

Sorting Parallel Columns with Block Protect
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If you've ever tried to sort names typed in Parallel Columns with Block Protect, you know it can't be done. WordPerfect won't sort information in columns. If you try it, your file will be full of hard page breaks, and your columns will be gone. Now, thanks to the included PSORT.WPM macro, the impossible is possible.

Note: This macro only works on Parallel Columns with Block Protect. It will not work on Newspaper or Parallel (without Block Protect) Columns.

Figure 1 below contains a sample directory. The first column contains names, the second contains telephone numbers and the third contains addresses. It's smart to use Parallel Columns with Block Protect to create a directory like this because the entries stay together over page breaks. In other words, if the name Paul Magleby is at the bottom of the page, his street address won't appear at the bottom of page 1 while his city, state and zip code are at the top of page 2. The whole address stays together.

Using the macro, you can type such a file in Parallel Columns with Block Protect and, in the end, have a nicely alphabetized file that has been sorted using the Sort feature.

Using the macro

To use this macro, go to a blank screen, retrieve your file and make sure a Columns Off code ([Col Off]) is at the end of your columns. If not, the last row in the columns won't be sorted. To check this, place your cursor at the end of the columns and press Reveal Codes (Alt-F3). If you don't see [Col Off], press Columns/Table (Alt-F7), (1) Columns and (2) Off.

Now press Macro (Alt-F10), type "psort" and press (Enter). The macro begins by backing up your document into a file called PSORT.TMP. This precaution is taken so that if you're not happy with the outcome of the sorted file, you may retrieve this file and have a copy of the original.

Next, you're asked which column you want to sort. In the Figure 1 example, a "1" would be chosen since the names are in the first column. If your names appear in a different column, choose the appropriate column number. After making your choice, the parallel columns are converted into a table. The Sort feature is then entered and keys for the sort set.

Next, the table is sorted and converted back into parallel columns. The new sorted file is then saved under the original filename and the resulting file is left on-screen for you to see. As stated earlier, if you don't like the results of your sort, clear the screen and retrieve PSORT.TMP. Then, press Save (F10), type the original filename and press (Enter), then (Y) Yes to replace it. You're now ready to make any necessary changes to the file or the macro, then try running the macro again.

Limitations and suggestions

Here are a couple of hints for sorting successfully:

- If you have names like "Barbara Jones, President" or "Jimmy Lee Curtis, Jr.," they'll sort by the last word, which is not the last name. To correct this, use a Hard Space – (Home), (Space Bar) – to separate the last name from the last word before running the macro. For example, type Barbara Jones, then press (Home), (Space Bar) and type President. Now when you sort, "Jones" will be alphabetized instead of "President."
- This macro sorts just one continuous set of columns and should only be used on documents containing one set of columns. The columns can span many pages, but you can't have more than one set of [Col Def] and [Col Off] codes. If you'd like to use this macro on a document containing multiple sets of columns, you must block and move the columns (including the [Col On] and [Col Off] codes) to the second document screen. Run the macro, then block and copy the sorted columns back to the original document.

Understanding the macro

Line 1 of the macro begins by turning display off. Then, if your document was previously saved, the {SYSTEM}path~ and {SYSTEM}name~ commands are used (line 2) to assign the path and name of your file to {VARIABLE}filename~. This information is needed later in the macro (line 24) when your file is saved.

Next, the macro backs up your file, saving it to PSORT.TMP (line 3). If you already have a file named PSORT.TMP, line 4 replaces it.

Line 5 begins by asking which column you want to sort. This information is used in line 13 when the keys for the sort are set. Line 6 then places the cursor at the top of the document and line 7 searches for the first [Col On] code. Block is turned on at the end of line 7 and the cursor is then taken to the end of the file (line 8). The {IF} statement (line 9) tests to see if the last item in the document is a [Col Off] code. If it isn't, the macro searches left for the last [Col Off] code (line 10).

Next, the macro converts the blocked columns to a table and calls up the Sort feature (line 12). Lines 13 and 14 then set the keys, telling the Sort feature which column, line and word to sort by. The column is determined by your answer from line 5. The line and word sorts are set to sort the last word in the last line of the column you chose (last name), then the first word in the first line (first name). All other defaults are left the same. The "1" at the end of line 14 starts the actual sort.

Line 15 saves the sorted file in WordPerfect 5.0 format, with the name PSORT2.TMP. Again, line 16 will replace the file if one already exists. Since the Tables feature doesn't exist in WP 5.0, by saving the file in WordPerfect 5.0 format, the table will be converted back into Parallel Columns with Block Protect. Line 17 then clears the screen.

Line 18 begins by inserting a hard page break on the blank screen-this creates a modified document that has no name. Then the macro retrieves the sorted WP 5.0 file (PSORT2.TMP) into this document and deletes the hard page break code.

The original column definition code, plus the one created when the file was converted to WordPerfect 5.0 format, are both in your document. Lines 19 through 22 delete the extra WP 5.0 column definition code.

Finally, lines 23-25 save your sorted file under the original name only if your file was saved before using the macro.



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