Although the manual does an adequate job of explanation, it doesn't go into much depth. We think that users will occasionally want more explanation than provided in the manual. There is also a major reference section that explains all the commands.

The table of contents is adequate, but the reference section is not sufficient, making it sometimes difficult to find the answer to a question.

A major problem is that the manual is not very durable. In fact, the cover began to separate from the pages after repeated use. This is a common problem with hardcover manuals and is difficult to store with our other Mac manuals.

The biggest problem we had was figuring out how the icons worked. Because Ready-Set-Go does not maintain tab formatting from imported files, you have to re-create tabs within Ready-Set-Go. The program includes a powerful and complicated tab formatting feature. Although Ready-Set-Go now comes with a "Guide to Tabs," it does not fully explain how to use them. After going through the manual and the documentation, we ended up calling the support line for help, where a very helpful clerk explained how the feature worked.

Another problem is that Ready-Set-Go does not automatically create a dictionary for new words. Although the dictionary is included, it is not comprehensive enough to be useful. Although the tutorial gets the job done, we found that Pagemaker's tutorial for the same sample file on disk is better organized and easier to use.

To use this there is no one-click help, you'll have to refer to the manual to answer incidental questions about the program. We recommend it as well done as Pagemaker's, but it is adequate and we rate it satisfactory.

EASE OF LEARNING:
This new version of Ready-Set-Go is much more intuitive to learn than its predecessor is primarily because it follows Macintosh interface conventions much more closely than the earlier release.

Getting started is a snap. The tutorial itself is straightforward, with the beginner told to follow the on-screen instructions. The tutorial is well designed for ease of use and will help you learn the basics of the program within a few hours. We found the tutorial easy to follow and found it helpful in learning the basics of the program. We recommend it as well done as Pagemaker's, but it is adequate and we rate it satisfactory.

EASE OF USE:
Ready-Set-Go is basically intuitive and easy to use. First you create an article page. This is the page that will hold the text of the article. Then you import previously created text or graphics. Once this is done, you can rearrange any element of a page, just as if you were using MacDraw. You can also edit text. And Ready-Set-Go's built-in text editor, which is handy.

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Word Perfect, Version 4.2, can display multiple columns — up to 24 columns at once. The screen user interface consists of a single status line at the bottom of the screen.

In general, Word Perfect is a fine performer enhanced by graceful editing style, an outstanding set of features, a fine trackball/clicker, and good general performance. But the documentation is not up to its usual high standard. The manual is a bit too long, and the help system is not quite as good as the rest of the software. Once again, Word Perfect earns an excellent rating in performance.

**DOCUMENTATION:**

Word Perfect's documentation includes a hefty manual in a three-ring binder. The manual is elegantly printed well-organized, and relatively easy to use. The manual essentially follows a consistent style, provides good examples, and offers substantial explanations. The index is adequate and easy to find things.

The on-line help is top-notch stuff, and we haven't seen another system do it as well. It stands out for several reasons. First, is context sensitive. Second, once you're in the help, you can get to the other part of it easily. Third, it is complete, and nine times out of ten you won't need to refer to the manual.

Another feature described in the manual is the on-line description of each printer driver's capabilities. It is a feature, for example, that you can use to print documents on your printer. In Version 4.1, and the printed booklets is a significant improvement.

**EASE OF LEARNING:**

No program as powerful and complex as Word Perfect is easy to master. Word Perfect helps the user learn, but complete command of the program takes time.

Word Perfect offers several tracks to learning the program. There is a typical on-line tutorial that walks the user through most of the program's major features and points out useful tips. That works well on all computers.

The program helps the user learn by using special printer characters, such as tabs, and by providing a “help” system that is accessible from any menu or any part of the screen.

