

Of course, every Mac comes with *some* software. For example, each Mac comes with the System software (on white floppy disks or on a CD) that it needs for its own internal use. It comes with some miniprograms, like the Calculator and the Note Pad, called *desk accessories*. But none of this free software will make you very productive on the day you set up your computer.

Software, for the most part, is expensive. The most popular Mac word processing program, for example, is Microsoft Word, and it goes for about \$300. If you plan to do number crunching, over 90 percent of Mac users use the spreadsheet Microsoft Excel (another \$300). Want a database for handling order forms, tracking phone calls, and creating merged form letters? Check out the fantastic FileMaker Pro (around \$200). (Try, *try* not to focus on the fact that what you get for that money is a 50-cent disk and a \$3 manual.)

There are lower-priced alternatives, of course. If you really want to do your homework, read a few recent issues of the Mac magazines for some guidance. WordPerfect, for example, is an excellent, easy-to-use word processing program, and it's about \$150. It can even exchange files with Microsoft Word. Unfortunately, you may feel a little bit left out with one of the underdog programs, since almost all the talk, help, and articles will be about the big three (Word, Excel, and FileMaker).



If you don't much care about being in the vanguard, you can get a lot of power in the form of an *integrated* program like ClarisWorks — which comes already installed on some Mac models. For the cost of a single program, you get several programs mashed into one: word processor, database, spreadsheet, drawing program, and so on. (See Chapter 7, "A Whole Big Chapter on ClarisWorks.")

In any case, you definitely need a word processor. Most people could use an address book program like Now Contact and a calendar/reminder program like Now Up-to-Date. And then there are graphics: if you want to draw or paint, read Chapter 6 for some explanations and suggestions.

Where to get it

There are two places to buy software: via mail order and at a store. Unfortunately, as you'll quickly discover, today's computer stores generally offer a pathetically small selection of Macintosh software. On the other hand, mail-order companies offer thousands of choices; give much bigger discounts; take returns after you've opened the box; and don't charge sales tax. And, of course, you don't have to fire up the old Volvo. You get your stuff delivered to your door by the next day (the overnight shipping charge is usually \$5