Word Perfect's Little Sibling Is a Useful Word Processor

Letter Perfect is a fast, effective word processor for executives, laptop PC users, and students.

BY JOHN LOMBARDI REVIEW BOARD

Unwilling to leave the executive word processing market to other vendors, Word Perfect has shrunk its best selling, professional word processor into a small but effective program called Letter Perfect. This trimmed-down product gives the executive, student, or laptop operator a reasonably fast, keystroke-identical (to Word Perfect) word processing program that can satisfy most general-purpose tasks. Pull-down menus with full mouse support make the program easy to use.

Letter Perfect comes with Word Perfect Shell 3.0, a DOS shell that offers memory management and keyboard macro utilities.

This program competes with executive word processors such as Professional Write (see review, September 17, Page 81), and Ami, Beyond Word Writer, and Q&A Write (see product comparison, August 7, 1989, Page 51). Letter Perfect does not replace Word Perfect Executive, the company's integrated package that includes a spreadsheet, a basic database, and an appointment scheduler.
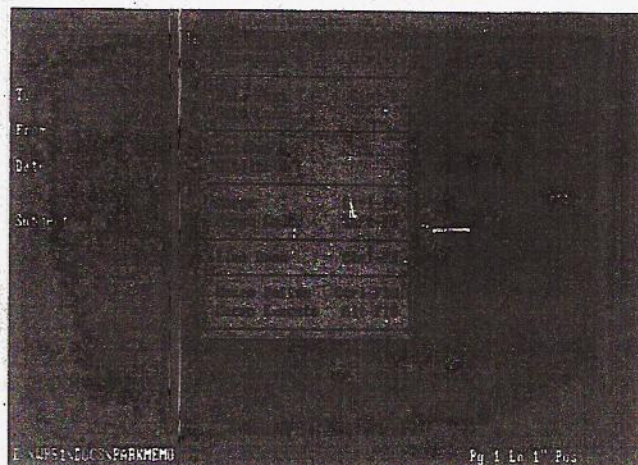
FEATURES:

In order to run Letter Perfect you need only one 720K floppy disk drive and 330K of free RAM, rather modest limits that most laptop computers can handle. Some parts of the program, such as the spelling checker and thesaurus, look like the modules in Word Perfect 5.1, but have smaller dictionaries and somewhat less capability.

Other sections of the program are similarly down-sized; for example, Letter Perfect can create endnotes, but not footnotes. The program cannot handle columns or indexes, or print line numbers. It doesn't sort or support style sheets. Letter Perfect has mandatory widow and orphan control — useful features, but you can't turn them off even if you want to.

Letter Perfect will accept Word Perfect 5.1 documents. Formatting codes that Letter Perfect can't use are retained when Letter Perfect imports a Word Perfect file, which means that several people can work on a document, each using either of Word Perfect's editors.

The program has no macro capability of its own, but the included Shell can

record keystroke macros that you can use in Letter Perfect. To make program switching quicker, the Shell can also swap inactive programs to expanded memory (instead of just unloading them).
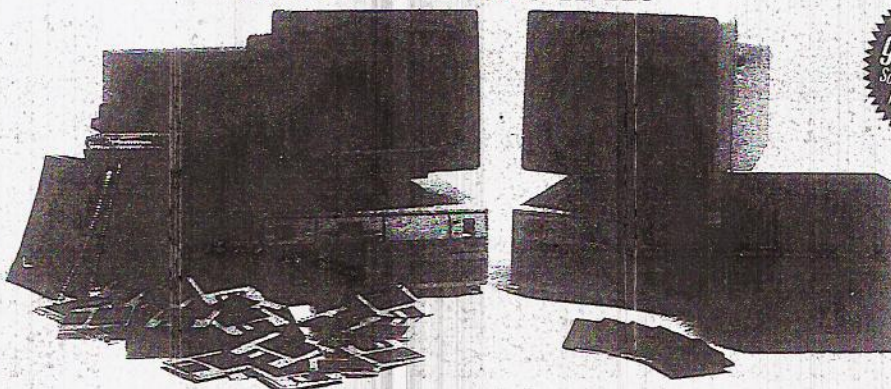
PERFORMANCE:

