

REVIEWS Software

INFO reviews only finished, production versions of products, never beta test versions.

All products receive scores ranging from unacceptable to excellent in various categories. We then weight the scores in different categories (giving the most weight to the performance and value categories) to produce an overall numeric score for the product. Scores should be judged as follows:

- 10 — **Excellent 9 - 10:**
Tops in its class
- 9 — **Very Good 7 - 8.9**
Offers special benefits
- 8 — **Satisfactory 5 - 6.9**
Meets essential criteria.
- 7 — **Poor 3 - 4.9**
Falls short in essential areas
- 6 — **Unacceptable 1 - 2.9**
Fails to meet minimum standards
- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

PFS Professional Write

Second-Generation Program Is Quick, Simple Update Adds Address Book Manager, Synonym Finder

By **John Lombardi** Review Board

With PFS Write, Software Publishing proved that there's a market for programs that emphasize simplicity and ease of use over power and complexity. Slowly other vendors have responded, and now Software Publishing faces competition from Micropro's Easy and Simon and Schuster's Webster's New World Writer, which offer similar approaches in a slicker format.

Software Publishing's response is a major upgrade called PFS Professional Write, also quick and simple, but now enhanced by an address book database, synonym finder, and a number of other features. Yet the product retains the easy and comfortable style that was the hallmark of its predecessor.

FEATURES:

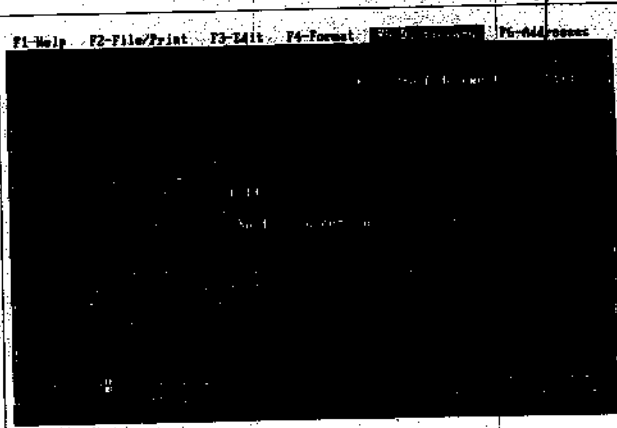
PFS Professional Write has a good set of features. Faithful to the philosophy of no frills but lots of ease of use, this program helps you prepare correspondence, reports, and other documents with speed and efficiency, as long as you require no complex formats, sophisticated editing, or long documents.

The program has most of the editing commands needed for typing and document preparation. Cursor moves are complete, and the delete commands allow the removal of letters, words, lines, and blocks. Cut and paste operations, along with Find and Replace, provide the basics for entering and revising text while line drawing capability helps create box charts. PFS Professional Write supports a macro facility that allows 35 different prerecorded keystrokes to be assigned to an Alt-key combination. The program also includes functions to save, retrieve, delete, and insert files as well as text blocks.

Formatting options include the basics without the extra features of more powerful programs. PFS Professional Write can set margins and tabs (including decimal tabs), underline and boldface, and include a header and footer. Lines can be set left, right, or centered. Spacing can be set single or double. Temporary left margins can be created with an indent command. Text can be printed justified, usually with whole-space fill. The spelling program can check an individual word or the entire document against the 77,000-word internal dictionary and maintain a 5,000-word personal dictionary. A synonym finder lists words that have the same meaning as any word you type.

PFS Professional Write has a module for form letters. Not only will the program prepare standard letters from an address list, its elaborate address book function provides special fixed forms with fields for managing lists of up to 256 entries per address book, with an unlimited number of address books.

Printing features are modest. Proportional spacing is not explicitly supported, although some printers that do proportional spacing, such as the HP Laserjet,



With PFS Professional Write, you can set margins, tabs, headers, footers, and underline and boldface. A synonym finder lists words that have the same meaning as any you type.

will produce text from PFS Professional Write in that font. The number of printers supported is impressive. Our tests with a Diablo 630 and a Laserjet Plus worked reasonably well, though accessing all the bells and whistles of a laser printer through PFS Professional Write is difficult at best.

