

Instant Phrases with Variables  
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*Note: Mr. Callas is a long-time consultant for law offices, so this article is focused on that market segment. However, you can easily tailor the macros and variables discussed below to your requirements.*

Déjà vu. That's how I feel sometimes when I realize that I'm typing a phrase in WP that I've typed before. I'm sure your work includes a few favorites that you often type: Very truly yours, With reference to the above matter, Thank you for calling to inquire about our ... and so on.

To save your fingers and avoid a few typos, WP comes with a useful tool: variables. In this article I'll explain a little about the basics of variables in WP. And to that end, the included VARNUM.WPM macro will have WordPerfect automatically remember your top 10 phrases for you.

### Variable Basics

A variable is handy for temporarily remembering a piece of information such as a name, dollar amount or phone number. But variables are only temporary. They're forgotten as soon as you exit WordPerfect.

Number variables (also called keyboard variables) give you an easy way to store and retrieve information. Number variables are retrieved with a simple keystroke. Similar to Alt-letter macros, number variables are accessed by pressing an Alt-number keystroke such as (Alt-1) or (Alt-7). For example, if you've assigned the phrase "San Francisco, CA 94121" to variable 3, when you press (Alt-3), WP inserts that text into your document just as if you'd typed it yourself.

The Alt-number variables can be used to hold lots of different kinds of information. You might use variables for names, phone numbers, addresses, symbols or common phrases such as "Enclosed please find," etc. (See figures below for sample variable lists that might be used by a law office.)

### Variable Pros and Cons

Alt-number variables have some limitations. You can only retrieve 10 variables (from 0-9) from the keyboard at one time. Also, the size of variables is restricted. In WP 5.1 each variable can only have up to 128 characters stored in it. In WP 6.x the size limit increased to over 1,000 characters for each variable. Variables can contain text and some keystroke commands such as (Tab), (Enter) or (Up Arrow). But no formatting codes are allowed in variables, so you can't use codes such as bold, italics or font settings.

One advantage of Alt-number variables is that you can use them in the middle of playing a macro. This isn't true of an Alt-letter macro. You can't run a macro while playing another macro. This means, for example, that you can use an Alt-number variable to fill in the blanks as a macro creates a document. This saves time when you're using a macro to complete a fill-in-the-blank form.

### Defining Variables as You Type

Now that you know all the neat things Alt-number variables can do, you'll want to know how to create them. Just follow these steps:

- First, type the text you want to assign to an Alt-number variable, such as “Very truly yours.” *Note: In WP 5.1 you can include hard returns and tabs in the text you assign to a variable. In WP 6.x you can also include hard returns, but you might run into problems with tabs. If you want to use tabs in WP 6.x variables, add them as part of the macro described later in this article.*
- Press Block (Alt-F4) and highlight all the text you want to assign to the variable. Remember, in WP 5.1 you’re limited to 128 characters.
- With the text blocked, press Macro Commands (Ctrl-Page Up).
- If you’re using WP 6.x, press (1) Assign Variable.
- Type the number of the variable that you want to use, from 0-9, and press (Enter).
- In WP 6.x press (Enter) again.

Now, any time you press the Alt-number combination, (Alt-1) for example, in the current session of WP, that text is inserted wherever your cursor is located. *Note: Be sure to use the numbers from the top row of the keyboard and not the numeric keypad.*

You can follow these steps to assign other Alt-number variables. If you assign text to an Alt-number variable that already exists, the variable is automatically replaced with the new text.

*WP 5.1 macro programming tip: You can use this technique to insert blocks of text, such as a menu or paragraph, in the WP 5.1 Macro Editor. Block the text and use (Ctrl-Page Up) to assign it to an Alt-number variable. Then, when you’re creating a macro in the Macro Editor, press the Alt-number combination to retrieve the text into your macro.*

## Creating a Permanent Set of Variables

Alt-number variables may be handy for spontaneous needs, but if their contents evaporate when you exit WordPerfect, are they useful beyond a single session? How can you create a permanent library of variables you can use every day? The answer is to use a macro that defines a set of Alt-number variables. The ASSIGN command can be used in a macro to define Alt-number variables just as if you had defined them yourself using the procedure described above. Then, by using your macro as a startup macro, your variables are automatically available every time you start WordPerfect.

