Insert Spanish Letters or Symbols
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A few years ago a foreign publisher translated one of my computer books into Spanish. Although the editors and secretaries at the publishing house could read and write English, I occasionally had to type Spanish words in my correspondence to them, especially when I referred to words in my royalty statement. During that same time I had a son living in South America, so just for fun I'd occasionally write him a short letter in Spanish.

When I first started writing Spanish in WordPerfect, I used the Compose feature to create special Spanish letters and symbols. I'd press Compose (Ctrl-2), type a single quote ('), and type a vowel to get an accented character like á. Or I'd press Compose (Ctrl-2) and then press the exclamation mark (!) or the question mark (?) twice to get the corresponding upside-down character ¡ or ¿.

After I had typed several Spanish documents, I realized that with a macro, I could save time each time I typed a Spanish character. Creating Spanish characters this way seemed easier than doing it with the Compose feature.

The Spanish macro

The Spanish macro, included as ALTZ.WPM, allows you to insert almost all the special Spanish characters: the accented uppercase and lowercase vowels, the letters Ñ and ñ, the upside-down exclamation and question marks, and the Spanish quotation marks (« and »).

You can edit the macro to include special letters or symbols for any language or discipline. For example, I've used a similar macro for inserting Greek letters into scientific documents.

Using the macro

To use the macro, just place the cursor where you want the special character inserted and press (Alt-Z). The prompt "Letter or symbol:" will display. Type the character you want and the special character will be inserted. For example, if you wanted to insert "á" in your document, you'd press (Alt-Z), then you'd type "a." Some special characters, including most of the uppercase letters, won't appear as the actual characters on your document screen. They will, however, print correctly.

Understanding the macro

The first line of the macro uses an advanced macro command called {CHAR}. It prompts you with a message, in this case "Letter or symbol:", then pauses for you to type a character. After this is done, the character you typed is assigned to a variable – in this case, the variable is called Symbol.

The second line of the macro contains the {CASE} command. This command has the following format: {CASE}expr~case1~label1~~~ where expr represents a variable or expression. The {CASE} command compares the given expression, in this case{VARIABLE}Symbol~, with each specified case (case1, case2, etc.) to find a match. When a match is found, the macro goes to the specified label (label1, label2, etc.). For example, in this macro if {VARIABLE}Symbol~ is "a," the macro goes to {LABEL}a~ and so on.

If a match isn't found, the macro goes to the next command after the {CASE} statement. In the macro, line 5 tells the macro to sound a bell and quit if a match isn't found.

Each case and label is separated by a tilde, and an extra tilde ends the {CASE} statement on line 4. You might notice that the expr requires an ending tilde (~), and since the {VARIABLE} command also ends in a tilde, two tildes are placed next to each other at the end of line 2.

Each case usually consists of a number or word (text string). All the possible answers to the prompt on line 1 are listed as a case. For example, with this macro if you type an "A," the value of the {VARIABLE}Symbol~ becomes an "A." So when {VARIABLE}Symbol~ is compared with each case, a match is found on line 4. This tells the macro to continue to the label called "AC" (for A capitalized).

On line 12, {LABEL}AC~ marks the location in the macro that inserts the character Á. To insert this character at the document screen, you'd normally press (Ctrl-V), type 1,26 and press (Enter). Instead, the phrase "{^V}1,26{Enter}" after {LABEL}AC~ executes these commands for you. Then the {QUIT} command terminates execution of the macro.

Note: WordPerfect macro labels are case insensitive. In other words, there is no difference between {LABEL}A~ and {LABEL}a~ in the same macro. That's why the macro has {LABEL}a~ and {LABEL}AC~, rather than labels named "a" and "A."