

PRO-EXT

Protext Extensions

using Protext

(c) 1993 Richard Fairhurst

System requirements

Amstrad CPC or Plus
Epson-compatible printer
128k RAM or greater
Protext (ROM or disc)

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About Pro-Ext

So what is this Pro-Ext, anyway?

Pro-Ext is the bane of my life. Ever since I originally started it way back in the mists of time, I've had Richard Wildey (Sentinel Software) on the 'phone demanding the latest version, improvements here and there, new features... and it eventually grew into something worthy of release. What you have here is the finished version.

The original reasoning behind Pro-Ext came when a group of us were planning to take over the Print-Out fanzine. (In the end, the plans were shelved, but that's a different story.) No-one could decide what we were going to produce it on: I wanted PowerPage, Rob Scott wanted MicroDesign Plus, Richard Wildey wanted Stop Press, and so it went on.

The idea occurred to me that everyone liked using Protex, which is as near to a standard word-processor as we get on the CPC, and is fast, flexible, and something else beginning with "f". (Friendly. Yes, that's it.) So why not write a utility that lets Protex produce a page with illustrations, headlines and the like? Ergo Pro-Ext.

This is the very latest version, v1.50, which contains a number of new features. As well as the unique multi-sized font editor (which lets you change and create fonts of any size), there is the new charting module, to automatically create bar charts and even pie charts from your data. In addition, for the first time, it will work with the disc version of Protex.

The program on your disc has been developed by a true CPC enthusiast. I won't be making much money from this - there's very little left in the serious CPC scene these days. I'm not trying to rip people off: Pro-Ext is keenly priced and is from a small, independent software house. There's no copy protection on the disc, so you can take backup copies for your own use. Please reward this trust and don't pirate the utility: if you like it, buy a copy. Thanks.

Richard Fairhurst
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How to use Pro-Ext

Loading the program: Prottext ROM users

You must load Pro-Ext before entering Prottext. The "official" way is to insert your Pro-Ext disc, type RUN"DISC", and select the first option from the main menu (just press COPY or ENTER for now). For a bit of a short-cut, try RUN"P". This speeds things up a bit.

You can then enter Prottext in the normal way, by typing |P.

Loading the program: Prottext disc users

As with ROM users, you should type RUN"DISC" and press COPY or ENTER to select the first option from the main menu. You will be asked to insert your Prottext disc, and shortly afterwards, to replace the Pro-Ext disc in the disc drive. To save having to go through the menu, you can type RUN"P" instead of RUN"DISC".

After this, you can enter Prottext in the usual way - |P.

If you'd like to avoid disc swapping, it is possible to install the main Prottext program on your Pro-Ext disc. To do this, insert your Pro-Ext disc and type RUN"INSTALL" - you will be prompted to insert your Prottext disc, followed by your Pro-Ext disc (use a backup copy, created with the DISCKIT3 utility or any other disc copier, with the write-protect tabs UP). After this short process is finished, you can from then on load both Pro-Ext and Prottext at once without having to swap discs.

How to use Pro-Ext

By now, you should have loaded Pro-Ext. Prottext will appear in the same way as ever... so what's new?

The new commands

Basically, you have a whole load of new features to play around with. To access these, you place special commands in the text. These consist of the following format:

```
A command to wake up Pro-Ext
The parameters of the command you want to use (e.g.
  headline text)
A command to tell it that you've finished the
  parameters
The single-letter command you want to use
```

Both the "wake up" and "I've finished" commands are accessed by pressing CTRL-X followed by A. An inverse A will appear on your screen in the correct place.

For example...

Here's the command you'd use to load the "OFFICE.FNT" font from the disc into memory:

```
*OFFICE.FNT*F
```

where * indicates the inverse A character. As you can guess, F is the command to load a font.

If you need help

Help is available from the Prottext command line at any time. Simply type PXHELP, and a list of commands (and what they do) will appear. For full details on a particular command, type PXHELP followed by the letter. (Remember that Pro-Ext commands are "case-sensitive" - i.e. some are a capital letter, some are a small letter.)

If you're still stuck, contact Sentinel Software. Either write with an SAE, enclosing a full explanation of your problems, or 'phone (081) 876 7032.

Headline commands

The headline system

Headlines in Pro-Ext are produced with a font that is loaded into the extra memory of your 128k CPC. Pro-Ext fonts are a special format: you can't use any other sort.

You can have centred or uncentred headlines.

Loading fonts from disc

Use the F command. For example, to load the "SCRIBE.FNT" font:

```
*SCRIBE.FNT*F
```

(Throughout this manual, "*" is used to indicate CTRL-X followed by A, which displays as an inverse A on-screen.)

A number of fonts are supplied completely free of charge on the disc. You can list these by typing |DIR *.FNT".

Printing a headline

Use the H command. For example, to print "Late News!":

```
*Late News!*H
```

Careful that your headline fits on a single line of the page. Remember that you need to have loaded a font before you can print a headline.

