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RAM Disk: Description (2/95)

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TOPIC -----

What is a RAM disk, and why would I use one?

DISCUSSION -----

You can set aside a portion of your computer's memory to function like a disk drive, called a RAM disk. With a RAM disk, you can save and retrieve files very quickly, but the files are stored only temporarily. This feature is not available on all models of the Macintosh.

Using a RAM disk is faster and conserves power, because the computer uses less energy and time to access RAM than it does to access a hard disk or a floppy disk.

PowerBook users may want to use a RAM disk to maximize battery life. Commonly used files could be stored on the RAM disk, which requires less electricity to access than hard disk and floppy disk drives. Also, accessing frequently used files from RAM allows the PowerBook to spin down the internal hard disk more often.

Memory assigned to a RAM disk is not available for opening programs, so it is usually not practical to create a RAM disk unless your computer has at least 4 MB of RAM. You need more than 2 MB of memory to create a RAM disk.

To create a RAM disk:

- Choose Control Panels from the Apple menu.
- Double-click the Memory control panel to open it.
- Click On to create the RAM disk.
- Drag the lever to choose the percentage of available memory you want to use for your RAM disk. Choose a size large enough to accommodate the programs and documents you want to put on the RAM disk, but not larger.
- Close the Memory control panel.
- Choose Restart from the Special menu.

You won't see the RAM disk icon until you've restarted.

Warning: Choosing Shut Down removes the RAM disk. (An alert box appears.) A

computer crash can erase the RAM disk files.

Since RAM disk storage is temporary, it's a good idea to observe some precautions when using a RAM disk:

- Don't store your only copy of a file on a RAM disk. Keep an extra copy on a hard disk or a floppy disk.
- Before using a program on a RAM disk, test the program on another disk (hard disk or floppy) to make sure it works properly.
- Always save the contents of your RAM disk on another disk before turning off your computer (which erases the RAM disk on most models). Note: Choosing Restart doesn't erase the RAM disk.

You use a RAM disk exactly as you would any other disk, except that you must save your work onto another disk before shutting down.

To erase a RAM disk, you can either :

- Select the RAM disk icon on your desktop and choose Erase Disk from the Special menu,
or
- Drag everything on the RAM disk to the Trash and choose Empty Trash from the Special menu,
or
- Shut down your computer, then turn it back on.

These methods won't remove the RAM disk itself or make more memory available for opening programs.

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