

Can I Work on This at Home?

A HOW-TO guide for doing homework on the computer

You have work to finish computer work at home, or you did a project on your home computer and need to bring it to school...can it be done? Yes, but there are some things you need to consider.

New Software understands old software; old software doesn't understand the new.

When you're using two different versions of the same software, like Word 97 and Word 2000 or ClarisWorks and AppleWorks 6, the newer version can understand files made in the older versions, but the older versions can't understand the files created in the newer versions. Word 2000 can understand Word 97 files, but Word 97 won't understand Word 2000 files.

Example: If you wrote a paper in AppleWorks 5 at school and brought it home to work on your new iMac at home which has AppleWorks 6, you would find that it works fine (although it will recognize that it was made in a different version). If you saved your changes at home in AppleWorks 6 and brought it back to school to print you will get the message "The document was created in a newer version" and it won't open. **Always keep your document saved as the older version of the software you're using.**

Word on a Mac understands Word from a PC and the reverse.

The important thing is having the same software!

Example: If you used Excel 97 at school on a PC to start entering data for your lab report and then brought it home to a new Mac running Office X you would have no problem opening it up. Just so you know, Macs don't need those 3-lettered file extensions like .doc or.xls to be able to recognize the file, but PCs do. So if you're saving a file on a Mac to use on a PC, make sure it has those three letters in the ending-otherwise the PC won't know what application to open it with.

Same software, same versions at home and school

So if you're lucky enough to use the same software and the same version of it at home as you use in class, then you pass go, collect \$200, and skip down to the section *How To Actually Get My Files Home*.

Same software, different versions at home and school

Save it in the older version so it can be opened either location.

Different software at home and school

You can still work on both computers to do some things, like word processing, for example. There are lots of options here:

The easiest thing to do is to save your documents in Rich Text Format or rtf. Both Macs and Windows computers can open these.

So when you go to Save As...pick RTF as the file format. The only downside to this is that this only works for word processing and you can't have anything very complicated in the document like tables or styles.

Apples Works, particularly newer versions can open older versions of Microsoft Word, particularly Word 97, so if you save your document in Word 97 format, you can open it in AppleWorks.

Unfortunately no Windows computer knows how to read AppleWorks, so you'll have to remember to save it in a format other than AppleWorks, such as RTF or Text Only.

How to actually get my files home:

So you're pretty sure that the file you're working on will be openable at home, how do you actually get it there?

1. If you're using a machine that has a floppy drive that is a simple way. Make sure when you save the file you have located the floppy drive as the saved destination. Simply clicking the floppy icon on the toolbar will *not* save it there!
2. You can also mail it to yourself if you have a web accessible e-mail account. However, Hotmail accounts are not accessible in Minneapolis schools. Yahoo e-mail accounts have a handy feature that can give you up to 30 MB of free storage space, accessible from anywhere. Go to <http://briefcase.yahoo.com>. Just upload and download your file there.
3. Buy a DiscOn Key or something similar. This is basically a memory chip that you can put on your keychain. They come in many different sizes, but 16 MB-64 MB is more than enough and they cost between \$15-\$50. You plug it into the USB port on the computer and a drive appears in MY Computer on a Windows machine, or on the desktop on a Mac. Drag your files onto the drive, and they're copied, drag the drive to the trash or eject it and you're set to go!