PopChar™ X
User's Guide

Version 2.3
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Welcome to PopChar X

PopChar X is a utility application that lets you insert characters from all installed fonts into your documents. You never need to search for and remember keystrokes any longer. Just pop up the PopChar X window, click the desired character, and the character will appear in your current document.

System Requirements

PopChar X requires Mac OS X 10.1.2 or newer.

Installation

If you already have a previous version of PopChar X installed, you may wish to check the version history (in the "PopChar X" folder) for a list of changes. Before you install the new version, you should first:

- Open the PopChar X window and select Quit from the PopChar X menu.
- Delete the old version.

To install PopChar X:

- Copy the "PopChar X" application from the disk image to your Applications folder.
- Unmount the disk image.
- Open the Applications folder and double-click the "PopChar X" icon.

That's it. You will notice that a small box labeled with the letter "P" has appeared in the top-left corner of the menu bar:
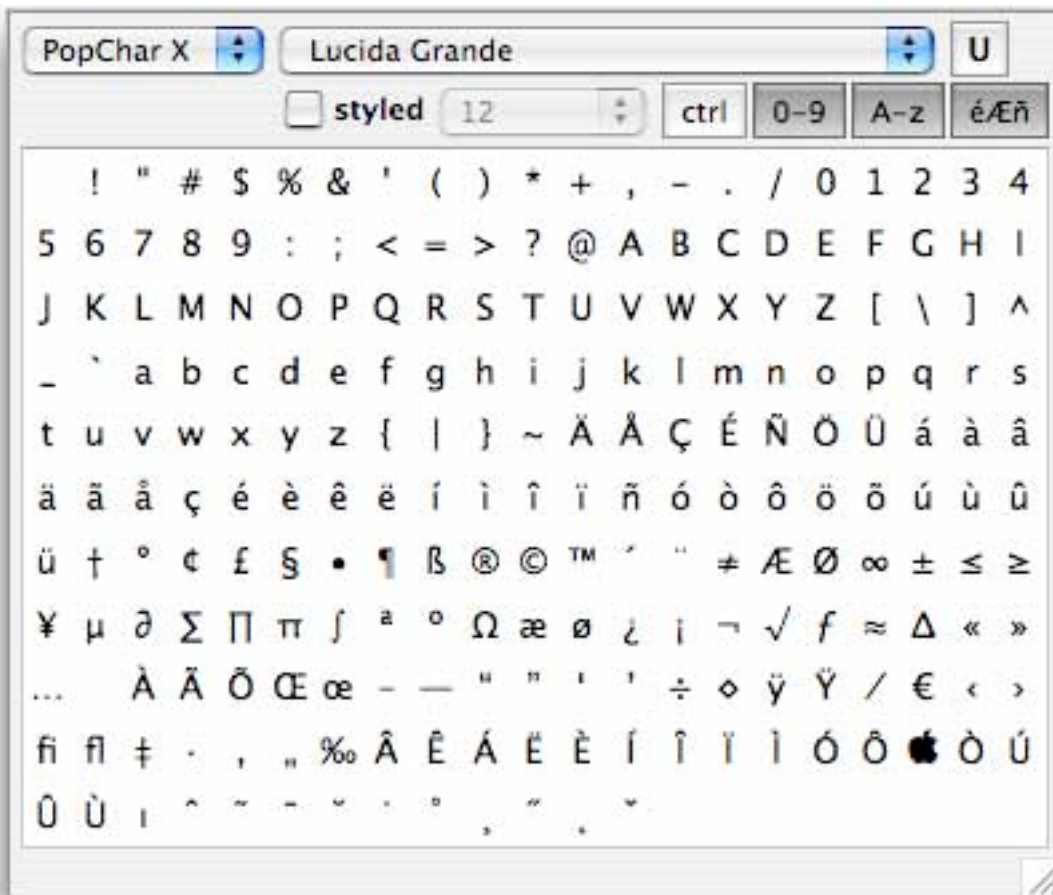

PopChar X is a background-only application. It will never show up in the dock. The small "P" in the menu bar indicates that PopChar X is running. Though small and unobtrusive, the "P" box is always there when you need it. Whenever you need a special character, just click it.

To launch PopChar X automatically when you log in or start up your Mac, make sure the "Start automatically at login" option in the preferences window is enabled.

Inserting Characters

Suppose you want to insert the Euro symbol in a text document. Put the insertion point where you wish to insert the symbol, then click the "P" box and release the mouse button again.

A window with all characters in a preselected font appears:

To insert the Euro symbol in your document, click the symbol in this window. When you click or simply point at a character, the bottom line displays some information about the selected character:

The information at the left side tells you that the Euro symbol has the number 219, or "DB" in hexadecimal. The term "MacRoman" indicates that this number is Mac-specific, as the character is not part of the standard ASCII range (0–127).

In the bottom right corner, PopChar X displays the keystrokes needed to generate this character. In this case, it tells you that you can also create the Euro symbol by typing option-shift-"2" on a US keyboard. The keyboard equivalent always matches the current keyboard setting. For example, option-"E" would be displayed for a German keyboard.

When you click a character, PopChar X inserts it in your text document.

PopChar X remembers the most recently inserted characters and displays them with a yellow background. The following snapshot shows what the table looks like after insertion of the Euro symbol, "Ô", "fi", "‰", "Ô" and "":

To make the PopChar X window disappear, either click the "P" box again or simply move the mouse pointer out of the window.

Menu Mode and Sticky Mode

You can also click the "P" box, keep the mouse button pressed and select a character in one step. If you do that, the PopChar X window goes away immediately when you release the mouse button. Using PopChar X in this way is like selecting an item from a menu. That's why we call this mode of operation the "menu mode".

If you click the "P" box and immediately release the mouse button, PopChar X displays the window and enters the "sticky mode". The window remains visible until you …
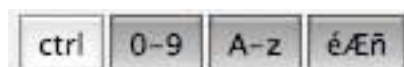
- click the "P" box again,
- move the mouse pointer away from the window, or
- open a "regular" menu from the menu bar.