Letter Perfect has standard cut and paste capabilities, but it does not offer columnar cut and paste. For auto-hyphenation, you'll need an extra-cost module, or you

can use Word Perfect's hyphenation capabilities if you have the program. You can set left, right, center, and decimal tabs, and you can define the tab leader (although it's not that easy to change it from the default period character).

The search and replace feature lets you operate on formatting codes as well as text. A quick key combination will insert the date and time.

Keystroke macros are supported

Letter Perfect is very easy to learn and use, thanks to a clean pull-down menu system. Purists can opt to use the traditional Word Perfect function keys.

through the Shell program. This is useful, but nothing like the elaborate programmable macros of Word Perfect. We rate basic editing good.

The spelling checker in Letter Perfect is a smaller version of the module from the parent product, Word Perfect 5.1. Included is an adequate dictionary, multiple special dictionaries, and the capability to maintain capitalization and check for irregular capitalizations. The thesaurus produces word lists with parts of speech, but again the word lists are not as comprehensive as Word Perfect 5.1. We rate the spelling checker and thesaurus good.

Mail-merge functions include the capability to skip bad records and use field names in any order. The user can set a prompt for keyboard input for certain information. Letter Perfect comes with a separate program that will convert a variety of database formats into files Letter Perfect can use. We rate mail merge very good.

Letter Perfect supports a host of print-

ers inherently, and an even longer list of printers through drivers available from Word Perfect Corp.

Letter Perfect does not come with support for soft fonts for IBM or HP printers (the reasoning is that if you need a lean word processor, you won't have room on your disk for font files). However, all the printer drivers from Word Perfect 5.1 will work with Letter Perfect, and the company will send you a disk with drivers for soft fonts for the cost of shipping. We rate font support satisfactory.

Letter Perfect can import the same

graphics formats into a document that Word Perfect can — in an executive word processor, this is an impressive capability. The program also offers solid line-and-box drawing tools. Letter Perfect's graphics manipulation features are more limited, however. You can scale a graphic but not crop it, and all images must be anchored to particular paragraphs. Compared to the competition in this market, Letter Perfect's graphics are very good.

Letter Perfect can read the same text file formats as Word Perfect (with the help of an included external program),

including ASCII, DCA/RFT, Wordstar, and Multimate files. Compatibility is very good.

Letter Perfect performed very quickly in most of our speed tests. However, the product was notably slow in our reformat test (like Word Perfect, the text related to each ruler line must be reformatted individually). Speed, on balance, is good.

DOCUMENTATION:
Letter Perfect's documentation is clearly presented and comprehensive. There is context-sensitive on-line help. In fact, the

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REPORT CARD   INFO WORLD

EXECUTIVE WORD PROCESSOR

Letter Perfect
VERSION 1.0

Criterion	(Weighting)	Score
Performance		
Basic editing	(125)	Good
Spelling checking	(125)	Good
Mail merge	(50)	Very Good
Fonts	(100)	Satisfactory
Graphics	(25)	Very Good
Compatibility	(75)	Very Good
Speed	(50)	Good
Documentation	(75)	Excellent
Ease of learning	(100)	Excellent
Ease of use	(125)	Very Good
Error handling	(75)	Excellent
Support		
Support policies	(25)	Excellent
Technical support	(25)	Very Good
Value	(25)	Very Good
Final score		**7.5**

