WordPerfect 4.x Versions

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1.   All of these are closely related versions. Each later version has enhancements over the prior one and slightly improved printer drivers. Memory requirements also increased with each version. WP 4.0 will fit entirely on one 1.44 meg floppy while both 4.1 and 4.2 will not, though all files necessary for full program functionality will.

2.   Default for all versions is white characters on a black screen but they can be setup for the WP classic white on blue screen colors, or your own combination.

3.   To install on a hard disk, copy all files on the disks to your directory of choice and then, from the directory where installed, run the program with the line WP/S or WP /S. This will put you into setup mode. All setup prompts are pretty much self explanatory if you are familiar with later versions 5.0 and 5.1 or other word processing software. There is no install program as included with version 5.1 and later.

4.   These versions do not support a mouse or use of either extended or expanded memory.

5.   These versions do not have a graphics mode print preview or any graphics import/use capabilities, they strictly deal with text. Without the graphics mode print preview the only accurate way to see printout results is to do a test printout. They do have a print preview mode but it is still a character based mode and cannot give a true representation of how things will appear on paper, particularly if using a proportionally spaced font.

6.   Printer drivers are primitive compared to version 5.0, or later WordPerfect versions. Fonts are limited to 8 fonts total per document. Any change of pitch or point size is treated as a font change and must be one of the 8 fonts in the printer driver. Only one font is permissible per line. Margins must be manually set based on the number of characters allowed in a line and the user specified pitch setting. The defaults are based on a 10 pitch, fixed pitch, font use and must be modified for any other font or pitch setting change. Use of proportionally spaced fonts requires a pitch entry of a number plus the " *" character. For example 12 point Times font is entered in the pitch setting as " **13***". All of this must be done manually by the user as little is handled automatically, as it is in versions 5.0 and later. For best looking printout the margin settings need to be changed even if you just shift from right justified to ragged right printing.

7.   Even with all of this manual entry, the handling of proportionally spaced fonts is not as good as in later versions and the resulting printout will not be as visually acceptable as with later versions, in my opinion. To get the best looking printout you will still have to experiment and do test printouts, even if you have a manual and actually read it.

8.   No printer drivers are available for any of these versions written later than early 1990 and no drivers are available on the Corel FTP site for versions 4.0 or 4.1. A set of 4 files of printer drivers is available for version 4.2 from Corel, dated March 1990. Version 4.0 and 4.1 drivers are considerably older than the above date and I know of no source for printer updates. Version 4.2 does include a printer driver modification program and documentation on it' s use.

9.   One of the earliest employees of WordPerfect Corporation, in a book he wrote about the company and his role in it, stated that laser printer support was not really handled satisfactorily until WP 5.0, which was almost a total program rewrite compared to the 4.x family. When the 4.x WordPerfect program family was introduced daisywheel and dot matrix printers were state of the art and the program' s structure did not allow drivers which really utilized the laser printer' s full capabilities.

10.   These versions do have the advantage of running with less memory and require less disk space, however there are probably few if any WordPerfect users still using a 8088 or 80286 system with only 2 floppy drives, 512K or less memory, or with a 10 meg hard disk, for any serious work.

11.   Versions prior to 5.1 are primarily of historical more than practical use interest. They have too many shortcomings compared to version 5.1, including lack of modern printer and font support, lack of mouse and graphics support, and requiring user intervention for settings handled automatically by later versions. Using WordPerfect 4.x for serious word processing work is about like trying to use WordStar 3.3 under CP/M or DOS for serious word processing and desktop publishing. It can be done, if no graphics are involved, but I feel you need to have masochistic tendencies to do so. Of course I am crazy enough so I have both WordStar 3.3 and 4.0 for DOS, as well as WordStar 4.0 for CP/M, installed on my system, along with WP 4.0, 4.1 and 4.2. The CP/M version of WordStar runs under an excellent Z80 and CP/M emulator and works fine but is definitely not my recommendation for a word processor for everyday use.

12.   WP 4.2 is the earliest version of Wordperfect that can have it' s files imported by WP 5.1 and 6.x, according to their documentation. However, there are indications in the manual section for the WP 4.2 Convert program that the file format for WP 4.2 and prior versions may be virtually identical as it merely refers to conversion to and from " WordPerfect format", with no qualifiers as to version number. If this is the case then later versions of WordPerfect should be able to import all earlier version' s files as WP 4.2 format files with reasonable success. Feedback on this point is requested.

13.   WP 4.0 does not include a thesaurus while WP 4.2 does. I believe that this was introduced with WP 4.1 as my copy of Student WordPerfect 4.1 does include it.

Unless you grew up with it, and hate to change, it is my judgement that WordPerfect 4.x versions are not particularly viable as a modern word processor any more due to both dated printer support and aged user interface. To a collector they are interesting from the standpoint

of how much programs changed in just a few years, particularly as regards the user interface and printer graphics and font support capabilities. It is believed that this is even more true for versions prior to 4.x. Any versions prior to 4.2 are not listed as being supported for file input/conversion by WP 5.0 or later versions, but see paragraph 12 above.

WP4X.WPD