As long as the window remains open, you can insert multiple characters in a row, switch the font, etc.

Note: The preferences window provides an option that gives you more control over how long the PopChar X window should remain visible.

Control Characters, Letters, Digits and Accents

The header of the PopChar X window contains four buttons labeled with "ctrl", "0-9", "A-z" and "éÆñ":

You can use these buttons to control whether control characters, digits, letters and accented letters should be included in the character table. PopChar X remembers the settings of these

buttons separately for each font. This means that you can, for example, display all characters of Zapf Dingbats and suppress letters and digits in text fonts like Times and Helvetica.

Control characters are the characters with ordinal numbers less than 32. Many fonts (such as Arial or Helvetica) do not contain printable control characters, so you will not notice any change when you click the "ctrl" button. Lucida Grande is one of those fonts that contain control characters:

Some applications treat control characters in a special way. For example, a wrong character or nothing at all may appear in a text document when you select a control character in PopChar X. The red color should warn you that these characters may not always work as expected, depending on the application in which you insert them.

Resizing the PopChar X Window

When you open the PopChar X window for the first time, it appears rather small. Depending on which font you use, some characters may be hard to recognize. If you want to see the characters in more detail, just resize the PopChar X window. PopChar X adjusts the font size on the fly while you resize the window.

PopChar X remembers the size of the window. When you select a new font, PopChar X automatically uses the biggest font size that lets you still see all available characters.

Moving the "P"

There are other utilities (like MaxMenus) that activate in the top left corner of the screen. To avoid conflicts, you can move the "P" box of PopChar X horizontally within the menu bar: Press the command key and click the "P" to drag it to the desired location. The following examples show some possibilities:
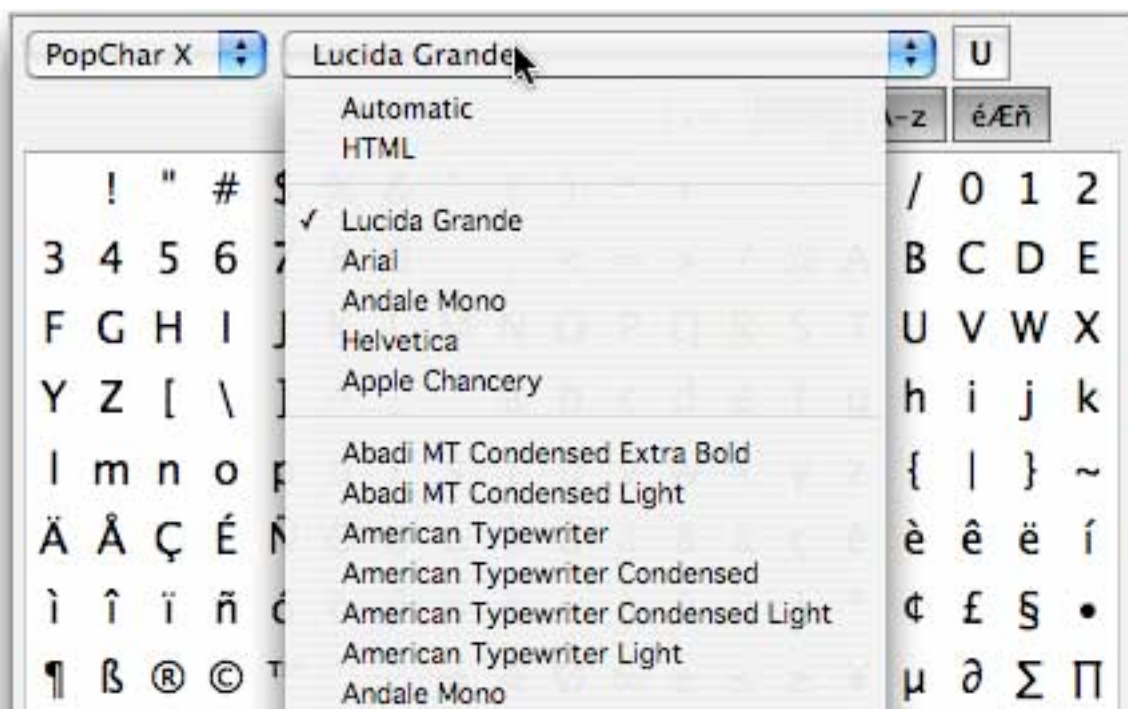
When you put the "P" in the right part of the menu bar, you will sometimes see one of the other menus in this area drop down briefly when you use PopChar X. This is a harmless cosmetic effect. We hope that we will be able to avoid this flashing of the menus when menu handling changes in a future version of Mac OS X.

Note that there is also a preference setting that hides the "P" unless the mouse pointer is inside the menu bar. See the "Preferences" section for more information.

Using Different Fonts

The font menu in the top row lets you switch the character table to any installed font. PopChar X remembers the current font setting separately for each application. For example, you can select Times as the font to be displayed when you work with TextEdit, and Monaco as the font to be shown in BBEdit.
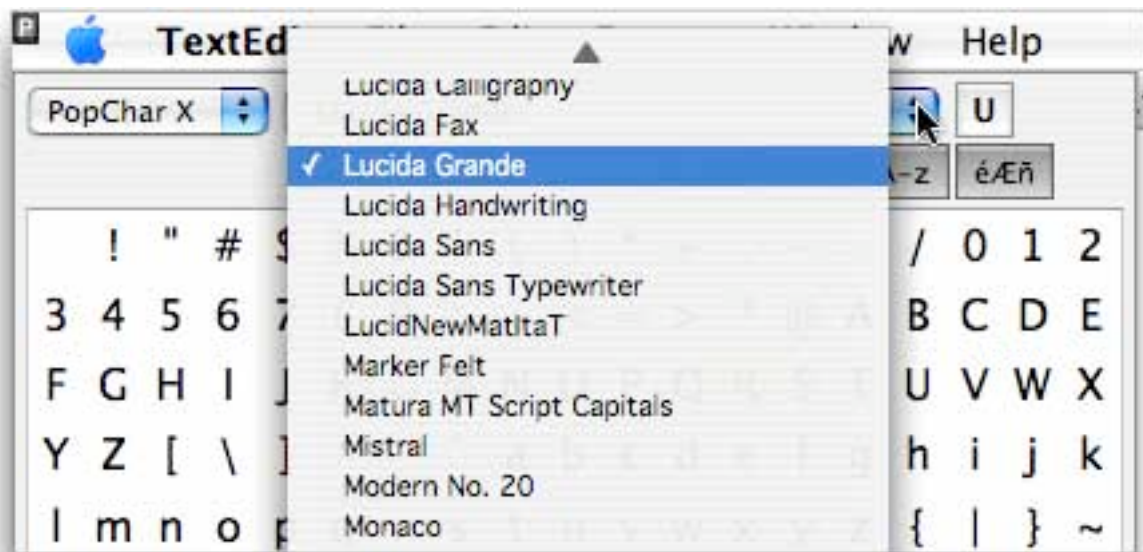
Whenever you select a new font, PopChar X remembers the most recently used fonts and repeats them at the top of the menu:

