



A Macintosh OS X.2.1 and Windows XP Report Card— Do New Computers Run Old Software?

Bias check. We love Macs. We used one to write and edit this article, and find them very easy to use. Our editor bases his wardrobe around blue jeans and black turtlenecks (you know, the kind that Steve Jobs wears). But this story goes beyond brand loyalty and pretty hardware. It's about the ability to get software running with little or no hassle. After all, children (and busy teachers or librarians) don't care about operating systems... they just want the software to run. Schools and libraries have thousands of dollars invested in older software, and we see older, high quality titles like **Logical Journey of the Zoombinis** at bargain prices. Will these programs run on the new operating systems? We decided to find out.

A Simple Test

When Sony sent us a hot new Vaio Desktop computer with Windows XP Home Edition, and Apple sent us a brand new iMac with the new "Jaguar" (10.2.1), we found ourselves with an ideal opportunity to give them both a run for their money. We went to our library and pulled 28 mostly older, fairly well known Win/Mac hybrid programs (see the list on the next page). We then installed the same disk on both systems, using the following guidelines:

- We used default installation settings; always erring on the conservative choices. For example, if the program asked us to install QuickTime or DirectX, we did so.
- We restarted each system between each install (to flush out any leftover headaches from the last installation).
- All the no-loads on Sony Vaio desktop were installed on a Dell system running XP Home Edition to confirm that the problem was caused by the operating system and not the hardware.

Redmond, We Have a Problem

As you can see from the table on the right, Windows XP gave us a significant number of problems, which seems to justify our subscriber complaints (see the Mailbag). Microsoft's new operating system (sold on nearly all new computers) is marketed as backward compatible. But nearly 30% of the older software programs we

tested wouldn't run correctly on Windows XP. That's a lot of headaches for schools and libraries who are thinking about upgrading; not to mention homes. Here's what needs to be done.

1. Wake-up Microsoft! Give us patches to bring the compatibility up to an acceptable rate -- at least over 90%. These patches should be preinstalled (no update required) on all new computers. Otherwise, Windows XP should be properly labeled as being marginally backward compatible. Imagine a Sony PS2 that ran only 71% of PS1 titles?

2. Label the products. Software sellers need to take care of their customers and properly label the products they sell. Take the acclaimed **Orly's Draw-A-Story** -- which is being sold widely at discount stores. There is no indication that this program won't run on Windows XP. This needs to change. Folks, if you can sell it, you can test it first to make sure it runs.

3. Support from publishers. Software publishers need to support their customers with online patches or better yet, replacement of the software.

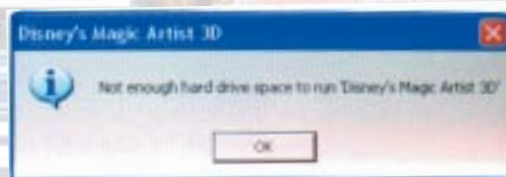
4. Somebody (us) needs to start tracking this issue. Already, we've posted in our online database the products that failed the XP and OSX test. If you happen to buy a program that doesn't

work, let us know. We'll contact the publisher on your behalf, and put the pressure on them to take care of business.



Some of your QuickTime software failed to load because it is out of date.

This was the only fatal error we could get out of the Mac, caused by the Zoombinis.



We had 8GB of free space

And what about Mac OSX.2?

Check out the results. Our hats are off to Apple. They have proven that it is possible to significantly re-engineer an operating system while taking care of prior customers and software publishers. Perhaps Bill Gates should try wearing black turtlenecks.