PRODUCT SUMMARY

Company: Word Perfect Corp., 1555 N. Technology Way, Orem, UT 84057; (801) 225-5000, (800) 451-5151.
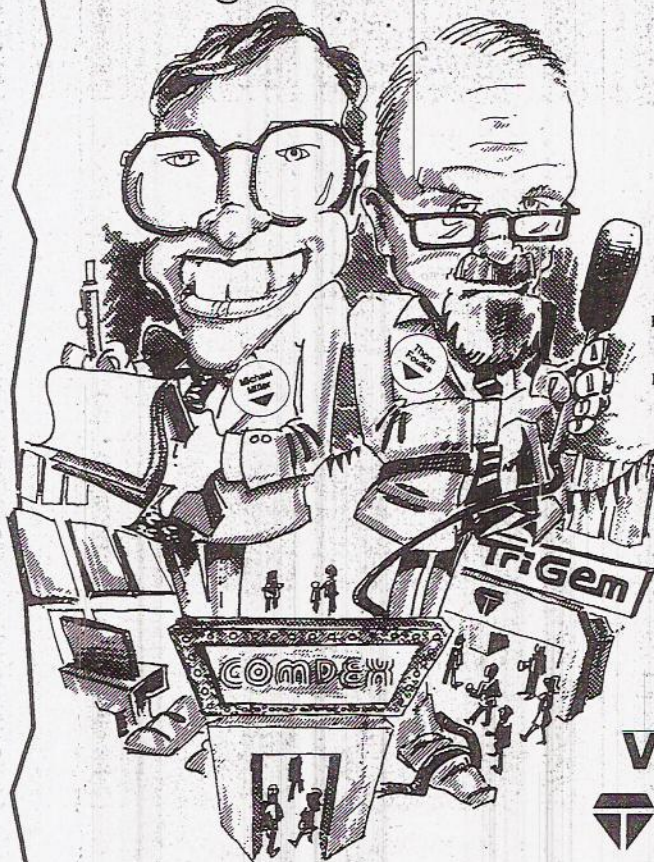**List Price:** $229.
Requires: IBM PC, PS/2, or compatible; 330K of free memory; requires one 720K or two 360K disk drives; DOS 2.0 or later; any display, but graphics preview requires CGA, EGA, VGA, or Hercules; works on most networks.
Pros: Close compatibility with Word Perfect; includes Word Perfect's Shell 3.0 utility; strong graphics, capable mail merge, easy to learn and use.
Cons: Laser printer support for soft fonts not included; no built-in address book database; macros require use of Shell.
Summary: This slimmed-down version of Word Perfect includes most of the essentials and is completely compatible with its bigger brother. An ideal product for laptop users and executives who have Word Perfect-equipped offices.

help system can be used as an alternative menu of sorts (the commands it discusses can be executed directly). Documentation is excellent.

EASE OF LEARNING:

Letter Perfect is quite easy to learn. If you're a Word Perfect user, you'll find that Letter Perfect's function keys work as expected, and you can also use alternative mnemonic quick keys. There's a cleanly laid out pull-down menu system, and as mentioned above, the help system can be used to execute commands. Despite the keystroke compatibility with Word Perfect, the alternate interfaces (the pull-

Perfect prompts if you try to quit without saving a changed document. The three-level Undo boosts the error-handling score to excellent.

SUPPORT:

Word Perfect support hours are 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mountain time via a toll-free number, after hours support is also available from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. for the cost of the phone call. The company provides free (except for the price of shipping) printer driver upgrades. Word Perfect also runs a BBS, an area on Compuserve, and fax support. Support policies are excellent.

Letter Perfect is particularly well suited to those who need to access Word Perfect files but don't need all the features of the bigger program.

down menus and quick keys) mean that new users don't have to be Word Perfect gurus to learn this program. We rate ease of learning excellent.

EASE OF USE:

This cleanly designed program is also easy to use. The multiple ways of accessing commands mean that the program is adaptable to a wide range of user preferences and skill levels.

In concert with Shell, Letter Perfect can use keyboard macros for further customizability. However, to import many file formats you have to run the Convert utility. Ease of use is very good.

