

# Adventures in the Multiplatform Office

## Plays Well With Others

Macs automatically connect with industry-standard hardware and software, letting you build a multiplatform office just by plugging in.

**M**ACS AND PCs may seem like different beasts, but they're really like different models of car: A sports car and a limousine have obvious differences, but they burn the same kind of gas and drive the same highways. Just as standardized fuels and roadways allow cars to share infrastructure, computing standards make it easy to use a Mac in any office environment, even one dominated by Windows PCs. In fact, the Mac's ease-of-use extends beyond its legendary user interface to a host of other devices.

### The Hardware Connection

The vast majority of computer peripherals work with Macs. USB keyboards, mice, speakers, and microphones rely on common interface and communications standards, and OS X recognizes nearly any recent printer, scanner, or camera. Plug one in, and a Mac can instantly use the device — no need to install drivers or other special software.

Other hardware standards make it easy to connect Macs to a network. All recent Macs support Gigabit Ethernet, so you can share files with amazing speed on a wired connection (if your network supports Gigabit Ethernet, too). The latest Macs can also join Wi-Fi networks, including the lightning-fast 802.11n standard. And they support Bluetooth 2.1 + EDR, which allows them to connect with nearly any Bluetooth peripheral or directly transmit data to a PC.



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Other hardware standards make it easy to upgrade your system. New Macs support DisplayPort and DVI, cross-platform video connections that let you attach just about any current display. Industry-standard RAM and SATA hard disks let you swap in components your IT department likely already has on hand.

Fact is, Macs interface with nearly all major PC standards. Apple led the industry in adopting many of them in the first place, including Wi-Fi and USB.

## Access to Files and Data

Software standards also play a big role in making Macs at home in just about any environment. For instance, Mac OS X automatically reads Windows hard disks, including those formatted with FAT 32 and NTFS, so you can just plug in a PC-formatted USB drive or flash drive to access its data.

Document files are nearly all cross-platform; Macs can natively read PDF, ZIP, JPG, MP3, H.264, and many other crucial formats. You can even open a colleague's PC-based Microsoft Word documents on your Mac. In rare cases where a PC file format (such as WMV) doesn't automatically work, a simple utility such as Flip4Mac can make them playable very quickly.

Macs recognize common file-transfer standards, too, including, FTP and SMB, letting you transfer documents created on a Mac to a Windows machine. Mac-based software supports HTML 5, Flash, Java, AIR, and more, so Macs will load nearly any website or universal application. Mac OS X even interfaces with Microsoft Exchange Server, accessing company mail, contacts, and other data.

## Same road, faster lane

Fact is, Macs interface with nearly all major PC standards. Apple led the industry in adopting many of them in the first place, including Wi-Fi and USB. This exceptional hardware and software compatibility means that PC-based offices can add Macs with a minimum of hassle: Plug in, load up, and experience the office in a whole new way. ■

## CROSS-PLATFORM COMPATIBILITY

These software formats and hardware interfaces are all commonly supported on both Macs and PCs. Use the best standard for your purposes, knowing that you will be able to share your files and equipment easily.

## SOFTWARE STANDARDS

MEDIA TYPE	EXTENSION	DESCRIPTION
Audio	AAC	Can reduce file sizes to about 1MB/minute while retaining excellent quality
	AIFF	Full-spectrum format often used in professional audio production
	MIDI	Developed for producing electronic music; command signals for a keyboard or other instruments
	MP3	Popular music format balances music quality and file size
	WAV	Full-spectrum format; similar to AIFF but more frequently used in Windows
Images	GIF	Commonly used for Web illustrations; reduces files to tiny sizes, but at the cost of quality
	JPEG	Medium-quality photo format balances file size and picture detail; often used by digital cameras
	RAW	Full-detail format used by digital cameras that doesn't compress data; creates large file sizes
	PSD	Ubiquitous Photoshop format that can also be read natively by Mac OS X
Presentations	PPT	Microsoft PowerPoint files are cross-platform and can also be generated by Apple's Keynote application
Spreadsheets	XLS	Microsoft Excel files are cross-platform and can be generated by Apple's Numbers, or read natively by Mac OS X
Documents	DOC	Microsoft Word files are cross-platform and can be read natively by Mac OS X
	PDF	Adobe's document format can include graphics and text, and files can be created by Mac OS X without additional software
	RTF	Simple text format includes basic formatting such as bolding and different font
	TXT	Bare-bones text format; can be useful for HTML coding

## HARDWARE STANDARDS

FUNCTION	STANDARD	DESCRIPTION
Audio	1/8-inch mini-jack	Used for audio headphone output or microphone input
	TOSLINK optical	Surround-sound input and output via a fiber-optic cable
Storage	SATA	Frequently used to connect internal hard disks at fast 1.5, 3, or 6 GB/s speeds
	PATA	Old disk-connection method still sometimes used for optical drives; most often found on older Macs
Networking	Gigabit Ethernet	Macs support 802.11n, the latest, wide-reaching standard for fast data transfer over wireless networks
	Wi-Fi	Surround-sound input and output via a fiber-optic cable
Peripherals	Bluetooth	Wireless real-time voice and data, and networking over short distances
	FireWire	Many Macs include the original FireWire 400 or faster FireWire 800 for connecting to hard disks, printers, and other local devices
	USB 2.0	Connects keyboards, mice, cameras, printers, hard disks, microphones, speakers, and many other local devices
Video	DisplayPort	Display connector capable of high-resolution video
	DVI	Display connector capable of high-resolution video; found on older Macs