This list of recent fonts is particularly handy when you have hundreds of fonts installed. The preferences window provides an option that lets you define how many recent fonts should be displayed at the top of the menu.

If you want to select a font in the neighborhood of the currently selected font, click the up/down arrows at the right side of the font menu. PopChar X then scrolls the contents of the font menu such that the current font is right below the mouse pointer, so you don't have to scroll the menu all the way down:

Now suppose you write some text with a word processor and use Times as the font for the body text. In the PopChar X window, you have selected a different font (for example, Lucida Grande or Symbol). If you now select a character in the PopChar X window, the effect depends on the setting of the "styled" checkbox, as described in the following sections.

"Unstyled" Insertion of Characters

When the "styled" checkbox is turned off, PopChar X inserts the selected character as if you had typed the corresponding keyboard combination. If the current font of the document and the font shown in the PopChar X window match, the character will appear in your text as expected. It will appear in the same size and style as the surrounding text in your document.

If the document's font and the font shown by PopChar X do *not* match, the result depends on how different these two fonts are:
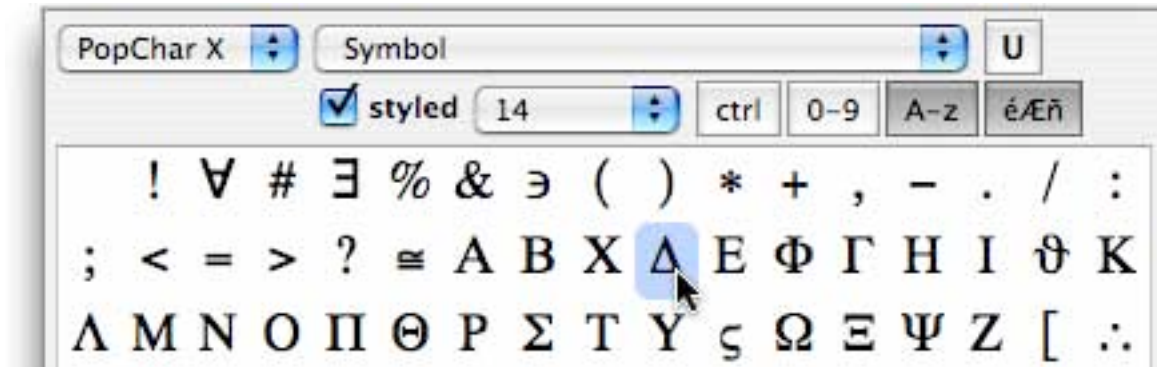
- If both are "text fonts" (such as Times, Helvetica, or Lucida Grande), they will typically contain the same characters. For example, if you select the Euro symbol from the Lucida Grande font in the PopChar X window, the Euro symbol will also show up in Times in the document.

- If the font selected in PopChar X contains special characters (such as Zapf Dingbats, WingDings or Symbol), the resulting character will still appear in the document's font. For example, if you select the telephone symbol from Zapf Dingbats, the percent symbol "%" will appear instead in Times. You can change that afterwards by selecting the character and applying the Zapf Dingbats font.

"Styled" Insertion of Characters

When the "styled" checkbox is turned on, PopChar X inserts the character along with its font, style and size information in the document.

If you are working with Times 14 in your text document and want to insert a delta symbol (Δ) from the Symbol font, you probably want the delta symbol to appear in size 14 as well, so you should check "styled" and select "14" from the size menu next to it:

How does that work? PopChar X uses the clipboard to insert the selected character in your document. It puts the selected character in the specified size on the clipboard and then forces the current application to paste the character into the text. When you have copied something else to the clipboard, PopChar X restores the clipboard to its previous state. This may take a while if the clipboard contains huge amounts of data (such as a large bitmap or the text of an entire document).

Styled or Unstyled, That is the Question

Which of these techniques should you use when? If you work with "regular" text, unstyled insertion will do exactly what you want, as the characters will appear in the same font, style and size as the other characters in your text document.

If you need some special characters, styled insertion is more convenient, as you do not need to reformat the inserted characters.

However, there are situations in which styled insertion may not produce the desired results. For example, some plain text editors (such as BBEdit, Xcode or the CodeWarrior IDE) do not support multiple fonts within a text. No matter which insertion method you choose, selected characters will always appear in the font of the destination text.

In general: If styled insertion does not work in a certain situation, we recommend that you turn the "styled" checkbox off and try one of the following solutions:

- Manually synchronize the font shown in PopChar X with the font used in the front document.
- Insert the character with PopChar X and then reformat it in the text document.

BTW, the clipboard technique used for "styled" insertion does not work with Classic applications. This has technical reasons and is caused by the way how the clipboard is converted between native Mac OS X and Classic. PopChar X recognizes when a Classic application is in front and turns the "styled" checkbox off automatically.

