Phrases at Your Fingertips
By Elden Nelson
WordPerfect Magazine

I'm a lousy typist, so it perturbs me when I have to constantly retype words I frequently use. Using macros lets me avoid this kind of dull, repetitive work. The included ALTX.WPM and ALTY.WPM macros take a word or phrase I've typed, put it in a window on the screen and insert that word or phrase into a document, wherever and whenever I want.

ALTX lets you create a list of words and phrases. ALTY displays that list, inserts your choice into your document and lets you save and retrieve that list.

Getting into the routine

Many advanced macros are divided up into routines. Routines are usually divided by blank lines. Each routine performs a special function in the macro. The rest of the article is devoted to explaining how these routines work together to create a list of words and phrases you can insert into your documents at any time. First I'll explain ALTX.WPM, then ALTY.WPM.

ALTX.WPM

The first line of ALTX gives you an "escape hatch." Just press Cancel (F1), and the macro terminates. The next four lines of ALTX check to see what you want to add to the list. If Block (Alt-F4) is on, the macro assumes you want to add whatever is blocked to the list. Otherwise, it takes whatever word the cursor is on and adds it to the list.

Lines 6 through 9 check to make sure that there are no more than 10 items in the list. If there are, this routine makes a note of it for future reference.

The routine in lines 10 through 30 is the real workhorse of the macro. It does some pretty fancy manipulation of the word or phrase that you've put in the list. It makes sure there are no punctuation marks, spaces, tabs, hard returns or page breaks at the end of the word or phrase you've put in the menu.

If there are, this routine removes them. This is an especially nice feature of the macro, since you'll rarely want the same punctuation at the end of your word or phrase every time you use it.

The rest of the routines are only used if there are already 10 items in the list. Lines 31 through 35 ask if you want to replace one of the items in the menu with the new one. The macro checks your answer to make sure it's one it recognizes.

If you want to replace one of the old items with a new one, the macro goes to the routine on lines 36 through 48. This routine runs through your list of words and phrases, asking if you want to replace that particular word or phrase with the new one you've just assigned, until you find the one you want to replace.

If, in the routine on lines 31 through 35, you decide not to replace one of the items in the menu with the new one, the macro goes to the routine on lines 49 and 50, which simply rewrites the screen, clearing away any prompts the macro may otherwise leave behind. Then the macro ends.

It soon becomes evident how each of these routines, each performing a simple function, can make a very powerful macro.

ALTY.WPM

The ALTY macro puts your words and phrases menu on the screen and lets you insert them into your document at the cursor. You define it much the same way you did the ALTX macro. Like ALTX, ALTY is divided into routines.

The first routine in the macro, lines 1 through 16, puts the menu on screen. Once the menu is on the screen, lines 17 through 27 instruct you to press the number of the word or phrase you want to insert. Then the lines check to make sure that whatever you press is a number between 0 and 9, and then an option is given to either Save (F10) if you want to save the menu for future use, or Retrieve (Shift-F10), if you want to use a menu you've created before. If the key you press isn't one of those options, this routine lets you know, then repeats until you press a valid option.

When you press a number, this routine puts that word or phrase in your document at the cursor, then ends the macro. If you press Save (F10) or Retrieve (Shift-F10), the macro goes to the routine beginning on line 30.

The routine on lines 30 through 35 is used only when you save your menu or retrieve a menu you've previously saved. If you've created a menu you think you'll use often, save it – otherwise, it will be erased when you exit WordPerfect.

Bear in mind that this macro lets you have only one menu saved at a time, in a file called VARIABLE.LST. If you save a new menu, the old one is erased. This routine creates two temporary markers (Hard Page codes) in your document, which give the macro room to work, without disturbing your document.

The markers and everything between them will be erased as part of this routine.

Depending on whether you press Save (F10) or Retrieve (Shift-F10), the macro goes to the routine on lines 36 through 43, which saves the menu, or the routine on lines 44 through 49, which retrieves the menu. In either case, after the menu is saved or retrieved, the macro returns to the routine on lines 30 through 35, which does some clean-up work, then goes back to the top of the macro to let you choose a word from your menu.

A few notes on ALTY:

• For best results, don't have Reveal Codes (Alt-F3) on for this macro.

• Also, variables have certain limitations: they can't store attributes, like [BOLD] codes. If you put a word or phrase with attributes in your menu, those attributes will be lost.

• Variables have a maximum length of 128 characters. If you try to put in a longer block of text, only the first 128 characters will be recognized.

After creating these macros, if you would like to add a word that you use frequently to the list, simply put the cursor anywhere on that word and press ALTX. If you would like to add a phrase to the list, Block (Alt-F4) the phrase, then use your arrow keys to highlight the phrase you want in the list and press ALTX.

When you press ALTY, this macro brings a box onto your screen which contains all of the words and phrases you have marked using ALTX. To insert any of those words or phrases, press the number beside the word or phrase, and it will be inserted into your document at the cursor's position. This macro also has the capability of storing a list and retrieving it for later use. To do this, press ALTY. To save a list, press Save (F10). To retrieve a list that you have used before, press Retrieve (Shift-F10).

Whether or not you're a lousy typist, this macro can really help speed up the insertion of difficult words and phrases you often use.