

The South Bay MUG Macintosh

February/March 2011

A Monthly CUPFUL for South Bay Apple Mac User Group Members

Ins and Outs of Calling via the Net

By DAVID POGUE, *NY Times*

“Hi David! Am I the only one getting really confused by all the free/cheap Internet calling options? Would you mind clearing the steadily occluding waters of Skype, Google Voice, Line2, FreePhone2Phone, and so on? Your fan, Caroline C.”

I loved this e-mail message for two reasons. First, I knew that the answer might make a great column. Second, you so rarely encounter the word “occluding.” All right, Caroline, here’s the story.

The world of phone calls is changing fast. Any time some service is both essential and expensive — like phone service — you can bet that somebody will invent less expensive alternatives.

As faster Internet connections caught on, it didn’t take long for clever programmers to realize that the Internet could transmit voices.

The world was suddenly full of programs (Skype, iChat, Google Talk, various Messenger programs) that let you make free “phone calls” to anywhere, as long as you and your callee were both sitting at computers.

Then came the era of cellphones that could connect to the Internet. What a mind-boggler! Doesn’t that mean that app phones (like iPhone and Android phones) could, in theory, make free “phone calls” over the Internet, bypassing voice networks? Your Internet calls would never use up any of your minutes. You’d save all kinds of money. You’d rock the very foundations of the telecom world.

Well, we’re getting there. With a few technically complex exceptions there’s still no app that offers all three of these elements: free calls, to regular phone numbers, from your cell phone. In most cases, you can choose only two of the three. For example, you can make free calls to any phone number — but only from your computer or landline phone

(Google Voice). Or you can make free calls from your cellphone to other owners of an app (Fring, Skype, TruPhone) — but not to actual phone numbers.

To prepare this report on the state of Internet calling, I made a lot of calls in all kinds of different configurations: to a cellphone, to a landline, over WiFi, over cellular, and so on. Over time, it became clear that Internet calling apps represent an excellent exercise in expectation-lowering.

For example, compared with regular cellphone calling, Internet calls usually take longer to connect. The sound quality is almost always inferior; you’d describe it as muffled, faint or distant. *Continued on page 6*

Next SBAMUG meeting: 2/23
**“PAGES” - word processing
& page layout**

Read this newsletter & click to websites online at www.sbamug.com – click on “Newsletter”

Stay tuned in by email: www.sbamug.com click on “Our Email Group”, then everybody-on@sbamug.com and send. When you receive a reply, click reply and send

Now we’re on Twitter: twitter.com/sbamug

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Welcome to

South Bay Apple Mac User Group (SBAMUG)



You and your friends and colleagues are invited to attend our monthly meetings. The \$35 annual membership dues entitle you to this monthly newsletter by mail or online plus many more benefits (Page 8).

To become a member or get more info about SBAMUG, please check our website at: <http://www.sbamug.com>.

We meet at the VFW Hall, 1865 Lomita Blvd. in Lomita



Mail: P. O. Box 432, Redondo Beach, CA 90277-0432

Phone: (310) 644-3315

Email: info@sbamug.com

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/sbamug>

SBAMUG Monthly Calendar – VFW Hall, 1685 Lomita Blvd, Lomita

February 23, 2011 - Pages

March 30, 2011 - Google Apps and Google Docs (Tent.)

Meeting Format:

6:30—7:30 p.m. Questions & answers for beginners/switchers. Open discussion & sharing.

7:45—9:00 p.m. Announcements & Main Program.

Refreshments provided; donations appreciated!

Submit suggestions for topics or speakers, or articles/ideas & original artwork for this newsletter by the last Wednesday of each month. Articles may be edited to fit space. Submit to: ptownsend@sbamug.com

Other Meetings:

- 1st Sat. Core Group 10 a.m. – Location variable. Ask at the meetings or email: info@sbamug.com
- Special interest groups (SIGs): Ask at the meetings or email: info@sbamug.com
- Last Sat.- Northrop Grumman-Ham Radio & Computer Swap Meet, 7 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. meet at SE corner of Marine and Aviation Blvd, Redondo Beach
- Search other meetings you may wish to attend at <http://www.apple.com/usergroups/>

Officers & Volunteers

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Membership Report – 144 Members

Please wear your membership card as your name tag at our monthly meetings.

Thank You Member Renewals: George Florman, Marie Cooper, Bob Lay, Joan Kraus, Toni Lubofsky, Charles Mulvey, Don Burt, Ray Chikahisa, Douglas Baker, Bill Berks, John Kells, Wayne Arnold, George Lewison, Walt Fierberg.

