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Introduction to AceLaunch

What is AceLaunch?

AceLaunch is an application launch manager. It provides the user with a swift and effective means of switching between currently loaded applications, and of loading new applications from a user-specified list, all with a single selection from a pop-up menu.

In addition to specifying a list of commonly used applications, the user can assign a list of documents to any or all of the listed applications.

The AceLaunch menu can be accessed in a variety of ways, and can be tailored to suit your preferences. For more information see the [How To Use AceLaunch](#) topic.

Why do I need it?

AceLaunch does not provide you with any functions not already available from the Windows Program Manager and File Manager. However, being frequent Windows users themselves, the designers of AceLaunch saw a need to provide a small but important part of this functionality in a much more convenient way, and AceLaunch was the result. If you often find yourself running several applications at a time, you should find AceLaunch a major boost to your productivity.

How To Use AceLaunch

AceLaunch can do three things:

- Switch to another currently running application
- Launch a new application from a user-defined list
- Switch to the Windows Task List or AceLaunch's own window

These tasks are accomplished by making selections from AceLaunch's menu. This menu can be displayed in response to any of the following actions:

- Clicking the left mouse button in the Windows desktop area
- Clicking the right mouse button in the Windows desktop area
- Clicking the right mouse button in the caption bar of the active window
- Selecting AceLaunch from the system menu of an application

To see how the menu is arranged, see [AceLaunch's Menu](#). For information on how to edit the application and document lists, and how to configure AceLaunch's behaviour, see [AceLaunch's Main Window](#).

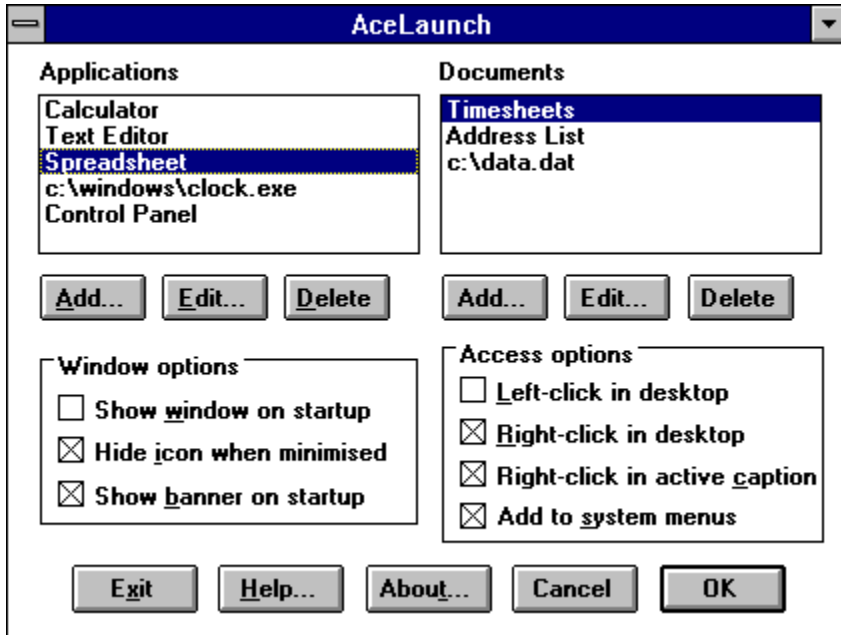
AceLaunch's Menu

This is a typical AceLaunch menu. The main menu is divided into three sections, corresponding to the three types of action AceLaunch can perform. Click on a region of the picture for more information:

Program Manager	
File Manager	
Clock	
Calculator	
Text Editor	▶
Spreadsheet	No document
c:\windows\clock.exe	Timesheets
Control Panel	Address List
AceLaunch...	c:\data.dat
Windows Task List...	

AceLaunch's Main Window

Click on a region of the picture for more information:



AceLaunch Commands

[Adding an Application](#)

[Editing an Application](#)

[Adding a Document](#)

[Editing a Document](#)

See also

[Configuration Options](#)

Configuration Options

[Show window on startup](#)

[Hide icon when minimised](#)

[Show banner on startup](#)

[Left-click in desktop](#)

[Right-click in desktop](#)

[Right-click in active caption](#)

[Add to system menus](#)

See also

[AceLaunch Commands](#)

Installation and Files

AceLaunch consists of two executable files, ACLNCH.EXE and LNCH_DLL.DLL. The DLL file should either be in the same directory as the application or in a directory specified in your system's PATH environment variable so that Windows can find it.

Similar rules apply to the help file ACLNCH.HLP.

The other file supplied is README.WRI, a file containing installation instructions and other miscellaneous information. This file can be read by Write, the word processor supplied with Microsoft Windows.

AceLaunch also needs to keep track of the preferences you set, such as the application and document lists and all the check-box settings. AceLaunch stores this information in a file called ACLNCH.CFG which it creates in your Windows directory.

