

What Floppy Format?

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TECHNICAL SUPPORT (HOW TO REACH ME)

Thanks for trying my software. Please throw your comments, suggestions, criticisms, etc. my way. I can be reached via the mail or BBS. The bulletin boards below will have current versions of my software and I will get any messages left there for me.

Mail Angel Babudro, "Organic Computer Wizardry", 28 Mulberry
Street, Clinton, NY 13323-1506

BBS Angelo Babudro

West Coast
East Coast

Researcher's BBS, So Cal (805) 949-8151 USR HST DS
Nite-Air BBS, Central NY (315) 339-8831 USR HST 14.4
Odie's PCBoard, Central NY (315) 339-6713 USR HST DS

INTRODUCTION

WFF is a menu shell for use with Christophe Hochstatter's FDFORMAT. WFF is Freeware; it is my contribution back to all the fine programmers who have donated their labour in the form of public domain software. Please distribute complete copies of WFF to bulletin boards and friends — please shackle any temptations you might have to eliminate or modify anything — not nice. :) I am open to donations if your situation warrants. For the latest version of WFF order my Sampler Disk (see ORDER.FRM).

Now, let me tell you what it is that I've created.

What Floppy Format? (WFF) is an easy way to quickly format floppies without remembering commands and option switches for various disk types using FDFORMAT, a formatting utility written and donated to the public domain by Christophe Hochstätter (normally found as FDFRM16A.ZIP or FDFORM18.ZIP on BBS's). FDFORMAT is the best floppy format utility I've seen, but it's so flexible that there are a million and one combinations of options. So I wrote WFF to allow me to set & test certain options, save the options I prefer, and then format a disks without having to remember any of it. I don't even need to remember which drive is A: (not that it's a problem...).

I use the extra high-density and off-colour formats provided via FDFORMAT for my archive disks. FDFORMAT packs 1.48Mb on a 5¼-inch disk and up to 1.72Mb on a 3½-inch disk, which dramatically reduces the number of disks I need to off-load large software from my hard disk. And I've noticed that with a CompatiCard IV the <300-byte TSR isn't needed for the extended densities. It's the best disk capacity extender I've seen, and it's public domain, too! Can't beat it.

If you can't find it on your local BBS, FDFORMAT can be downloaded from the BBSs listed above.

By the way, I don't have any interest in FDFORMAT other than using it. I'll have to write a letter to the author some day...

WARNING WFF allows you to format disks in drive letters other than A: or B: by assigning drive A: to that drive. I did this so that I could format my 8" drive (which is K: on my system) using FDFORMAT.

To illustrate, my 8" drive is K: so WFF does an "ASSIGN a=k" before issuing the FDFORMAT command. When

FDFORMAT is finished, an "ASSIGN" command is issued by itself to remove the drive assignment.

BEWARE If you set a hard disk letter as a floppy disk drive I have no idea what will happen (I'm not going to try it!). So PLEASE PLEASE be careful if you use something other than drives A: and B: -- double check that it's a floppy disk letter you're using!

File List

The files that make up What Floppy Format? are as follows:

wff.exe	The executable file
wff.txt	The documentation (this text) in ASCII format [*]
wff.wp	The documentation (this text) in WordPerfect 5 format (so you can format for your printer) [*]
wff.new	Late-breaking news [*]
file_id.diz	Description file for BBSs [*]
desc.sdi	Description file for BBSs [*]
order.frm	Order form for all of my Shareware! Please

TYPE ORDER.FRM > PRN

These are the files which make up WFF. When you give copies to friends, BBSs, etc. please be sure to include all of these files. Additional files will be created in the same directory as you use the software. The files marked with [*] can be deleted if disk space is a premium, but I ask that you please keep ORDER.FRM handy in case you or someone else you know wants to contact me. Since I am asking for no money for WFF I hope you will do this for me. Thanks.

Using WFF

NOTE: WFF.EXE should reside in a directory in your DOS PATH. Otherwise you will have to use "cd" to change to that directory each time. To set your path use the "set path=" command in your autoexec.bat file.

Just type WFF from the DOS prompt. The first time you use it, WFF will pop-up its set-up screen for you to fill in. Just tell it whether you have a monochrome or colour screen, which types of floppy disk drives you have (up to 4) and the drive letters, and the path to the FDFORMAT programme. If FDFORMAT resides in a directory which is in your DOS PATH it will automatically be filled in. (See WARNING above about floppy drives.) Default values for disk verification and sector sliding are also presented for you to change. If you aren't sure what you want to use, just leave the defaults as they are -- the default sector sliding values should improve the floppy disk's speed on any computer. See the documentation

for FDFORMAT for details about these.

Directory Command — While you are formatting disks you can press F5 between disks to see a directory on the screen. This is the directory command, and parameters, you like to use. You can use the DOS "DIR" command, or "NDIR" as I use, or "HDIR" or anything else.

Root Dir Files — This is the maximum number of files the disk may have in its root directory (\). In more technical terms, this setting determines the size of the FAT (File Allocation Table). See FDFORMAT docs. Leave "112" for default of 112 or 224, depending on disk type. You can lower the number to squeeze a few more bytes out of your disks. This does **not** affect subdirectories; only the number of files you can have in the root.

After you've done the set-up, just pick the size of disk you want from the horizontal menu — 3½-inch, 5¼-inch, and 8-inch — and press RETURN. You'll see a vertical menu of the densities available, depending on whether you have double-density or high-density drives — densities which are not valid for your drive(s) cannot be selected. Highlight your selection and press RETURN. That's all there is to it!

Special Features & Functions

Quick Format — If you have verification turned OFF, FDFORMAT version 1.8 will re-format a disk in 5-10 seconds by only verifying already formatted tracks and clearing the FAT.

Continuous Format — After a disk is formatted you will hear some tones to tell you the disk is finished (so you don't have to watch the screen), and a ticking will begin.¹ This is to let you know that WFF is waiting for your response:

1. You can press Esc to stop formatting disks or F5 to see a directory of another disk.

2. You can remove the disk. This will initiate WFF's Continuous Format feature — WFF will wait for you to insert another disk or press Esc to quit or F5 for a directory.

Before inserting another disk you can press the F5 key to get a directory of a disk. WFF will prompt for a drive letter at the bottom of the screen. While it is waiting for the drive letter you can insert the disk you would like to view.

NOTE Both FDFORMAT and WFF test the disk drive. Usually this causes no noticeable delay, but I stumbled across a combination of electronics that took 16-seconds to identify an unformatted disk. If this is happening to you there may be a

¹These sounds are only audible if the Sound option under "File" is turned ON.

conflict in your system; experiment with card settings (address, IRQ, etc.). In my case it was an address conflict.

Drawbacks — I designed WFF to allow selection of disk drives based on size rather than drive letter. This avoids confusion where one 5.25" and one 3.5" disk drive are used since you can't even assume that the top drive is A: (Tandy broke that rule). But, if you have two of the same drives (like an old AT or XT with dual 5.25" drives) there is no way to choose between them. Anyone got a good idea on how to deal with this??