

Macintosh vs Windows 95

#8 Scripting and More

Summary

Software features built into the Apple® Macintosh® computer, including AppleScript™ scripting and Apple Guide help, give developers and users extremely powerful ways to extend the features of the Macintosh and customize them for specific tasks. Scripting is not included in Windows 95, and it's an important Macintosh advantage.

This is part of a series of short reports on the contrasts between a Macintosh computer and a PC with Windows 95. To see previous entries in the series, visit us on the Internet at <http://www.apple.com/whymac>

The Macintosh Advantage

AppleScript is a scripting language integrated into the Mac™ OS. It allows users and developers to automate routine or highly complex tasks. New tasks can be written or "recorded" by the user.

AppleScript allows developers (both commercial and in-house) to create custom solutions by integrating hundreds of off-the-shelf scriptable applications. Programs that support AppleScript include Claris FileMaker Pro, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, Novell/Word-Perfect's WordPerfect, Quark XPress, FrameMaker, SoftWindows, and many others. A growing suite of third-party tools supports AppleScript, including Apple's HyperCard®, Main Event's Scriptor, PreFab Software's Player, Software Designs Unlimited's Face-Span, and a lot more.

Developers can combine AppleScript solutions with other powerful Apple technologies, such as Apple Guide. Apple Guide is the electronic help system built into every Macintosh computer. It leads a user through specific procedures one step at a time by pointing out exactly where to click the mouse or type. It is used heavily by a number of Macintosh developers (for example, Insignia Solutions' Soft Windows 2.0 uses Apple Guide to provide electronic help for people running DOS and Windows

programs on a Macintosh.) Custom Apple Guide files can be created to help a user work through an AppleScript solution.

The AppleScript language supports localized dialects' which make it easier for non-English speakers to work with AppleScript. Dialects currently available are French and Japanese (two of Apple's largest markets).

Finally, no discussion of Macintosh scripting would be complete without mentioning UserLand Frontier. Frontier is a very powerful third-party scripting environment, available only for the Macintosh. It extends the capabilities of AppleScript in many ways. The latest version of Frontier, now in beta, includes powerful links to Internet scripting.

Windows 95 does not include a built-in scripting language.

What It Means For Users

For technically skilled users, scripting is a very powerful way to customize a Macintosh computer and automate tasks. For nontechnical users, scripting itself involves some learning (it is not for completely nontechnical users), but anyone can benefit from the custom solutions created by people who do create scripts.

Some of the most dramatic uses of Macintosh scripting today are in automating business tasks. For instance, scripting can automate tasks such as importing information into a database. A more complex example would be to automate the creation of a catalog by combining a desktop publishing application, image database, and text information on products. Another example is that the scripting features in SoftWindows mean a script on the Macintosh can actually execute Windows commands.

Macintosh developers are driving scripting in other interesting directions, many of them involving the Internet (such as combining scripting and the World Wide Web to



make it more interactive and extensible). We can't do justice to this work in a short document because so much is going on; if you're interested, the best thing to do is check the references below for more information and examples.

What About the Future?

Apple is planning additional extensions to make AppleScript more powerful and easier to work with, but details on the plans have not been made public.

Questions or Comments?

You can send e-mail to the Macintosh Platform Marketing team at competition@applelink.apple.com

For more information on topics mentioned in this note, use the Internet:

General Macintosh scripting information:

<http://mmm.dartmouth.edu/pages/macscripting/macscripting-home.html>

<http://www.gz.com/scriptweb/>

<http://www.ultranet.com/~mfenner/applescript.html>

<ftp://gaea.kgs.ukans.edu/applescript/00applescript.faq>

For information on the Macintosh scripting e-mail list:

http://cy-mac.welc.cam.ac.uk/a_script.html

PreFab Software:

<http://www.tiac.net/prefab/index.html>

Frontier 3.0:

http://www.hotwired.com/staff/userland/aboutfrontier30_313.html

WordPerfect:

<http://www.wordperfect.com/>

Frame Technology:

<http://www.frame.com/>

SoftWindows 2.0: http://www.insignia.com/marcom/datasheets/SoftWindows_20_DataSheet.html

Claris FileMaker Pro:

<http://www.claris.com/Products/FMPro/DataSheet.html>