

Save it yourself

Tim Nott tackles the ticklish topic of autosaving in Word. He straightens out a mail-merge and advises on WordPerfect accents, multinational alphabets, and managing Word margins.

It has been bubbling along for some time now, but let's take a step back and consider this from a beginner's point of view. You can configure Word to save the file on which you are working at set intervals. You can also configure it to make a backup whenever you manually save the file.

Mike Davis, who has just migrated from WordStar, writes: "Disaster struck today because of Word's autosave function. With WordStar, the autosave function saves as you go along, creating backups from which the last save can be restored.

"I set Word to save every five minutes and yesterday spent three hours preparing a long report. As I wrote, I was conscious of the save process, so when I decided to stop I also decided that the last paragraph was wrong and would rewrite it when I started up again. So when I quit, I was asked 'Save?' and answered 'No', as it had been saving all the way along. Starting up again this morning, there was no trace of the previous day's work. What's the point of autosave, if it doesn't protect you from mistakes like this?"

The idea of the autosave feature is that it is a protection against crashes or power failures. If Word terminates abnormally, then restarting should automatically bring up the last autosaved version of any files open at the time of the incident. But it's not a substitute for saving in the normal way.

If you don't save before closing the document, you'll lose all changes made since the last explicit save. Word 6 doesn't explain this very well. Word 7 does, if you click on the question mark button in the "Options/Save" dialog (Fig 1). Word 97 goes one better by calling the process "Autorecover" rather than "Autosave".

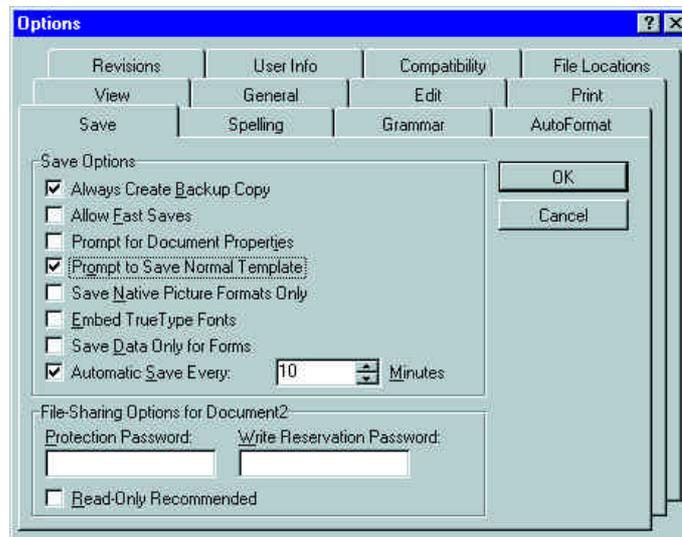


Fig 1 (left and below)
Automatic save...

To make sure that you don't lose work, select the Automatic Save Every check box. In the Minutes box, enter the interval at which you want to automatically save open documents, from 1 to 120 minutes. You must still save the document when you finish working on it.

...but not quite what you might think

Confusing? Maybe, but it's designed to be: if you experimentally (or accidentally) make changes to a document, those changes will not be autosaved irrevocably.

The urge to merge

Ian Bannerham has a Unix system at work, and wants to send marketing data to individual PCs on the network in order to mail-merge letters. "It's easy to create and export a .CSV file to a local PC — but then I come unstuck. Because the file exports the data without a header for each column, Word 7 won't do a straight merge. If I open the .CSV in Excel 7 and insert a row with

headers, Word will accept this with no problem. Is there an easier way?"

Well, I'm by no means an expert on Unix or networks (my understatement of the month!) but I do know what a .CSV file is: Comma Separated Variables is a plain-text file format for importing or exporting data from a spreadsheet or database. Imagine a table of names and addresses: the name, street, town etc. are arranged in columns, or "fields", and each row (i.e. a complete name and address) constitutes a "record". In a .CSV file, each field is separated by a comma, and each record by a carriage return as in Fig 2 (page 264).