ERROR HANDLING:

Error handling consists of a three-level Undo and a timed backup feature. Letter

We were able to get through quickly each time we called. The technicians had correct and helpful answers to our questions. Technical support is very good.

VALUE:

Letter Perfect is particularly well suited for laptop computer users, executives, and those who need to access Word Perfect files but don't need all the features of the bigger program. Letter Perfect functions quickly and effectively, with a minimum of complication. At $229, we consider it a very good value. ☐

John Lombardi is president of a major university and author of five books. He has been working with computers since 1967. Jeff Eckert of the Test Center contributed to this review.

REVIEW RESPONSES

Windows 3.0 File Manager

With regard to your product comparison on multitasking environments (September 24), on Page 79 under Ease of Use your article says that the Windows 3.0 File Manager "unfortunately . . . does not let you view two directories or drives at the same time."

I have been able to look at separate directories on different drives without any problem. First, open File Manager; second, select the desired drive by clicking on it; third, double-click on the icon of the directory that you are interested in. A window will open showing all the files in that directory. Fourth, if you wish to view the contents of another directory, shrink the current window with the files and drag it to the side. Open another directory window by repeating the second and third steps.

In this way you can even look at three or four more directories at the same time. The only limitation is the screen size.

Orrin C. Kerr
Computer Support
Agriculture Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

Mr. Kerr is right, of course. You can simultaneously view contents of two directories on different drives. The point we meant to make is that you cannot view two directory trees at the same time. Windows requires far more steps to move files between directories and drives than Multifinder does, for example; Kerr demonstrates this with the number of steps he cites. Windows' File Manager has been frequently criticized for its sometimes awkward interface.
— Editors

Printer Sharing Oversight

In your September 10 issue (Page 81), you compared several printer sharing devices that had their pros and cons. One product, PC-Interlink by Softworx Inc., was not listed in the comparison. From the results that I read, PC-Interlink would have made a superior showing.

PC-Interlink includes an integrated print spooler that allows users to buffer their respective print jobs. This will free up the computer so that the user can go on to other projects while PC-Interlink prints in the background. PC-Interlink can handle all types of print jobs, whether it be text, graphics, or a combination thereof. With PC-Interlink, users can simultaneously send output to one of several printers.

At $299.95, PC-Interlink is the best value in the printer sharing device category. No one product currently on the market offers everything that PC-Interlink offers. PC-Interlink is a simple, low-cost, no-hassle solution to sharing printers, transferring files, and sending messages.

Michael West
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BENCHMARKS   **INFO WORLD**

Executive Word Processors

	Letter Perfect Version 1.0	Professional Write[1] Version 2.2	Ami[2] Version 1.00A	Beyond Word Writer[2] Version 1.1
File functions[3]				
Load	0:01	0:03	0:06	0:01
Save	0:01	0:03	0:04	0:01
Import ASCII	0:04	0:08	0:13	0:01
Export ASCII	0:05	0:03	0:07	0:02
Import DCA/RFT	0:05	0:16	N/A[4]	0:22
Cursor movement				
Top to bottom	0:02	0:02	0:09	<1
Manual scroll	0:31	0:29	1:37[5]	0:27
Reformat	0:50[6]	0:04	0:03	0:01
Search				
Last word	0:03	0:03	0:03	0:02
Global replace	0:03	1:13	0:05	0:04
Append file	0:01	0:03	0:12	0:02

Times are in minutes:seconds, lower numbers indicate better performance.
[1] Professional Write reviewed September 17, Page 81.
[2] Ami and Beyond Word Writer reviewed in product comparison of executive word processors, August 7, 1989, Page 51.
[3] File size is approximately 15K.
[4] Ami does not import DCA/RFT.
[5] Ami's scroll time using arrow keys in layout mode; using the mouse, time was 1:54. Using draft mode, scroll time is significantly faster.
[6] Like Word Perfect, you cannot globally alter rulers in Letter Perfect. Time indicates how long it took to alter each ruler individually.