What are User Groups?

I've never heard of user groups. What are they?
User groups are clubs, organized by people interested in sharing information about their computers. Apple has more than 600 user groups registered worldwide - some with fewer than 20 members, others with over 1000.

What benefits do user groups offer?
User groups help members with technical questions, give honest advice on peripherals, software selection and provide a friendly environment where people can learn more about their computers. Most groups offer classes, one-on-one support, monthly meetings, and a group newsletter.

How are user groups organized?
User groups are independent organizations run by local volunteers. Apple promotes and supports its user groups, but the company does not own or direct them. They are not organized into a formal hierarchy; each operates alone. User group members usually elect officers - a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, meeting coordinator, newsletter editor, webmaster and volunteer coordinator - who manage the day-to-day operations of the club.

Why should I join a user group?
Joining gives you full access to all the benefits a group offers. Though membership offerings vary from group to group, you can at least expect a newsletter, personalized email or phone support, regular meetings and a welcoming atmosphere.

What does it cost to join?
Membership prices vary from group to group. While some groups have no membership fee, most charge between 10¤ - 50¤ (£6 - £30) a year to cover expenses.

How do I give user groups a try?
Use the online locator to find a couple of groups near you. Look closely at their web sites to see what they offer. If they've posted a sample newsletter, read through it to evaluate the quality of the publication. Find out when the group meets and visit one of their monthly meetings. This is an excellent way to get to know the group. Introduce yourself to one of the group leaders and explain what you're looking for. Chances are, they'll know just where to find it.

I can't attend meetings. Can user groups still help me?
Yes. Even if you don't attend regular meetings, many user groups still offer enough benefits to make membership worthwhile. This is especially true if the group offers a top-notch monthly publication and specialized technical help. Or consider joining an online-only user group. If you're comfortable using the internet, online groups can be a good resource for support and camaraderie via email discussion lists and/or message boards. Online groups are a bit different - they usually don't charge for membership and are often run by one or two non-elected individuals who dictate policy based on community input.

Finding a User Group

I can't find my local group on Apple's web site. What's the problem?
Send email to usergroups@euro.apple.com, and we'll resolve the issue.

I found my group, but there's no contact info, or the contact info is wrong. Why?
Possibly whoever last updated your group record left some records blank or entered information that's no longer valid. Contact your group leaders and ask them to fix it.

Starting a User Group

How do I start a user group?
Read **Inprise's** excellent guide to starting a user group.

How do I get my group into Apple's user group program?
You must apply to be in the program.

1. Click on Register a New Group.
2. Fill out the Group Profile and submit.
3. Fill out the Contact Profile and submit.
4. Wait patiently. New group approvals sometimes take a few weeks.

I put my group information in the database, but it still doesn't show up in the locator. Why not?
Your group has not yet been approved. Be patient, it takes time. All new groups must be reviewed and approved before we'll point our customers to them via the online locator. If you provided an email address in your database record, you will

be contacted regarding the status of your group.

I keep putting my group information into the database over and over again, but it never shows up in the locator. What's going on?
It could be a couple of things. Perhaps the group doesn't meet minimum requirements, but you didn't provide an email address so that we could contact you about it. You must provide an email address if you want to be updated on the status of your group.

Another possibility is that we're behind on new group approvals, which means that your group is still in the queue, waiting for review — only now there are multiple copies. We won't know which one is the most accurate, so we'll have to guess. Please resist the urge to create new records for the same group over and over again. The information is there. We will see it.

What are the minimum requirements for new groups? To be approved as a user group, you need to meet at least 4 of the 5 following requirements:

- at least 20 members
- two leader contacts in the database
- a generic group email address
- a group web site
- a history of successful meetings

To be approved as an online-only group, you need:

- 50 members on your listserv and/or web discussion board
- a digest version of your listserve a method for Apple to view postings
- two leader contacts in the database
- a generic group email address
- a group web site

So, once approved, are we an official Apple User Group?
No, you are recognized Apple User Group. Apple user groups are independent organizations not authorized, sponsored, or otherwise approved by Apple. We recognize your value, encourage your efforts, and look forward to working with you.

Managing a User Group

I'm a user group leader. How do I get promotional stuff from Apple?
Send your request three weeks ahead of scheduled meeting date and be
precise as to what you need and quantities. We might not be able to
supply everything but we will do our best. Each request will be reviewed on a case-by-
case basis.

Where can I buy Apple merchandise for my group?
User group leaders have access to Apple Sales Web, a private web site. Subscribe to the
Apple User Group Bulletin for details.