As with the font selection, PopChar X remembers the setting of the "styled" checkbox sepa-rately for each application. For example, you can turn styled insertion off for BBEdit and on for AppleWorks.
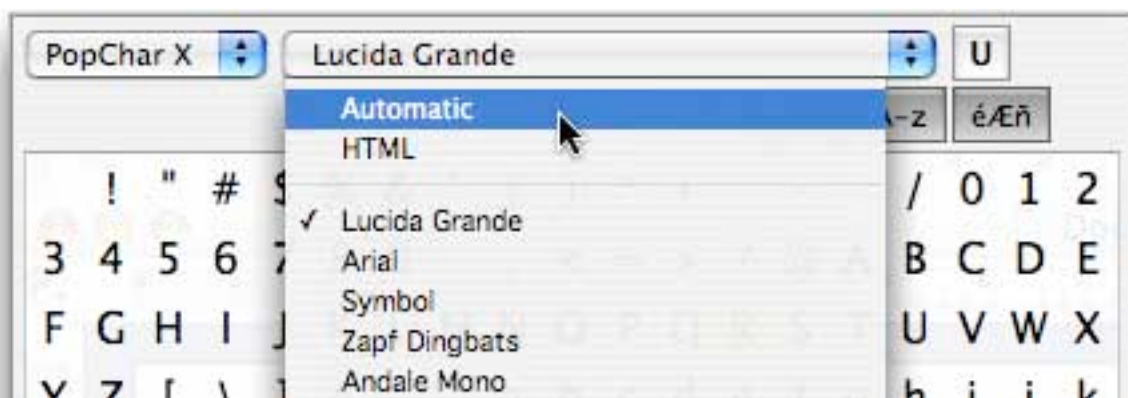
Automatic Font Detection

PopChar X can automatically detect the current font for some popular applications. The list of currently supported applications includes:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
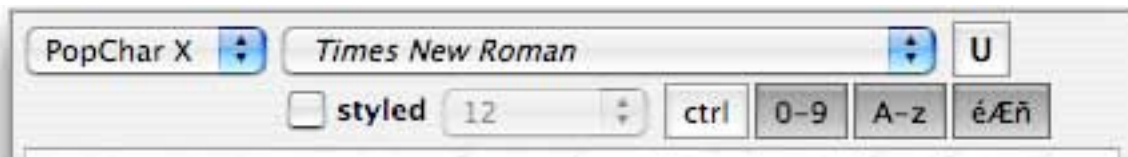- Adobe Illustrator
- Adobe InDesign
- BBEdit

Note: Since there is no standard technique for querying the currently used font within an application, PopChar X has to use different methods for each of these applications. When we discover other applications that support querying the current font, we will include them in future versions of PopChar X.

To enable automatic font detection in one of these applications, select "Automatic" in the font menu of PopChar X:
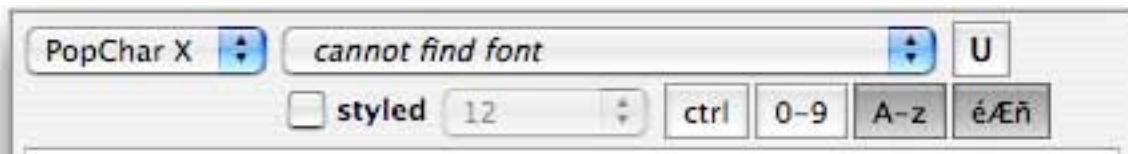

With "Automatic" turned on, PopChar X periodically looks up the current font of the front ap-plication. As this usually happens in the background, you will see the correct font in PopChar X most of the time when you click the "P". It is, however, possible that the window opens with the previous font and then switches to the current font with a small delay (typically less than a second).

When PopChar X has been able to detect the current font, it displays the font name in italic in the font menu:

Automatic font detection only works if the frontmost window of the current application is a document window that allows text entry. If there is no insertion point or selection or if a dialog window is in front, PopChar X will not be able to detect the current font. In such cases, it will display "cannot find font" in the font pop-up menu:

If you need some special font in this situation (for example, when you wish to insert a special character in a "Find" dialog window), simply select the desired font from the pop-up menu, and PopChar X will turn automatic font detection off and switch to the selected font.

Font Detection Anomalies

When PopChar X uses automatic font detection, it relies on information provided by the current application. In the ideal case, PopChar X would always display the font that would be used for the next character inserted from the keyboard. Unfortunately, this does not work in all cases, as shown in the following example:

The heart symbol is a Zapf Dingbats character, and the remaining text is in Times. If the insertion point is between two characters with different fonts, most applications return the font of the character to the right of the insertion point (Times in this example), although the next keystroke would insert a character in the same font as the character to the left (Zapf Dingbats). In this situation, PopChar X would display the wrong font.
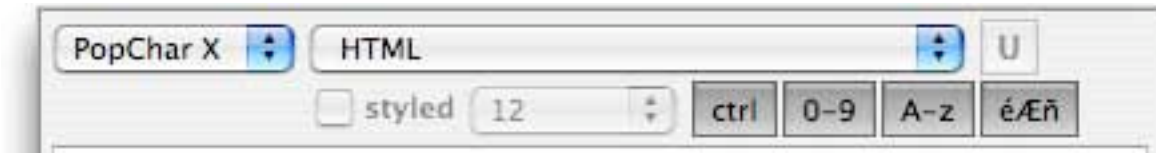
A similar situation arises when you select a new font in the current application when there is no selection but rather an insertion point. Most applications will then use the selected font for subsequent text entry, but they will still report the previous font to PopChar X.

Adobe Illustrator and InDesign

Adobe Products handle fonts in a different way than most other applications. As a consequence, PopChar X is not always able to detect the correct font. PopChar X uses a sophisticated technique to guess the current font. In a few cases, the guess will be wrong, and PopChar X will use a font with a similar name or display the "cannot find font" message.

HTML Codes

The second item in the font menu reads "HTML". If you select this item, PopChar X displays the current system font (usually Lucida Grande) and turns the "styled" checkbox off:

If you now select a character, PopChar X inserts the corresponding HTML equivalent in your document. For example, if you select "Ø", the corresponding HTML code "Ø" will be inserted in your document.

