

Mac vs PC

The study of why Macs are better than PCs

Miscellaneous Mac Complaints

I've collected here all the other odd-and-end "reasons" I've heard people come up with, to explain why they don't use Macs. If you have any others to contribute, I would be glad to add them to the list.

These studies are out-of-date.

Occasionally I get a thoughtful email from a Windows/PC proponent that says something to the effect of "Your arguments are convincing, except for the fact that a lot of the reports and studies appear to be 'out of date'".

First of all, none of the studies reported here are more than five years old. Secondly, anyone who says something akin to "I won't consider any studies more than two years old" is immediately exposing themselves as an uninformed individual. Exactly what magical happened 24 months ago to suddenly make prior research "inapplicable"? Clearly setting such a standard is extraordinarily arbitrary, and again, tells us a GREAT deal about the pronouncer. A person genuinely interested in the truth would be **anxious** to review **any** study, because they can always glean *something relevant* from it.

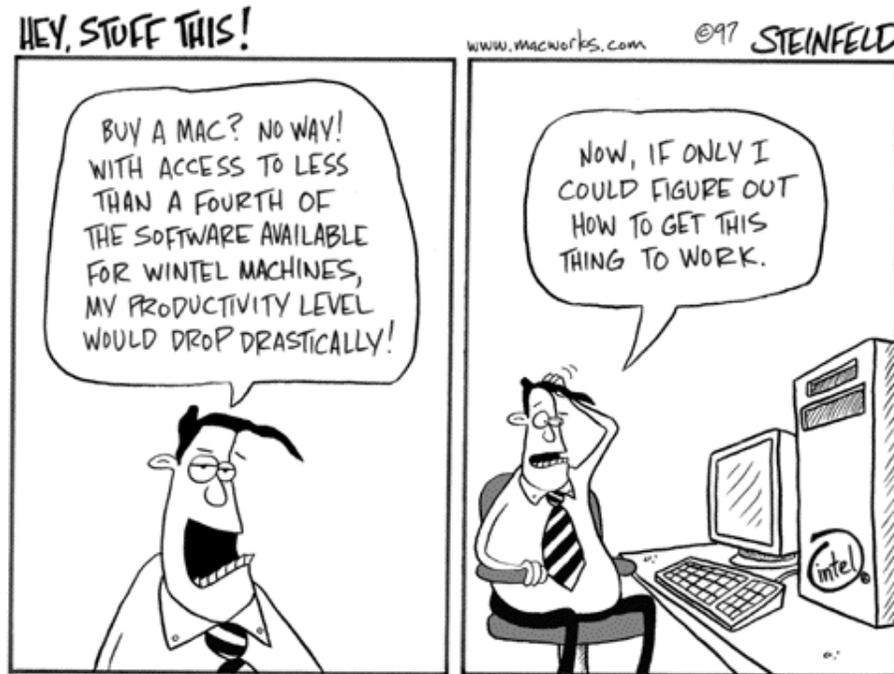
Furthermore, since the people making these types of remarks are usually longtime PC users, I find this response rather disingenuous. If their primary complaint about a study that proves Macs are better than Windows/PCs, is that it was done in 2000, my question is this: WHAT WERE THEY USING IN YEAR 2000? *Oh, a Windows PC.* Well why weren't they using the better computer then? *Because they were equally close-minded at that time.* **To these types, this issue is not resolvable based on what the facts are, so NO amount of studies will change their mind, regardless of the date!**

It is true that many of the some 1000 reports, studies and articles cited on these pages were not just completed last week. However, I continue to reference the pertinent ones, as the **relative difference between platforms remains approximately the same as when these reports were initially done.** (Some would contend that the differences are now even more in favor of Macs with the UNIX based Mac OS X. See our [Mac OS X](#) discussion.) I've also now taken the extra step of labeling most references as to the date so you can see for yourself how many are **very** current.

