WordStar 2000 Is Finally a Strong, Competent Product
Version 3.5 performs well as an editing tool, although it still lacks many graphics functions.

BY JOHN LEEMANN CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

WordStar 2000 has always struggled to rival the handwriting of not being the classic WordStar, while at the same time offering a compatible package for users. Over the years, WordStar 2000 has improved, yet at the same time WordStar 2000 has failed to improve its features, speed, and gracefulness. Other competitors took over the lead. WordPerfect and Microsoft Word, primarily have come to dominate the word processing market once controlled by WordStar.

Today, WordStar 2000. Plus Release 3.5 is a strong, competent performer among high-end professional programs. While the program lacks some specialized features — particularly in the graphics and presentation modes — WordStar 2000 has clearly come of age.

FEATURES:
WordStar 2000 has all the basic requirements of a professional package. It is strong in basic editing, mail merge, and standard business formatting and layout chores. It contains a special address file manager that facilitates mailing list applications and form letters, a telecommunications package integrated into the word processing environment, and a graphics screen capture and editing program.

WordStar 2000 is weaker than the leading products in sophisticated layout and table tasks, especially with proportionally spaced fonts, frames, graphics, and table support. However, these weaknesses remain a strong program.

PERFORMANCE:
WordStar 2000 performs well as an editing tool. It has most of the required tools, although its tab steps will only perform regular and decimal tabs, not character or character/decimal tabs can take any character for the decimal marker but you have to go into an elaborate tabulation program to change the default character. WordStar hyphenates automatically or manually, but its hyphenation formula can be

Paper clip swapping, we installed the package without a hitch in 20 to 25 minutes. The option to install the fonts takes 10 to 20 minutes.

If you're familiar with Windows, you'll find WordStar 2000 immediately. It's obvious how much thought went into making WordStar 2000 operation as painless as possible.

WordStar also has a comprehensive, indexed on-screen help facility. You may never need the manual. In fact, the on-screen help screens are actually WordStar presentations that you can co-opt to make your own. We rate ease of learning very good.

EASE OF USE:
Once installed, you run WordStar as a regular Windows application. It coexists and is multitasked with other Windows applications — an especially useful feature, given that you can use Windows' clipboard to paste onto your slides any text or graphics from another program (e.g., text from Microsoft Word for Windows, or a data table from Excel). You can flip from slide to slide by clicking and dragging a slide-change button. Although it's a separate module, switching onto WordStar's numeric chart function is seamless.

To reorder your slides, just click on the slide and move it to the correct position. Any speaker's notes or handouts you've created are automatically moved to the right part of the program's window.

We liked the fact that WordStar stored all slide and note screens in one file per presentation. This obviates the need for separate file-prompter and chartbookkeeping headaches you're stuck with in most charting packages.

One serious limitation with WordStar is that you cannot create slides in both landscape and portrait orientations within the same presentation.

Despite WordStar's competency, it's a fairly easy program to use. Once you're up to speed, you'll be able to knock out presentations faster than with any other program.

ERROR HANDLING:
PowerPoint's error trapping is smooth and intuitive. If you do make a mistake, PowerPoint pops up a dialog box with a short, correctable prompt and a button to get you back on track. You can then exit, save your work, or go back and make changes. We rate WordStar's error handling very good.

SUPPORT:
Support online and in print is minimal. For questions about WordStar, you're on your own unless you pay for training. We rate support poor.
**Wordstar 2000 Plus**

**Version 3.5**

**Criteria (Weighing) Score**

- **Basic editing** (50) Good
- **Spelling checker/thesaurus** (90) Very Good
- **Mail merge** (20) Very Good
- **Layout** (60) Good
- **Graphics** (50) Satisfactory
- **Outlining** (20) N/A
- **TOC and indexing** (20) Very Good
- **Style sheets** (20) Satisfactory
- **Font support** (60) Excellent
- **Font/graphics** (25) Very Good
- **Menus** (26) Satisfactory
- **Printer support** (50) Very Good
- **Compatibility** (60) Excellent
- **Speed** (50) Satisfactory
- **Documentation** (75) Excellent
- **Ease of learning** (75) Very Good
- **Ease of use** (130) Good
- **Error handling** (40) Satisfactory

**Support**

- **Support policies** (20) Very Good
- **Technical support** (20) Satisfactory

**Value** (50) Good

**Final score: 85**

**PRODUCT SUMMARY**

Company: Wordstar International Inc.

Address: 301 Alcentra Del Rio, New York, CA 94949, (415) 362-8000, (415) 382-0000, (800) 227-9609

List price: $145

Requirements: IBM PC or compatible; 512K or 64K minimum RAM for full functionality; any printer but graphics preview requires CGA,EGA, VGA, Hercules. Hard disk strongly recommended. EMS memory automatically. DOS 2.0 or later will run under Windows.

**Powerful mail merge and mail list capability, strong editing, superior documentation and strong compatibility and printer support, program includes: "telemark" for integrated communica- tions, inset for graphics screen captures, excellent page preview.**

**Comments:** Less powerful than competitors; user interface less effective because different modules use different command structures; no tables feature; graphics less effective than in competitive programs.