While you select characters in the PopChar X window, the information in the bottom right corner gives you a hint what will be inserted in the document:

- When you select the percent symbol, "%" appears. This means that the percent symbol will be inserted directly, as it does not cause any problems within web pages.

- When you select the "®" symbol, "®" appears. This is the system-independent name of the character which is recognized by all major web browsers.

- When you select the trademark symbol "™", the numeric code "™" is shown. This is the Unicode number of the trademark symbol. PopChar X uses this code instead of the corresponding name "™" because some browsers support the numeric code, but not the character name.
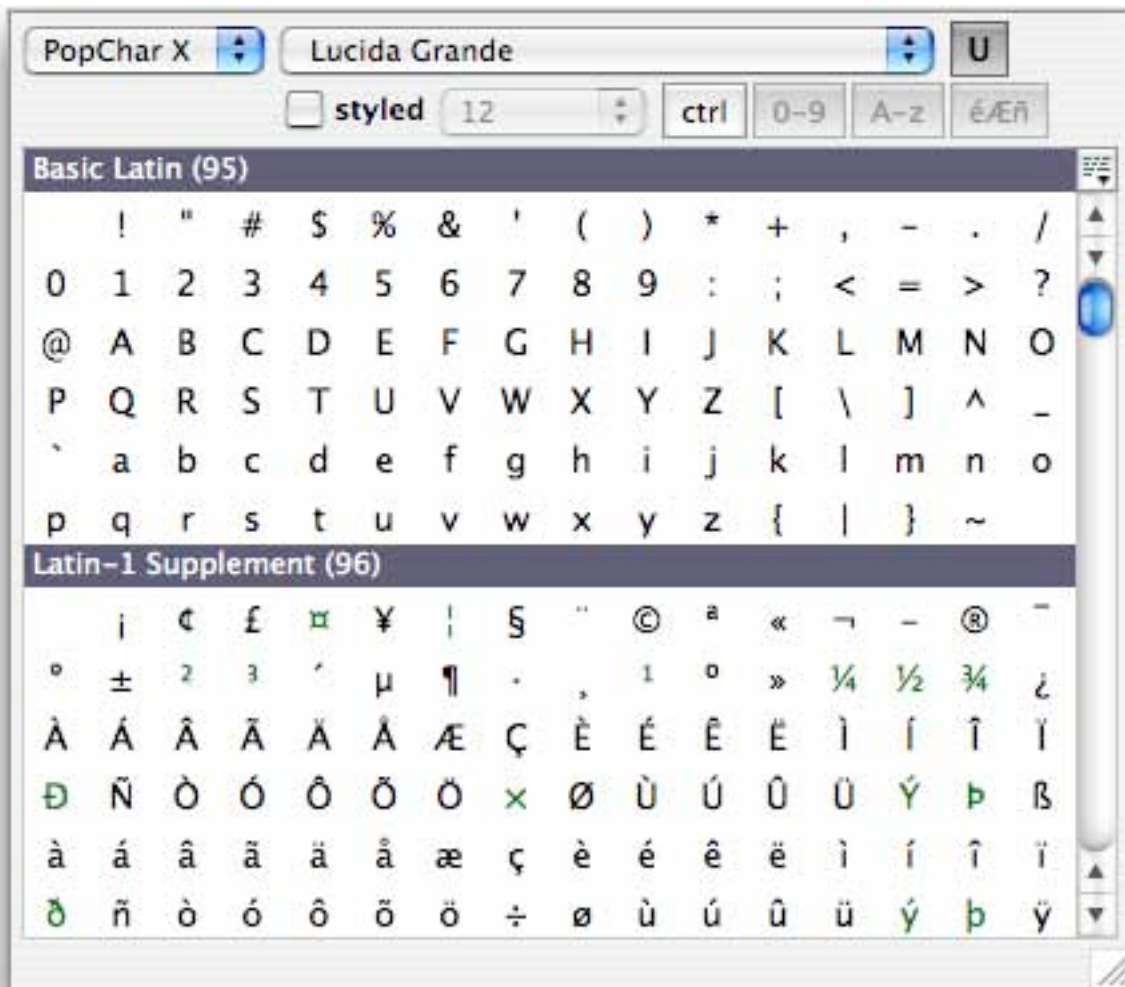
The HTML equivalents of the characters were carefully chosen for compatibility with most web browsers on Mac OS, Windows and Unix. We nevertheless recommend that you check your web pages with as may web browsers as possible to make sure that your audience will see the special symbols exactly as intended by you.

PopChar X remembers the "HTML" setting separately for each application.

Unicode (U)

The "U" button next to the font menu stands for "Unicode". The button is enabled for all fonts that contain a Unicode mapping. This is the case for most fonts delivered with Mac OS X. If a font does not have a Unicode mapping, the "U" button will be disabled. This is the case for some fonts in older formats.

Clicking the "U" button enters Unicode mode. The characters available in a font are then displayed in the Unicode order and arranged according to the Unicode categories, as shown in the following screen snapshot.

The number of characters in each category is shown in parentheses in the category headers.

The number of characters available in Unicode fonts can vary considerably. The following table shows the number of characters for some typical fonts (in Mac OS X 10.3 or newer):