Contact Membership Chair CW Mitchell for any corrections: cwmitchell@sbamug.com. Renew at the meetings or by mail.

THE SOUTH BAY MUG (ISSN 1058-7810) is published monthly for \$35 per year by South Bay Apple Mac User Group, 2550 Via Tejon, Suite 3J, Palos Verdes Estates, CA 90274. Periodicals postage paid at Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE SOUTH BAY MUG, P.O. Box 432, Redondo Beach, CA 90277-0432.

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Nine items to check out before we meet again!

asciart.zip Program to convert image and pictures to ASCII art. (ie letters, symbols, numbers to look like the picture) Export to text, HTML, Tif, RTF etc. OSX 10.5 or better PPC/Intel. Shareware \$19.95

bookpedia-1.dmg Latest update to one of the programs I demoed about a year ago. Catalog your book collection. Keep track of books you loan out, Scan in using the bar code or enter using the ISBN/UPC code. Has a "iTunes like" interface. PPC/Intel OSX 10.4.9 or better. Shareware \$18

burn251.zip Alternative CD/DVD burning program for Data, Audio or Video discs. Well recommended. OSX 10.3.9 10.4 or better for all features. Freeware

convertableplanets.zip A teaching tool type program. Unit conversions and gravity. How much would you weigh on another planet? Has additional info about the planets. OSX 10.4.11 or better PPC/Intel. Freeware

Deeper-1.dmg.download Utility program to enable/disable features in finder, iTunes, Dock, Quicktime, Mail, and others. Similar functionality to Onyx in tweaking things. OSX 10.6 Intel only Freeware

homebusinesscard.dmg This program will let you design business cards. Add text, graphics and images. Has opacity levels and masking. OSX 10.4-10.6 PPC/Intel only. Shareware \$29.95

iCash.dmg Personal finance tracker. Income, expenses, credits, debts, and bank transactions. PPC/Intel 10.3 or greater. Shareware \$39.00

MacFamilyTree 6.0.12.dmg Genealogy application. Latest version with Web export fixes and localization fixes. PPC/Intel 10.5 or better. Shareware \$ 49.00

PeriodicTable-1.dmg Learning tool for the periodic table. OSX 10.4 or greater. PPC/Intel. Freeware

CD for this month will be at the February 2011 meeting, labeled as the January-February CD. Catch you at the February meeting. Jim Pernal PD Editor

HOW TO ADD EMAIL ACCOUNTS TO APPLE'S MAIL

For Mac OS 10.2 or later, with Apple's Mail.app

Every Mac comes with Apple's very own killer email client. Thanks to Mail, you don't have to check each of your separate email accounts online anymore. Just pop them all into Apple's Mail and you can read all of your messages in one simple application.

But how do you get your email accounts into Mail? Or, if you're already using Mail, how do you add other email accounts? We'll show you how to do it!

Note: To use your Gmail account with Mail, see: <http://www.macinstruct.com/node/175>

1. Open the Mail application. It is in the Applications folder, and it's usually also on your Mac's Dock.
2. From the File menu, select Add Account.
3. Select your email account type from the Account Type menu. Most email accounts are POP accounts. Enter your full name and email address. Click Continue.
4. Enter your incoming mail server (also known as the POP server), user name, and password. In some cases, your user name might be your full email address. If you don't have this information, contact your service provider.

Click Continue. Mail will now try to log into the POP server you provided. If the test fails, click Continue anyway. (Mail's test doesn't always work -- even if you've provided the correct information.)

5. If your incoming mail server requires authentication, check the Use Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) checkbox and select an authentication type. Click Continue.
6. Type in your Outgoing Mail Server (also known as a SMTP server). If your outgoing mail server requires authentication, check the User Authentication checkbox and enter your user name and password.
7. If your outgoing mail server requires SSL, check that box and select your authentication. Click Continue.
8. Make sure the information you have entered is correct. Click Continue.
9. That's it! You've added a new email account to Mail. To add another email account, click Create Another Account. To finish the process, click Done.

Matthew Cone <http://www.macinstruct.com/node/206>

Speeding up your Mac

by Christopher Breen, MacWorld

Keith Trevolt, a reader who has switched from a Windows PC to the Mac, has a general maintenance question. I have some specific suggestions.

He writes: I used to reformat my PC's hard drive yearly to clean out all the files that slowed it down. Then it would run like it was brand new. How often do I need to do that with the Mac? I want to clean it up, make it run faster, etc.