These features, while representing the fundamental set of word processing capabilities, are not what make PFS Professional Write an interesting program. Just about every competitor's product does the same things, and some do more. PFS Professional Write's claim to fame is its simple, easy-to-use and learn design, including the visible page that shows margins, headers, and footers on screen, the menus that appear instantly on command, and the clear help screens that explain each command.

PERFORMANCE:

PFS Professional Write behaves in a mostly predictable fashion. Editing goes quickly. You can move the cursor anywhere on the screen between your margins, not just in areas where there is text. Many people, especially casual users, prefer this method. However, the tab key will not insert blanks, even in the insert mode.

Generally quick and effective, the program does cause a slight delay while typing across page breaks when the footer is displayed and the screen jumps to the next page and displays the header. The ruler line at the bottom of the window has a block cursor that trails along after the main cursor with a tiny but perceptible delay that can grow irritating. The ruler line is always visible and cannot be turned off.

Margins can be changed at any time, but they reformat the entire document whenever you change them. It is not possible to have different margins in the

same document. You can set temporary left margins for block-indented paragraphs, but if you change the permanent margins, the entire document is conformed to the new margins instantly. Presumably, Software Publishing expects that few users actually need multiple-margin documents, other than indented blocks. There is no right-margin release.

Single and double are the only spacing options that can be changed at will throughout the document. Changing the spacing in the middle of a document affects how newly entered text will be done. Existing text can have its spacing changed by marking a block and changing the spacing.

The two-line header and footer facilities permit the placement of standard information in the top and bottom margins as well as a page number, if required. The header and footer can be positioned on the left, the right, or centered. They can also be underlined and set in bold or italic, but you can't vary the style and print a mixture of regular text, bold, and italic within the header or the footer (although the header can be different than the footer). There is no facility for handling alternating headers and footers for left-hand and right-hand pages, and page numbers cannot be printed in both header and footer.

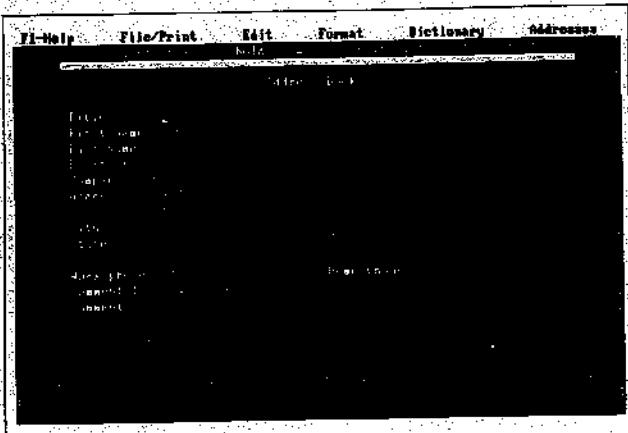
Insert mode is signaled by a block cursor on the screen. Typoover by an underline cursor. Backspace is destructive for characters, but you can't backspace to delete a space between two words: for that you must use the Delete key. While there is no indication where hard carriage returns fall at the end of paragraphs or lines, they can be deleted with the Del key to join two paragraphs.

PFS Professional Write can handle line lengths of up to 250 characters.

Block commands allow for the normal cut and paste operations, changed

Also Included
In This Section

- **Collmate** 55
- **Drafix I** 56
- **Filemaker Plus** 58



PFS Professional Write adds a mailing list manager. It offers an unlimited number of address books, with fields for managing lists of up to 256 entries per book.

indent, type style, line spacing, and printing or saving the block. Blocks can only be marked from the cursor position forward in the document, not backward toward the top.