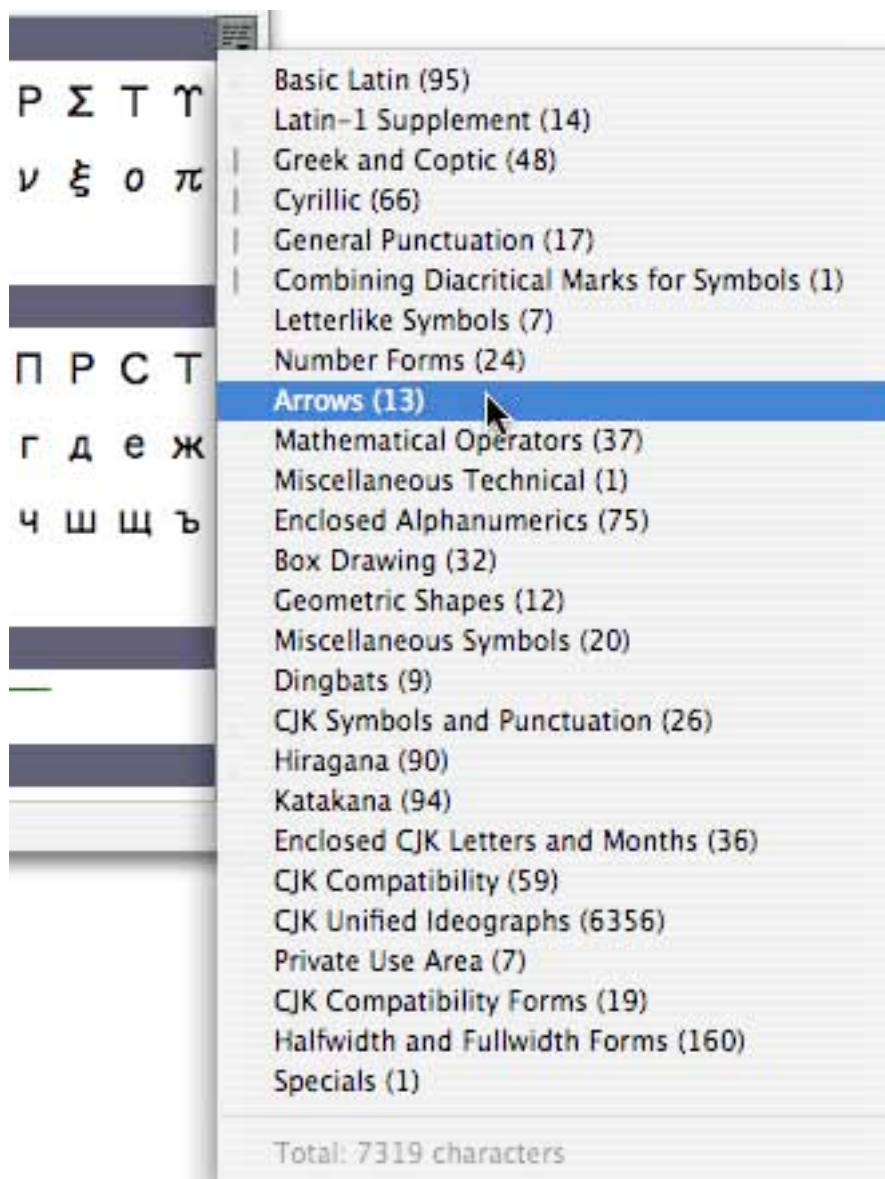|	
Zapf Dingbats	214
Charcoal	418
Helvetica	1576
Lucida Grande	2241
Osaka	7319
AppleGothic	8760
Apple LiGothic Medium	13568

Because of the huge number of characters in some fonts, the buttons for displaying digits, letters and accents are now useless; they are therefore always turned on and disabled in Unicode mode.

The font size is automatically adjusted to the size of the PopChar X window. In Unicode mode, PopChar X selects a font size such that about 200 characters are visible in the window. As usual, you can increase the font size simply by enlarging the window.

Scrolling

When you open the PopChar X window in menu mode (by clicking the "P" and keeping the mouse button pressed), the character table begins to scroll when you point past the last row or above the first row. In sticky mode, you can use the scroll bar to navigate within the character table.

Above the scroll bar, there is a small button ( ) that displays a menu with all categories present in the current font. You can use this menu to quickly jump to the desired category:
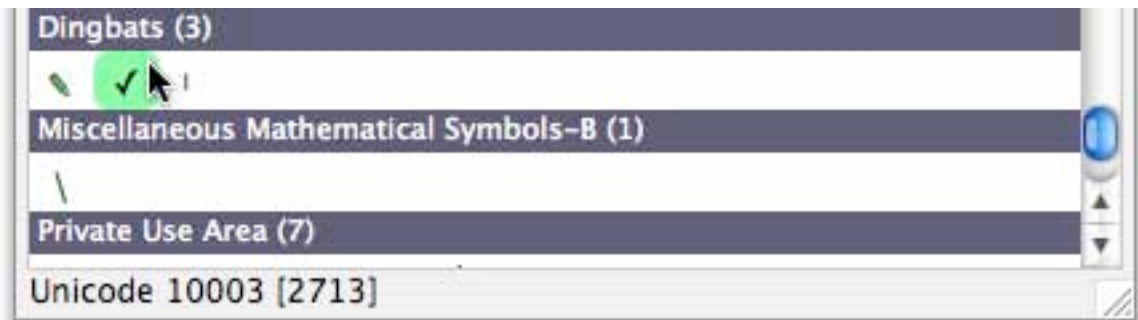
The vertical lines at the left side of the menu indicate which categories are currently (at least partially) visible.
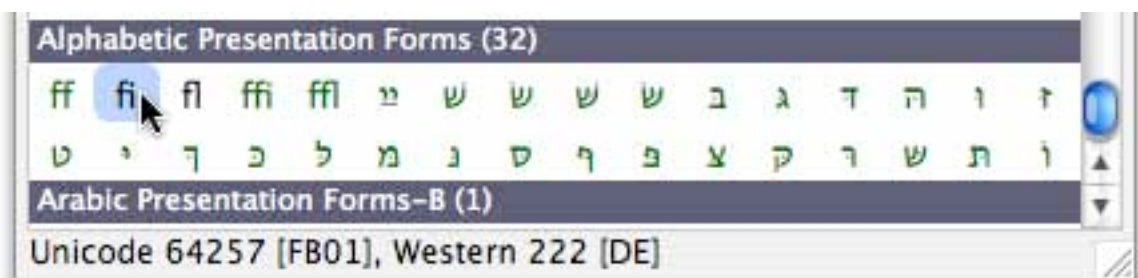
The last line of the menu displays the total number of Unicode characters available in the font.
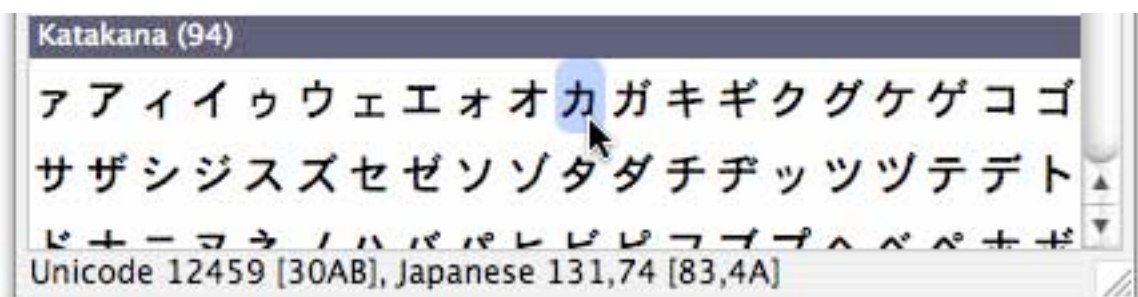
Character Codes

