iMac Jargon Explained

Although the iMac is one of the most user-friendly computers on the market, it is unavoidable that there is some jargon connected with it:

- **Processor**. Also known as the central processing unit, or CPU, this refers to the processing of digital data as it is provided by apps on the computer. The more powerful the processor, the quicker the data is interpreted. As with the rest of Apple's computers, iMacs use Intel processors

- **Memory**. This closely relates to the processor and is also known as random-access memory, or RAM. Essentially, this type of memory manages the apps that are being run and the commands that are being executed. The greater the amount of memory there is, the quicker apps will run. With more RAM they will also be more stable and less likely to crash. In the current range of iMacs, memory is measured in gigabytes (GB) and both models have 4GB

- **Storage**. This refers to the amount of digital information the iMac can store. It is frequently referred to in terms of hard disk space and is measured in gigabytes or terabytes (TB). The minimum storage space on a standard iMac is 500GB on the 21.5-inch models and 1TB on the 27-inch models

- **Magic Mouse**. This is a wireless mouse that comes with all new iMacs. It connects via Bluetooth (page 13) and is a multi-touch device. This means that many operations such as scrolling through web pages or documents can be done on the surface of the mouse. There are no buttons on a Magic Mouse but different parts of it can be clicked on and they are assigned separate functions

Don't forget

Memory can be thought of as a temporary storage device, as it only keeps information about the currently-open apps. Storage is more permanent, as it keeps the information even when the iMac has been turned off.

● **Magic Trackpad**. This is an input device that performs the same functions as a trackpad on a MacBook laptop. As with the Magic Mouse it connects via Bluetooth and supports a wider range of Multi-Touch Gestures than the Magic Mouse. It also sits at the same angle as the iMac Wireless Keyboard so the two can sit comfortably side by side. (For an in-depth look at Multi-Touch Gestures on the Magic Trackpad and Magic Mouse, see Chapter Six.)

● **Wireless Keyboard**. New iMacs come with a Wireless Keyboard which, like the Magic Mouse and Magic Trackpad, connects via Bluetooth to the iMac

● **Graphics card**. This is a device that enables images, video and animations to be displayed on the iMac. It is also sometimes known as a video card. The faster the graphics card, the better the quality relevant media will be displayed at. In general, very fast graphics cards are really only needed for intensive multimedia applications, such as video games or videos. On an iMac this is the AMD Radeon HD Graphics card

● **Wireless**. This refers to an iMac's ability to connect wirelessly to a network, i.e. another computer or an Internet connection. In order to be able to do this, the iMac must have a wireless card, which enables it to connect to a network or high-speed Internet connection. This is known as the AirPort Extreme Wi-Fi wireless networking card

● **Bluetooth**. This is a radio technology for connecting devices wirelessly over a short distance. It can be used for items such as a wireless mouse, or for connecting to a device, such as an iPhone for downloading photos

Beware

The wireless input devices (keyboard, mouse and trackpad) are battery powered and can use up a lot of charge. It is a good idea to use rechargeable batteries to save having to buy a lot of new batteries.

Hot tip

To turn off the Magic Trackpad, press and hold the button on the side for a few seconds.

13

Don't forget

The iMac also has an ambient light sensor on the side of the body. This adjusts the display brightness, depending on the amount of available ambient light.
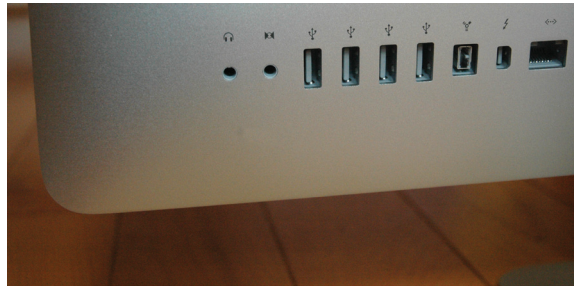
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- **Ports**. These are the parts of an iMac where external devices can be plugged into, using a cable such as a USB, FireWire or Thunderbolt. They are located at the back of the iMac:

USB stands for Universal Serial Bus and is a popular way of connecting external devices to computers.

14

- **USB**. This is a method for connecting a variety of external devices, such as digital cameras, MP3 music players, scanners and printers

- **Ethernet**. This is for connecting an Ethernet cable to a router, for accessing the Internet, rather than doing it wirelessly

- **FireWire**. This is a similar method of data transfer to USB but is much faster. For this reason, it is generally used for devices that need to transfer larger amounts of data, such as digital video cameras

There are also ports for an external microphone and one for headphones.

- **Thunderbolt**. This is a port for transferring data at high speeds, up to 12x faster than FireWire. It can also be used to attach a Thunderbolt Display monitor

- **CD/DVD players or re-writers**. On an iMac this is known as a SuperDrive, and is a thin slot on the side of the iMac. Discs are inserted by simply pushing them into the SuperDrive slot. The SuperDrive can be used to play music CDs, watch DVDs, copy data from CDs or DVDs, and copy data from your iMac onto CDs or DVDs

- **Webcam (FaceTime)**. This is a type of camera fitted into the top of the iMac and it can be used to take still photographs or communicate via video with other people. It works with the FaceTime app