Printing a centred headline

Exactly as any other type of headline, except that you need to use the C command.

Changing how your headlines appear

You can select Near Letter Quality (really smart) or Draft quality (rough but quick). You can also change the width of the headline (only uncentred ones, though). Here's how you do it:

```
*2,1*h
```

The "h" is the command name. 1 means Near Letter Quality (put a 0 in here for draft, if you like). The 2 is to indicate double width: 1 would indicate normal width.

Art commands

The clip art system

A picture can speak a thousand words. This, of course, is not necessarily true, but I thought it made quite a nice intro to the section...!

Anyway, you can print out a piece of clip art using Pro-Ext. (Clip art is ready-made artwork that comes on a disc.) Pro-Ext can handle clip art with the ".CUT" extension, which is good news because both of the major DTP packages on the CPC (PowerPage and Stop Press) use this. If you want to use normal or Multifaced screens, or even Advanced Art Studio windows, don't worry: a program is supplied to let you convert them to ".CUT" format (see below).

If you want some nice cheap clip art, try looking around PD libraries. Most have good ranges.

How to print clip art

Use the A command. To print "GLOBE.CUT", for example:

```
*GLOBE.CUT*A
```

Dead easy. Printing is carried out one pin at a time, for really top-notch results. (By the way, I strongly recommend that you print out each new item of clip art as you get it. That way you can keep a catalogue and choose the appropriate piece whenever you need it.)

Changing how your clip art appears

Use the "a" command. (Capital letter for the output command, small letter to set options - the same as with headlines.) An example...

```
*2,4,3,5*a
```

Not very obvious, when you look at it! Let me explain... the 2 is the width of the art. 4 for quadruple width, 2 for double width, and 1 for normal width.

4 is the height: again, 4 for quadruple, 2 for double, and 1 for normal.

The 5 (I know I've missed one out) is the left margin, so you can make clip art appear in the middle of the page, for example. It controls the number of spaces that are added before the clip art is printed.

The 3 is the complicated (-ish) one. We chose to use one-pin printing so that the output quality was perfect, but the danger here is that you could wear a pin out on your printer head if you use that one more than any other. Cue hefty repair bills. So what Pro-Ext allows you to do is change the pin.

This can be 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 or 64. The clever bit is that you can print on more than one pin at once: in this example, we're using two. The two in question are 1 and 2. Why? Because 1 and 2 make 3, and that's the parameter we typed in. Not all that complicated, really!

Other commands

Page formatting

Pro-Ext integrates seamlessly with Protext, except one problem which there was no way around. You have one line which contains a command to print a nice big headline: fair enough. But Protext doesn't know this, and thinks it's still one line. This means that Protext's line counting gets out of sync with the actual current position on the paper.

But, don't worry, we've provided an even better replacement: wave goodbye to Protext's page controls and say hello to Pro-Ext's. One simple command, P, lets you make the printer feed onto the next page. It even lets you print a page number at the bottom of the page. For example, say we want to print that this is page 5, and feed onto the next page: just type...

```
*5*p
```

It's that easy! (Note that Pro-Ext knows which side of the paper to print the page number on, depending on whether it is an odd or even page.)

Ruler lines

One thing you often need is to draw a line across the page to separate one section from another. Pro-Ext offers a command to do this, and it's probably the easiest command to use in the whole program (it doesn't take any parameters, you see). Here it is:

```
**R
```

Changing how your ruler lines appear

You may want to make the ruler line longer or smaller. The default length is 100, but you can change it.

Similarly, the ruler line is usually set as two thin lines very close together. You can change the pattern of the line: it's held in binary. Don't flinch, it's easy really. You have seven spaces, one under the other, each of which can hold a line or a blank. From left to right, write a zero for each one which you want to leave blank,

and a 1 for each one where you want to place a line. For example, for a thick line (three lines high), you might write 0011100.

Now all you need to do is convert it into decimal. Actually, you can cheat here. The easiest way to do it is exit into BASIC, and type PRINT &X0011100 (or whatever your number is). The equivalent in decimal will appear, in this case 28. There's the second parameter. So a command for a thick line with standard width would be:

```
*100,28*r
```

And there you go!

Graphics conversion

All Pro-Ext menus work in the same way, for maximum ease-of-use: to change which option is selected by the flashing highlight bar, press SPACE to advance one, or the up and down cursor keys. COPY or RETURN will act on the selection.

The graphics conversion program is loaded from the main menu (it's the second option on the list). When loaded, a new menu will appear: this is worked in the same way as the main menu.

The first option on this menu, Load screen, lets you load in any screen file. First enter the filename, then the mode that the screen is in (1 or 2) - MODE 1 screens are converted to MODE 2. The screen will be loaded into memory. (Note that compressed screens are automatically decompressed!)