PFS Professional Write's spelling checker handles hyphenated words and apostrophes. It checks individual words at the cursor, or the whole document from the cursor forward. In addition, it will display synonyms for any word suggested. When the speller finds an unmatched word, a menu offers several alternatives, including display-suggested replacements. You can add new words to the personal dictionary. You can also skip the word, type a replacement, or accept the offered replacement. The spelling checker works as well as any we've seen.

The address book in PFS Professional Write is well-done. It has a fixed format with space for 13 fields, including name, address, title, and a couple of comments. The layout is good, entry and revision are easy, and the information in the address book is immediately accessible from the edit screen of the word processor. A copy format makes it possible while writing a letter to call up a name from the address book and automatically insert the name and address at the top of the letter. Another feature lets you print that name and address on an envelope. However, the address book is not a database because it has no variable format and no data management facilities other than a sort by last name, although there is a selection feature.

Form letters are easy using the address book or files from PFS Professional File, or any standard ASCII delimited files such as those that can be generated with PC-File or Dbase III. Using the search and sort capabilities of PFS Professional File, which can connect directly to Write, you can get very sophisticated mail-merge functions. However, the address book alone is easily able to accomplish many form letter functions.

PFS Professional Write supports a reasonably comprehensive list of printers. The program supports sheet feeders. Justification is done at print time and selected from the print menu; however, the program uses whole spaces to justify, not microspace justification, with both our Diablo 630 and our Laserjet Plus printers. It can also print to disk for a formatted output file. The program can begin and end printing on any page, do multiple copies, offset the left margin, select a print style for the entire document, include other files at print time,

send printer codes to the printer from the document, and chain-print documents. It is even possible to include graphs produced by programs compatible with the PFS series if your printer can produce graphics.

Document exchange within the program includes IBM's Document Content Architecture (DCA) format, ASCII (special characters and formatting information removed, including headers and footers), encrypted files that require a password to decode, and normal PFS Professional Write format files. The program will read these files directly and save files in any of these formats.

This word processor offers solid performance across a range of capabilities. It is fast in operation, its editing commands are clear and predictable, the spelling program is superior, and the address book is cleanly integrated. We find the program considerably better than the average word processor, about on a par with Micropro's Easy Extra and somewhat better than Webster's New World Writer. We rate performance for PFS Professional Write as very good.

DOCUMENTATION:

PFS Professional Write has extensive menus and a complete, in-context, on-line help system. This on-line documentation is sufficient for most standard tasks, and for more complex activities, such as form letters, the manual provides an excellent reference. We had one very minor complaint about the index: We found no entry for control keys, because the program calls them Speed Keys. This is a common problem; vendors invent new terms and forget to cross-reference them for experienced users.

This aside, the documentation is well-organized, presented in a spiral-bound hardback binder that is durable and lies flat, and printed in clear, high-quality type. We rate the documentation as excellent.

EASE OF LEARNING:

PFS Professional Write is a snap to learn. Once installed and running on your machine, the clear menus and predictable behavior make it easy to adapt to this word processing program. New computer users will have little difficulty with most of the features of this program, although they will have to learn a number of terms and concepts that are appropriate to computer use in general. For the more-or-less computer literate, PFS Professional Write will present no difficulties.

Given its excellent documentation, strong menu system, and clean design, PFS Professional Write earns an excellent rating for its ease of learning.

EASE OF USE:

Most of the design features that make this program easy to learn also make it easy to use. Because the extensive menus and help screens may become less convenient when you've mastered the program, PFS Professional Write provides control-key combinations for the most commonly used commands. You can get or save files, do most editing functions, indent, double-space, center, and spell using different control-key combinations.

Because you can see everything except justification on-screen, including headers and footers, page layout is exceedingly simple.

Of course, one thing that makes this product so easy to use compared to something like Word Perfect 4.1 is that PFS Professional Write has many fewer features. Nevertheless, the features it does have are well-designed to make this product as easy to learn as it is to use. We give this program an excellent in ease of use.

ERROR HANDLING:

This program is virtually impossible to crash. It handles most simple-minded errors, such as open drive doors and similar difficulties, with aplomb and comprehensible error messages. PFS Professional Write operates on files entirely in memory, so a power failure will cause the loss of any editing changes since the last save. Fortunately, saving is quick and easy.

