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Format vs. Initialize: Difference Between Them (4/95)

Article Created: 3 March 1995

Article Reviewed/Updated: 21 April 1995

TOPIC -----

The terms format and initialization are often used interchangeably. With regards to Apple HD SC Setup, what is the difference between format and initialization?

DISCUSSION -----

Formatting is a process that prepares a disk for storing information. Formatting can be low-level which prepares a disk by dividing it into tracks and sectors where information can be stored or high-level where only a directory is created.

Low-Level Formatting

Low-level formatting is also commonly referred to as simply formatting. During formatting, sector addresses, byte gaps, sync gaps, drivers, and partitions are created on the disk.

High-Level Formatting

High-level formatting, commonly referred to as initialization, creates a directory but does not write any sector information on to the hard drive.

This can get confusing because drive utilities vary greatly in the way they handle initialization and formatting. Apple HD SC Setup, for example, performs both initialization and formatting in the same operation while other utilities, such as SiliverLining, Norton Utilities, and FWB Hard Disk Toolkit separate initialization and formatting into two distinct operations.

The Erase Disk command from the Mac OS Finder can perform both a low-level format and a high-level format if the disk is a floppy disk. On hard drives, Erase Disk can only do a high-level format.

This article was published in the "Information Alley":
Volume I, Issue 25, Page 6

Article Change History:

21 Apr 1995 - Added keyword; made minor technical updates.

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Keywords: kalley

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19960215 11:05:19.00

Tech Info Library Article Number: 17304