The Bottom Line

Remember, more times than not (71.4% in our tests), Windows XP will run your older programs, and as time goes on, more programs will be XP compliant. But the older they are, the more likely it is that you'll have trouble. Does this mean a Mac should be your next computer? Not necessarily. Windows XP owners will continue to have significantly more choices in children's software than Mac owners -- programs like Spirit, Harry Potter, Age of Mythology and many more will not run on Macs. And Windows XP computers cost less. These two important factors make Windows computers worth the hassle for most users. Hope springs eternal, though. Someday we'll see a problem-free Windows computer, right alongside runproof pantyhose and a cure for the common cold ☺



Here's how 28 Important Older Titles Performed on Current Operating Systems



Title Installed	Publisher	Date	Windows XP Home	Mac OS X.2.1
3D Thinking Lab (one of the popular Thinkin' Things activities).	Edmark (Riverdeep)	1998	OK, although the following error message appeared: "Due to security issues of Windows NT, this program may not perform correctly. Would you like to continue? YES or NO?" 	OK
Alphabet Express	School Zone Interactive	1998	OK	OK
Clifford Reading	Scholastic Consumer Software	2000	OK	OK
The ClueFinders' 3rd Grade Adventures	The Learning Company	1997	OK	OK
Dineo's Magic Artist 3D CD-ROM	Dineo Interactive	2000	No. "Not enough hard drive space." 	OK
The Graph Club 1.3	Tom Snyder Productions	1998	OK	OK
I Spy School Days	Scholastic Consumer Software	1997	No. "Not a valid Windows image." 	OK, despite a QuickTime loading error message.
Inspiration Version 7	Inspiration Software, Inc.	2002	OK	OK
JumpStart: Pre-K	Knowledge Adventure	1998	OK	OK, although iTunes automatically started.
Kid Pix Studio Deluxe Version 1.0	Bruderbund (The Learning Company)	1998	OK	OK
Logical Journey of the Zoombinis 1.0 (1995) and Logical Journey of the Zoombinis Deluxe (1998)	Bruderbund (The Learning Company)	1998	No. "Unable to initialize graphics." 	No. "Unable to initialize sound." 
Math Blaster: Ages 4-8	Knowledge Adventure	1998	No. "This program failed to run"	OK
Mile & Betsy Preschool	Edmark (Riverdeep)	1997	OK. Ran and installed fine, but screen size changed between activities.	OK (small screen size)
My First Amazing World Explorer 2.0	DK Multimedia	1998	OK, despite the message "Warning -- This product has not been tested on Windows NT and may not run correctly." It ran correctly.	OK
My First Incredible, Amazing Dictionary 2.0	DK Family Learning	1997	OK	OK
The Oregon Trail 9th Edition: Adventures Along the Oregon Trail	The Learning Company	2001	OK 	OK
Only a Dime-A-Story	Bruderbund (The Learning Company)	1998	No. "Unable to locate component- Application failed."	OK, although iTunes started automatically.
Reader Rabbit Preschool Sparkle Star Rescue!	The Learning Company	2001	OK 	OK
Reels for Tears	Ripple Effects	1998	No. Installed fine, and ran OK, but minus the QuickTime movies.	OK
ResourceLink: 19th-Century American History	ABC-CLIO	1998	OK	OK
Schoolhouse Rock! Grammar Rock	Creative Wonders	1995	No. "Not a valid Windows image." 	OK
Shells Rise the Brave -- One of the Living Books.	Bruderbund (The Learning Company)	1998	OK	OK
Tenth Planet: Representing Fractions	Sunburst Communications, Inc.	1998	No.	OK
Type for Fun	Sunburst Communications, Inc.	1998	OK	OK
Type to Learn 3	Sunburst Communications, Inc.	2002	OK	OK
Web Workshop Pro	Sunburst Communications, Inc.	2000	OK	OK
Where in the USA is Carmen Sandiego Deluxe Edition	Bruderbund (The Learning Company)	1998	OK	OK
Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego? Treasures of Knowledge	Riverdeep - The Learning Company	2002	OK	OK
			71.4% success rate 28.6% failure rate 20 out of 28 programs installed and ran correctly.	96.4% success rate 3.6% failure rate 27 out of 28 programs ran correctly.