The reason that the differences stay comparatively the same is because the major players have continued to perform consistently: **Apple is still the innovation leader, Microsoft is still the copier, and the Dells of the world are still box assemblers.** This fact is obvious to all but the oblivious, but don't take my word for it.

In January of 2002, the [Wall Street Transcript](#) published an interview with David C. Bailey (vice president and research analyst with Gerard Klauer Mattison and Co.) as part of a 47-page Computer Hardware report. He says, in part: "Apple continues to lead the PC industry in innovation. The company completely revamped its portable product line in 2001, and we expect Apple to make significant enhancements to its desktop offerings in 2002... Apple has rolled out an entire suite of software products that enable consumers to capture, edit and distribute digital audio and video using very powerful but easy to use applications... In the Wintel PC market, innovation has almost ground to a halt..."

Windows/PCs have more software than Macs.



Yawn. OK, **one** more time...

- It's the **QUALITY** that counts NOT **quantity**. Best guesses are that some eighty percent of Windows software is second rate. The net effect of this inferior software is a substantial cost to users. So many of those PC advocates who are trying to save \$50 by buying a cheap PC, end up spending hundreds of dollars (*plus* their time) with poor quality software.

One attentive observer wrote: "The problem with the ads in PC magazines and on commercials is that when they say PCs have thousands more applications than Macs, it's because they're adding all the applications from their antiquated OS's, including DOS, Windows 3.1, Windows 3.11 for Workgroups, Windows 95a, Windows 95b, and so on, MANY of which will not work on the newest operating system, WinXP."

- The typical Mac user has six to eight applications that they utilize; the typical Windows user four or five. What difference does it make if there is more software available if it isn't used? There are over **ten thousand** Mac applications. Just how many do YOU need?
- Almost all important applications are **cross-platform**. Furthermore, many of them (like MS Office) originated as Mac only software. **Originated as Mac only software!**
- Recently I received this email "I'm a technology coordinator for an elementary school in Honolulu. As such I deal with all sorts of computers on a daily basis and I'm often asked for advice from parents, students and teachers as to what kind of computer that they should buy. One of the most frequent objections I hear to buying a Mac is that there isn't very much software available for the Mac compared to Windows.

"I somewhat accepted this as true myself, but then I started to think about my own situation. I can't think of a single application that I would like to have that isn't available for the Mac. Then I realized that many of the applications that I use everyday are shareware and freeware. This is one of the great, unknown secrets of owning a Mac: **our shareware/freeware offerings are much better than those of our Windows using friends.**"

- Now that Apple's operating system is UNIX based, this opens the door for Macs to use the voluminous quantity of Open-Source software. Read about the [Fink](#) and [Darwin](#) projects as examples of extremely interesting developments in this exploding area.

In fact, this detailed November 2004 [discussion](#) of this topic in LinuxInsider says (compared to Windows software) “Outside of a few specialized areas, the Mac software markets offer a greater range of choices and, including available Unix freeware, both more functionality and lower total cost.”

- With the simple addition of Virtual PC, Macs can run Windows software as well as Mac software. In fact a Mac (with Virtual PC 5) can run ELEVEN different operating systems (also including Linux, UNIX, OS2) – **simultaneously!** And that’s not all: a Mac user also has the choice of using [Wine](#), or [Bochs](#), or [Guest PC](#), or [iEmulator](#) to do the same or more as Virtual PC, for less cost.

Oops, that means that if you are fighting the software quantity war, **Macs WIN!**

Macs don’t have floppy drives or serial ports.

Astoundingly as it may seem, some schools have chosen not to buy Macs because they do not have an internal floppy drive. (Of course an external just won’t do!) A similar mentality exists some places regarding the Mac not having a serial port. (Naturally, a USB-serial converter just won’t do either.)

We would equate this foolishness to not buying a good car because it didn’t offer an eight-track tape player as an accessory.