If you want to load another type of art, use Load AAS window (to load Advanced Art Studio .WIN files), or Load Multiface screen. The screen you have loaded can be viewed by selecting the View screen option.

Clip art is saved using the next option, Save clip art. When it comes to this stage, you need to make sure the right amount of picture is saved out - and get rid of any gunk around the edges, if present. To do this, use the cursor keys to make the picture's edges touch the solid black. (If you make a mistake, and want to go back in the direction you have come, use SHIFT and the cursor keys.) COPY saves the art.

Finally, there are the useful Other drive and Catalogue options, as well as the standard Reload menu, which will return to the main Pro-Ext menu.

Charting module

Another program available from the main menu, this generates bar or pie charts for inclusion in your documents. The charts are saved as .CUT files (clip art) for Pro-Ext to load.

The charts are drawn from your own data, which consists of 16 numbers and a category for each one. The category is the description of what the number signifies: so, if you were preparing a sales graph for the year, the first category would be "January", the second "February" and so on: the first number would be the number of sales in January.

To load data from disc, select Load data from the menu. (An example file, CD.DAT, is provided.) To save out data, use the next option, Save data. Before you do this, though, you'll need to enter some, using the Data entry mode.

Enter the categories first, or names of each piece of data - so, if you were illustrating profits over the year, you might want to name each category after a month. Up to 16 categories can be filled - simply press ENTER on its own after you've finished.

You can then re-enter Data entry mode, and this time, when given the choice between categories and data, select "Data" by pressing D. You should then enter the figures for each month. (By the way, if you make a mistake, don't panic: just repeat this process, and press ENTER to skip over the correct values.)

To draw a graph, select Draw pie chart or Draw bar chart. The graphs are automatically scaled, and the categories arranged so that text does not messily overlap. When you've drawn the chart you want (which can be viewed again using View screen), save it out as a piece of clip art using Save clip art.

Of course, the Other drive, Catalogue and Reload menu options are available.

Font editor

The last extra utility is the font editor. Pro-Ext's font editor isn't like others: most font editors only offer you one fixed size (usually 8x8 or 16x16) which, to be honest, can be programmed in half an hour. The Pro-Ext font editor, however, lets you edit fonts of any size.

You might want to start by loading an already existing font: use Load font for this. Or, if you want to create a completely new font, use Select new font. If you do this, you will be asked for the height of the font: if it is to be 41 pixels high, just type in 41 and press ENTER. Easy!

To change the font, use Edit font. This brings up a separate screen, showing (at first) the capital letter "A" in this font. You can move around the grid using the cursor keys: holding down SHIFT moves the flashing cursor in increments of 8, and CTRL with a cursor key moves to the edge of the grid. To toggle a pixel on or off, use COPY, ENTER or SPACE.

Pro-Ext fonts are proportional, which means that not each character is the same width (otherwise, the thin letter "i" would take up as much space as the thicker "m"). To alter the width of the character, which is constantly displayed on the right of the screen, press W and type in the new value.

If you've made a mistake in editing the character, CTRL-Z reverts to the previous design. CTRL-X will "cut" the current character: that is, put the design on a clipboard (or temporary storage area), and wipe the current character. CTRL-C copies the design to the clipboard, without wiping the current character. CTRL-V, the "paste" function, copies the design on the clipboard onto the current character. (These keys are industry standards, and will be second nature to anyone who's ever used a Mac or even Windows.)

A special feature of Pro-Ext's font editor is the unique range of "effects" offered. Each effect is selected by pressing CTRL and a number on the main keyboard from 1 to 6. CTRL-1 greys out the design, by super-imposing a "check" pattern. CTRL-2 produces a "horizontal lines" effect, with CTRL-3 giving "vertical lines", and CTRL-4 a

"criss-cross" combination of the two. CTRL-5 applies an impressive shadow to the letter, and finally, CTRL-6 makes the character "bold" (or emphasised). Try them out - you'll be impressed!

When you've edited a character, you can select a new character by pressing G (for "Go to"), and entering either the character itself or its ASCII code. Or, more simply, use

the < and > keys to move to the previous and next characters respectively. Finally, to quit the character edit mode, press Q.

The remaining options on the menu are Save font, which will save your font in Pro-Ext .FNT format, and the standard Other drive, Catalogue, and Reload menu functions.

Error messages

If Pro-Ext complains that something has gone wrong, it tells you about it. Here are the messages that can appear:

Error in loading file

The font or art file you want cannot be loaded for some reason or other.

Unknown command

You have entered a command which doesn't exist!

Font file not loaded

You cannot print out headlines without having loaded a headline font first.

Wrong number of parameters

Either you've supplied too many, or you've missed some out. Check the manual or the on-line help.

Parameter overflow

You've tried to put a parameter in which is too long for Pro-Ext to cope with.

UFOs have landed

This message should not appear in normal use. If it does, please contact the Home Office immediately.