**SOFTWARE WORD PERFECT VERSION 4.2**

**Performance**

Performance is measured by a word processing program in a complex combination of speed, power, and accessibility. For raw speed, Word Perfect performed very well compared to word processors like Microsoft WordPerfect and WordStar. While the programs move around text, Word Perfect also loads files to disk and thus experiences appreciable delays when moving long distances in files, or when editing multiple columns displayed side by side on the screen.

The Word Perfect spellcheck is one of the best, its capabilities exceed those of even a finely tuned version of Office Writer. You can check one page of the document at a time, or the whole document that only from the beginning.

The program's facilities for moving, deleting, moving, selecting, saving, and otherwise manipulating blocks of text are comprehensive and work well. Though the black commands are quick and effective, Word Perfect does not leave the block active after you have selected it or copied it to the clipboard. The program also lets you insert standard ASCII text files in several formats. (In Version 4.2 it is an option that lets you remove hard carriage returns from ASCII files you import, a useful tool that works quite well)

Word processing programs use special codes to indicate changes in such document characteristics as margins, tabs, boldface, italics, and underlining. Word Perfect has a Reveal Codes feature that splits the screen horizontally, showing normal text above and the text plus codes that control special features in the screen below. This wonderful display is a great way to understand complex document formatting. The Reveal Codes system gives access to a visible representation of special codes and a clean, uncluttered editing and writing screen. Even better, you can use the search feature to find and replace the codes.

Word Perfect is famed for its host of special printer drivers, and the ones we tested (like those to the HP LaserJet Plus) worked well. However, the ones to the HP LaserJet and the others proportionally spaced printers will soon discover that considerable effort and tinkering are required to get Version 4.2 to produce what you want. On the Laserjet with proportional spacing, the problem seems to arise because Word Perfect measures by characters rather than by inches, and it is difficult to tell the result to the configuration the program measures by characters.

Version 4.2 also includes improved printing features. You can now print just sections of a document. Especially helpful is the new preview feature, which writes an exact image of the print file to the screen so that you can check for errors and make changes before printing.

Word Perfect is reasonably responsive, and the errors are fewer than in earlier versions.

The program seems to be quite aware of your justification, but you won't see proportional spacing (because of limitations in the display hardware).

In general, Word Perfect is a fine performer enhanced by graceful editing style, an outstanding set of features, a fine trackball/clicker, and good general performance. But the documentation is not up to its usual high standard. The manual is a bit too long, and the help system is not quite as good as the rest of the software. Once again, Word Perfect earns an excellent rating in performance.

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The manual and programs have excellent on-line help files that explain many of the program's complex features. These work well, and users who work with Word Perfect will find them useful. Learning material systematically can get up to speed quickly.

One of the program's strengths is that you can take it with you as you travel. Because of its size, Word Perfect on a portable computer is easy to carry around. It is easy to learn as very good.

**EASE OF USE:**

Many of the features that make this program easy to learn also make it easy to use, especially with the on-line help. Users need only have only a good conceptual knowledge of what indexing is, how sorting works, and what is meant by margins and tabs, for example, to use these features. Memorization is kept to a minimum. Many menus are slow to down the experienced user.

Word Perfect also has specialized subsets of standard functions, making it easy to use. For example, it has a two-sided indexed that provides a hanging indent from the left and right margins. It also has a feature for things like dot leaders. You can get this with other word processing programs, but it is not as easy to use.

Not only are there commands for editing the word at the cursor but you also delete from the cursor to the end of the next word, either left or right. You can delete in a command to the end of
Squish

File Compressor Crams Data Into Smaller Space, but Slowly

By John Walfenbough

If you're like many people, those once limitless 20 megabytes of storage space on your desktop disk drive are rapidly filling up as your files grow and you add new programs. An inexpensive way to regain some of that disk space is to compress your files.

Compressing data files not only reduces disk space needed to store the files, but it can also make telephone calls shorter. When the files are telecommunicated. A typical file compression program reads the data, through its compression algorithm, and then writes the compressed file back to disk. When the file is needed by a program, the reverse procedure is performed to expand the file.

