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SoftKey

2000 Shareware Games!

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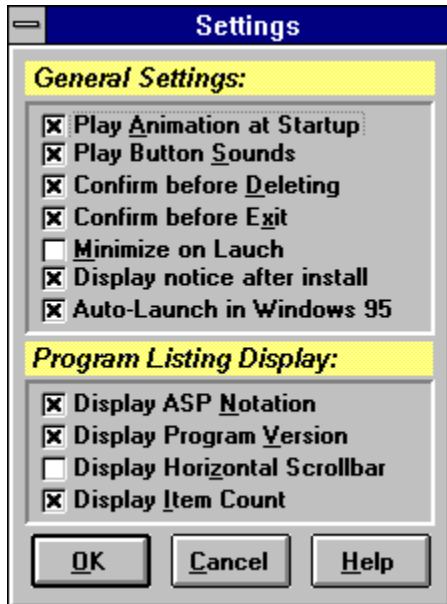
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Configure Settings

The Settings dialog allows you to customize the interface to work the best for you. From this dialog, you can control features such as animation and sound effects, prompts, notices, auto-minimizing, and Program Listing format.



(Click on areas of the picture above for more information.)

Setting Explanations

Setting	Explanation
Play Animation at Startup	Toggle the startup animation on/off.
Play Button Sounds	Toggle sound effects on or off.
Confirm before Deleting	Asks you if you are sure, when you click the <u>Delete</u> button.
Confirm before Exit	Asks you if you are sure, when you click the <u>Exit</u> button.
Minimize on Launch	Minimize the interface when a program is launched. (Same as the Program Manager feature by the same name.)
Display notice after install	Displays notice when a program is installed.
Auto-Launch in Windows 95	Automatically runs the interface when the disc is inserted into the drive. Only available on systems running Windows™ 95.
Display ASP Notation	Displays the notation <ASP> next to programs which are written by ASP Authors.
Display Program Version	Displays the version number next to each program in the <u>Program Listing</u> .
Display Horizontal Scrollbar	Places a horizontal scrollbar at the bottom of the Program Listing, so that you can scroll left and rights to

Display Item Count

view long entries.

Displays the number of items in the current category, at the top.

Searching for Programs



If you are looking for a specific type of program, the interface includes a powerful keyword searching feature. Simply type the keyword you are looking for in the box labeled *Text to search for* and then click the Search button. If matches are found, the Program Listing will display them.

The search engine will search through all program titles, descriptions, and authors for matches. This enables you to search for your favorite author by name, or find all games such as "poker".

Menu Bar

The menu bar across the top of the interface provides access to all features. Below is a list of the menu items, and a description of the action that each performs.



Action Menu

The Action menu contains the same features as the [Action Buttons](#) area of the interface, and is provided for quick keyboard access to these commands. In addition, the following choice(s) appear:

Launch	Read	Install
Order Form	Search	Add Item
Move Item	Edit Item	Delete Item
Exit		

Category Menu

The Category menu lists the [Category Buttons](#), just as they are displayed along the left side of the interface, and is provided for quick keyboard access.

View Menu

[Show Item Path](#)

Options Menu

[Configure](#)
[Install File Sharing](#)
[Restore Content](#)

Help Menu

The Help menu provides access to our comprehensive on-line documentation. You can jump directly to the Table of Contents by selecting the "Contents" option, search for a particular keyword, or access any of several "Special Help Topics".



Troubleshooting / Frequently Asked Questions

This section contains helpful notes and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Because of the power and complexity of the Windows™ environment, many different messages can appear, which all have the same cause. For this reason, multiple questions and multiple answers may be grouped together below.

Q: *My computer reports "Unable to Read Drive D:".*

Q: *When I access the CD-ROM, I get a "Bad Media" message.*

A: The most common reason for these errors is dust or fingerprints on the CD. Use a soft, clean cloth, such as a cotton T-shirt and some water. Wipe the disc from the center to the edge. If necessary, you may use a mild detergent, but NEVER use solvents of any kind as they may cause permanent damage to the CD. If problems continue to occur, it is possible that your CD-ROM drive may need cleaned or repaired. A scratch or other permanent mark on the underside of the CD may also cause this problem.