Fig 2: A .CSV file

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Grundy, Eddy, Grange Farm, Ambri dgefl
Snel I, Li nda, Ambri dge Hal I, Ambri dgefl
Perks, Si d, The Bul I, Ambri dgefl
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Note that the spaces after the commas don't need to be there: I've just included them for clarity. When you create a mail-merged letter in Word, each field needs a label. In the above example these might be Surname, Forename, Address1, Address2

Word assumes that the labels are in the first row, so Ian's problem is that Word will assume the merge fields are called "Grundy", "Eddy" and so on. Which is rather inconvenient, especially as Eddy won't get his letter. The easiest way around this is to create a separate file for the headers. You can do this simply enough in Notepad, as

above, and save it as a .TXT file. Then go to "Tools/Mail Merge" and you'll see a three-step "Helper" — it's almost identical in Word 6, 7 and 97. Create the document to be merged with step one, then hit the "Get Data" button. The last option on the menu that drops is "Header Options". Choose this and you can then open your header file, or create one as a Word document. Having done this, hit the "Get Data" button again and open the main .CSV data file.

Unless you've already set up a template or letter with the merge fields inserted, you'll get a message that Word hasn't found any merge fields and you should go and edit the document. Do so, and you'll see that the Merge Toolbar has appeared. If it hasn't, turn it on from the "View/toolbars" menu. Click on the "Insert Merge Field" button and you'll see the list of field names. Insert these

where you want, then click on the "View Merged Data" button, two to the right, and you'll be able to page through each letter and see the names and addresses from the data file in place. You can then create the merge (either to a new file or direct to the printer) from the toolbar or by returning to the "Tools/Mail merge" menu.

Booklet update

In my April column I looked at ways of printing an A5 booklet on A4 paper. Thank you, Alan Salmon, for pointing out how to do this in WordPerfect (Fig 3). He was using 6.1 and I've got 7; the process is pretty much the same, but here's how to do it in the latter:

1. Create a new document.
2. "Format/ Page/ Page Size" as A4 Landscape.
3. "Format/ Page/ Subdivide Page" as two columns.
4. "Format/ Page Numbering/ Select" to choice.
5. "File/ Print" — go to the "Two-sided printing" tab and tick the "Print as booklet" tab. And that's it.

I found that it's rather tricky to format an existing document this way (I kept getting blank columns) so either prepare a template or start with a new, blank document and type or paste in the text. Secondly, if you have a rather awkward eight-and-a-bit pages, which would produce a 16-page booklet with seven blank pages, don't forget the very wonderful "Make it fit" command in the "Format" menu, which can reduce this to eight.

An even simpler suggestion comes from Ian Bannerham — a Panasonic KX-P6300 laser printer will print two or four pages to a sheet of A4. He writes: "All you have to do is arrange your pages in the correct order, use the manual duplexing, and voilà!..." I haven't used such a printer but it sounds good. It's just the "arrange your pages in the right order" that makes me a little wary.

Margin of error

According to John Orcopoulos in Thessalonica, "Many people in Greece need to set different margins in even and odd pages of the same document. For example, all odd pages have margins: top and bottom = 2.5cm, left and right = 2cm, and all even pages have margins: top = 2.5cm, bottom = 8cm, left and right = 2cm. When I set margins from Word's "Page Setup" I have only two choices — 'Whole

document' or 'This point forward'."

I've been wondering why this need is particular to people in Greece? But still... You can go through the document page by page and set different margins "from this point onwards", or "for this section" (an extra option you get after the first section) but this is horribly fiddly and I just ended up with a mess. So, bearing in mind the great maxim, "If at first you don't succeed, bodge it", I came up with this. From the "Page Setup" dialogue, go to the "Layout" tab and choose "Different odd and even headers and footers". "View/ Zoom" to get two pages side-by-side, then "View/Headers and Footers". Now, if you try to change the header or footer size by dragging in the vertical ruler, this changes both odd and even pages. But if you type a number of carriage returns into one of them, this will just affect the odd or even pages. The body text will get pushed up or down to suit, effectively providing you with different top or bottom margins.