When you point at a character, the bottom line of the window displays the corresponding Unicode number in both decimal and hexadecimal:

In addition to Unicode, every font has a "native encoding" that maps one or two byte codes to characters. If a selected character is also available in the font's native encoding, the corresponding code is displayed as well (here in the "Western" encoding):

In some encodings, two byte codes may be needed, as shown here for a Katakana character in the Osaka font:

The native encoding is used for inserting characters in applications that do not support Unicode (see the next section, "Inserting Unicode Characters"). If a Unicode character does not

have a native equivalent in the font's encoding, PopChar X displays it in green (see the checkmark in the snapshots above).

Inserting Unicode Characters

When you select a Unicode character, PopChar X always uses the clipboard to transfer the character to the front application. When PopChar X puts the character in the clipboard, it includes both the Unicode and the standard text clipboard formats. When the "styled" option is active, PopChar X also includes the corresponding style information. What gets inserted in the current application depends on how well the application supports Unicode or at least foreign script systems:

- If the application fully supports Unicode, it will properly insert the selected character. Examples are TextEdit, Mail, and the Finder (e.g., when you rename a file or folder).

- If the application can handle foreign script systems (such as Japanese or Korean) but does not support Unicode, characters available in the font's native encoding (shown in black in the PopChar X window) will be inserted correctly. The green characters will typically result in the insertion of one or two different characters. Examples for such applications are Appleworks and Microsoft Word.
  Hint: When a wrong character appears, try turning the "styled" checkbox on.

- If the application supports neither Unicode nor foreign script systems, only the standard characters in the "MacRoman" character set will work. To avoid surprising results, you should turn the Unicode button off in such applications.

Inserting Unicode Characters as HTML Codes

When you press the option key while selecting a Unicode character, PopChar X inserts the corresponding HTML code in the current document. As a visual feedback, PopChar X displays the HTML code in the right part of the bottom line when you press the option key:
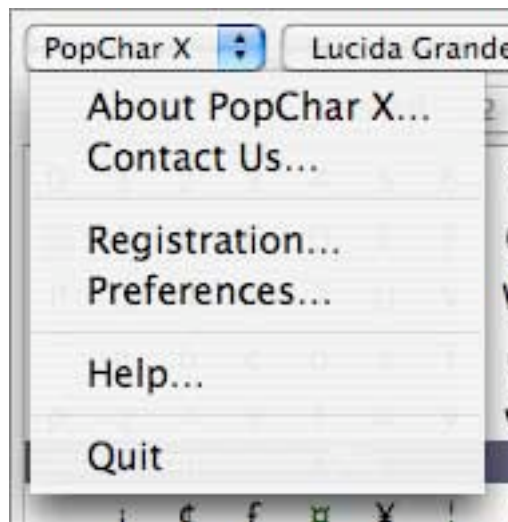

This feature lets you insert HTML codes for arbitrary Unicode characters. However, this does not mean that every web browser will correctly display these characters. For example, if you use HTML codes to represent text in a foreign script system (such as Arabic, Hebrew, or Japanese), the client's computer must be able to handle text in these languages. Since you cannot assume which fonts and script systems will be installed on the clients' computers, you should use this feature with caution.

In contrast, selecting "HTML" from the font menu displays only those symbols that will very likely work in most web browsers on arbitrary platforms.

The "PopChar X" Menu

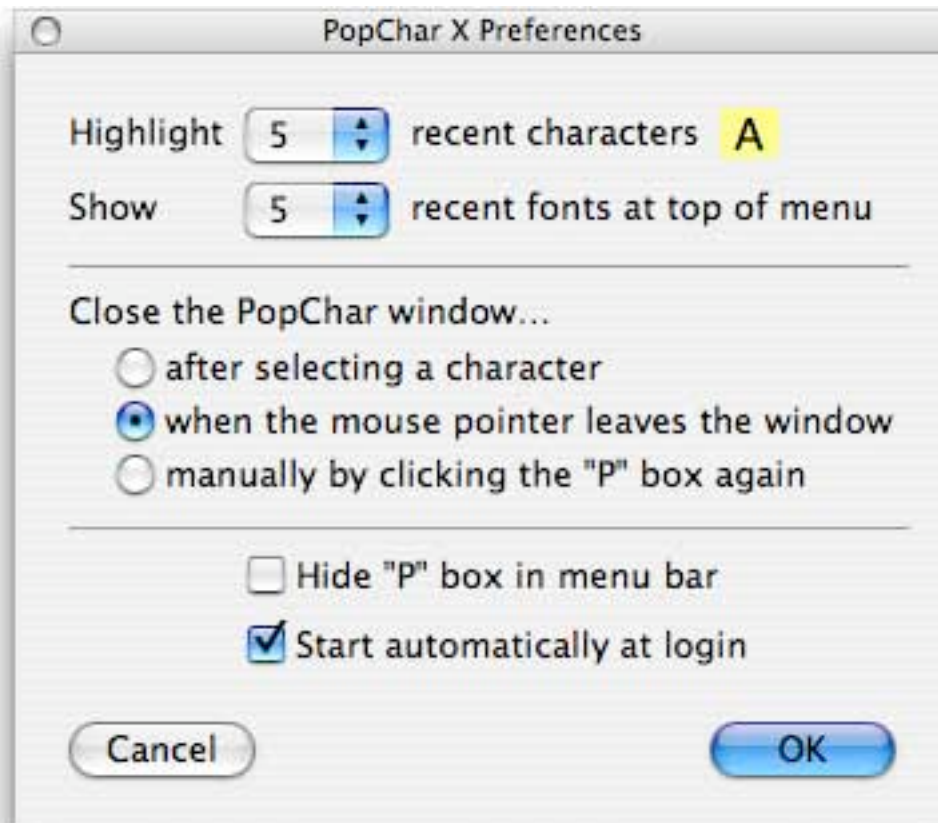When you click the "PopChar X" pop-up menu, the following menu appears:

