

Easy Drop Caps with a Macro
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Newsletters, fliers, reports. We're inundated with documents. To grab the exhausted reader's attention, you need to start your work off with a bang. A good way to do this is with a large, initial capital letter (called a "drop cap") like the one you see at the beginning of this paragraph.

Drop caps are especially useful in documents that have many solid paragraphs with no headings, lists or bullets. But how to create them? Don't bother making all the calculations yourself. Here's a macro that makes drop caps as simple as pressing a few keystrokes.

Drop caps in WordPerfect are easy enough to set up. All you do is put a large capital letter inside a graphics user box and let the body text flow around it. But calculating the right box and letter dimensions isn't so easy. To look good, a drop cap should be close to the following letter, without touching or overlapping. It also shouldn't interfere with the text on the next line below.

Getting just the right combination of height, width and point size can try the patience of Job. Even within the same font, capital letters come in a surprising variety of widths, so if you make your box a tad too small or your font a point too large, you end up with a user box that's empty because the letter doesn't fit.

The included DROPCAP.WPM macro, however, solves all the guesswork and lets you create drop caps on the fly. (See some examples in Figure 1 below.) It prompts you to press the letter for the drop cap and automatically determines the correct point size for the font and the correct height and width for the user box, based on the current base font. It even lets you choose which font to use as a drop cap, so you can add variety with unique drop. The drop caps created by the macro are two lines high. The only limitation is that you must use a scalable font for the drop cap; otherwise, the macro won't be able to select the correct point size.

Using the Macro

You can use the macro as you're typing new text or you can use it on existing text. If you're typing new text, place the cursor at the left margin where you want the drop cap (don't tab or indent), press Macro (Alt-F10), type "dropcap" and press (Enter). You'll see the prompt Press the drop cap letter at the bottom left of the screen. Simply press any letter – uppercase or lowercase. If you don't press a letter, you'll hear a beep and see a prompt reminding you to press a letter.

After you press a letter, the macro pauses in the font list, with the prompt Select the drop cap font, then press (Enter) at the bottom of the screen. Use the arrow keys (not name search) to move to the desired font for the drop cap. A bold font often works well for drop caps. Try to stay away from italic fonts. The slant in some italic fonts may cause the drop cap to touch the second letter of the word. Remember, you must choose a scalable font.

With the desired font highlighted, press (Enter), and the macro inserts the correct point size for the letter you chose. The macro finishes formatting the user box and quits.

You can continue typing the text. Don't type the initial letter again. You won't see the capital letter that's in the user box. Only the outline of the box appears as you type. In fact, you won't even see the

text right after the drop cap; the user box obscures the letters. To get a good look at your drop cap, press Print (Shift-F7), (6) View Document. Press Exit (F7) to return to your document.

You can easily add a drop cap to text that's already typed. For example, if you had typed "Once upon a time" and wanted to make the capital "O" a drop cap, first make sure there are no tabs or indents before the word "Once." Then delete the existing "O." Without moving your cursor, run the macro as described above, pressing "O" when asked for the drop cap. When the macro has finished, it might look like some of your text was deleted, but it's just "hiding" behind the user box. Use View Document to see how your drop cap looks.

Note: if you're placing a drop cap right after an [HRt-SPg] code, the macro inserts a hard page break instead so that the drop cap is sized properly.



Figure 1. These drop caps were created with the DROP CAP.WPM macro.