange submenu options to organise them according to name, size and other criteria.

Choose your view

One of the iMac's lesser-known features is also one of its most useful. You can store an item anywhere you like on your hard disk just by dragging it on to the hard disk icon. Just wait a moment, and the icon opens into a list of the hard disk contents. Move your item over further sub-folders to 'drill down' to the folder you want.
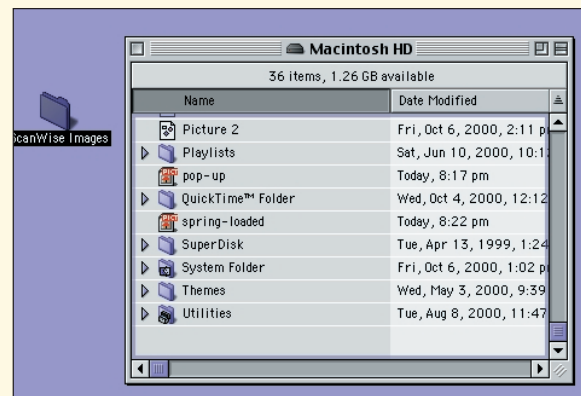
When moving things around, click and drag the item and hold it over the item. If you hold it long enough, the destination will open up

Jargon buster

Desktop
This is what you see when you first start up your iMac, and it's like your main working area where you see your hard disk icon, the Trash and other items. Most people use it as the starting point for their work.

Finder
This is the part of the iMac operating system software that you 'see', and it's a program that runs continuously (you see it on the Applications menu) and provides the tools for displaying and organising the files and folders on your hard disk.

Save dialog
When you're working on a document using an application like AppleWorks, sooner or later you'll need to save your document as a file on your hard disks. The Save dialog displayed when you do this doesn't just ask you to choose a name for the file, but a location too, based on the folders set up on your hard disk.

Tear-off
The Applications menu is actually a 'tear-off' palette. This means that if you click it to open it but keep the mouse button pressed and drag downwards, the menu is detached from the menu bar and remains open, floating on the screen all the time. You may find it more convenient to work this way.

Help!

If the last 15 pages weren't enough to put you at ease, here's some extra tuition

We've spent the past 15 pages giving you a guided tour of the iMac, but it may not be enough. Here's a look at the help available.

Using the help system
Your iMac's Help Center (American spelling) provides help with your hardware, the iMac OS and many of the applications you have installed.

If you want to know more about your iMac, click the About Your iMac option. If you need to know more about Control Panels, folders and other on-screen controls, click on Mac Help.

Once you've chosen what you need help with, you'll see a list of topics down the lefthand side of the screen. Click any one of these to see a list of further sub-topics. By clicking on the topics you can zero in on just the information you need.

Alternatively, type a word or phrase into the Search box at the top of the window and hit the Return key. You'll then be given a list of matching topics to examine.
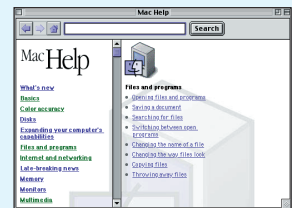
Lost your way?
Sometimes the easiest way to get out of a tricky situation is to get back to the Desktop and start again! One common cause of disorientation stems from the fact that the iMac can run several programs at the same time and you may lose track of which one you're working in. This is especially likely where you've closed a document window but left the application
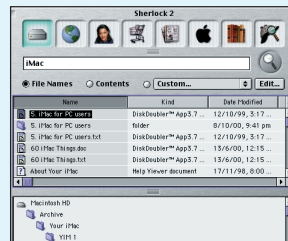
Sherlock can get you out of many a fix! Use the Command, F shortcut to activate it from the Desktop

running. You can 'see' another application in the background but the menus don't match.

You can sort all this out via the Applications menu to the far right of the menu bar. This lists all the programs currently running, and lets you switch

Your iMac's online Help system can explain both how your hardware works and how to use menus, dialogs and so on

between them. See our walkthrough for a bit of help.

Lost your files?
There's a third way of getting confused, and it's when you know you've saved a file but you've no idea where it is.

It's easily done, especially if you don't look carefully at the Save dialog when you first save the file. Sherlock is the answer. It's a powerful search tool built into the iMac OS, and you activate it by choosing Find from the File menu.

You type the name of your file (or even just part of the name) into the box, hit the Return key and Sherlock will find all instances of that name on your hard disk. It lists their locations, and you can even double click found items to open them or drag them from Sherlock on to your Desktop or into another folder.

Right , so now you're up and running, but don't miss the next instalment: getting connected to the Internet
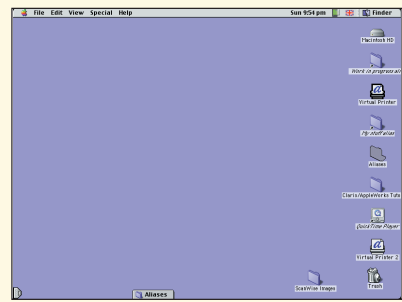
The Applications menu

Use the Applications menu to swap between programs you're working with

1 When running several programs, the Applications menu can help you find what's going on. Use it to get back to the Finder

2 In the Finder, choose Hide Others from the Applications menu to hide other programs. Get back to them by choosing them from the menu

3 You can finish clearing the screen by Option, clicking on the Close box of any open folder windows. This closes all open windows