

Mac Museum Profile — The 128k Mac 'original Mac

Joey Cooper

In this first installment of our new series profiling old Macs, we are going to tell you everything you want to know about the original 128k Mac. A lot of the information covered here also applies to the 512k Mac and the Mac Plus. While you can't use an original Mac for graphic design or high-end games, it really is still a useful machine for word processing and some other stuff.

First of all, let's take some time and look through the 128k's specs. If you didn't already know, the 128k in its name means that it has that much RAM, which by today's standards isn't much. The 9" screen has 512x342 pixels. Built-in is a 400k 3.5" floppy drive.

The original Mac also has a cute all-in-one design that leaves your desk much less cluttered than most computers. All you have is the computer, a keyboard and the mouse. You can also hook up a LaserWriter, a simple and durable printer that is good for printing out letters and drafts.

What About Software?

So what software can you run on an original Mac? Frankly, not much. Every 128k came with both MacWrite and MacPaint bundled, and old versions of both of these titles run fine. There are probably dozens of other programs that will run on an original Mac, but they are really hard to find. Basically, the software that you have for the 128k right now is about all you will be working with.

As for system software, everything before system 4.0 works. Of course, without any hard drive, you can't just run one system, every disk you use will have a different one on

it. We have a MacWrite diskette that has system 1.1, which doesn't even have the Shut Down feature in the special menu. Pretty much the same like regular software, you don't have much choice as to what system you use.

Putting It All Together

So now that we know what we have to work with, let's look to see what you can do with a 128k. Take out the computer and put it on a desk. Then a good thing to do next is clean the little machine. It's amazing what a little scrubbing on the case will do. Now hook up the keyboard and mouse. This is fairly easy, as there is a clearly marked place to hook the mouse in the back, and the keyboard simply plugs in the front. Now plug in the power cord into both the wall and the Mac and you are ready to go! Turn on the machine, and you should see a flashing disk on the screen. If the screen never seems to turn on, there is a short somewhere leading to the power of the monitor. The solution? Put your right hand on one side of the Mac, and then hit the other side with your left hand. Hopefully your screen will wake up. If it doesn't, though, you'll need someone who knows computers to fix it (or you might just be out of luck, and you can't use your original Mac).

Assuming everything works, you can now insert a floppy. Make sure the floppy has a system installed, and that it is a 400k diskette, not a 800k or 1.4 MB disk. If all this is true, your 128k should boot up with a smiley face and say "Welcome To Macintosh". Waahoo! From here you can experiment around with the computer, seeing what software works and stuff. You can also try hooking up a LaserWriter II, if you have one. To hook to the original Mac, you'll need a special connector, which [I'll have to check on].


Technically, you can't do much with a 128k Mac. But it really is fun to have one to play with, just to get on and use every once in a while. You can even do some work on them from time to time! And older Macs make great gifts! So whatever you decide to do with your 128k Mac, just remember, have fun!

Joey Cooper wrote this article on a Mac Plus with System 1.1. He is the editor in chief of a small Mac publication called the Mac Users Militia Journal <http://www.netusa1.net/~dnorton/mum/>. This article was previously published in the Mac Users Militia Journal, somewhere and reprinted with his kind permission.

Vendors

So what if you don't have an original Mac in the closet to play with? You can always buy a used one. There are several used computer places that sell 128k Macs. Just look through the back of a magazine such as MacAddict and keep your eyes peeled for used Mac vendors. They probably won't advertise that they have an original Mac, so you'll just have to call and ask them.

 Joey Cooper

Before people start emailing me, I've only taken this month off to finish the site update. Honest, or have I said that already? [catch some son]. I was lucky to find an excellent stand in for my column in the shape of Joey Cooper. I'm sure you'll agree he's written a well thought out piece. You never know, he might be here again next month. -  Darren