My group wants to distribute Apple software. Can we?
To legally distribute Apple software, you need to download, sign and send in a User
Group Software Distribution Agreement.

My group wants to use the Apple logo for promotional purposes. Can we?
To legally use the Apple logo, you need to download, sign and send in
the User Groups Signature and Trademarks Licensing Agreement.

**I have some input on Apple's user group program but don't feel comfortable
discussing it directly with Apple. What can I do?**
Send your thoughts to the Apple User Group Advisory Board. The advisory board is
responsible for gathering feedback from the user group community and providing counsel
to Apple on issues related to its user group program. Contact them at ugab@mac.com.

Internal advocacy: It's far easier to justify resources for Apple
user groups when we have accurate information about who they are, how
many customers they touch and the services they provide in their local
communities.

What is the Apple User Group Advisory Board?
The Apple User Group Advisory Board is a small, diverse group of leaders chosen by
Apple to provide ongoing feedback and advice on its user group program.

Who is on the current board? As of January 2001:
*Chuck Joiner, Advisory Board Chairman, Hershey Apple Core, Hershey,
PA *Richard Crispin, Waterloo Region Macintosh Users' Group,
Waterloo, Ontario *Lorin Evans, Washington Apple Pi, Rockville, MD

*Rose Lynn, Gold Coast Macintosh Users Group, Miami, FL *Del Missier, Spartanburg Mac User Group, Spartanburg, SC *Gail Murphy Glore, Wired Women, Shelburne, VT *Lorene Romero, North Coast Mac Users Group, Santa Rosa, CA *Jonas Skardis, Santa Fe Mac User Group, Santa Fe, NM *Warren Williams, Appleworks Users Group, Ann Arbor, MI

Please see our advisory board profiles for more information about these leaders.

What's the purpose of the board?
The advisory board represents the needs of the community. They are there to take suggestions and feedback from the user group community and to work with Apple on addressing community concerns. They also contribute time and talent on key initiatives that benefit user groups everywhere.

What does the board do for user groups?
The advisory board collects feedback from the user group community and meets with Apple every month on a conference call, twice a year at Macworld and constantly via email. Apple listens to this feedback and considers the ongoing advice it receives from board members on issues related to the user group program. In partnership with Apple, IDG and other computer industry vendors, the advisory board also plans and executes several important user group events at Macworld, including User Group University, the User Group Lounge and Macworld Guides.

How are board members chosen?
They are selected by the Apple User Group Program Manager. Diversity is key; Apple looks for strong individuals running successful community groups of varying size scattered throughout North America. Some board members represent groups with new leadership, while others represent groups who've had consistent leadership for many years. Apple chooses people with positive attitudes, leaders who succeed despite adverse conditions and who thrive in an open, forthright environment built on mutual trust and respect. We also insist on good chemistry, individuals who work well as a team.

How long do board members serve?
Board members serve a two-year term. If interested, they may be considered for an additional year.

What if a board member doesn't perform well?
Board members who don't perform well will be given every opportunity to improve. If they don't, they will be asked to resign. Board members who break a confidence will be dismissed immediately.

Why are board members hand-picked rather than elected?
Because the best way to put together an outstanding team is to hand-pick the players. User group leaders are welcome to organize on their own.

Why is the board so small?
Because eight busy people are easier to coordinate than nine or more. Large meetings often become unwieldy, unproductive and difficult to manage. Additional seats are a possibility in the future, depending on need. Guest seats may be added on a temporary basis as circumstances warrant.

When does the board meet?
The Apple User Group Advisory Board meets in person at MacWorld San Francisco, MacWorld New York, via monthly conference calls and online 24/7 on a private email list.

How does one become a board member?
The next board will be seated in January, 2002. Please apply by October 1, 2001, to be considered. Individuals interested in joining the Apple User Group Advisory Board are welcome to nominate themselves by sending the following to usergroups@euro.apple.com:

- Name
- Title
- Group Name
- City/ Country
- A brief paragraph describing your user group and what's special about it.
- A few thoughts on what you would do with user groups if you were Apple
- Your thoughts on the state of the user group community and what could be done to make it stronger.

Prospective board members are also encouraged to join the Apple User Group Discussion List. In addition to being a great resource for help from your peers on issues related to running a user group, the discussion list is used by Apple as a sounding board for new ideas and sometimes as an informal advisory board.

What kind of time commitment is required?
Lots. Advisory board members spend hundreds of hours of personal time attending meetings, planning events, gathering feedback and working with Apple to bring its user group community together.