Accentuate the positive

Returning to the perennial subject of accents, Dick Grenville wants to use accents that aren't in the standard western ANSI character set, such as an "R" with an inverted circumflex. "I have loaded support for central European versions of Arial and Times New Roman fonts, from the CD, and I can use all the accents. But none of the accented characters appear in the WordPerfect Insert box."

There is one important principle to remember here: WordPerfect likes doing things its own way. It has always traditionally mistrusted Windows, and insisted on supplying its own printer and keyboard drivers. I'll come back to Windows' generic multinational support, but

Quick ones

- Word Pro — If you are an inveterate keyboard addict, Alt + Enter will toggle between the document and the property box. Once in the property box, you can use the usual keyboard tricks of tabbing between controls and typing the first few letters of a font to navigate.
- To put a border around several paragraphs in Word, you can just select the paragraphs and "Format/ Border..." (or use the Borders toolbar). But this all goes horribly wrong if the paragraphs have different indents. It is much easier to use the drawing tool bar to create a rectangle, set its fill and line properties to suit, and then send it behind the text. The disadvantage is that, unlike a paragraph border, it will not keep pace with editing or moving the text.
- For a quick acute accent in any application, Alt Gr (the right-hand Alt key) + vowel does the trick. Add shift to capitalise. Ctrl + left Alt + vowel will perform the same trick.
- When you save a Word 97 file in Word 6 or 7 format, it doesn't; it saves it in RTF with a .DOC extension. This should not be a problem if the Word 6 or 7 recipient has the RTF import filter installed.

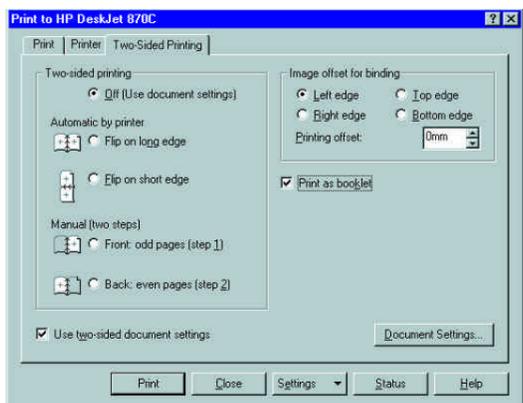
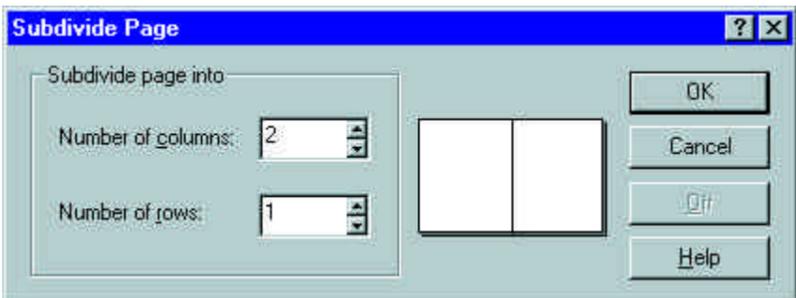
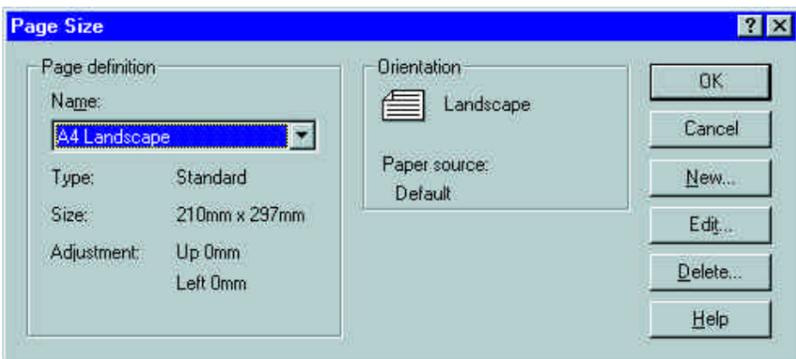


