

Peek-a-Boo Preferences

The Peek-a-Boo Preferences dialog is shown above. There are many options that can be adjusted using this dialog.

Checkbox Preferences

The **Name** is the name of the process. In addition to the Preferences checkbox for Name, you can set the width of the Name in the Peek-a-Boo main window. If you don't want to view the name, don't set the name width to 0; rather, uncheck the checkbox.

CPU% is a bar graph (updated periodically) that shows how much of the system's CPU time was spent in that process. Normally the process in front will take most of the CPU time. If there's a background process using a lot of the CPU, it's often processing. Sometimes when things seem sluggish in, say, a word processing application, it's because processes in the background are using too much CPU time. Peek-a-Boo lets you identify these CPU hogs.

The **MemGraph** is a bar graph showing memory usage in a process. The black part of the graph is the memory used, and the white part of the graph is the memory available. Peek-a-Boo scales all MemGraphs so they all fit in the allocated space (Preferences lets you choose the width of the MemGraph in pixels). Smaller processes will not use the full allocated space.

Active Ticks tells how much CPU time this process has had since it was launched. One tick is 1/60 second, so if a process has had 3600 Active Ticks, it has actually been using the CPU for one minute.

The process **Type** tells whether a given process is an application, Finder, an extension, or other. 'APPL' means it's an application; 'FNDR' means Finder; and 'appe' means extension process.

The process **Signature** is the creator type of that process. This four-character code is an identifier Finder uses to find applications.

Size tells the amount of Macintosh memory the process is using. This can often be changed from Finder using the Get Info command and re-launching the application.

FreeMem is the amount of free memory available to that process. It can give clues such as whether more windows can be opened, or whether complicated features can be used. FreeMem is extra handy for people debugging applications and watching for memory leaks. (Set the Memory Display to "bytes," then watch FreeMem.) Note: the MemGraph feature uses the same values that the Size and FreeMem features use.

Launch Time shows the time of day the process was launched.

The **PSN** is the Process Serial Number of the process. This doesn't have much meaning to everyday users of the Macintosh, but it's available from the Process Manager, so Peek-a-Boo can display it.

The **Location** of a process is the place in the Macintosh's memory where the process is.

The **Mode** of a process is a four-byte integer that contains several pieces of information that tell Finder how the process behaves. See a technical reference manual (such as Inside Macintosh or Think Reference) for the meaning of the Mode field. Later versions of Peek-a-Boo may include a more intuitive representation of the Mode field.

The **Path** of a process shows where, and on which hard drive, the application exists.

Launched By tells the name of the process that launched the selected process. Most of the time it's Finder; it could be any application capable of launching other applications, however. Also, if the application that launched this process has quit (or if the System launched the process, like it does for Finder), this says "<unknown>."

Memory Display Preference

Memory Display lets you choose how you want to view several memory-related items (such as FreeMem, Size, Largest Free Block, and Total RAM). You can choose to view in bytes, kilobytes, megabytes, or best. The choice “best” views in bytes if the value is up to about 5K, in K if the value is up to 1MB, and in MB if the value is larger than one megabyte. This is the option I regularly use.

Numerical Preferences

Several of these numerical preferences let you adjust the width of various fields. If you don't want to see these fields at all, use the corresponding checkboxes: don't set the width to zero!

Name width lets you adjust the width (in pixels) of the name display. Lower this to 50 or so if you just want to see the first six or eight characters of the name; raise it if you want to see the full name. If you don't want to see the name at all, use the “Name” checkbox.

Launcher width lets you adjust the width (in pixels) of the name of the launcher. Again, if you don't want to see the name at all, use the “Launched By” checkbox.

Path width lets you adjust the width (in pixels) of the path.

Mem graph width lets you adjust the width (in pixels) of the space allocated to the MemGraph.

Update (ticks) is an important preference. This lets you adjust the period between updates of items such as CPU%, AcTix, FreeMem, and MemGraph. One tick is 1/60 second; for example, a value of 30 for Update (ticks) would result in Peek-a-Boo updating its fluctuating items every half second. A short time interval generally provides quicker feedback, but can slow down other processes slightly. Also, too short an interval may result in not enough time for the Process Manager to update itself due to a Process Manager bug (see “Future Features”).