Shareware Registration

AceLaunch (TM) Copyright © Acelong Limited 1993

AceLaunch is a Shareware program. It is not free. You may try the program once, but if you like it and continue to use it you should register your copy. The registration fee is \$15 U.S. or £10 Sterling. You can register on CompuServe by typing GO SWREG to access the Shareware Registration Database, or you can write to the address below enclosing your name & address, your registration fee, and details of how you obtained AceLaunch (you can use the Registration Form from this help file).

John Reah
Acelong Limited
PO Box 102
Ipswich IP10 0DA
England

Registering entitles you to free updates of the Shareware version as they become available, and support via mail and CompuServe (ID: 100143,1544).

You may distribute this software as long as the following files are included:

ACLNCH.EXE
LNCH_DLL.DLL
ACLNCH.HLP
ACLNCH.WRI

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Compatibility Issues

System Requirements

AceLaunch requires Windows 3.1 or higher, which in turn requires a 286 processor or better. A mouse is not necessary, although AceLaunch is designed as a time-saver for people who use Windows a lot, and as a result most of the access methods for AceLaunch involve the mouse.

Compatibility With Applications

The reason for requiring Windows 3.1 is that Launcher uses the Windows TOOLHELP library quite extensively, and TOOLHELP was not made available under Windows 3.0 (although it can be retro-fitted). The use of this library means that no use of undocumented Windows internals was necessary, so AceLaunch should work satisfactorily with any well-behaved Windows application, being a well-behaved application itself. It has been tested with virtually all of the utilities supplied with Windows, and a great many commercially available applications too.

Wherever the unexpected behaviour of other applications has caused problems, a work-around has been put into AceLaunch, except in one or two cases where it was not thought appropriate. For example, Norton Desktop for Windows (TM) uses mouse clicks in the desktop for its own purposes, but by choosing AceLaunch's access options appropriately it can be made to co-exist with NDW quite happily.

Of course no guarantee can be made that AceLaunch will function correctly in all environments. Incompatibilities with certain applications are bound to appear, and during tests one manufacturer's display driver was found not to handle pop-up menus correctly. Nevertheless, it is hoped that AceLaunch will prove extremely useful to most users. After all, if a Shareware program doesn't meet your needs there is no obligation to pay for it, so every effort will continue to be made to keep AceLaunch the best utility in its class.

Registration Form

Note: To print this form, select Print Topic from the File Menu.

To register your copy of AceLaunch, complete this form and send it with a cheque or money order for \$15 U.S. or £10 Sterling made payable to Acelong Limited to the following address:

Acelong Limited
PO Box 102
Ipswich IP10 0DA
England

Version: _____

Where obtained: _____

Name to register: _____

Address: _____

Current window list

The top section of the AceLaunch menu lists the top-level windows of the currently loaded applications. In this example, the Program Manager, File Manager and Clock are loaded. Selecting any of these will switch to the corresponding application, restoring it to its normal size if it is an icon. This is the same as clicking Alt-Tab until the required application is selected.

AceLaunch doesn't include itself in this section; it appears in its own private section at the bottom of the menu.

Application launch list

The middle section of the AceLaunch menu contains the user-specified list of applications which can be launched (see [Adding an application](#) and [Editing an application](#)). Selecting one of these launches the application.

The first item in this section is Browse - this brings up the standard Windows Open File dialog which lets you launch any application, whether or not it is in the list.

If an instance of an application is already running, it can be selected from the top section of the menu. Selecting from this middle section will launch a new instance of the application.

AceLaunch private section

This section always contains two items. The first brings AceLaunch's main window to the front, and the second activates the Windows Task List. AceLaunch doesn't include itself in the current window list; it always appears here instead.

Launch with no document

If an application in the menu has documents associated with it, highlighting it activates a submenu like this. If you don't want to load one of the listed documents, the "No document" option loads the application and lets you choose a document yourself.

Document launch list

If an application has documents associated with it, they appear in a sub-menu like this. In this example, selecting "Address List" will launch the Spreadsheet application which in turn will load the Address List document.

For information on associating a document with an application, see [Adding a document](#).

Minimise Button

Use this button to minimise AceLaunch to an icon.

This has the same effect as clicking the OK button or pressing the Return or Enter keys.

Application List Box

This list box shows the applications that are currently configured to appear in AceLaunch's pop-up menu.

For more information on AceLaunch's menu see [The AceLaunch Menu](#).

For more information on editing this list see [AceLaunch Commands](#) or click on the add/edit/delete buttons below the application list.

Document List Box

This list box shows the document files associated with a selected application. When the selected application is highlighted in the AceLaunch menu, these documents will appear as a sub-menu.

For more information on AceLaunch's menu see [The AceLaunch Menu](#).

