

# the digital plumber

---

How do you avoid losing a location shoot to computer equipment failure? Well, the simple answer is to have at least two of everything, which is all very well if you can afford or even carry it, but what if you can't? This month I'll list what I consider to be the bare minimum required to keep your Macintosh and communications on the road. Click on the name of any product mentioned to go straight to a supplier or download page. Some of the links earn me a few bob if you buy by clicking on them. If you don't want to do this, simply Google the application's name, find the vendor's site and buy it that way.

## WITH YOUR MACINTOSH

To avoid being stranded if your Mac plays up on you, you'll need

- a second Mac. Yeah, right. Actually, there is often more than one Mac at a location, which is where your bootable backup comes in. Be warned, however, that currently you can't boot an Intel Mac from a bootable backup of a PowerPC Mac, and vice versa. This situation might change with OS X 10.5 Leopard, due for release this Autumn. Intel Macs consist of MacBooks, MacBook Pros and Mac Pros. iMacs and Mac minis can be either Intel or PowerPC. All other Macs made this century have PowerPC processors.
- a FireWire cable. Better still, two FireWire cables: a 400 – 400 and 800 – 800. Use the 800 – 800 if you can for double the transfer speed.
- an Ethernet cable.
- the Apple CDs or DVDs that came with your Mac. Use Toast or similar to make safety copies and have them with you.
- your DiskWarrior CD, or a copy of it.
- an up-to-date clone of your Mac's internal hard disk on a mobile disk that you can boot from. Make the clone with



SuperDuper! or Carbon Copy Cloner. Not all mobile disks can boot a Mac; it depends on the type of FireWire bridge chip installed in the disk enclosure. Mobile disks that I know to be bootable include the LaCie Rugged range with FireWire and the Wiebetech ToughTech range.

There are many others; sadly the popular SmartDisk FireLite range often cannot be used to boot from. Whichever you choose, make a bootable backup and try booting from it before relying on it. Booting instructions below.

- a USB memory stick; these are surprisingly useful. Think of them as 21st Century floppy disks.
- several cheap, lightweight mobile hard disks to keep your shoot data and its backups on. Always reformat a new disk to Mac OS Extended Journaled in Disk Utility before using it. Most disks you buy will be in DOS format and, whereas the Mac will happily mount and use them, the format will cause problems if you later attempt to use them for bootable backups.

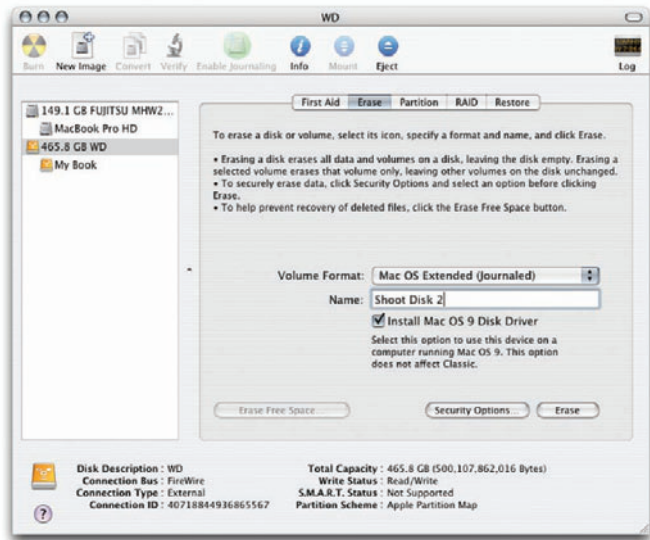
## SOFTWARE YOU SHOULD INSTALL

- Applejack. It goes without saying.

## The Academy of Plumbing 18 The Complete Location Survival Guide, Part One by Paul Ellis

Instructions for installation and use were published in Image August 2007. Download it now and keep it in your Documents folder. Use Spotlight to find it when you need it.