## Using the WP 5.1 and WP 6.x Macros

You can play the included VARNUM.WPM macro by pressing Macro (Alt-F10), typing “varnum” and pressing (Enter). You won’t see anything happen; all WP does is initialize the Alt-number variables. After running the macro, you can press an Alt-number to insert any of your variables. After playing the macro once, if you define any variables manually using the steps given above, your new variable will replace the variable assigned by the macro. You can reset your variables by playing the VARNUM.WPM macro again.

Once you exit WP, the variables are erased, so you need to play the VARNUM.WPM macro each time you start WordPerfect in order to have your variables available. You can use a start-up option to automatically have the macro play each time you start WP. To use this start-up option, if you normally type "wp" at a DOS prompt to start WP, instead type "wp /m-varnum." If you use a menu program to start WordPerfect, modify the command line so that it includes the /m-varnum start-up option. Alternatively, you can add the line SET WP=/M-VARNUM to your AUTOEXEC.BAT file to have the macro play each time you start WP.

### Using Multiple Variable Sets

But what if you commonly use more than 10 phrases? One of the great things about variables is that you can use macros to easily switch between several sets of Alt-number variables, each set tailored to a specific task or project. You can create as many macros as you need, each loading 10 different Alt-number variables customized to the needs of a specific task, project, client, etc.

For example, a law office might have three variable-defining macros. PLEAD.WPM would set up Alt-number variables for case names, pleading titles, court names and so on. LETTER.WPM might set up variables for subject lines, letter closings and common paragraphs, and MEMO.WPM would set up variables for use in memos.

To create your own task-specific Alt-number macros, make a copy of VARNUM.WPM and rename it something related to the type of variables it's setting up. Then, when you're working on that task and need to use those Alt-number variables, play the macro and your variables will be set up for you. To use a different set of Alt-number variables, all you have to do is play that macro. You can switch variable sets as many times as you want.

### Displaying the Variable Contents

If you forget what you've assigned to the Alt-number variables, use the VARSHOW.WPM macro included in this collection. Press Macro (Alt-F10), type "varshow" and press (Enter). A list of the Alt-number variables displays on your screen. If you want to insert one of the variables into your document, press the number of the variable (0-9) and the text is inserted at the location of the cursor. Otherwise, press any key to return to the current WP document.

```

1 {ASSIGN}0~San Francisco Superior Court Action
  Number.~
2 {ASSIGN}1~With reference to the above-
  captioned matter, ~
3 {ASSIGN}2~Cal. Civ. Proc. Code §~
4 {ASSIGN}3~Interrogatory Number : {Enter} {Left}
  {Left}~
5 {ASSIGN}4~Attorney for Defendants, Cross-
  Defendants and
6 Cross-Complainants~
7 {ASSIGN}5~I have personal knowledge of the
  facts set forth
8 herein and if called upon to testify, could
  competently do so.~
9 {ASSIGN}6~I declare under penalty of perjury
  under the laws of
10 the State of California that the foregoing is
  true and correct.~

```

Sample WP 5.1 Variable List for a Law Office

```

1 VAR0:="San Francisco Superior Court
  Action Number "
2 VAR1:="With reference to the above-captioned
  matter, "
3 VAR2:="Cal. Civ. Proc. Code §"
4 VAR3:=NTOC(-8185)+"Interrogatory Number
  :"+NTOC(-8182)+NTOC(-8167)
5   +NTOC(-8167)
6 VAR4:="Attorney for Defendants, Cross-
  Defendants and Cross-Complainants"
7 VAR5:="I have personal knowledge of the facts
  set forth herein and if called upon
8   to testify, could competently do so."
9 VAR6:="I declare under penalty of perjury
  under the laws of the State of
10 California that the foregoing is true and
  correct."
11 VAR7:="My office is located on Sutter Street

```

Sample WP 6.x Variable List for a Law Office