There is no Undo command, although deleting a block actually copies it to a clipboard where it can be retrieved by the Paste operation, a useful safety feature. Other deletes do not end up in the clipboard, however, nor do large block deletes that exceed the size of the clipboard buffer. The program also has a limit on the amount of text it will cut and paste.

One oddball lapse in error handling occurs if you reset the margins so the body of text is too narrow (for example, the left margin at 10 and the right margin at 15). When you reformat the text with a line length of five characters, any words longer than that are broken after the fifth character. When you try to recover by resetting the margins back to something reasonable, the program puts a blank character in the middle of every word broken. There is no easy recovery from this other than to discard the working copy and start over with the original on disk. We found this an easy mistake to make because when we reset the margins accidentally, then tried to select another command from the menu, we mistakenly used the Return key, which executes reformatting. The program should handle this error situation more elegantly.

We tested the program with several memory-resident programs, such as Ready and Sidekick, and had no problems.

Overall, error handling is conventional and satisfactory.

SUPPORT:

PFS Professional Write has a strong support organization. The program is not copy-protected, faulty disks will be replaced for 90 days (a standard warranty), and the company provides a telephone line (not toll free) within the United States and a telex number for international messages. The manual promises a newsletter and notification of product

upgrades for users who send in their registration card.

We called with technical questions about a problem we were having with the DCA feature. We found the technical support staff easy to reach, forthright in their dealings with users.

Because of its telex access, newsletter, competent and available technical staff, and lack of copy protection, PFS Professional Write earns a very good rating in support.

VALUE:

Within the realm of easy-to-use and easy-to-learn word processing programs, PFS Professional Write is one of the best. It is quick, effective, predictable, and reasonably complete. While lacking a number of complex features characteristic of more powerful programs, it has the basics and a number of bonuses of its own, like the address book. Its speller is excellent, as is the documentation. The program is limited to files of no longer than about 30 pages, and for some uses this may present a problem. It can not handle documents with complex formatting requirements such as multiple margin settings, outlining, and indexing.

PFS Professional Write, at \$199, is about equal in value to Micropro's Easy Extra, which costs \$149, and a better value than Webster's New World Writer, priced at \$150. We rate PFS Professional Write a very good value for basic word processing.

John Lombardi is a professor of history and author of five books. He has been working with computers since 1967.

INFO WORLD THE NEWS WEEKLY

REPORT CARD

SOFTWARE
PFS PROFESSIONAL WRITE

	Unacceptable	Poor	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent
7.9					
Performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Documentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ease of Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ease of Use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Error Handling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

Quick and easy, effective and reasonably versatile, PFS Professional Write excels at correspondence, reports, and short documents with standard formats and simple printing enhancements. Recommended for small offices with mail list and form letter requirements, and for all with occasional word processing requirements.

PRODUCT DETAILS

List price, \$199. Version tested, 1.0. Requires IBM PC or compatible, DOS 2.0 or later, two double-sided floppy disk drives, 320K of RAM. Networking version announced. Top-view compatible. Hard disk recommended. Software Publishing Corp., P.O. Box 7210, 1901 Landings Drive, Mountain View, CA 94039; (415) 962-8910.

Cell...
 So...
 In...
 By...
 Cell...
 ing...
 Lotus...
 featu...
 your...
 rather...
 +C3...
 Al...
 and...
 check...
 some...
 avail...
 "Can...
 Sprea...
 erful...
 rors...
 Co...
 capal...
 Engli...
 featu...
 worth...
 those...
 or co...
 FEA...
 Cells...
 prod...
 versio...
 will...
 mar...
 scree...
 V...
 Col...
 and...
 spr...
 ma...
 to...
 Eng...
 sati...
 of...
 wh...
 do...
 you...
 gue...
 Lis...
 ava...
 AT...
 or...
 l...
 due...
 Cla...
 sea...
 822