Sundog Software's Squish attempts to make the file compression easier. It allows applications to work directly with compressed files. While Turner Hall's SQZ program (see "Software: Users Find Extra Space With Squeeze," September 8, 1986) works only with 1-2-3, Squish is not limited to a specific file type and thus works with a wide range of programs.

The trade-off for its wider range of file support is that Squish, while it performs its function fairly well, only halved our test text files, while SQZ can expand these files into as little as 15 percent of their original volume. Squish is also more difficult to learn and depends on a few DOS commands. It is less efficient and takes longer to compress files. Finally, while SQZ actually speeds up disk access, Squish slows down access times so that loading and retrieving files takes a lot longer. Because of this performance overhead, you'll want to be picky about when you use Squish.

FEATURES:
The RAM-resident part of Squish uses only 244 bytes and can handle all DOS disk, read and write, when a program accesses it. Squish looks for a translation file in the current directory if it finds one. Squish will apply its compression only to files and file names associated with your Squish system.

Squish also lets you import files that you've decompressed on other systems. This step is necessary because of Squish's method of compressing the file contents. This master control file (and backups) is updated with the appropriate data. The raw text file number is also embedded in all squished files, thereby creating a foolproof method to ensure that Squish always reads the proper translation file.

Squish can be used only for data files and will not work with program files. The best error message if you try to compress a program file with a COM, EXE, or BAT extension.

To issue the DOS Type command with a compressed file, Squish will uncompress the file before it's sent to the operating system. Similarly, you can quickly uncompress a file by copying it to a directory that doesn't contain a Squish file control list. Finally, you also get a simple security system by using Squish, since compressed files are airtight without their corresponding translation file.

PERFORMANCE:
Squish indeed compresses files, doing better with some than with others. It compresses daily and text files more than than files that are lined with extended ASCII characters (such as spreadsheets files).

We've found Word Perfect relatively sensitive to memory-resident utilities, and have been able to hang or crash it if some versions of Squish or Ready are not handled carefully.

The Undelicate command in Word Perfect is as good as, any in the business. There are three levels of Undelicate that can uncompress the last three deletions. If you delete using the Cut command, the deleted block is saved until the next cut, so you can restore it using Paste.

Although the program is a bit sensitive to memory-resident utilities, this is offset by its excellent error recovery and disk handling, and its many options for backing up files. We rate error handling as very good.

SUPPORT:
Aiming programs in this category, Word Perfect's support is above average. You can reach technical support via toll-free phone from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mountain time. We received correct and helpful answers to our questions, the technician who talked to us was not friendly with the program, though it didn't hesitate to seek out answers from more knowledgeable coworkers. Registered users of Version 4.1 can update for $55. Those who own earlier versions will have to pay $60 to get the new version.

The vendor will replace defective disks for free for 90 days. In addition, the product comes with the following guarantee: if a defect is discovered in Word Perfect, the company will replace it, and provide a new disk. Word Perfect Corp., has earned a deserved reputation for responsiveness.

VALUE:
The update to Word Perfect 4.2, while relatively minor, is a useful improvement, as is the first-rate product. The program's power and flexibility, its great range of features, its ease of learning, and excellent ease of use add to the word-processing system. The good toll-free telephone support we received (and its long hours), reasonable update policy, and the broad warranty of performance handily earn Word Perfect an excellent rating in support.

John Lombard is a professor of history and author of five books. He has been using Word Perfect since 1983.

Squish is a RAM-resident program that compresses most data files. It is not copy-protected. Pros: compatible with most programs, good for memory management, reduces disk access and saves $215,154 per gigabyte. Cons: significantly slows disk access in background mode, difficult to learn.

List price: $79. Version tested (1.0) available for the IBM PC, PC XT/AT, and compatibles. Readability: RAM, DOS 2.0 and later, or either a hard disk or two floppy disk drives. Sundog Software, 100 West 59th Street, New York, NY 10019 (718) 853-9135.