A: The second most common reason for these errors is that your drive is dirty or miscalibrated. If problems persist, you may want to have your drive inspected by a professional.

Q: *The 'Add Item' and 'Delete Item' buttons are always disabled.*

A: Windows™ must have file sharing enabled in order for these features to become available. You must have a file sharing driver loaded, such as VSHARE.386 or SHARE.EXE to take advantage of these features. For more information, please see the help file topic: ['What is File Sharing?'](#).

Q: *I have installed VSHARE.386, but the 'Add Item' and 'Delete Item' buttons are still disabled.*

A: After installing VSHARE.386, Windows™ must be restarted in order to enable file sharing. If you have already restarted Windows™, and the buttons still appear grayed, then you are probably running Windows 3.1 in STANDARD mode. VSHARE.386 (and all other virtual device drivers) will only load when you are running Windows™ 3.1 in ENHANCED mode. Please see your Windows™ documentation for more information about running Windows™ in Enhanced Mode. If you cannot run Windows™ in Enhanced mode, you may still be able to enable file sharing by using SHARE.EXE. Please consult your DOS documentation for details on installing SHARE.EXE.

Q: *I get a 'Path / File Access' error when running a program from the CD-ROM.*

A: If this error occurs while you are running a Shareware program, then the program is attempting to save information into its own directory, on the CD-ROM. Because CD-ROM's are read-only, the program cannot save information to the disc. Simply install the program to your hard drive (using the Install button), and launch it from the Program

Manager (*not* the interface). The program will then be able to function normally.

Q: *After installing a Shareware program, I tried to run it, and got a 'File not found' error.*

A: Consult the program's documentation for proper placement of necessary files. Because the interface cannot know where a program wants its files, it copies all necessary files into a single directory. This usually works very well, but may fail on systems with unusual configurations. Programs which require more complex installation usually come with their own setup program, and the interface has no control over the installation process.

Q: *A message box says 'VBRUN300.DLL' is in use. Cannot Continue.*

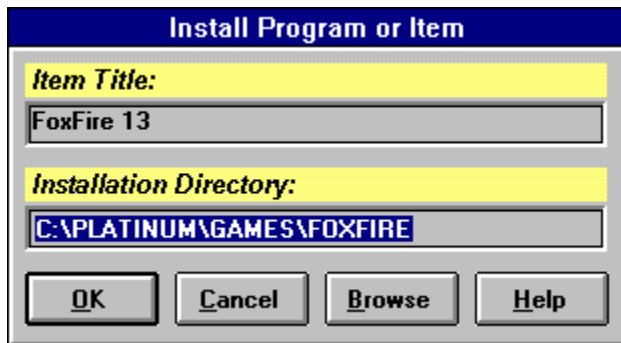
A: Shut down all applications then retry running the program from the file manager.

Installing a Program

If you particularly like a program and would like to install it to your hard drive, select the program and click on *Install*. Installing a program allows you to run it without having the CD-ROM in your drive, and without using the interface. An icon will be created for you in the Program Manager, to make launching the program easy.

Programs which do not have their own installation procedure will be installed by the interface's built-in installer. When this happens, you will see a dialog appear that looks like the one below. Programs which do have their own custom installation program will all appear differently, and ask different questions... simply follow the instructions that program gives you to install the program.

The Built-In Installer



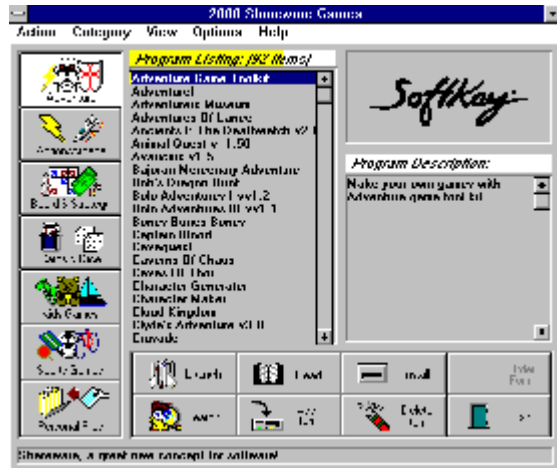
The "Install Program or Item" dialog allows you to specify the location that you want to install the selected program. The interface will automatically pick a default directory for you, which is often the best choice. Once you have selected a destination path (or chosen to use the default installation directory), click the "OK" button to complete the installation.

