

WGIF 1.0a

Introduction

WGIF is a freeware program to display pictures that conform to the GIF87a standard under Microsoft Windows 3.0. I created it because I couldn't believe that every existing GIF display program I could find for Windows 3.0 had a shareware price tag and also because I needed a vehicle to begin learning about the display of bitmaps under Windows, scroll bars, menus, etc.

If you want to write me for some reason (and that reason does not involve me sending you a disk with something on it) then my address is:

Bells and Whistles Software
3829 Lawndale Ave.
Ft. Worth, TX 76133

I'm always open to suggestions for improvements, new program ideas, hate mail, and disks full of those half finished programs you've been working on.

Features

WGIF is currently the fastest GIF display program I've seen for Microsoft Windows 3.0. It loads pictures in 50% of the time that WinGIF 0.80 needs and it can perform an ordered dithering while decoding with hardly any slowdown. This speed would not have been possible if not for the excellent LZW decoding routines of Steven A. Bennett, many thanks to him.

You can use File Manager's ability to associate programs with file extensions so that you can double click on a GIF file listed in a File Manager window and WGIF will open and begin displaying the picture.

It remembers any option settings (like dithering preferences) you may have from one session to the next.

It's also free... However, WGIF is only freeware and NOT public domain software. You can give copies of it to all your friends (or your enemies if you don't like it) but you can't sell it or claim that you wrote it.

Non-Features

GIF89a format is not yet supported (hardly a big deal yet).

Real mode Windows, what's that?

No clipboard support.

Ordered is the only dithering option (and although it's quick, it's not very pretty).

It's actually bigger than WinGIF even though WGIF does less. Go figure.

You can't save a GIF file as a BMP, DIB, TIFF, RIFF, BIFF, WHIM, or WHAM file.

Running multiple copies of WGIF can sometimes cause crashes. This is the only actual bug I currently know of in the program, and since it isn't a major need for most people I thought I'd go ahead and put this version out anyway.

Using WGIF

WGIF is simple enough at this time that a thorough explanation of the menu items that make up its commands, plus a basic understanding of how to operate a Windows 3.0 program should be enough to operate the program. I am assuming that you already have the understanding of how to run Window's programs from reading Microsoft's documentation and playing around with the programs that are bundled with Windows (like Write and Paint).

WGIF has three menus: **File**, **Options**, and **Help**. I'll address them in order.

File/Open...

Brings up a standard Windows file selection dialog box. Find the GIF that you want to display and select it. After selecting a file WGIF will attempt to load and display that file.

File/Reload

This command is normally displayed in a light gray color which indicates that it cannot be performed. However, whenever you change an option which would change the appearance of a currently displayed picture then you can use this command to reload the same picture that was last loaded and display it with the new option(s).

Currently, the only way to make this command available is to change the dithering method used when displaying a picture (see Options/Dithering below).

File/Exit

Saves your current option selections and leaves the program.

Options/Dithering

This option shows a small arrow out to the right of it to indicate that it has a sub-menu with various dithering choices on it. The only two options at this time are **None**, which performs no dithering, and **Ordered** which performs a very high speed form of dithering with mediocre visual quality. The option with a check mark beside it is the currently selected dithering method.

If you have Windows running in 256 colors then you should leave WGIF set to **None**, if you only have 16 colors then you should try the **Ordered** dithering.

Note: Changing this option will not affect any currently displayed picture. It affects the next picture **Opened** or **Reloaded**. If you want to see a currently displayed picture with another dithering method, select the method and then select **Reload** from the **File** menu.

Options/Decode To Screen

If this option is selected (as indicated with a checkmark to the left of it) then WGIF will display the lines of the GIF file as it decodes them. If any of the lines that are displayed this way are destroyed (for example, by moving another window over them) then they will not be redrawn until the entire GIF has been decoded.

Options/Minimize On Decoding

If you would rather the program just got out of your way while it decodes

that big GIF file then this option is for you. It will automatically minimize WGIF's window when it starts decoding a GIF file and you can tell when the program is done with the decoding process because the name of the GIF file will appear in the icon's caption.

Options/Yield While Decoding

Decoding a large GIF file can take a while so you probably want this option selected. It governs whether or not WGIF allows other Windows programs to run while it is decoding a GIF file. I've found the speed difference between yielding to other programs and not yielding to be generally insignificant but you can turn it off if you need the absolute fastest decoding possible.

Help/About WGIF...

Displays a dialog box that tells you the version number of the WGIF that you are running and various legal swill that I have to put in my program to protect myself.

Using WGIF with File Manager

If you would like to set up File Manager to use WGIF for automatic display of GIF files then you will need to consult your Windows documentation on the subject of "Associating Documents with an Application" (p. 135 in my copy of the Windows User's Guide). Select a file ending with .GIF and type in the path to WGIF in the dialog box that File Manager offers for the association.

Glossary

- dithering is a way to trade off resolution and/or clarity in a picture for an appearance of more colors. WGIF uses dithering in an attempt to make pictures with large numbers of colors (e.g. 256) look better on displays with fewer colors (e.g. a basic VGA card with 16 colors under Windows).
- freeware is software which has no fee associated with using it. This is NOT the same as public domain software.
- GIF (pronounced jif) is a Graphics Interchange Format created by CompuServe Inc. as a means of transferring pictures among a variety of microcomputers in a device independent manner and with significant compression of the images to reduce their size.
- public domain software is software which has no owner and is available for you to 'do as thou wilt' with. You can sell it, include it with your own software, etc.
- shareware is software which can be tried out before you pay for it. Most shareware has a specific trial period associated with it and after that trial period is over you must either pay the author for the software or cease using the software.