**Summary:** Wordstar 2000 Plus. Reliable. 3.5 has all the basic features required for routine personal word processing. If you have relatively standard needs, use mail lists and mail merge, and have little need for word publishing capabilities or significant graphics, this program will provide good service. It is, however, state of the art and lacks behind some market leaders such as Word for Windows, Ami Professional, Word Perfect, or Microsoft Word.

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Speed tests for Wordstar 2000 3.5 show reasonable performance.

INDEX can be constructed for Wordstar 2000 documents. The testing results list cross-references, which can be formatted in any way supported by Wordstar 2000 and allow a variety of indexing options. However, the standard table of contents will not accept proportionally spaced text (when you format your text with a non-proportional font), indexes and other lists exist as separate documents. Wordstar 2000 does not support exclusion or inclusion concordances, which allow you to either exclude or include words in your index. We rate this function very good.

Basic style sheets store ruler lines and fast information along with common text elements and multiple column information. Styles cannot be acquired by example. Style sheets earn a satisfactory score. Font support includes the capability to change fonts, handle Hewlett-Packard downloadable fonts, manage Postscript fonts, and select such elements as bold, underline, superscript, and subscript. The support for fonts does not include kerning or variable word spacing, although many font features can be customized by modifying printer definition files. While margins are expressed in inches, page length is still shown in lines which leads to some difficulty in establishing proper page size with proportionally spaced fonts. We rate font support satisfactory.

The footnote and endnote capabilities automatically handle notes by updating numbers and gathering notes at the end or the bottom of the page. Formatting in notes can be changed. However, footnotes cannot be used with text formatted in columns. The document can have either footnotes or endnotes, but not both. We rate noteing very good.

Wordstar 2000 has a limited keystroke macro facility; there is no macro record, for example, and you cannot use variables or other programming constructs. Macros earn a score of satisfactory.

While soft font downloading for HP printers is less easy than in Word for Windows, it is nonetheless effective and well supported. Wordstar 2000 supports a wide range of dot-matrix and daisy-wheel printers, along with most laser printers and fonts. Printer definition files are edited to take advantage of special printer characteristics. Printer support for all major printers is rated very well.

Star Exchange, a companion program included with Release 3.5, supports both WordPerfect and ASCII files from many major products. Wordstar products from Wordstar 1.0, Multiscript II and 3.6, Microsoft Word 3.0, as well as DCA/RFT and ASCII files can be brought into or exported from Wordstar 2000. It earns an excellent rating for compatibility.

Speed tests for Wordstar 2000, Release 3.5 show reasonable performance, but it is no speed demon. We rate this product satisfactory in comparison to other products in its class.

DOCUMENTATION: Wordstar 2000 documentation consists of a large and well-presented reference manual that includes a nice index and well-written explanations. On-line documentation and help screens are more than adequate and error messages are sufficient. The on-line tutorial program is superior and a quick-reference card, getting-started manual, and a booklet that describes how to produce a number of common document formats all contribute to Wordstar 2000's excellent documentation rating.

EASE OF LEARNING: By no means the easier product to learn, Wordstar 2000, Release 3.5 offers, through its tutorial, full menu mode, and help screen, a comprehensible approach to learning. Users will find it possible to produce general office documents within an hour of starting work with Wordstar 2000. We rate Wordstar 2000's ease of learning good.

EASE OF USE: The product has multiple ways of presenting its commands, through menus or functions or Control keys, because the program permits significant customization and because the integration of the modules is reasonably effective. However, some aspects of the program are clumsier than the competition, particularly the indexing and table of contents. Font control is harder than in some products, notably Word for Windows, and the use of limits requires learning a different set of commands and functions. We rate ease of use good.

ERROR HANDLING: Wordstar 2000 warns you when you abandon files with the changes unsaved, permits a variety of save options, prevents any changes to the original file until a save is successfully completed, and automatically keeps a backup file. There is no timed backup. Undo is single level and does not capture single character deletions done with backspace or delete keys. Wordstar's error handling earns a satisfactory score.

SUPPORT: Wordstar International offers a 30-day money-back guarantee. The company offers support for the life of the release. After which it offers 5-day-a-week support. Support hours are 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Pacific time. It also offers corporate, fax, and BBS support.

We rate Wordstar's support policies very good.

We found the phone number through the Wordstar Forum on CompuServe and made several calls that produced technically competent advice without significant delay. We rate Wordstar's technical support satisfactory.

VALUE: Among high-power professional word processing programs, Wordstar falls below the top group—composed of such heavyweights as WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, Word for Windows and Amp Professional. Although priced in this class ($455), it is somewhat less powerful and more difficult to use. There is also a Wordstar 2000 LAN product available as well. The server version costs $395 and the workstation version is $150. We rate the value of Wordstar 2000 Plus, Release 3.5, good.

John Lombardi is publisher of a major university and author of the books. He has been working with computers since 1967.