If you wish to select a different path than the default one provided, you may type it directly into the Installation Directory box, or browse for a destination by clicking the Browse button.



How to use the Interface

This section provides important information on how to use the interface and its many powerful features. Many of the pictures you will see in this section contain "hot-spots" which you can click on for more information.



For information on an area of the interface, please click on the desired area of the interface picture, or select from these areas...

[Menu Bar](#)

[Category Buttons](#)

[Program Listing](#)

[Action Buttons](#)

[Help Bar](#)

(Click on areas of the picture above for more information.)

For ease of use, the interface is divided into four major areas. These areas are: the Category Buttons (along the left side), the Program Listing (in the center), the Program Information Panel (center of the right side), and the Action Buttons (bottom right). To learn about each of these areas, please click on that area of the above picture, or click on its name, below...

[Category Buttons](#)

[Program Listing](#)

[Action Buttons](#)

In addition to these four major areas, there are two additional areas which you will find very useful. The menu bar across the top of the interface allows access to all features of the product, including some "special" features which cannot be accessed through the command buttons. Along the bottom of the interface is an area called the "Help Bar", which provides context-sensitive help on the fly. For more information, please click on the appropriate topic below:

[Help Bar](#)

[Menu Bar](#)



What is Shareware?

Shareware is an exciting marketing method which allows you to try top-quality software before you pay the author. With Shareware, you cannot be disappointed spending money for a program that's not right for you. The small fee you pay to us covers only the duplication and distribution costs, and permits you to evaluate the program.

If you continue to use the program, you must send the author an additional payment which may entitle you to technical support, printed manual, bonus programs, and more. Your payment supports authors, enabling them to continue writing newer and better Shareware programs.



What is File Sharing?

File Sharing is the ability for two or more programs to "share" a file at the same time. Many database engines require file sharing support, due to the tremendous amount of file operations that are done.

Does my system already support file sharing?

Although newer versions of Windows™, such as Windows™ for Workgroups, Windows™ NT, and Windows™ 95 have built-in file sharing capabilities, Windows™ 3.1 does not. If you are using Windows™ 3.1, you will need to install file sharing capabilities.

Microsoft provides two different drivers, each which support file sharing. The best method is to use a special Windows™ driver called VSHARE.386, which the interface can install for you--see below for details on how to install VSHARE.386. The second driver that you can use is SHARE.EXE, a DOS-based program which can be run from the DOS command line, or added to your AUTOEXEC.BAT file. SHARE.EXE is an older solution, which in most cases should be considered obsolete. VSHARE.386 should be used whenever possible. If, however, VSHARE.386 cannot be used on your system, SHARE.EXE should work fine. For information on installing SHARE.EXE, please consult your DOS manual.

Important Note: *If your computer is attached to a network, please consult your network administrator before installing file sharing, or making any changes to your system configuration.*

How to install VSHARE.386

If your system does not already have file sharing support installed, you will get a message the first time you run the interface. Immediately following the message, you will be asked whether you want the interface to install file sharing for you. If you choose not to install file sharing, you can change your mind at any time by clicking on the *Options* menu and selecting "Install File Sharing".

Important Note: *VSHARE.386, like all virtual device drivers, will only work if you are running Windows™ in "386 Enhanced" mode. To make certain that you are, choose "Help/About" from menu of Program Manager. If you are running Windows™ for Workgroups, Windows™ NT, or Windows™ 95, file sharing is already enabled.*

Action Buttons

The lower-right area of the interface contains eight command buttons. These buttons are placed for easy-access to the most commonly used features of the interface, such as Launching a program, Reading a program's documentation, and Installing a program.



(Click on areas of the picture above for more information.)

For more information on a particular command button, either click on the image of the button above, or on the text description below.