As expected the gist of the issue is that Apple has taken the technology lead and have dropped such legacy aspects of the computer, some time ago. (Legacy = antiquated.) An underlying rationale that would explain the resistance to progress phenomena, is that **PC proponents have so much trouble learning how to use the basic technology they have, that they are often reticent to abandon their prior efforts to begin learning something new...**

Apple moved on for many good reasons. For instance floppy drives hardly hold anything of consequence, a 100MB Zip drive would cost about the same as a floppy drive, and flash (key) drives are even more powerful (and less expensive). And floppies in a school setting have been identified as one of the main sources of virus propagation (from the student’s home computer, etc).

Surprisingly, at Microsoft’s and Intel’s [PC Design Guide](#) site, they have recommended abandoning these outdated technologies (e.g. ps/2, ISA, mpu-401 [midi] and game [joystick] port, serial, and FDC [floppy diskette controllers]) since 2000!

Evidently some people didn’t notice this as it came as a shock when the [Register](#) published an October 2001 article saying that Intel is planning to officially abandon serial ports and floppy drives by late 2002.

The article also has the courage to specifically state another of our contentions, that “PC types seem to hang on to their outdated technologies with rather more passion than their Mac counterparts...”.

This Brandeis University [story](#) says “Friends Don’t Let friends Use Floppies.” Here’s a good [discussion](#) (PDF) about Dell and floppies – where Dell says that they are being held back by their Wintel customers. But even they seem to get it now.

Macs are not sufficiently “ backward compatible.”

First, let’s define this terminology. As commonly used, “backward compatibility” would refer to a situation where third party software you used before would still work *after* you upgrade your operating system (OS).

The **facts** about backward compatibility are these:

- When buying new computers or software, any school or business should be looking **FORWARD**, not backward. This article [Backward Compatibility is Backward](#), says it well.
- Apple and Microsoft are both continuing to improve their operating systems. Some people have noted the gains that Microsoft has made (compared to the industry standard: Apple’s OS) in the last few years. However, these are noteworthy primarily because Windows had such a long way to go in the first place. Furthermore, Apple has continued at a brisk pace of improving its OS as well. The net affect (as we have demonstrated elsewhere) is that Apple still has a significantly better OS. (Read our [Mac OS X vs Windows XP](#) discussion.)

- Whenever Apple **or Microsoft** makes changes to their OS, there may be modifications necessary that third party software developers need to make to be compatible with the OS upgrade.
- Apple **and Microsoft** have no control over third party software developers, who are independent companies. If a third party company decides not to upgrade a product to take advantage of OS improvements, Apple or Microsoft can't force them to. That's just the nature of the computer business. (Note: Part of the US government's lawsuit against Microsoft is that they allege that Microsoft **did** try to force other companies to do things Microsoft's way – which is illegal.)
- It is the END USER's obligation that they THOROUGHLY investigate software that is mission critical, **before** they commit to it. In addition to the OS upgrade aspect they should get assurances that the software developer is committed to timely modifications of their software based on user inputs as well (i.e. a different issue than OS upgrades).
- Historically, Apple has been MUCH more conscientious about maintaining hardware and software compatibility. For instance, that's why 286 machines can't realistically run Windows 98, but Mac LC's can run system 8.x. And in their latest BIG improvement, Apple's new OS X has a "Classic Mode" that will run all third party software that ran under the OS 9.x.
- So the bottom line is that backward compatibility can be an issue on ANY platform, but in the past it has been **more of a problem with Windows PCs**.

Apple is a single source for Macs.

I just don't get it. For some reason the same person saying this profundity will shell out \$50,000± for a Mercedes and never give it a thought that he is purchasing a "single-source" product. And a rather expensive one at that!

So let's say that Mercedes goes out of business. What will the car owner do for parts and service? My guess is that the car will still run fine and there will be parts and service availability pretty much just as before.

Apple is a **very successful**, multi-billion dollar company with literally **billions** of dollars of cash on hand. Furthermore, hopefully we have all learned by the last few years experience that a company's stock value has NO direct relationship to: **1)** the quality of their products, or **2)** the financial health of the company.

