At Ease 1.0: Product Description (8/95)

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TOPIC ---

At Ease, an extension to System 7, provides an alternate environment for users who want a simple, uncluttered, interface for application and document launching, plus simple system and hard-disk protection. It's a friendly, safe, one-touch desktop designed especially for the education and home markets.

At Ease doesn't entirely replace the Macintosh Finder: you'll still need the Finder for throwing files away, adding new applications, and so on.

DISCUSSION ---

Why Is At Ease Needed?

For many novice (especially young) Macintosh users, some elements of the Macintosh interface are difficult to master: for example, aiming the mouse, double-clicking, and using pull-down menus.

And school lab administrators have told us they need a better way to:

• Maintain standard settings on each computer.

• Prevent student from accidentally -- or maliciously -- trashing applications, documents, or System Folders.

• Limit students' access to a predetermined set of applications and documents.

• Teach young or novice users how and where to locate and save applications and documents.

At Ease simplifies the common tasks of finding and launching applications and documents, while providing a simple level of protection for a Macintosh computer's system settings, and for the files and folders on the hard drive.

Features

In addition to a simple and consistent interface, At Ease provides:

• Easy initial setup with a "Gather all Applications" button for quick setup.

• Optional password access to the Finder, System Folder, Control Panels, or any application or document not meant to be available to all user.

• Password protection, with a 'clue' to help young users remember the password. Files can't be thrown away or moved without the password.

• Documents and applications alphabetized for easy access.

• Mouse Practice, a fun and interesting tutorial on how to use a mouse.

Some At Ease options:

• Require that files be saved only to a floppy (so that nothing can be saved to the hard disk).

• Have buttons added automatically to At Ease.

• Remove items such as the Chooser from the Apple Menu Items folder, making them unavailable to users.

• Add specific Control Panels (Sound, for example) or aliases to the Apple Menu Items folder for quick access.

At Ease allows twelve to twenty icons per page, depending on display size. Displays less than 640 pixels wide contain four columns; larger displays contain five columns.

At Ease supports file Sharing, background printing, most Apple menu items, startup folder items, System 7 Tune-Up, and Balloon Help. And At Ease saves RAM -- as much as 200K.

The At Ease Package

At Ease consists of:

• A control panel with which a teacher, parent, or lab monitor turns on At Ease and sets up access to documents, applications, and hard drives.

• An application that handles application and document launching.

• An "At Ease Items" folder containing aliases to the objects displayed in At Ease.

• A Preferences file, which contains an encrypted version of the password.

Technical Details

When a user clicks on the 'on' button to start At Ease, the boot blocks of the boot volume are altered so that At Ease is used in place of the Finder. When the 'off' button is clicked, the boot blocks are restored.

When the At Ease system has been restarted (the At Ease control panel turned on), the extension contained in the control panel executes, installs some trap patches, and creates an 'At Ease Items' folder in the System Folder. Any Control Panels or folders put into the At Ease folder will be ignored.

Support

At Ease is simple to set up and use. Apple provides support toll-free for one year from date of purchase. (Because At Ease requires System 7, many customers will be upgrading to System 7 first, and then installing At Ease. The personnel answering At Ease questions can also answer System 7 questions.)

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