- SMARTReporter, which periodically checks your hard disks for their state of health and warns you if a hardware failure is imminent. Usually, if you do get such a warning, take heed because it's not messing around, and back up your important data (i.e. the day's shoot and email) immediately.
- DiskWarrior. Never leave home without it. It can fix disk directory damage that almost nothing else will and is your second port of call (Applejack being the first) if your system seems to be behaving strangely.
- SuperDuper! or Carbon Copy Cloner, to keep your bootable backup up-to-date.
- Chronosync or similar, to help in backing up your shoot data.
- If you shoot to cards and don't use Photo Mechanic, ImageIngester to back up your pictures as you copy them from the card.
- PhotoRescue to recover erased, deleted or corrupted camera data cards



- something in which to store your user names, passwords, software serial numbers and helpdesk phone numbers, and your studio's static IP address. I like and use Web Confidential but there are many others.

## MAINTAINING COMMUNICATIONS

- If you simply must have email at all times, get a BlackBerry. It works.
- Alternatively, get a 3G data modem and a roaming data account with a mobile phone provider, and use that to establish communications. A great trick is to use your Mac's Internet Sharing function (System Preferences/Sharing/Internet) to share your 3G connection via Airport. This turns your Mac into an instant location wireless hotspot for others to use. Very cool, and very useful, too. Make sure that the modem you choose is Mac compatible: not all are. Your mobile phone company should know. Yeah, right again.
- Even better than that, take a hardware router along that can use the 3G data modem itself and have a proper firewall-protected location hotspot. The Draytek 2910 and 2800 can both do this. Draytek keep a list of compatible modems on their information page. Some of these are also Mac-compatible.
- Make sure you know how to log on to any wireless hotspots in your vicinity.

iStumble will show you what's available (logon procedures described in Image May, June & September 2006). For a searchable database of known hotspots, go to [www.hotspot-locations.co.uk](http://www.hotspot-locations.co.uk).

- Use your Ethernet cable to plug into the wall or someone's router or switch whenever possible. It's faster, more secure and infinitely easier than messing around with wireless hotspots in hotels. Consider getting a BT OpenZone account, or similar, to be able to use the paid public hotspots in Starbucks and the rest.
- There is more, and more detail, to be found on this subject in Image September 2007.

## SENDING EMAIL

- Make sure that you have an authenticated email SMTP server to send outgoing email through. A .Mac account is very useful for this, as is a Gmail account. An authenticated email server usually requires your username and password before it will allow you to send email through it. Your email application's Preferences or Accounts window will tell you if you're using an authenticated SMTP server.
- If you find that despite having a working Internet connection you cannot send email from your Mac no matter what

you do, go to [www.mail2web.com](http://www.mail2web.com). Enter your email username, email password (NOT your Mac account password) and mail server address, and have basic but functional browser-based email that always works, so long as your email account is functional. C.C. to yourself any mail you send so that you maintain a record of it.



- Email always goes down occasionally, and when it does you need a backup email account or two. .Mac works well, as does Hotmail, Yahoo Mail and Gmail. Any 'orrible PC in an Internet café will do for this. How do you send pictures to clients in this way? Copy them to your USB memory stick, whack it into the PC and add them as attachments. You can even copy them to your BlackBerry for this purpose. Any port in a storm. Of course, all of this will change for us UK types (it already has in the USA) with the release of the iPhone, which will make roaming connectivity for Mac users so much easier.

Next month, Part Two will concern itself with uploading your shoot to your studio Mac, location data storage, the My Mac Is Playing Up checklist and a bunch of How To's. Remember what Akela said, and Be Prepared.

Those of you still hungry for information can keep up by periodically checking my blog at [www.thedigitalplumber.co.uk](http://www.thedigitalplumber.co.uk), where you'll also find pdfs of previous articles and my contact details.

© Paul David Ellis, 2007.  
All Rights Reserved.