

Pearl has an unusual feature that makes it better for power users, but can be confusing at first. It's important that you understand this rule to avoid frustration. Since Pearl is designed to do its archiving job with the least possible interruption of the user (if you're reading some text online, for example, and decide to archive it, you want that process to go as quickly and unobtrusively as possible), it pays close attention to the way it was launched. Here's what it does:

** If you start Pearl by double-clicking it (or invoking it from a script or a QuicKeys macro, etc, without an archive document), it assumes that you want to archive the text on the clipboard. If it's been configured to run in automatic mode (see the Setting Preferences item), it will take the clipboard text, archive it to the default archive and quit. This process is very fast and interrupts the user very little. If it hasn't been set for automatic operation (ie, if the Preference for "Prompt for description" isn't set to "Never" or no default archive is set), it will process the text and present it in a New Item window for you to approve (or make changes) before it's archived.

** If you start Pearl by double-clicking an archive (or dropping one on its icon), Pearl assumes that you want to browse that archive and will open it up for you to look at. It won't do anything with text on the clipboard. Once Pearl is running, you can always Paste text directly into an archive (creating a new item in the process) or you can open a New Item window and paste text into it for editing before it's archived.

** If you start Pearl by dropping a text file or clippings file on its icon, it will assume you want to archive the file and will extract the text from the file and do so according to its preferences.

If you're set Pearl up for automatic operation, it's so quick to use, you'll hardly know it's there.

Consider this example:

While reading a newsgroup, you come across a FAQ. Being a good net citizen, you want to save this for later reference. In your comm program, you select the text of the FAQ and Copy it to the clipboard. Then you double-click the Pearl icon. If you've set your preferences for automatic operation, Pearl will run, pull the text from the clipboard, archive it to your default archive and quit (in a couple of seconds), leaving you free to continue reading your newsgroup. Later, you can go back and make sure that the description Pearl picked for your text suits you (alternatively, you might have had a QuicKeys macro set up that did a copy-and-launch-Pearl in a single keystroke).

If you've set Pearl up so that it may prompt you for a description if its rules can't find a good match, it will work somewhat differently. In this case, Pearl will process the text and, if it isn't confident enough about its description, put it into a New Item window. This window contains the text of the entry and a place to edit the description line that goes with entry. New Item windows must always be saved into an archive. Once saved, the windows go away automatically (once text is in an archive it can't be changed, it's a permanent record - no revisionist history allowed). Here's how it works:

You're reading your mail and come across a project time estimate from Joe, a coworker. To

archive this estimate (so that you can hold it over his head later on and threaten him), you copy the text of the note to the clipboard and double-click Pearl. You like to edit your text as you archive it, so you've set Pearl to "Always" prompt you for a description. When Pearl runs, it will see that the text is email and will probably pull out the subject line and the sender's name and put them in the description area of the New Item window. You override this description by typing "Joe's Time Estimate" into the description line. You might also add some of your own notes to the text of the message. Then you archive it by selecting Quick Save from the File menu and picking the proper archive from the sub-menu. The New Item window will go away as it is saved.

Another way you might be using Pearl is to keep track of all those "Read Me" files that come with each software package you install. Sometimes they contain useful information, but who bothers to keep them all around?

You install the latest version of MonsterWrite on your Mac. There's a ReadMe file full of hints, gotchas and last minute information that didn't make the manual. You won't be motivated to read it, however, until the program starts crashing later on. To archive the file for future reference, you drag it over the Pearl icon and drop it. Pearl either dumps it's contents automatically into the default archive or gives you a chance to edit it before it's archived, depending on the preferences. Either way, the text will be where you can find it later.

Pearl can also be used to keep a diary or log book. Just run Pearl (see the Command-key trick in the hints section) and select New Empty Item from the Item menu. This will give you a New Item window to type in. Just type your entry and Save it to an archive the way you normally would. One advantage in keeping logs with Pearl is that archived items can't be changed, always get time-stamped and are always displayed in the order they were archived.

Lastly, you can place text into an archive by choosing the Paste to Archive item in the Edit menu. This will paste the clipboard text straight into a new item in the archive, no matter what your preferences. Many people may want to use Pearl this way: keep it running, with an archive or two open. As you see something you want to save, Copy it, switch to Pearl and Paste it into the archive of your choice.