Sending True BASIC Postscript files to a Printer

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Introduction

One of the features of True BASIC Gold Edition, as well as the earlier Professional Editions, is the ability to journal True BASIC graphics to a Postscript file. This is a good way to create high-quality output for printing, or for inclusion in documents created with drawing or painting applications. The means of getting the Postscript file to the printer or into a draw or paint document are not always obvious, however.

This article will outline a couple of easy ways to do this using tools you already have or which are freely accessible. It is by no means exhaustive; we invite you to share other means you may have discovered.

Tools You May Already Have

We'll start with getting Postscript output to the printer. These tools assume your printer is a Postscript printer unless otherwise noted.

If you're still using the DOS version, the simplest tool of all, of course, is using the COPY command on the DOS command line:

```
COPY mypsfile/b PRN:
```

This should also work in Windows or OS/2 if you have a printer attached to a device such as PRN: or LPT1:. It may not work in some network printer setups.

If you're using the Macintosh version of True BASIC, whether the old Pro Edition or the new Gold Edition, you have a couple of built-in possibilities. If you have Desktop PrintMonitor enabled, such that there is a printer icon for a Postscript printer on your desktop, you can simply drag and drop your Postscript file on the printer icon, and it will be interpreted and printed.

There exist two other, similar possibilities which may have been included with your operating system or printer drivers. You may find a utility named "Laserwriter Utility" and/or another utility named "Apple Printer Utility" on your hard disk, possibly, but not necessarily, in the Apple Extras folder.

Laserwriter Utility: Double-click the application. It will check your printer and eventually reach a point where the menu is displayed in the menubar. Choose **Download Postscript File**… from the **Utilities** menu. It will prompt you with a standard file open dialog for the name of a Postscript file to print.

Apple Printer Utility: Double-click the application. It will display a window with any Appletalk zones at the top and printers in the selected zone in the bottom. Select a printer to print the file to and click Open Printer. It will open the printer. Then, choose `Send Postscript File...` from the `File` menu. It will prompt you with a standard multiple file open dialog for the name or names of the Postscript file or files to print.

Drop*PS and PrintFile

Next we'll look at some simple tools for printing Postscript files that you probably don't have already, but can easily download (for free!) Again, these tools assume your printer is a Postscript printer unless otherwise noted.

If you are running Windows 95/98/NT, there is a freeware utility named **PrintFile**. You can find this file at `http://www.winfiles.com`, in the Windows 95/98 Printer Tools section. Unzip it and install it according to the instructions. The installer will optionally create Start Menu items and Desktop shortcuts for you. I find the Desktop shortcut handiest, but you may feel differently. If you have it create the Desktop shortcut, then you can simply drag and drop your Postscript file on the shortcut. You will be presented with the Print Setup dialog to make any adjustments to your printer. When you click OK, your file will be printed. The PrintFile window will remain by default. If you click the "Settings" button and check "Quit when handled command line", it will go away automatically after printing. This utility has a couple of other useful features, including the capability of performing "N-up" printing.

A similar freeware utility named **Drop*PS**, written by Bare Bones Software (makers of BBEdit) exists for the Macintosh and is available from `http://www.barebones.com/free/free.html`. Again, I find that it is easiest, after un-BinHexing and UnStuffing, to drag the utility to my Desktop. Then you can simply drag and drop your Postscript file onto the utility. The first time you run the utility, you will be presented with a dialog for choosing an Appletalk zone and a printer in the zone. It will continue to use these by default when you drop files on it until such times as you double-click Drop*PS and change the preferences.

GhostScript and GSView

Our last utility is perhaps the most interesting utility. Called **Ghostscript**, it is available for Unix, VMS, Macintosh, Windows, and OS/2. All versions except Macintosh have available a "previewer" called GV, Ghostview, or GSView which you will want to download as well; some of the previewer functions are built into the Macintosh version. If you don't download the previewer in other versions, you will be restricted to a command line interface. In the remainder of this document, I will assume that you have downloaded the previewer or are using the Macintosh version.

Ghostscript can be used not only to print Postscript files, both to Postscript printers, and often to non-Postscript printers, but also to view them on your monitor,

and copy them onto the clipboard. On some platforms, it can also add an EPS preview section (True BASIC creates EPS-compatible files, but elects to leave off the preview), making the Postscript files more useful when loaded into page layout applications. On most platforms, it allows you to save to a native format (for example, MS BMP in Windows or Pict on the Macintosh).

There are two different versions of Ghostscript, GNU and Aladdin. The chief difference is licensing. Both allow free use, so you can use either for your personal use. If you intended to redistribute Ghostview, you will need to examine the licenses to see which better fits your needs. I have used the Aladdin version in preparing this article. Both are available at `http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~ghost`. Source and binaries are available, as well as documentation, FAQs, and a lot of other information.

Here is a quick "getting started" guide to using Aladdin Ghostscript to manipulate True BASIC Postscript files. For all items below, start by launching Ghostscript and opening the Postscript file you wish to work with. It will be rendered in a screen window for you.

To print the image to the printer: Choose `Print` from the `File` menu.

To copy the image to the clipboard: Choose `Copy` from the `Edit` menu.

To add an EPS preview section in Windows or OS/2: Choose `Add EPS Preview` from the `Edit` menu, then choose an image type from the hierarchical menu. You will be prompted for a new filename for the modified file.

To add an EPS preview section on the Macintosh: This is a little more complicated on the Macintosh. If you have done a standard install, you will see in the `Ghostscript` menu an item called `ps2epsi`. This will allow you to convert a Postscript file to an EPS file where the preview is in interchange format. Select `ps2epsi`… from the `Ghostscript` menu. You will be prompted for the name of a file to convert (it doesn't use the already-loaded file). Choose a file. You will then be prompted for the name of a file to save the converted file to. You will note that there are other conversion scripts there, as well. `ps2pdf`… might be interesting--it will convert a Postscript file to an Adobe PDF file readable by Adobe Acrobat.

To save the image to a BMP in Windows or OS/2: Choose `Copy` from the `Edit` menu, then choose `Paste To`… from the `Edit` menu. You will be prompted for a new filename for the BMP file.

To save the image to a Pict file on the Macintosh: Choose `Save As`… from the `File` menu. You will be prompted for a new filename for the Pict file.

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