<u>Command</u>	<u>Action</u>
<u>Launch</u>	Launches the selected program or item.
<u>Read</u>	Displays the documentation for the selected program or item.
<u>Install</u>	Installs the selected program or item to your hard disk.
<u>Order Form</u>	Displays the order form for the selected program or item.
<u>Search</u>	Displays the keyword searching window.
<u>Add Item</u>	Adds a new program or item to the list.
<u>Move Item</u>	Moves the selected program or item to a different category.
<u>Edit Item</u>	
<u>Delete Item</u>	Deletes the selected program or item.
<u>Exit</u>	

Launching a Program

The *Launch* button starts the selected program. Some programs on the CD-ROM may not be launched due to their behavior. These programs must be installed first, because they need to store information into their own directories. The *Launch* button will be grayed out when a program cannot be run from the CD-ROM.

The interface supports launching data files, such as text files (*.TXT), bitmaps (*.BMP), and sound files (*.WAV). You can add these files to the database at any time using the *Add Item* button, and then display them with the *Launch* button. To determine which program to use as a viewer, the interface uses your system's file manager associations.

Shortcuts & Special Keys

1. Double-clicking on a program or item will automatically launch it.
2. **CTRL-L** is also a launch shortcut. Select the item you wish to launch, and press **CTRL-L** on your keyboard. This performs the same action as clicking the Launch button.

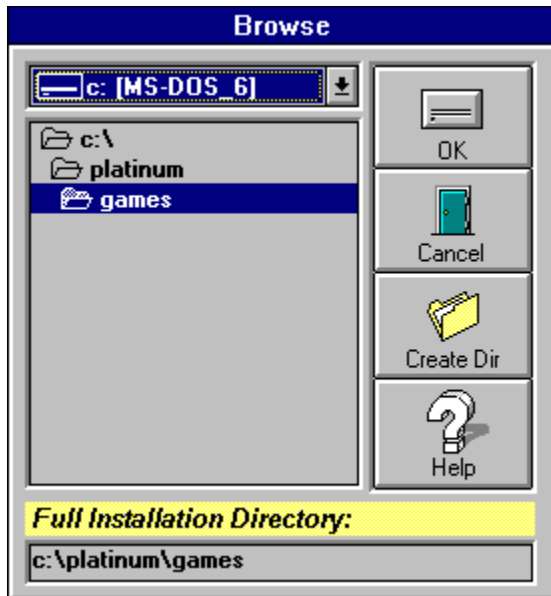
Reading a Program's Documentation

If you would like to know more about a program, select the program from the Program Listing and click on *Read*. The interface will display the program's own documentation, if available. If there is no documentation for the selected item (this is common for items such as pictures and sound files), there are other sources which may be able to provide the information you seek.

The Order Form button, like the Read button, displays a file containing the order form and ordering instructions.

Running the program will often provide valuable information, as well. If the program has a help menu, try viewing the About box... it may contain instructions on how to use the program.

Browse



(Click on areas of the picture above for more information.)

When installing a program or item, you may wish to "browse" for a directory, instead of accepting the default path that the interface chooses. This is useful when, for example, you want to install a game into your own special directory.

Use the *drive* and *directory* controls to locate the directory you want to use. If you want to create a directory beneath the current one, you can use the Create Dir button. Once you have chosen the directory you want to install the program in, click on the "OK" button. The interface will return you to the Install Program dialog, with the path you chose displayed in the *Installation Directory* box.

Creating a Directory



Type the name of the directory in the box labeled *New Directory*. Remember, the name can not be longer than eight characters. The full path of the directory is shown in the box labeled *Full Directory Path*. Click on the Create Directory button to make the new directory, or Cancel, if you change your mind.

Order Form

Many of the programs contained on this CD-ROMs are Shareware programs. To make registering your favorite programs as easy as possible, many authors have provided an Order Form which you can print out and mail. If there is no order form for the program, please try the Read button and the program's About box.

