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# Say so long to problems by installing more RAM

One of the biggest computer problems I've been seeing lately are machines with too little RAM memory.

If you bought your computer a few years ago and just recently upgraded the system software, you may actually slow your computer down. The more sophisticated software eats up RAM memory.

However, there is a simple solution. Just add more RAM to your computer.

RAM stands for Random Access Memory. It's important for you to understand that this is not hard drive space and throwing away files will not help. RAM is the working memory your computer uses to operate programs and run the machine. If your machine says it it out of memory, it's talking about RAM; if it says it's out of disk space, it's talking about the hard drive where your files are stored.

RAM looks like a group of chips all lined up on a mini circuit board. It's approximately two- to three-inches long and fits in rows on your computer's main circuit board.
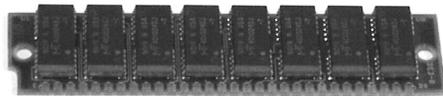
If you're planning on increasing any computer's RAM, you need to know what type of memory it uses. If you own a Macintosh with OSX, click on the blue apple in the upper left hand corner and pull down to "About this Mac." Windows users will right click on the "My Computer" icon and go to "Properties."

To run OSX 10.4 at a minimum level, you need 512MB of RAM. If you're going to be using InDesign CS2 or Photoshop CS2, up the RAM to 1GB. Windows XP requires around the same amount of RAM.

I know it sounds like a lot (1GB!!!), but these programs are huge and require a lot of RAM. If you have a couple of software programs and are trying to maneuver around

computernotes
from the road

by WILMA MELOT

the Internet at the same time, it's easy to run out of RAM.

Some software programs actually leave little pieces in the RAM as you start and stop using them during the day. Shutting down your computer for a few minutes is the only way to completely clear it out.

Some of the problems I've seen lately that were caused by not having enough RAM are:

• Not being able to print or printing slowly (one computer took 10 minutes to print one page).

• Scanning slowly (speed increases after restart).

• Desktop redraws slowly.

• Icons appear to flash off and on.

• PDFs dropping fonts and photos.

• Problems with e-mail (not able to send; redrawing problems; not being able to save e-mails).

• Programs quit and/or freeze computers.

• Frequent computer crashes.

All of these problems can be corrected simply by increasing your computer's RAM.

Almost every computer dealer can order the RAM you need and it's not too difficult to install on most machines.

Apple offers online instructions – including photos – at www.apple.com/support. Just

type in RAM and the name of your computer in the search menu.

If you don't want to attempt installing the RAM, just take your computer to the dealer where you bought the RAM. What's that? You don't have a computer dealer in your town? Not to worry. Most online computer dealers sell RAM. Just make sure you talk to a live person and get the right chips for your computer.

There's no doubt increasing RAM is the best option but what if you can't upgrade? What if the RAM is worth more than the computer or your boss doesn't think it will improve productivity enough to make a cash outlay?

Your next-best option is preventive medicine. Before you print or create PDFs, give your computer a break. Shut it down for about five minutes (have a cup of coffee while you're waiting). This clears the RAM memory and lets you start off fresh. Only open programs required to create PDFs or print pages. Clearing memory by turning your computer off should make it "think" better.

I often recommend shutting down computers during lunch and dinner on busy days. This gives the computer, and operator, a break.

One last thought: if you're running Tiger OSX 10.4.x, you have access to DashBoard. Although this is a cool application, it's a memory hog. One open Widget can use as much as 10mb of RAM. If you have 10 Widgets open all the time, it's using 100MB of your RAM – whether you're running them or not. If the Widgets are open when you hit the Dashboard, they're using your memory.

To remedy the situation, just close the Widgets you don't need.

There's a lot of give and take when it comes to RAM but the most important thing to remember is that more memory is always better.
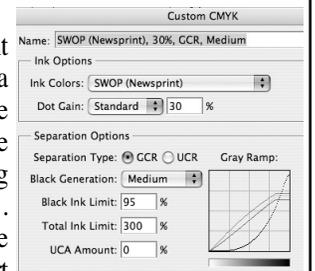
plugged IN

A Little Photoshop

I've been asked whether to correct photos in CMYK or RGB a hundred times. As a general rule, try to do as much color correction as possible in RGB mode. If the image is going to be printed in your paper, convert it to CMYK at the end of the photo correction process.

The main reason I recommend this is because the CMYK mode throws away data – a lot of data. Why would you want to correct an image with significantly less data than your scanner or camera can capture?

You want as much data as possible while correcting images. When you're done, convert to CMYK (under "Image" choose "Mode") and let it toss out the data that won't be used on press.

This conversion is based on your preferences and depends on Photoshop's color settings. Make sure that the color settings under the Photoshop menu have been changed to SWOP (Newsprint).

To do this go to the button located on the CMYK line (in Photoshop CS). Change to custom and then choose the custom CMYK setting. In the ink options choose the SWOP (Newsprint) and put in the dot gain on the press where you print. If you don't know, ask your printer for the settings. Dot gain controls how much the ink bleeds into the paper – and how muddy your photos will print.

Some experts say that you should lower the black generation and ink limit to 85 or 95 percent. If your press runs heavy black ink, try reducing those settings a little more and then see if it improves the amount of black in your photos.

Computer books

I thought I would give you a run down on some of the best sleeping aids money can buy. These computer books will either hold your interest so you can't sleep – or put you right to sleep with one new idea each night.

The Little Black Book of Computer Security by Joel Dubin has good reminders for all of us. *How Digital Photography Works* by Ron White is a good reference for those new to digital photography. It explains how a digital camera works from the ground up.

Mac makes a splash with Intel processors

They're finally here. The new line of Macintosh computers are blazingly fast and over the course of a year there's going to be a whole new line to choose from.

But look before you leap. You can expect to see some great deals on the Power PC computers left in stock at dealerships. A big decision you're going to have to make is what co-processor you want in your computer.

According to the scuttlebutt on the Web, Mac OSX will soon work on any Intel machine – if the hackers have their way. Web reports also say most software programs will take at least another year to be native to the new system. We're going to be stuck running in Apple's Rosetta technology until the upgrade – if there is an upgrade.

There's even some talk that Classic (Mac OS9) will no longer run on the new Intel machines. I plan to test this out as soon as possible.

One thing is certain: we're witnessing a real change in Apple's computer line.

Of course, all you want to know is what it means to you – the local newspaper owner with Macs. Here's what comes to mind:

1. It will soon be necessary for us to run OSX software, most likely when Acrobat goes native. As software crosses over to the Intel side of the world, we need to keep up with where our programs are in the upgrade cycle.

Quark has already announced that its next release will be native (native now means that it will run on Power PC processors as well as Intel processors.). This makes Quark the guinea pig. Adobe will be watching to see how

Quark fares before they upgrade the CS2 suite – if they decide to go native this soon.

2. When you buy a new computer this year you will need to decide if you're going to upgrade your software from Classic to OSX. If you plan to stay with your Classic software as long as possible, you do not want an Intel chip in your computer. If your software is already OSX compatible (or you're getting ready to make the change) look at the new Intel processor machine and go for native upgrades of your software.

I wouldn't buy the first Intel's off the shelf unless you like being the guinea pig. Give Apple a little time to work out the bugs in the system. There are always a few.

To all you PC guys saying, "We don't have to worry about that," your time is coming. LongHorn is on the way – or so they say.