There are two schools of thought on this oft-asked question. They fall into these camps: Never ... and Never ever.

I'm not a Windows guy, so forgive me if I paint this incorrectly, but my understanding is that this kind of advice is thrown so casually about because attempting to locate and cleanly dispense with all the dribs and drabs of cruft that slow down a PC can be the work of an unpleasant lifetime. So, rather than propel yourself into such a time-sucking hell-hole, you start fresh.

But again, not a Windows guy so the reality may be far worse than I've posited.

Although I've heard of Mac users taking such a slash-and-burn approach, I honestly can't recall the last time I did such a thing. Instead, you might try these techniques:

1. Restart your Mac every so often.

Like battery-sponsored bunnies, a Mac running OS X can stay on its feet seemingly forever. Launch Terminal (found in /Applications/Utilities) and enter uptime. You'll learn how long your Mac has been running since the last reboot. If it's been trotting along for weeks, restarting it may afford it the opportunity to flush out some old junk that's slowing it down.

2. Keep the desktop clean.

If you have a lot of files on the desktop your Mac will slow down. Tidy up those files by placing them in folders and the Finder will be snappier.

3. Slim down the contents of your hard drive.

If your hard drive is nearly full, your Mac will run more slowly. Archive or trash old files you no longer need.

4. Add RAM.

More RAM can speed up some applications.

5. Restart your browser and clear its cache.

Browsers are notorious for slowing down after they've been running for a long time. If you find that your Web surfing has been reduced to dog-paddling, quit and restart your browser. If it's still slow, clear its cache. In Safari choose Safari -> Empty Cache. In Firefox choose Firefox-> Preferences -> Advanced -> Network and click the Clear Now button.

6. Check login items.

Background applications and processes can slow down your Mac. Open the Accounts system preference, select your account, and click the Login Items button to take a gander at what's slated to run at startup. Do you need everything it lists? If not, delete the unnecessary items.

7. Check Activity Monitor.

Launch Activity Monitor (found in /Applications/Utilities), choose My Processes from the pop-up menu at the top of the window, and click the %CPU heading. Look at the top several items. This tells you what's drawing most of your Mac's attention. Are there items there that you can do without?

8. Quit applications.

Per the last suggestion, it's very easy to run multiple applications on your Mac. But perhaps there are more running than you need. Look in the Dock. If you see scads of applications with little blue dots beneath their icons (indicating that they're active), quit those you aren't planning to use in the near future.

9. Speed up your wireless network.

There are times that your network is the bottleneck rather than your Mac. If you suspect this is the case, take a look at Macworld contributor Glenn Fleishman's Speed Up Your Wireless Network. It's the goods.

10. Buy a faster (or different) drive.

A faster hard drive can speed up your Mac as can a solid state drive (SSD). SSDs can have read and write times that are four to five times faster than a standard spinning hard drive.

I find tip 2 especially helpful... being too lazy to file things correctly from the start, my desktop gets so weighed down it takes forever (a minute!) to load everything. Eventually I create new folders on the desktop or elsewhere and drag files into them.

P Townsend, editor

Macworld Senior Editor Christopher Breen is the author of "Secrets of the iPod and iTunes (6th edition)," and "The iPod and iTunes Pocket Guide (4th edition)" both from Peachpit Press and "Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard Essential Training (video)" from lynda.com. Find Chris's books at <http://www.amazon.com> and www.peachpit.com.

HOW ABOUT THEM APPLES!

The Apple I, which went on sale in 1976, was a kit that cost \$666.66. The beauty pictured here has a custom keyboard and wooden case. For a timeline history of Apple, see: [While You Were Out](#), by Sam Grobart in the NY Times, January 18, 2011.



AND WHILE WE'RE TALKING HISTORY, despite the claim that anything pre-Mac is not worth talking about, check out this bit of history right here in the South Bay. Take a personal tour. I did, led by Gary... You'll learn all sorts of enlightening trivia too. *P Townsend, editor* <http://www.printmuseum.org/>



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FAST FORWARD... GOT IPAD?

You took the plunge, got your iPad. Now what? Go back to the page you visited before you purchased: <http://www.apple.com/ipad/>

At the bottom of the page find various topics. Check out features, and click on guided tours on each page. <http://www.apple.com/ipad/features/>

Check out Apps,
<http://www.apple.com/ipad/apps-for-ipad/>

See, How to Get started with the iPad,
<http://mashable.com/2010/04/03/ipad-setup/>

Also, First 10 things to do with your iPad,
http://www.maclife.com/article/feature/first_10_things_do_your_ipad

Share your tips with others at the SBAMUG meeting!