Deleting a Program or Item

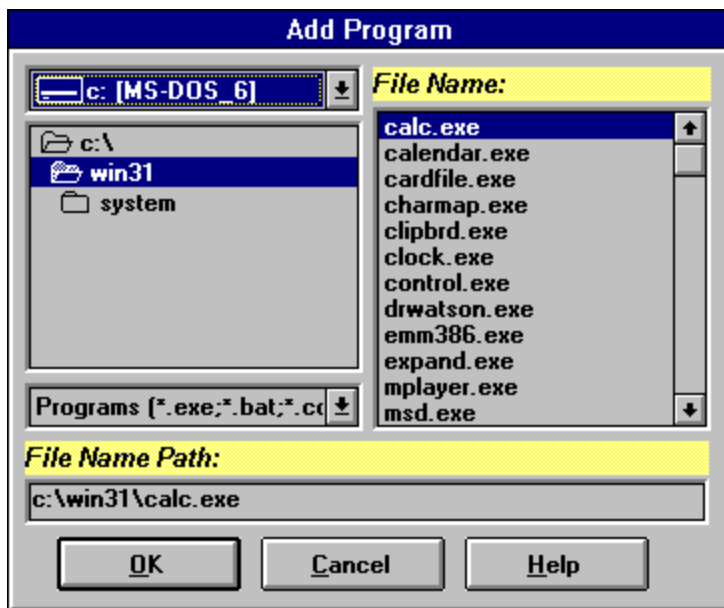
Deleting a program will remove it from the database, and it will no longer be displayed in the Program Listing. This is useful for "hiding" programs which you may never use. If the program is one that you added then it will be permanently removed from the database. However, if you delete one of the original programs it can be 'undeleted' by selecting Restore Content from the Options menu.

Adding a Program or Item

In addition to the thousands of programs available on this CD-ROM, you can add your own favorite programs to the database! This is a great way to categorize and catalog programs which get easily misplaced. Once a program is added, you can launch it just like any other program.

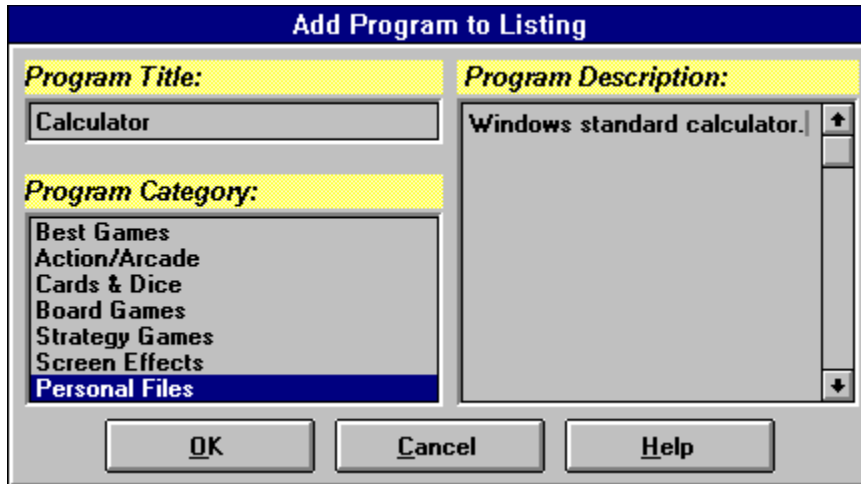
Adding a Program to the database involves two steps: First, you must locate the program or item on your hard drive. Second, you can enter information about the program, including a Title, Description, and Category.

Locating the Program or Item



Use the Add Program dialog to locate the program or item you wish to add. If you are adding a program, make sure to select the program itself, and not one of its data files. Programs typically end in the extension ".EXE". Click OK when you are done or click Cancel if you decide not to add a program.

Entering Program Information



Type the name of the program in the box labeled *Program Title*. Type brief description in the box labeled *Program Description* and select a Category for the new program. Click on OK when you are done. The program you just added is now available under the category you selected!

Adding Data Files

The interface has an intelligent launching algorithm which allows you to add data files, such as text files (*.TXT), bitmaps (*.BMP), and sound files (*.WAV) to the database. Simply select the file you want to add, just as you would select a program.

When you launch a data file from the interface, the interface will make use of your file association to determine which viewer to use. In this way, you can have full control over what program to use as a viewer, for each and every type of data!

Exiting the interface

Click on the *Exit* button to leave the interface. If you have the "Verify on Exit" option turned on, you will be prompted before exiting.

Help Bar



Shareware, a great new concept for software!

