

Creating an Acronym Glossary
WordPerfect Magazine
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Acronyms are "invented words" substituted in documents for frequently used phrases. While they save writers a lot of time, they can present a problem, especially in a large document, because an acronym glossary is required. This glossary alphabetically lists and defines all acronyms found in the document. Without it, readers must search the entire document to find the meaning of any acronym they don't understand. However, compiling such a glossary can take as much time as writing the document itself.

The acronym glossary shown in Figure 1 below seems tame enough – it's only a double-column, alphabetical listing of a document's acronyms and their definitions. However, it takes time to search the text of the document for acronyms, then list, alphabetize and put them in a columnar format.

The included following trio of macros can significantly reduce the time needed to prepare an acronym glossary. The first macro, SRCH.WPM, locates and marks all acronyms and their phrases. The second macro, GLOSSARY.WPM, generates the draft glossary file for editing. The last macro, CLEANUP.WPM, deletes extraneous characters, builds the acronym glossary format and alphabetizes the list. These macros let you assemble, edit and complete an acronym glossary in no time at all.

What's an acronym?

As mentioned earlier, an acronym is an "invented word," substituted in a document for a phrase used frequently. These phrases are usually proper names or technical terms, but they don't have to be. The first letter(s) of the words in the phrase are normally used to form the acronym. For example, heat induced failure (HIF). However, other letters can also be used, as in National Aerospace Plane (NASP).

An acronym is introduced by showing it in parentheses following the first appearance of the phrase it replaces. It commonly contains only capital letters, although numbers, special characters and lowercase letters may also be included.

2SAPS	"2000: Scientists Against Paranormal Surveys"
MIASMAIS	Millennial International Analysts of Suitable Martian Alleged Landing Sites
NSA	National Security Agency
VP	Vice President

Figure 1. Final glossary format—alphabetized and in two columns (using tabs).

Using the macros

To begin using these macros, retrieve your document, press Macro (Alt-F10), type "srch" and press (Enter). The macro immediately goes to the bottom of the document and begins to search backwards for any occurrence of an acronym.

When an acronym is found, it's highlighted and you're given two choices: you can either skip it or include it in the glossary. If you don't want the acronym included in the glossary (it may just be text in parentheses), press "N" for no and the macro will continue the search.

If you do want the acronym included, press "Y" for yes. You'll then be prompted to block the text of the acronym. Simply press (Ctrl-Left Arrow) until all words the acronym represents are highlighted. Press (Enter) and the acronym will be marked for a list and the process continued.

When the search reaches the top of the document file, the macro will ask if you want to save the file with the markings for the list. If you do, you'll be asked if you want to save it with the current filename or to a different filename.

Finally, you'll be asked if you want to construct a draft of the acronym glossary. If "Y" for yes is pressed, the GLOSSARY.WPM macro is automatically invoked and the commands executed. If you choose "N" for no, the macro quits. You may run GLOSSARY.WPM later by retrieving the document, pressing Macro (Alt-F10), typing "glossary" and pressing (Enter).

Whether GLOSSARY.WPM is invoked from the SRCH.WPM macro or manually invoked at a later time, once this macro is started, a draft glossary is created at the bottom of the document from the markings inserted by SRCH.WPM. Once this draft glossary is generated at the end of the document, it's saved as a separate file under the designated filename of GLOSSARY.DFT.

The GLOSSARY.WPM macro then exits the document, retrieves GLOSSARY.DFT, and you're allowed to review the draft glossary if desired.

Next, you'll be asked if you want to clean up the glossary file. If you press "Y" for yes, the CLEANUP.WPM macro is automatically started. If you choose "N" for no, the macro quits. You may invoke CLEANUP.WPM later by retrieving GLOSSARY.DFT, pressing Macro (Alt-F10), typing "cleanup" and pressing (Enter).

Once CLEANUP.WPM starts, the draft glossary is placed in the correct format, alphabetized in two tabular columns and saved as GLOSSARY.FNL.

How do the macros work?

SRCH.WPM

This macro begins by turning {DISPLAY OFF} so that the execution of the commands can't be seen. Then line 2 takes the cursor to the bottom of the document so the file can be searched backwards.

Lines 3-14 do the actual finding and marking of acronyms. The {WHILE} command on line 3 ensures that the loop on lines 3-14 will repeat until the search (line 4) fails. When this happens, the macro breaks out of the loop and goes to line 15.

Because the first occurrence of an acronym should always be placed in parentheses, line 4 of the {WHILE} loop begins by searching left for a closing parenthesis, ")."

When ")" is found, the macro pauses and asks if you want this acronym included in the glossary (line 7). Line 8 checks your response; if you press "Y" for yes, line 9 asks you to block the text the acronym represents, and line 10 marks this block for a list.

The loop is then repeated until a ")" isn't found and the macro moves to line 15, where you're asked whether the code marking changes should be saved. Lines 16-23 contain an {IF} statement. Line 16 checks your answer, then line 17 asks if those changes should be saved under the current filename. Depending on your response, lines 18-22 save the file under the original name, or allow you to enter a different name. Line 23 then ends this {IF} statement with an {END IF} command. Last, lines 24-27 start GLOSSARY.WPM if you answer "Y" for yes to the question on line 24.

GLOSSARY.WPM

This macro begins by going to the bottom of the document and creating a new page where the draft glossary will be generated. Lines 3-8 set specific formatting codes. All tab settings are cleared and new ones set, an asterisk (*) marks the beginning of the draft glossary (line 3), then the final list is defined and generated (line 4). Finally, the "*" is deleted at the top of the draft glossary (line 5) and lines 6-7 block the list and save it as GLOSSARY.DFT. If that file already exists, it will be replaced, using the {IF} statement on line 8.

Lines 9 and 10 exit the document without saving, then retrieve the draft glossary file (GLOSSARY.DFT) and rewrite the screen for viewing. Lines 11-14 allow you to review the file if desired, then lines 15-18 start the CLEANUP macro if you choose to clean up the glossary file at that time.

CLEANUP.WPM

Line 2 turns Reveal Codes off if it's on. This is necessary for the macro to work properly at a later time.

Lines 3-4 then go to both the bottom and top of the file, deleting the codes that generated the list in the original document. This ensures that the list won't accidentally be regenerated, thus deleting the list entirely.

Lines 5-14 then do the majority of the cleanup work and put the glossary in the correct format, as shown in Figure 1 above. The {WHILE} loop (lines 5-14) will repeat until the search on line 6 fails. When that happens, the {ON NOT FOUND} {BREAK}~ commands on line 7 make the macro leave the {WHILE} loop, continuing on line 15.

An acronym is searched for by locating a hard return (line 6). When one is found, the spaces and page number that were generated along with the list are deleted (line 8) and the acronym is moved to the beginning of the line (line 9). Next, more codes that were included as a result of the generation are deleted (line 10); the parentheses are also deleted and the phrase that matches the acronym is indented, giving the glossary a columnar look (lines 11-13).

An extra (Enter) is also inserted at the end of each phrase, preventing the alphabetical sort (line 16) from misaligning long phrases. Line 17 then deletes all extra [HRT] codes and lines 18-19 save the final glossary as GLOSSARY.FNL.

If the file already exists, it will be replaced. Last, line 20 positions the cursor at the top of the final glossary, leaving it on-screen for your review.