You can open this menu also with the right mouse button or with a control-click on the "P box" or anywhere in the PopChar X window.

- **About PopChar X...** displays the about box with version information.

- **Contact Us...** opens a window with a couple of buttons that make it easy for you to get in touch with us. You can visit one of our web pages (the PopChar X home page, the FAQ page, and the order page) or send a mail message to technical support and customer service.
  For this feature to work, you need an active Internet connection. Clicking one of the buttons opens your favorite browser with the specified web page or prepares a mail message using your favorite mail program.

- **Registration...** displays a dialog for entering or changing your license key.

  If you use PopChar X under the terms of a site license, the registration dialog displays the name of the license holder.

- **Preferences...** opens the preferences window. See the next section for details.

- **Help...** displays this document.

- **Quit** closes PopChar X. You will usually need to quit PopChar X only when you upgrade to a newer version.

Preferences

The "Preferences…" command gives you a couple of options to configure the display and behavior of PopChar X:

- "Highlight *nn* recent characters" lets you define how many recent characters should be shown with a yellow background. If you find the yellow marks distracting, you can also disable them altogether by choosing "no" from the pop-up menu.
- "Show *nn* recent fonts at top of menu" controls how many recently selected fonts should be repeated at the top of the menu.
- The next section lets you define which actions make the PopChar X window disappear:
  - *after selecting a character* closes the window immediately after you have inserted a character.
  - *when the mouse pointer leaves the window* is the default behavior: the window remains open as long as you keep pointing into the window, but disappears when you move the mouse pointer outside.
  - *manually by clicking the "P" box again* keeps the window open until you explicitly dismiss it with another click on the "P" in the menu bar.

Note that these options do not apply to "menu mode": When you click the "P" in the menu bar and then immediately select a character without releasing the mouse button, PopChar X always closes the window after inserting the selected character.

- "Hide 'P' box in menu bar" removes the black square with the "P" as long as you don't need PopChar X. The "P" box reappears when the mouse pointer enters the menu bar.
- "Start automatically at login" adds PopChar X to your list of login items. This setting is active by default, so PopChar X will automatically be launched when you restart your computer or log out and in again. We recommend that you leave this item checked unless you prefer to start PopChar X manually.

Uninstallation

If you wish to remove PopChar X from your computer permanently, we recommend the following procedure:

- Select "Preferences…" from the PopChar X menu and disable the "Start automatically at login" option.
- Quit PopChar X and move the PopChar X folder to the trash.

Registration

If you use PopChar X under the terms of a site license, this section does not apply for you. If PopChar X asks for a license key when you launch it, ask your system administrator about the proper installation procedure.

PopChar X is distributed on a "try before you buy" basis. When you do not yet have a license key, PopChar X runs in demo mode. You can try how it works, but many special characters will be disabled.

To order a license key, please visit our online store at

      www.macility.com/store/

or select "Registration…" from the PopChar X menu and click the "Order a License Key" button.

When you order online, you will usually receive your license key via e-mail within the next business day. To enter the license key, select "Registration…" from the PopChar X menu. Enter your license key exactly as you received it.

Hint: To avoid typing errors, you can copy the license key from the mail message and paste it into the registration window by typing command-V.

Once you have registered PopChar X, the demo limitation is immediately removed; you don't need to quit and relaunch PopChar X.

Your license key includes **free updates** to new PopChar X releases **for two years**. This includes minor releases (such as bug fixes and small improvements) as well as major releases (such as additions of features).

Before you install a newer version of PopChar X, check the Registration dialog. It contains a hint when the free upgrade period for your license will end.

Please note that this licensing scheme does not mean that your license will expire after two years. You can use a registered copy of PopChar X without limitation, but your license key will not be valid for newer versions that will be released more than two years after the purchase of your license key. To use newer versions, you will need to upgrade your license key.

By the way, your license key for PopChar X also works for PopChar Pro. If you have a Mac model that can still start up with Mac OS 9, you can install PopChar Pro on the Mac OS 9 system. When you use the same system as the "Classic environment" under Mac OS X, PopChar Pro disables itself, and you can use PopChar X for Classic applications.

Known Issues

- Some other utilities (notably MaxMenus) also activate in the top-left corner of the screen. To avoid such conflicts, press the command key and move the "P box" of PopChar X to a different location in the menu bar.

- When the "P box" is in the right part of the menu bar, the standard menus in this area (time, monitor, sound, Airport settings etc.) may briefly drop down over the PopChar X window. This is a harmless cosmetic effect. We hope that we will be able to avoid this flashing of the menus when menu handling changes in a future version of Mac OS X.

- Insertion of Unicode characters requires active Unicode support by applications. Applications with limited or missing Unicode support will insert wrong characters for certain Unicode characters. We expect that more and more applications will take advantage of the Unicode features of Mac OS X. For example, Microsoft Word 2004 and InDesign CS2 now fully support Unicode, whereas older versions of these products could not benefit from the Unicode features of PopChar X.

Credits

Many people contributed to PopChar X – too many to thank them all individually. In particularly, we have been receiving much encouraging feedback from many PopChar Pro users and many helpful suggestions and hints from PopChar X users and testers. We'd like to thank all of them for their continuing support.

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