The context-sensitive help bar always displays a simple hint or suggestion for using the item that the mouse cursor is pointing at. This part of the screen gives a little extra help, such as what action a button will perform, or why a button is grayed-out.

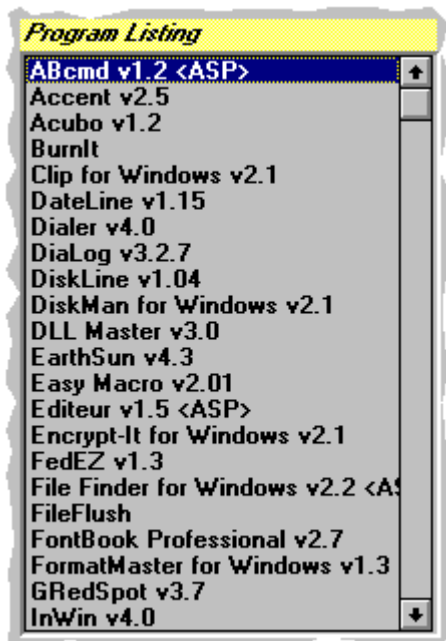
Install File Sharing

This option will install file sharing capabilities. File sharing is necessary in order for you to use features which require changing the database--features such as Add Item, Edit Item, Move Item, and Delete Item.

Show Item Path

If you are an advanced computer user, you will find this feature invaluable. This feature displays the exact location on the CD-ROM of the selected item. For single-file items, such as a bitmap or sound file, the filename will indicate that particular item. For multiple-file items, such as an application, the filename will indicate the *primary* file. In most cases, this is an EXE file, but can be an SCR file (screensaver), VBX, DLL, or other file.

Program Listing



The program listing is the central focus of the interface. Most of the actions you will perform, such as launching a program, reading a program's documentation, and installing a program, will act on the program that you have selected in the program listing.

For example, if you have "Fredrick's Famous Calculator" selected in the program listing window, and click on the "Launch" button, the interface will run "Fredrick's Famous Calculator." Likewise, clicking "Install" will install that program. Other commands which act on the selected program are "Delete Item", "Order Form", "Edit Item", and "Move Item".

In addition, the information displayed in the Program Information area is information that pertains to the selected program.

The program listing is the central focus of the interface. Most of the actions you will perform, such as launching a program, reading a program's documentation, and installing a program, will act on the program that you have selected in the program listing.

For example, if you have "Fredrick's Famous Calculator" selected in the program listing window, and click on the "Launch" button, the interface will run "Fredrick's Famous Calculator." Likewise, clicking "Install" will install that program. Other commands which act on the selected program are "Delete Item", "Order Form", "Edit Item", and "Move Item".

In addition, the information displayed in the Program Information area is information that pertains to the selected program.

Commands such as "Search" and "Exit" are not specific to any program, and therefore don't affect the currently selected program in any way.

The programs and items displayed in the program listing can be changed by selecting a new category button, or by performing a search.

The notation 'ASP' indicates that the program complies with the standards of the Association of Shareware Professionals.

Edit Item



The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "Edit Program in Listing". It has a dark blue title bar. The main area is divided into three sections: "Program Title:" with a text box containing "Calculator"; "Program Description:" with a text area containing "Windows standard calculator." and a vertical scrollbar; and "Program Category:" with a list box containing "Best Games", "Action/Arcade", "Cards & Dice", "Board Games", "Strategy Games", "Screen Effects", and "Personal Files" (which is highlighted in blue). At the bottom, there are three buttons: "OK", "Cancel", and "Help".

(Click on areas of the picture above for more information.)

The Edit Item feature allows you to change the Title, Description, or Category of an item that you added. You may only edit programs that you have entered using the [Add Item](#) feature.

Restore Content

Selecting "Restore Content" from the Options menu will reset the database to its original state. All programs when have been 'deleted' will be available again, and all programs which you have added will be removed.