But let's be REAL imaginative here and say that the one-in-a-million circumstances occur where Apple does go out of business. What happens to the school district that has 2000 new Macs? Well:

- The Macs would continue to work well the next day – and for years later – just like they did before.
- A likely development would be that another company (e.g. IBM) would purchase Apple's patents, etc., and continue on selling Macintosh computers (one of the premier name brands in the world).

Remembering that there would still be over 50,000,000 Macs in circulation...

- The third party software applications would still function, and the vast majority of these developers would still be in business.
- Almost all of the third party hardware developers would continue to make peripherals (remember that USB and Firewire are cross-platform).
- Service would still be available from almost all of the sources that existed before.

So, although there would be some bumps, things would go on almost exactly the same as before. In fact, if one was to be concerned about company survival in the future, it seems like it is Microsoft that is being threatened with a breakup by the federal government. What effect might that have? **Isn't Windows a single source product???** I don't hear these sky-is-falling observers worrying about that...

Actually, the single source situation is really a BIG benefit to Mac owners, as it results in **total integration of software** (operating system, applications, etc.) **AND hardware** in Apple products. It is a **patchwork quilt in Windows** – which is one of the reasons why hardware Plug-and-Play has been so difficult for PCs to achieve.

Additionally, it has allowed Apple to actively regulate the software user interface so that it is consistent! No such central authority exists in the Windows/PC world – although lord knows, Microsoft has tried to assume the role. The net affect of this problem is that **Windows applications do NOT have consistent user interfaces**. Who cares? YOU SHOULD, as it is YOUR time that is being wasted to learn the differences!

Apple's overall market share is small.

There are at least three reasons why the reported numbers for Apple are in error:

1 - There is no 100% accurate data! What you see is full of **BIG** (and often questionable) **assumptions**, as well as **LARGE approximations**.

There are many indicators that say these numbers should be suspect. For example, Nielsen/NetRatings periodically monitors the visitors to commercial sites. In Mid 2003 they issued a [report](#) regarding computer manufacturer's websites. They found that not only did "Apple Computer Inc.'s Apple.com **lead all computer hardware sites in number of shoppers**" for the monitored week, but, astoundingly, when looking at the total of the unique visitors to **ALL** computer manufacturers' hardware sites combined, **73.7%** of these people went to Apple.com! Another [snapshot](#) they made in November of 2003, showed similar results...

And here is a September 2002 report of [research](#) that says that the market shares are quite different from what you hear reported:

- 11.6% Apple
- 10.4% Compaq
- 9.8% Dell
- 9.1% IBM
- 7.3% Hewlett-Packard
- 5.1% Sony

All the rest are under 5%.

2 - Statistics can lie. Here is a good example. Let's say that the reality of the situation *is* that 90% of computer users are Wintel owners, while 10% have Macs. Let's also say we want to look at the purchases of a group of 100,000 such users.

Before we do so, another fact that needs to be added to the equation is that **Macs last much longer:** typical reported average usages are 6 years for Macs and 4 years for Wintel computers. That would mean that Mac users would typically buy a new computer **twice** in twelve years, while Wintel users would buy a new computer **three** times during the same period.

So using this twelve year timeframe to demonstrate this point: 90,000 Wintel users would make 270,000 purchases (i.e. three each), while 10,000 Mac users would make 20,000 purchases (i.e. two each). In other words, out of 290,000 computers bought, 20,000 would be Macs. So the statistics would say that there are 6.9% Mac users.

Oops! But we started with the FACT that we KNEW that there were 10% Mac users! **The net effect of this ONE example of a statistical oversight is that Mac users are under-reported by at least 50%.**

Here is an article titled [Debunking the Linux-Windows Marketshare Myth](#) that explores a few of the reasons why statistics can be misleading. Some of the issues discussed there also apply to the Apple situation.

