EDITORIAL

When all else fails, read the instructions.

■Your editor got his writing career started many, many years ago, working in the publications department of a major electronics equipment manufacturer. The hardest part of the job was getting people to read the instruction manuals.

Take the guy who sent his brand new transmitter back because it "smoked"when he turned it on. Obviously, this dude never read the section titled "Unpacking:" The final amplifier tubes were still surrounded by cotton wadding, put there to protect them during shipment. It was *still* there, but now burned to a crisp. We told him to "tune for minimum smoke!"

In one case, we even had a jumper wire taped to the last page of the instructions, which, when properly installed alongside the AC input, would complete the primary circuit so the power *could* be turned on!

Take a careful look at the instruction manuals that come with your new computer equipment, and you'll see that the manufacturers go to great and costly lengths to make those instructions as palatable as they can. (At least *some* of them do!) They spot little fetching cartoons throughout the pages, copiously use photographs, add color where they can, and the writing is light and breezy, written to express, not to impress. They do whatever they can to *make* you read the instructions, and hopefully, read them in detail before you throw the big switch for the first time.

The fact of the matter is that by spending some time reading the instructions, you're going to save yourself a lot of time when you power up and go online. That little bit of familiarization can be of tremendous help and add to your previous knowledge.

It's a good idea to begin by unpacking the unit just enough to gain access to the instruction booklet and then stop. Take the book out, and go through it a few times until you know that piece of equipment like the back of your hand. Then and *only* then should you proceed with the unpacking and really make friends with the equipment you've spent your bucks for.

You'll probably save a small fortune in telephone calls to the manufacturer's service department too.

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