What perks do board members get?
Not many. A nice dinner out, an occasional thank-you gift, a little recognition. that's about it.

Doesn't Apple in the US fly them out to Macworld and pay for their accommodations?
No, they go on their own time and money.

So, why would anyone want to be on the board?
Because they care. Because user groups have the power to improve people's lives through technology, and they want to help Apple to understand this. Because they are committed to creating win-win relationships among user groups, Apple and its customers.

How do I contact the advisory board?
Send your thoughts, comments, and concerns to the advisory board at ugab@mac.com

What are Apple Regional Liaisons?
Apple Regional Liaisons are leaders selected by Apple and its User Group Advisory Board to network with user groups in their local areas.

Who are the current regional liaisons? As of January 2001:

European Liaisons:
Yuan-Yuan Sun, Mac Users Switzerland, Zurich, Switzerland
Michael Corgan, London Macintosh User Group, London, UK
US Liaisons:
Sandy Foderick, Mini'App'Les, Minneapolis, MNUS
Amaya Gergoff, Caracas Macintosh User Group, Caracas, Venezuela
Michael Henigan, Atlanta Macintosh Users Group, Atlanta, GA, US
Heidi Kriener-Ley, Loyal Ontario Group Interested in Computers, Toronto, Canada Jed
Mark, Diablo Valley Mac Users Group, Walnut Creek, CA, US
Lynn Poos, Silicon Mountain Macintosh User Group, Colorado Springs, CO, US
Steve Welsh, Corvallis Macintosh Users Group, Corvallis, OR, US

Chris Bastian, New York Mac Users Group, New York, NY, US

Please see our regional liaison profiles for more information about these leaders.

What's the point of having regional liaisons?
Regional liaisons are there to establish and maintain relationships with the groups in their areas. They are specifically looking for success stories to share with the rest of the user group community and for concerns to take back to Apple. Regional liaisons also contribute time and talent on key initiatives that benefit user groups everywhere.

What do liaisons do for user groups?
Liaisons collect feedback from the user group community and share best practices among leaders. Collected feedback goes to the User Group Advisory Board and to Apple. Apple listens to this feedback and considers the ongoing advice it receives from board members and regional liaisons on issues related to the user group program.

How are regional liaisons chosen?
They are selected by the Advisory Board Chairman, the Advisory Board Regional Chair and the Apple User Group Program Manager, with input from other board members as needed. Diversity is key; Apple and its Advisory Board look for strong individuals running successful community groups of varying size scattered throughout the world. We choose people with positive attitudes, leaders who succeed despite adverse conditions and who thrive in an open, forthright environment built on mutual trust and respect. We also insist on good chemistry, individuals who work well as a team.

How long do they serve?
Liaisons serve a one-year term. If interested, they may be considered for an additional year.

What if a regional liaison doesn't perform well?
Liaisons who don't perform well will be given every opportunity to improve. If they don't, they will be asked to resign. Liaisons who break a confidence will be dismissed immediately.

Why are liaisons hand-picked rather than elected?
Because the best way to put together an outstanding team is to hand-pick the players. User group leaders are welcome to organize on their own.

Why aren't there more regional liaisons?
Because we're just getting started with this program. Additional liaisons will probably be added in the future depending on interest, need and our ability to coordinate efforts.

When do liaisons meet?
Liaisons meet in person at MacWorld San Francisco and MacWorld New York, via occasional conference calls and online 24/7 on a private email list.

How does one become a regional liaison?
The next team of regional liaisons will be seated in January, 2002. Please apply by October 1, 2001, to be considered. Individuals interested in joining the Apple Regional Liaison Team are welcome to nominate themselves by sending the following to usergroups@euro.apple.com:

- Name
- Title
- Group Name
- City /Country
- A brief paragraph describing your user group and what's special about it.
- A few thoughts on what you would do with user groups if you were Apple.
- Your thoughts on the state of the user group community and what could be done to make it stronger.

Prospective liaisons are also encouraged to join the Apple User Group Discussion List. In addition to being a great resource for help from your peers on issues related to running a user group, the discussion list is used by Apple as a sounding board for new ideas and sometimes as an informal advisory board.

So, why would anyone want to be a regional liaison?
Because they care. Because user groups have the power to improve people's lives through technology, and they want to help Apple to understand this. Because they are committed to creating win-win relationships among user groups, Apple and its customers.

How do I find out which liaison covers my region?
Send your query to the regional liaisons at ugrl@mac.com