

MAC LESSON #51

USE RPN (REVERSE POLISH NOTATION) WITH YOUR CALCULATOR

In OS X Tiger, the calculator has been improved with the addition of RPN, Reverse Polish Notation. RPN, also known as Postfix Notation is a simplified method of writing arithmetical formulas without having to use parentheses.

RPN has been available in hand-held calculators since the 1970's. In RPN, the operands precede the operators. Sound complicated? It's not. It means that instead of typing $1 + 2 =$ to get to 3, in RPN you would type 1, press the Enter key, and type 2 and press the + key. While this may sound backwards, it simplifies and speeds up the processing of complex formulas.

To switch your calculator into RPN mode, click on View from the menu bar at the top of the calculator window and then select RPN. This same menu lets you switch between basic, scientific and programming calculator applications and lets you activate a "paper tape" windows so you can keep track of your calculations.

Once you activate RPN, the display panel lights up, and the "equal sign" on the virtual keypad changes to "enter".

Enjoy!

