Sympathy Dictionary Builder Help

The Sympathy Dictionary Builder utility converts lists of words into dictionaries that can be used within Sympathy.

This utility will only convert word lists in plain ASCII format with a single entry per line; upper and lower case letters, spaces, apostrophes and hyphens are encoded in the output database. All other characters are discarded.

To use the builder, follow these steps:

· Click on **Change...**, select the ASCII word list you wish to convert into a Sympathy Dictionary, then press Ok.
· A default name for the Sympathy Dictionary will be provided; you can override this if you need to. You can also set the Sort Order.
· Click on **Start**. Dictionary building takes several minutes; the exact length of time taken depends on the size of the word list.
· If you wish to abandon dictionary building, click on **Abort**.
· A message box will appear when the dictionary is ready. If there are any errors, check the message at the bottom of the main window for the reason. Do not attempt to use partially complete dictionaries with Sympathy.

Sort Order

The dictionary sort order influences the words selected by the automatic grid filler: it provides a coarse adjustment that can be further refined using Sympathy's **Normal Letter Commonality** setting on the **Filling Properties Dialog**.

In unconstrained situations, the automatic grid filler only needs to read blocks of words from the front of the dictionary files, so the sort order in the dictionary files determines the type of words chosen initially. When the filler has already placed several words to work around, it will read further into the dictionary files, so the sort makes less difference.

The following controls affect the sort order:

Sort. Usually, you will want to leave this checked so that sorting will be done. There are some situations when you may want to uncheck the box so that no sort is done:

·   If you wish to create an alphabetically ordered dictionary from alphabetically ordered input (e.g. for use with The Electronic Alveary);
·   if you wish to experiment with your own sort order by constructing a word list in a particular order and getting Sympathy to use that order.

Commonality. Although the default setting of **0** is normally satisfactory, you may wish to adjust this. The value works in the same way as the commonality settings in Sympathy:

·   increasing the number will favor words with more common letters: this will reduce fill times, but the fill may include too many "uninteresting" or "crosswordese" words;
·   reducing the number will favor words with less common letters; this will increase fill times, but the fill may include more "interesting" words.

The optimum setting depends on the size of the dictionary and the type of grid being filled:

·   the smaller the dictionary, the higher the commonality value that's needed to fill a given grid in a reasonable amount of time;
·   the more constrained the grid (barred and fully checked grids are highly constrained, whereas blocked grids are relatively unconstrained), the higher the commonality value that's needed to fill a grid in a reasonable amount of time.

Note that duplicate entries in the word list will be eliminated when a sort is done. If sorting is disabled, duplicate entries will be preserved in the dictionary: the automatic grid filler always ensures that there are no duplicates in the grid, but the fill will be faster if there are no duplicates in the dictionary.