For more information on editing this list see [AceLaunch Commands](#) or click on the add/edit/delete buttons below the document list.

Add an application

This button lets you add a new application to the list. You can also add an application by pressing the Insert key while the application list box has the input focus.

For more details see [Adding an application](#).

Edit an application

This button lets you edit the details of an application in the list. It has the same effect as using the mouse to double-click an application in the list.

For more details see [Editing an application](#).

Delete an application

This button removes an application and all its associated documents from the list.

Add a document

This button lets you associate a new document with the currently selected application. You can also add a new document by pressing the Insert key while the document list box has the input focus.

For more details see [Adding a document](#).

Edit a document

This button lets you edit the details of a document in the list. It has the same effect as using the mouse to double-click a document in the list.

For more details see [Editing a document](#).

Delete a document

This button lets you remove a document from the list.

Show window on startup check-box

Causes AceLaunch's main window to be displayed when AceLaunch is loaded.
If this box is left unchecked, AceLaunch will load as an icon.

For more details see [Show window on startup](#).

Hide icon when minimised check-box

Causes AceLaunch's icon to be made invisible when the AceLaunch window is iconised.

For more details see [Hide icon when minimised](#).

Show banner on startup check-box

Displays a banner for a short time while AceLaunch is loading.

For more details see [Show banner on startup](#).

Left-click in desktop check-box

Causes the AceLaunch menu to be activated in response to clicking the left mouse button in the Windows desktop area.

For more details see [Left-click in desktop](#).

Right-click in desktop check-box

Causes the AceLaunch menu to be activated in response to clicking the right mouse button in the Windows desktop area.

For more details see [Right-click in desktop](#).

Right-click in active caption check-box

Causes the AceLaunch menu to be activated in response to clicking the right mouse button in the caption bar of the main window of the active application.

For more details see [Right-click in active caption](#).

Add to system menus check-box

Provides a keyboard interface for AceLaunch by appending the AceLaunch menu to the system menu of every application.

For more details see [Add to system menus](#).

Exit

Saves the current configuration and exits the AceLaunch application.

Help

Loads this help file.

About

Displays a dialog box showing the version of AceLaunch.

Cancel

Undoes any changes made since the AceLaunch window was last activated, and minimises the AceLaunch window. Clicking this button has the same effect as pressing the Escape key.

OK

Saves the current configuration and minimises the AceLaunch window. Clicking this button has the same effect as pressing the Return or Enter keys or clicking the minimise button in the caption bar of the window.

Adding an application

The middle section of the AceLaunch menu contains the user-specified application list. To add new applications to this list, use the Add button underneath the application list box in AceLaunch's main window or press the Insert key while the application list box has the input focus. This displays the standard Windows Open File dialog box, with the filter set to show all EXE, COM, BAT and PIF files.

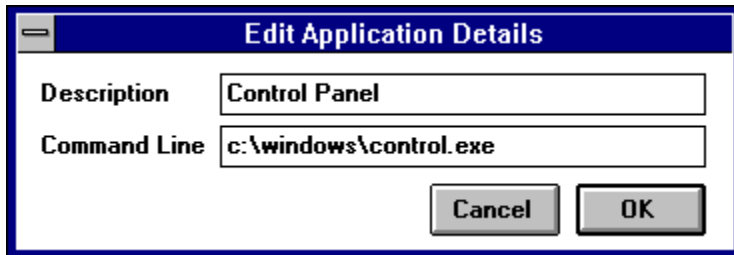
Once a file has been chosen it is added to the list. AceLaunch keeps track of two pieces of information about each application: its file name and its description. If the application is a Windows executable AceLaunch retrieves the description from within the file itself, otherwise the description string is set to the name of the file. Both the description and the file name may subsequently be edited (see [Editing an application](#)).

The same application may not be installed twice.

Editing an application

AceLaunch holds two pieces of information about each application it can launch: the first is the description, which appears in the AceLaunch menu and in the application list in AceLaunch's main window; the second is a command-line which is used to launch the application.

You may edit either of these strings either by double-clicking the application in the application list or by selecting the application and choosing the Edit button under the application list. The following dialog box is displayed.



The description may contain a mixture of upper and lower case characters and spaces, and normal MS-DOS rules apply to filenames. A description string cannot be used more than once.

When you add an application to the list the command-line is initially set to the name of the executable file, but you can use this dialog box to add command-line parameters or switches as necessary. The first parameter or switch should be separated from the end of the filename by a space.

Adding a document

It is possible to associate a list of documents with each of the installed applications. In AceLaunch's menu these lists of documents appear as sub-menus, and when a document is selected its name is passed to the associated application as a launch parameter.

To associate a new document with an application, first select the name of the application in the application list box, then choose the Add button beneath the document list box. If you're not using a mouse, use the Tab key to shift the input focus to the document list box then hit Alt-A or the Insert key. This displays the standard Windows Open File dialog box, with the filter set to show all files.