Fig 3 Three steps to booklet heaven in WordPerfect

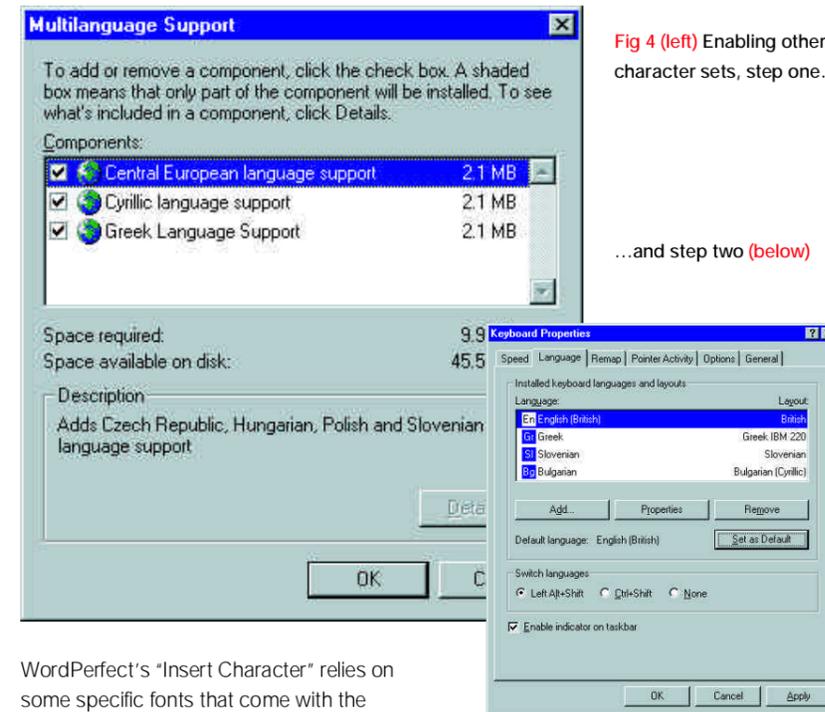


Fig 4 (left) Enabling other character sets, step one...

...and step two (below)

WordPerfect's "Insert Character" relies on some specific fonts that come with the program being installed.

For the multinational set there should be six entries in your fonts folder entitled "WPMultinational" (A & B) in Courier, Arial and Times. There are more for Arabic, Japanese, maths and other character sets if you want them, but they must be installed from the WordPerfect setup disks.

Typing in tongues

So what about this multinational stuff built in to Windows 95? Unlike Windows 3.1, the core fonts in Windows 95 contain 652, rather than 256, characters. In other words, as well as the Latin alphabet and common Western European accents, you have a full set of Greek, Cyrillic and Eastern European characters. But this isn't enabled by default. Go to Control Panel/ Add-Remove/ Windows Setup, choose

"Multilanguage support" and choose the character sets you want.

You will be prompted to insert the CD-ROM (sorry, floppy owners will have to trawl the Microsoft web site for these). Next, go to the "Keyboard" section of Control Panel and select the languages in which you want to type. Make sure the "Enable indicator on Taskbar" box is ticked (Fig 4). Once again, you will need the CD-ROM in the drive. This will give you an extra icon in the system tray allowing you to toggle between character sets and keyboard languages. Select "Gr", for example, and you'll be typing in Greek.

You'll also see, in WordPad, a "Script" box in the "Format/ Font" dialogue that lets you choose the set. What you don't get is a map, showing what keys are mapped to which characters, so there is some exciting trial and error involved there. Which all goes to show that when I stated (in my column last month) that "Windows 95 users face the same obstacle", replying to Frank Dowson's query about inserting Greek characters in a normal font under Windows 3.1, I was not only talking through my hat, but apparently sitting on it at the time.

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