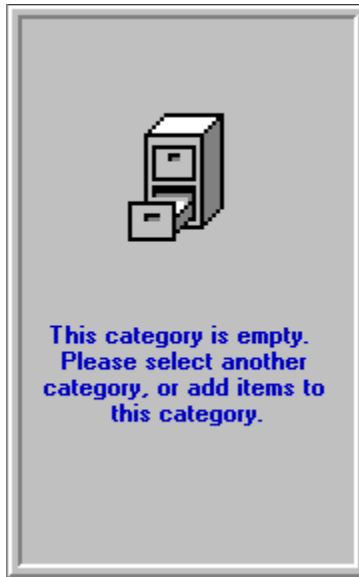
Moving a Program or Item



(Click on areas of the picture above for more information.)

You can move a program to a different category using the Move Item menu option. The program you are moving is shown in the *Program Title* box. Simply select a new category and then click *OK*. You can also double-click the new category, and the program will be moved.

Empty Category



When there are no programs associated with the selected category this window will be displayed. One example being the personal category when the program is first installed. A category might also be empty if all its programs are deleted. To change this, select the restore content feature or add a program to the category.

Category Buttons



(Click on areas of the picture above for more information.)

The interface uses category buttons to help you sift through the hundreds of programs on the CD-ROM. Along the left side of the interface are between 6 and 20 category buttons, depending on the product which you are using.

To view the programs in a particular category, simply click on that category button. For example, on our *Game Gallery*, you can view all available strategy games by clicking on the "Strategy" button. The programs or items in that category will be displayed in the Program Listing, at the center of the interface. If you do not have a mouse on your system, you may select any category by using the Category menu.

The "Personal Files" category, at the bottom of the Category button bar, is a special category that is reserved for your own files. You may add or move your favorite programs to this category, keeping them easily accessible at all times.

How To Register

Many of the programs included on this CD-ROM are Shareware. Shareware programs are programs which you are allowed to try for a period of time (usually 30 to 60 days), after which you must register them with the author. The authors of these programs work extremely hard to bring you the best programs possible, investing months and often years in the development process. Please make sure to register all Shareware programs which you enjoy and intend to use! This allows authors to develop newer and better programs for your enjoyment, at prices far below retail cost!

Information about program registration can be seen by clicking on the Order Form button. If you cannot find the information you need, or there is no Order Form file available for the selected program, then click on the Read button for the program's documentation. If neither of these methods work, you should look in the program's *About* box, or contact the Author directly for information on how to register the program.

Installation Successful

The interface installed your selection successfully.

If you installed a program, you should find an icon available in the Program Manager. Simply double-click on the icon, as you would launch any other program.

System files, such as fonts and screen savers, will now be available in their native environment. For example, if you installed a font, it will now appear in the fonts list of your favorite programs. Windows screen savers can be accessed from the "Desktop" icon of your Control Panel.

Data files, such as bitmaps and sound files, are installed in the directory that you selected. Since bitmaps and sound files must be loaded by another program in order to use them, no icon is created for these files.

Unable to Install Selection Successfully

The interface was unable to install your selection successfully.

There are several reasons why an installation can fail. Listed below are some of the most common causes you should check for...

Not enough disk space. You must have enough space on your selected drive in order to install the selected item.

The selected drive is read-only. You must be able to write to the drive you select for installation. For example, you cannot install a file onto your CD-ROM drive, because CD-ROM's are a "read-only" media. If you are installing to a floppy diskette, make certain that the disk has the write-protect tab off.

File Associations

The interface has an intelligent launching feature, which allows you to view data files easily. In addition to programs, which can be run by themselves, you can "*Launch*" bitmaps, sound files, movies, icons, and thousands of other file formats. The interface uses the same viewers that appear whenever you launch a data file from the File Manager.

For example, when you first install Windows™, Paintbrush is the associated viewer for bitmap (*.BMP) files. Therefore, when you launch a bitmap file, the interface will use Paintbrush to view it. If, however, you find a bitmap viewer that you like better than Paintbrush, you can "associate" it with the bitmap file format so that it becomes the new default viewer.

All file associations are controlled and can be changed through the File Manager's File/Associate menu option. For more information, please consult File Manager's online help, and search for the keyword "associate". "a"

Windows™ 95 Features

We always strive to bring the newest and best technologies to your desktop, to make your work more productive, and your play more enjoyable! The interface is continually evolving, and will improve with each new release of our product line! If you have Windows™ 95 now, or purchase it later, the interface can offer the following additional features:

Auto-Running this Product

This CD-ROMs support a special Windows™ 95 feature called "*AutoRun*". This feature makes it possible to run the product simply by putting the CD-ROM in your drive! You no longer need to click on an icon to start the interface. If you do not want the product to launch automatically, you can disable *AutoRun* through the Configure dialog.

