What is Bitmap Font Writer

Bitmap Font Writer is a free program that let you draw text using a font where each character is drawn in a bitmap file.

If you've drawn your own bitmapped font in for example Photoshop, you are forced to manually Copy & Paste each character in order to combine them into a word. This gets pretty tedious if you're doing buttons for a website, as an example. The purpose of Bitmap Font Writer is to make this procedure smoother. By arranging your font in ASCII order and put markers to define the width of each character you may load the image into Bitmap Font Writer which the combines the characters for you. Then you simply copy everything to the clipboard to get it back into your painting program.

Bitmap Font Writer is not meant to be used alone; rather it's a tool that shall be used together with a paint program such as Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro. Its purpose is not to produce fancy buttons or similar, it's a tool that you'll find useful if you do your own bitmapped fonts.

The program is aimed towards graphic artists, web designers and developers. Some knowledge of your favorite graphics package is required.

See also:
About

Version History

v1.0 (2001-08-20)

       – Initial Public Release.

For the latest version, check the website:
http://www.stefan-pettersson.nu/bmpfont/

License

Bitmap Font Writer is freeware. That means that the program is free to use and you may send it to other people, you are even encouraged to do so. You may not sell this program for money or include it in a package that will be sold for money. Bitmap Font Writer may be included on a CD-ROM (for example a magazine cover-cd) if the author (stefpet@algonet.se) has given permission.

Even if it's free, a contribution of any amount will be very appreciated, not to mention that you will support further development of Bitmap Font Writer and other software. Point your browser to the following URL to support the author: http://order.kagi.com/?3SK

About

The idea to make Bitmap Font Writer came to me when I drew my own font, bitmapped, which I wanted to use in images on my webpage. In order to put together a word or sentence there was a lot of copy and paste of characters to combine them into a word, making the whole procedure quite tiresome. However, not until the same situation surfaced at work, where the graphics artists worked with bitmapped fonts for use in games, I got to actually start coding this little handy (I think) tool.

The program contains just the basic functionality I felt was needed. However, suggestions for further improvements are very welcome.

I would be very happy to hear if there's anyone that find this program useful, don't hesitate to send an e-mail to stefpet@algonet.se, thanks.

Bitmap Font Writer website:
http://www.stefan-pettersson.nu/bmpfont/

Author's website:
http://www.stefan-pettersson.nu

See also:
What is Bitmap Font Writer
Version History
License

Credits

Programming and GUI graphics by Stefan Pettersson (stefpet@algonet.se).

Font Credits
The fonts green-spacey-font.bmp, metallion-font.bmp, smallish-font.bmp and mini-font.bmp by Stefan Pettersson.

The font system-color-font.bmp is the standard Windows System font but colored.

See also:
About

Using Bitmap Font Writer

Using Bitmap Font Writer is pretty straightforward. Launch the program and load the bitmap file containing the font you would like to use. Enter the text you would like to render in the textfield.

Choose Write Text (F9) to see how it looks like. When you're satisfied choose Copy Image (Ctrl+C) to copy the image to the clipboard in order to paste it into Photoshop or any other image-editing program.

See also:
Create Your Own Bitmap Font

Loading a Font

Load a font by selecting a Windows Bitmap file (.bmp) containing a font arranged according to the Bitmap Font Format.

See also:
Create Your Own Bitmap Font
Bitmap Font Format

Create Your Own Bitmap Font

Creating your own font to use in Bitmap Font Writer is really easy. Simply use your favorite painting program, such as Photoshop or Paint Shop Pro, to draw the characters you want to use in your font. You should arrange them in ASCII order and put out marks between each character so Bitmap Font Writer knows exactly how wide you intend each character to be. When all this is done, simply save the image containing the arranged font to a Windows Bitmap file (.bmp) and load it into Bitmap Font Writer.

ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) is a format for text files, all characters are arranged in a special order according to ASCII. Because this software is targeted to towards those slightly more tech-savvy people, there is no need to discuss ASCII further. Check out the fonts distributed with the program for examples.

Please see the section Bitmap Font Format for information regarding how the characters must be arranged in the bitmap image.

See also:
Bitmap Font Format

Bitmap Font Format

A font file to be used in Bitmap Font Writer must be arranged in a special way, and the actual image file must be a standard Windows Bitmap file (.bmp).

Here is an example of the entire image of a font (metallion-font.bmp):

All characters in the font should be arranged according to their ASCII value. You may start your font at any character and use that as an offset, however, it's recommended that you start with 32 that represent a blank space. All character between the starting and ending character must be defined. No character may be skipped, use a blank character in it's place if you don't want to draw it.

The image size shall be cut exactly according to the font size, but leaving a one pixel row above the characters. This row of pixels is used to define each characters width. See the image below for an example:
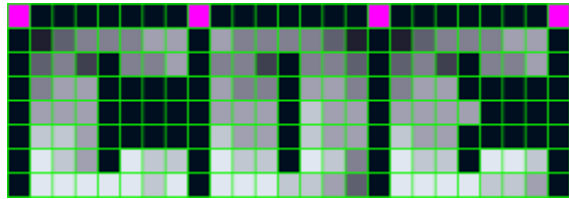
The pink pixels are used as delimiters to define the width of a character. There are no limitations, all characters do not need to have the same width. The color of the delimiter pixels is defined by the color of the top-left pixel (0, 0).

A font may be any size and use any number of colors.

At first glance it may look a little bit confusing if you're not familiar with using bitmap fonts when programming, but it's actually quite simple. Probably the easiest way to grasp it is to take a look at the fonts distributed with Bitmap Font Format (installed in the fonts directory where you installed the program). To get started, use one of the example fonts as a template for your own font.

If you don't get the exact expected result, use the Font Information option to "debug" your font, to see if any character is missed or there is a stray delimiter.

Font Information

The Font Information window displays information about the font and the font itself. This is useful if you've got "offset errors" with your font, i.e. and E is displayed when you entered a D. This is most certain a result of a missing character with a lower ASCII value. Those kinds of problems will easily be seen in the Font Information window.

Move the mouse pointer over the font to see in the Character panel which ASCII value (and character) each square is representing.

Font Information

> **Char Max Width**
> The maximum width of a character in pixels.
> .
> **Character Height**
> Height of font in pixels.
>
> **Character Count**
> Number of characters included in the font.
>
> **Font Filename**
> Filename of the image with the font.
>
> **Font Path**
> The path to the image with the font.
>
> **Font ASCII Range**
> The ASCII range of the displayed font (may be justified by changing the ASCII Start value in Settings)

Character
Displays information about the character in the grid that is marked with the mouse pointer.

> **Char**
> The actual character.
>
> **Dec**
> ASCII value in decimal.
>
> **Hex**
> ASCII value in hexadecimal.

See also:
Settings

Settings

Configure how the font will be rendered and how to treat the entered text in the settings window.

Image

Spacing
Space in pixels between characters.

Line Space
Space in pixels between lines.

Space Width
Width of the space character in pixels.

Horz Offset
Horizontal offset in pixels of how far into the output field the text is displayed.

Vert Offset
Vertical offset in pixels of how far into the output field the text is displayed.

Font

ASCII Start
ASCII value of first character in font bitmap file. Modify this value if another character is drawn than the one that is entered.

Text Case
Settings regarding how to convert the case of entered characters.

Auto
Case is automatically set depending on the current font's number of character characters.

Force Uppercase
Entered text is always converted to uppercase.

No Conversion
Entered text is treated as-is. No conversion to uppercase is done.

Use the Test button to see how the image is rendered, without saving the settings.