How did you find me?

Did you know that a lot of smart phones encode the location of where pictures are taken? When you upload or send information, others can access this information. Geotagging stores location data in the form of Latitude and Longitude. You can stop posting this information for all to see by disabling the geotagging on your smartphone.

On the iPhone iOS 4.x, Go to Settings, General, then Location Services. From there you can set which applications can access your GPS coordinates or disable it entirely.

On the iPhone iOS 3.x the above procedure disables ALL location-based services for ALL applications (like your GPS). There is no easy way to disable location-based services for just one application. You can make the iPhone prompt you at first use for each application. Once resent, the first time you enter the application you can enable or disable the location

based services app- go to Settings, General, Reset. Be careful here! Select Reset Location Warnings, and then Reset Warnings. This restores Location –based warnings. Then once you enter into the default Camera app on the iPhone, you can select Don't Allow. This will prevent the Camera app from geotagging photos.

On Android/Droid phones, press the Menu Key, then Settings. The press Location and Security. Uncheck GPS to turn it off. However, this turns off all location based services. To disable just the camera application, start the Camera app--this is the menu on the left side of the camera app. Select Store Location to make sure it's set to off.

You can also disable the geotagging on various Palm, BlackBerry and other devices.

For more info, check out <http://icanstalku.com/how.php - disable>

In and Outs, Continued from page 1

Finally, the voice delay is measurably worse on Internet calls. During each test, I conducted a little experiment: I told my calling partner I was going to count to three, and asked her to say “three” simultaneously with me. Even on a typical cellphone call, I hear her “three” distinctly late, a half second or so. But on Internet calls, that delay is usually a full second or even more. Don't try to practice your comic timing on an Internet call.

Ordinarily, calling apps connect to the Internet when you're in a Wi-Fi hot spot. When you're not, these apps can connect to the Internet over your cellphone company's data network. In that setup, though, the results are disappointing; the sound is muffled and delayed, and, if you're driving, the calls drop frequently. Internet calling apps are generally worth using only when you're on Wi-Fi.

Exaggerating the abilities of these apps is par for the course. Skype and Fring, for example, claim to permit phone-to-phone video chats, even when you're not using Wi-Fi. In practice, the quality and delays are so horrific that the feature is unusable.

Despite all of these drawbacks, though, these apps offer two unassailable benefits. First, of course, they can save you a lot of money. If you make most of your calls over Wi-Fi, you can downgrade to a cheaper cellphone calling plan, because you're using fewer minutes. (If you have Line2, Pinger or Google Voice, you can also cancel your text-messaging plan because they offer unlimited free texting.) And second, these Wi-Fi apps let you make solid calls indoors — precisely

where cellular coverage is weakest.

All right, then, Caroline: here's a rundown. Most of these apps are available for iPhone and Android phones. Each recreates your phone's existing phone-calls app, complete with a dialing pad, Recent Calls list, address book (inherited from the one already on your phone) and so on. All offer very cheap calls to overseas numbers.

SKYPE Free “calls” to anyone, anywhere in the world, with Skype on their computers or phones — which is a lot of people. The company says it is averaging 124 million users a month. If both of you are on Wi-Fi, the call quality is insanely clear and realistic, more like an FM radio broadcast than a cellphone call. Despite the clarity, delay problems can come and go during the call. Delay can still be a problem, though.

To call actual phone numbers, it's \$3 a month for unlimited calls within the United States, paid in advance; there are all kinds of other plans. (With most of these apps, billing can get complicated, and you should not expect tech support of the caliber supplied by your cell company.

Line2 is the only app here, for example, with a human staff on its tech support line.) You can send [text messages](#) for 11 cents each. But recipients' replies come to your phone's regular text-message app, not to Skype, so you can't see the back-and-forths in the same app. And you pay for the replies at the standard carrier rate. *Continued on next page.*

TRUPHONE Unlimited calls to landlines in 38 countries, or cellphones in 9 countries, for \$13 a month. Like all of these WiFi calling apps, TruPhone turns an iPad or iPod Touch into a Wi-Fi cellphone. No text messaging.

FRING This app's strength is its ability to connect to a lot of other services, like Skype, MSN Messenger, Google Talk, ICQ, SIP, Yahoo Messenger and AIM — either with “phone calls” or typed chats. As with Skype, you can make calls to phone numbers only by buying credits in advance; you're billed 0.7 cents or 0.9 cents a minute to domestic landlines and cellphones. Sound quality isn't great. No text messaging.