Cancel Button

Click the Cancel button to abort the current action, and close the dialog.

CompuServe Software Registration Number

The CompuServe Shareware Registration number, or SWREG #, is a number which you can use to register the Shareware program you have selected. The registration cost of the program will be billed to your CompuServe account, and the author will be notified of your registration. This is a very convenient way of registering programs; however, due to the commission which CompuServe earns, the author may need to charge a slightly higher registration fee when you use this service.

For more information on this service, please check your CompuServe manual, or call CompuServe at 1-800-848-8990 (or 1-614-529-1340).

Control Panel

The Control Panel is a system configuration tool that comes with Windows. It allows you to specify settings for your Windows configuration, such as how fast your mouse cursor moves, and what your desktop background looks like. The Control Panel can be found in the Main group of your Program Manager.



Control Panel

(Click on this icon to launch your systems Control Panel.)

Data Files

A data file is a file which contains certain information. In order to view a data file, a compatible viewer must be used. For example, a bitmap (.BMP) file can be viewed by Windows Paintbrush, and a sound file (.WAV) can be played by the Sound Recorder. Examples of data files are:

Bitmap files (.BMP)

Sound files (.WAV)

Movie files (.AVI, .MPG)

Animation files (.FLI, .FLC)

Icon files (.ICO, .ICL, .DLL, .EXE)

Directory Selection list box



Use the directory selection list box to choose a directory from the current drive.

Drive Selection combo box



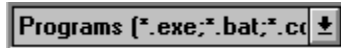
Use the drive selection combo box to select one of your systems drives.

File Selection list box



Use the file selection list box to select a file.

File Type Selection combo box



Use the file type selection combo box to control what kinds of files are displayed in the file selection list box.

Freeware Programs

A freeware program is a program that is owned and Copyrighted by an author, but which is freely distributable, and has no charge for use.

see also Public-Domain

see also Shareware

Help Button

Click the Help button to display information about the current task you are performing, or to find out how to use a particular dialog or screen.

OK Button

Click the OK button to perform the current action, and close the dialog.

Personal Files Category

The *Personal Files* category is a category designated for your own added programs. When you add a file to the database, you can store it in any category you wish. However, storing it in your *Personal Files* category makes it very easy to find your own added files.

Program Size

The size of the program represents the amount of space that the program will use if you Install it to your hard drive. Because many Windows™ programs use shared files, called DLLs, this size often represents a *maximum* amount of space that the program will need. However, during installation of the program, you may need as much as twice this amount of space available in order for the program to install successfully.

Program Version

The version of the program is a number assigned to it to help you determine if it is the most current release. This is done much like a magazine or book, where a higher number such as Volume 2 represents a more recent release.

Public-Domain Programs

A public-domain program is a program that belongs to the public. When a program is designated as Public-Domain, no individual or company can claim ownership of the program. As such, using a public-domain program costs you nothing, and is freely distributable.

see also Freeware

see also Shareware

Shareware Programs

A Shareware program is a program that is owned and Copyrighted by an author, but which you have been granted free *limited* rights to use. A Shareware program is just like every other program that you can find in a retail store, except that you are allowed to *try* a Shareware program before you decide whether you want to *buy* it. In this respect, Shareware is a very advanced marketing method.

Your free limited rights to use the program are determined by each Shareware programs author, and you must read the authors documentation to determine what rights you have been granted. Many times, you will be granted a free period of evaluation time, such as 30 days, to determine whether you like the program. If you decide to use the program beyond this evaluation time, you must send the author the requested payment (usually *far* less that retail programs of the same quality) in order to purchase the software.

see also [What Is Shareware?](#)

see also [Public-Domain](#)

see also [Freeware](#)

System Files

A system file is a special file which is recognized and used by Windows to perform certain functions. Examples of system files are:

Windows Screen Savers (.SCR).

Truetype Fonts (.TTF)



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