Once a file has been chosen it is added to the list, and the description and the filename are both set to the name of the chosen file. Either of these may subsequently be edited (see [Editing a document](#)).

A document may be associated with more than one application, but may not be associated more than once with the same application.

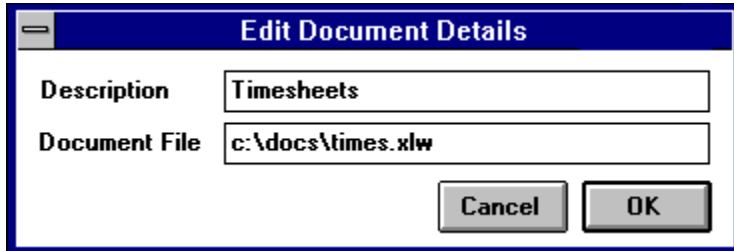
Why doesn't it work?

Some applications (such as the Windows calculator) do not use document files at all. Others do use documents but have not been written to open documents whose names are passed as command-line parameters. Worse still, they may attempt to open files of the wrong type without bothering to check their format. AceLaunch has no way of knowing this, and lets you assign any document to any application.

Editing a document

AceLaunch holds two pieces of information about each document: the first is the description, which appears in the AceLaunch menu and in the document list in AceLaunch's main window; the second is the name of the document file, which is used as a parameter when an application is launched.

You may edit either of these strings by selecting the application with which the document is associated, then either double-clicking the document in the document list or selecting the document and choosing the Edit button under the document list. The following dialog box is displayed.



The description may contain a mixture of upper and lower case characters and spaces, and normal MS-DOS rules apply to filenames. The same description cannot be used for more than one document , and the same document cannot be installed twice.

Show window on startup

Although AceLaunch's main window must be displayed in order to edit the configuration details, AceLaunch will probably spend most of its time iconised (minimised).

If this check box is left blank, then AceLaunch will iconise itself as soon as it is loaded, so it is as unobtrusive as possible if you place it in your Startup group, for example.

Selecting this check-box will cause AceLaunch's main window to be displayed the next time AceLaunch is run.

The settings are saved when the OK or Exit buttons are pressed.

Hide icon when minimised

Apart from when the application and document lists are being edited, AceLaunch will spend most of its time as an icon. To minimise the obtrusiveness of this icon, you can select this option to make AceLaunch invisible whenever it is iconised. As well as making the icon invisible, this prevents it from appearing in the Windows Task List or in the list of applications you can cycle through using the Alt-Tab key sequence.

There is an option in the bottom section of the AceLaunch menu to bring up the main window again should you need it. The same effect can be achieved by attempting to re-run AceLaunch, as only one instance can be active at a time, and any attempts to load further instances simply result in the first instance being re-activated.

Show banner on startup

As it is possible to load AceLaunch as an icon and to make that icon invisible, it is quite possible for AceLaunch to load without ever being noticed. In case this prospect is a little daunting, clicking this check-box causes a small dialog box to be displayed for a second or two while AceLaunch is loading, simply as visual reassurance of what is happening.

Left-click in desktop

The AceLaunch menu can be accessed in a number of ways; clicking this checkbox causes the menu to pop up in response to clicking the left mouse button in the Windows desktop area.

The desktop is the background area behind all the Windows, and unless you are a devotee of the "Hot Dog Stand" school of screen colouring it will probably either be coloured some shade of grey or covered in bitmapped wallpaper.

There is a slight difference in the way Windows handles left and right button pop-up menus, in that a pop-up menu activated by the left button will not accept any input from the right button, but a pop-up activated by the right button can accept input from both buttons. For this reason you may find it more convenient to use the right button.

Note

If you are using Norton Desktop for Windows, you may find that enabling this option prevents you from dragging disk icons around the desktop. If this is the case, disable the "left-click in desktop" option and use the other access options instead.

Right-click in desktop

The AceLaunch menu can be accessed in a number of ways; clicking this checkbox causes the menu to pop up in response to clicking the right mouse button in the Windows desktop area.

The desktop is the background area behind all the Windows, and unless you are a devotee of the "Hot Dog Stand" school of screen colouring it will probably either be coloured some shade of grey or covered in bitmapped wallpaper.

Right-click in active caption

The AceLaunch menu can be accessed in a number of ways; clicking this checkbox causes the menu to pop up in response to clicking the right mouse button in the caption bar of the main window of the active application.

This is particularly useful if you often run applications "full screen" such that the desktop is obscured.

Add to system menus

The AceLaunch menu can be accessed in a number of ways; clicking this checkbox causes the AceLaunch menu to be appended to the system menu of every active application.

Mouse users will probably find it quicker to click the right mouse button in the active window's caption bar, but this alternative interface is offered so that AceLaunch can be easily accessed via the keyboard.