LINE2 This app gives your phone a second phone line, with its own phone number. It's smart enough to place and receive calls over Wi-Fi when available, and over the cell network otherwise; \$10 a month buys all the Wi-Fi calls you want, to regular phone numbers. It's the only app here that offers true phone-to-phone text messaging, which is very useful. My only beef: the app takes too long to notice that it's on a Wi-Fi network before you can place a call, sometimes 15 seconds.

GOOGLE VOICE Google Voice is free. It offers a million glorious features — transcripts of your voice mail messages, and free text messages, which is huge. It does not, however, save you any money on cellphone calls; it places calls over the regular cellular network, so it doesn't conserve cellphone minutes. (Google Voice can make free domestic calls from your computer or a landline, not from your cellphone — at least not without a tricky app called Talkatone.)

Make free domestic calls from your landline phone. Dial your own Google Voice number, then press 2 for “Make a call.” Not many people pay per minute for long distance on their home phone anymore, but this option is here if you need it.

FREEPHONE2PHONE This service works on any phone, not just app phones like iPhone and Android. If you listen to a 10- or 12-second ad, you get a free 10-minute call — to landlines in 55 countries.

To use it, you start by dialing a local number, which you look up at FreePhone2Phone.com. After the ad plays, you dial the country code and number; sound quality is excellent. Beats using calling cards, that's for sure.

TEXTFREE WITH VOICE TextFree, this app's predecessor, gave an iPod Touch its own phone number — and gave you unlimited free Wi-Fi text messaging. The new free “With Voice” app adds voice calls from Wi-Fi, with a fascinating payment twist: you earn free minutes by downloading certain promoted apps (say, 15 or 30 minutes each). You can also buy minutes cheaply (for example, 250 minutes for \$5). This app comes breathtakingly close to turning a Touch into a full iPhone — at a fraction of the monthly cost — which makes it catnip for teenagers and those even younger.

Talkatone. This free app takes some effort to set up. Its purpose is confusing (“an iPhone application for chatting, calling, and location sharing”). The interface is confusing too—it looks more like a chat program than a phone app.

But once you waded through the complexity, you find out that Talkatone lets your iPhone achieve that Holy Grail: free phone calls, to regular phone numbers, from your cellphone (when you're in a Wi-Fi hot spot).

It works by tapping into a Google Voice account, which you have to get and set up. It uses the free calling feature that's part of a Gmail account, which you also have to set up. But once that's done, it's true: free calls when you're on Wi-Fi. Download and enjoy!

netTALK. Several readers pointed out this iPhone app. It, too, requires more tech setup than the average non-techie is likely to understand — when you open the program, the first thing you see is an error message that says, “netTALK requires a valid SIP account.” And it doesn't provide any information on what that is or how to get one. But once that's all plugged in, readers say, you wind up with the same effect: an iPhone that uses no carrier minutes when you make calls from a WiFi hot spot.

WHISTLE PHONE. This iPhone app, too, requires an SIP account (SIP is an Internet-calling technology) — but at least it helps you create one. You have to submit a lot of personal information to get the account, and you have to listen to a quick ad every time you place a call. But yes, it works — free calls over Wi-Fi.

Readers also pointed out that there are hardware boxes, like **magicJack** and **Ooma**, that let you make Internet calls from home. MagicJack is now offering software called magicTalk that lets you make free calls to numbers in the United States and Canada from your computer. And there are services like JaJah, which create free calls over the Internet by requesting the number you're dialing, then hanging up, then calling both you and your callee simultaneously from the middle. Crazy, and still more complicated than regular calls, but it works.

Don't expect much in the way of tech support when you use these apps. And in many cases you're stuck with one number for text messaging, and a second number (your free one) for calls. Often, you're stuck with two separate address books, too. Clearly, this industry is in its confusing, chaotic infancy.

So there you have it, Caroline: my effort to render the cheap Internet calling options just a little less occluded. May all your minutes be free ones!

PERIODICALS

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Or, contact Membership Chair

CW Mitchell at

cwmitchell@sbamug.com

SBAMUG Membership Application

South Bay Apple Macintosh User Group provides Mac owners and users with a local source of shared knowledge and experience through monthly meetings, training seminars and our monthly newsletter.

Individual & family membership: \$35/year payable to SBAMUG

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Phone: (_____) _____

Email Address: _____

Special interest: _____

Model of Macintosh you use most: _____

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Comments: _____

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