3 - The influence of businesses using Wintel machines effectively as **terminals**, **significantly** skews the numbers. A good example is Point-Of-Sale terminals (POS). There are tens of MILLIONS of these used in gas stations, restaurants, bars, retail outlets, airlines, etc. Since there is minuscule computing done with these "computers", these businesses buy these boxes based on ONE over-riding criteria: *what is the cheapest*. (Consider this analogy: how many taxicab companies do you see owning Mercedes – or even Chrysler 300s?) The point is that terminal type usage should be *excluded* from the statistics, but it is not.



(If needed, go [here](#) for further elaboration.)

Even if we assume (incorrectly) that a 5% figure is close, think about this:

1 - The quality of the computing experience is the ONLY thing that matters. That's why you would buy a Maytag washing machine, or an Amana refrigerator, or a SONY TV, and not give a hoot about what percentage of the market these companies have. (BTW, their reported percentages are all **smaller** than Apple's.)

2 - Things change. Consider this January 2004 [story](#) in the *New York Post* which says "Buoyed by a host of winning machines, from the iMac to the iPod, Apple is enjoying a renaissance. It's been challenging Microsoft in the corporate environment with a new flexible operating system to rival Windows... These new beachheads have Apple's fortunes looking brighter than they ever have."

And indeed they are. Anyone remotely following the business news over the last few years knows that Apple has received a LOT of positive [press](#). One of the fallouts from this is that there is almost universal agreement that Apple's computer market will increase – quite possibly substantially.

The primary reasons for this are:

- a - Many of the people who have bought the runaway hit, the [iPod](#), are also considering a Mac. The press had dubbed this the Halo effect. This USA Today [article](#) is typical.
- b - Apple has been in the news a lot, and has received a substantial amount of good publicity. In addition to the iPod, many articles are about the success of its stock, and there continues to be favorable [projections](#) from numerous financial analysts.
- c - The low price [Mac mini](#) has likewise been widely and well-reviewed, and many price-sensitive PC users are giving it a look. It is particularly attractive to PC switchers as they can throw away their bland beige box, plug in the Mac mini, and keep their existing monitor and keyboard.
- d - The primary switch cause (in my experience) is that PC users have simply had it with the incessant viruses and spyware that they are subjected to in the Windows platform. The facts are that in the last four years or so there have been some 80,000 viruses identified for Windows, and ZERO for Mac OS X. Here is a [discussion](#) of the situation. This profound difference is a powerful motivator.
- e - With [Tiger](#) now available, some PC users will appreciate even more, how much better than XP the Apple OS is. That is Merrill Lynch's [position](#). This will have more resonance with PC users who are exasperated that the next Windows upgrade is some TWO YEARS away!

3 - SO WHAT? As we've expounded on before, it is universally recognized that at least 95% of the public is "technically challenged". (Jives nicely with purported market share, no?) [Want to test your friends: ask them what a transistor is or how it's made, or to explain the differences between ROM and RAM, or what TCP/IP means, etc.] Putting aside the artificially polite PC terminology for a moment, **exactly why should I buy a computer based on what technically ignorant persons do?**

Apple is no longer the number one supplier of education computers.

An October 2003 market data [report](#) compiled by a leading research company (QED) says otherwise. However, as we just said about statistics: these numbers are not all that accurate, so who would care?

Who sells the most is not as important as who has the **best**. Just because Ford sells MANY Escorts, should you buy one? In this case, Apple has the premier (AND most cost efficient) product, and that is why it is the right choice.

Competitors like Dell are desperately trying to get a foothold in the education market by selling computers at cut-rate prices. REMEMBER that the initial cost is only a small fraction of the TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP, **and just say no.**

Conclusion: *None of these "reasons" hold any water. Don't let misinformation keep you from buying the most powerful, easiest to use, and lowest cost computer available: a Mac.*

This section's Haiku
(see the bottom of page 1 for more explanation):

***Chaos reigns within.
Reflect, repent, and reboot.
Order shall return.***

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