

## CHAPTER 4

### Menu Guidelines

This chapter describes the changes introduced by Mac OS 8 in the features of Mac OS menus, including menu bar appearance, help menus, sticky menus, contextual menus, and the enhancement of keyboard equivalents for menu item selection.

For more complete information on designing and using menus, see “Menus” in *Macintosh Human Interface Guidelines*.

## Menu Bar Changes

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In keeping with the changes introduced in platinum appearance, the menu bar has gained a three-dimensional Apple logo, beveled edges and anti-aliased corners. Menu dividers have an etched appearance. Figure 4-1 shows the new appearance.

**Figure 4-1** Menu bar using platinum appearance



The position of the Preferences command has now been standardized to the bottom of the Edit menu.

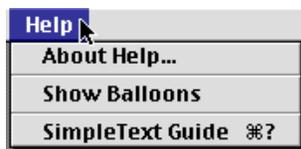
Extended keyboard modifiers are now available to activate menu commands. This means you can use the Control, Shift, and Option keys (and display their glyphs) in addition to the Command key to create a much wider range of keyboard equivalents. For more information on keyboard equivalents, see *Inside Macintosh: Macintosh Toolbox Essentials*.

## Help Menu

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The Help icon has become a standard menu title. This makes it easier for users to identify and use online help files. The Help menu always appears as the last menu from the left; all application menus and “service menus” (such as those created by telecommunications applications or disk utilities) should appear to the left of the Help menu. Figure 4-2 shows an open Help menu.

Figure 4-2 Help menu



The Help menu contains the following items in order:

- n About Help
- n Show Balloons
- n Help (for the current application) if any
- n Shortcuts (for the current application) if any

You should ensure that any help files you create are accessible through this menu, as well as the Command - ? and Help keyboard equivalents.

## Sticky Menus

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Traditional Mac OS menu behavior demanded that users click and hold on a menu while scrolling and selecting an item. This can be frustrating for many users, so the Mac OS now features **sticky menus**. The name derives from the fact that clicking an item in the menu bar for less than the user-defined double-click interval results in the menu being displayed (“sticking”) without

forcing the user to continue holding the mouse button. If the user clicks and holds an item in the menu bar for longer than the double-click interval, the menu will behave in the traditional manner, closing immediately after the mouse button is released.

To select a desired item in a sticky menu, the user simply navigates to the item, highlights it and clicks. This convenience extends to any hierarchical menus which are linked to the sticky menu; each sub-menu will be displayed as a sticky menu as its linking item is highlighted.

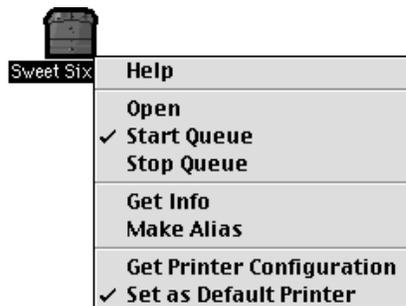
Clicking while the cursor is outside a sticky menu will close the menu without making any selection. Pressing a command key will close the menu and execute the appropriate command. A sticky menu will also close on its own after fifteen seconds have elapsed without a selection being made.

## Contextual Menus

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**Contextual menus** are a new feature of the Mac OS. Pressing the Control key while clicking on an item displays a pop-up menu which you can use as a convenient shortcut to provide contextual help or activate often-used commands associated with that item. (The contextual menu may also be invoked by clicking on an item with the right button on a two-button mouse.) Figure 4-3 shows an example of a contextual menu invoked by Control-clicking a desktop printer.

Figure 4-3 A contextual menu



## CHAPTER 4

### Menu Guidelines

The contextual menu appears with its upper left corner offset one pixel to the right and one pixel down from the click location. If the menu is too wide to be fully displayed in the default position, it will appear with the upper right corner offset one pixel to the left and one pixel down from the click location. This positioning reverses on right-to-left oriented systems, with the latter position becoming the default and shifting to the former when required. Menus which are too long to be fully displayed exhibit the scrolling triangle and scroll as normal menus.

A contextual menu behaves as a standard sticky menu, except that moving the cursor off the contextual menu onto another menu does not activate the second menu. The user must explicitly click on the second menu to close the contextual menu and open the second menu.

The first item in a contextual menu is always a Help item. It should open the appropriate Apple Guide access window with a relevant keyword already loaded in the Look For view. If no help file is available, the Help item will be disabled, but the item is always displayed.

Any subsequent items in the contextual menu are defined by you. The list of items should comprise a small subset of the most commonly used commands in the application context which produced the menu. In Figure 4-3, seven common desktop printing commands are listed in the contextual menu, separated by dividers into functional groups. You should never place a command in a contextual menu which is disabled or cannot be selected from another menu in the application.

If you do not define specific items for a contextual menu, it will display a Help item and load any appropriate plug-ins.

Note that you should not set a default item. If the user opens the menu and closes it without explicitly selecting an item, no action should occur.

Keep the list of items in a contextual menu short, clear and simple. Use sub-menus reluctantly and keep them to one level. Adding unnecessary complications reduces the convenience of contextual menus for both you and the user.