How To

by "The Cajun"

As we embark on a new journey of technical knowledge, we are reminded that most technical knowledge quickly becomes out of date as soon as a product is upgraded or revamped. All of the idiosyncrasies of the product that we worked so hard to discover, overcome, and work around are removed. Like an unwanted cast on a limb, once it is removed, we long for it's presence. Such is the case of this issue's How To... column:

The In's and Out's of Easy Envelopes Plus.

Yes, this month we learn all about Easy Envelopes' little quirks and rattles. We will understand them so much that once Easy Envelopes Pro rolls out the door, the characteristics of the old Easy Envelopes will be sadly missed (except by me). So let's get to it...

The EE+ 2 file

Easy Envelopes is a desk accessory, it has a different way of being launched, saving files, and allocating memory. Since the release of System 7, placing items under the Apple Menu has become easier, and there is no need for the Font/DA Mover. With the addition of aliases and the more flexable Apple Menu folder, the older desk accessory structure is no longer needed.

The Easy Envelopes DA, not having the conventional file system, keeps it's information in a file in your System Folder called "EE+ 2 file." This file is created when you first launch Easy Envelopes. First, Easy Envelopes looks in the System folder for it's file. If it does not find one, it will create a new empty one. If there is one there, it is opened by Easy Envelopes and all of your saved addresses are loaded into the program.

A few things you should keep in mind about this file:

• It can only be stored in the System Folder.

• It can only be called "EE+ 2 file."

• It should be backed up.

Easy Envelopes only looks in the System folder for it's file. It will not look anywhere else. If it's file is not there, Easy Envelopes will create a new one, and you will not have any addresses from the other file. For the same reasons, the EE+ 2 file and only be called "EE+ 2 file", a differently named file will be passed over.

Occasionally, if you experience a system crash while Easy Envelopes is open, the EE+ 2 file will become corrupted. You can tell if your file is corrupted by the addition of tons of miscellaneous characters that are suddenly added to your address and notes fields. Also, you may have an address count of 245 of -27563. This is a corrupted file, and needs to be thrown out.

"Thrown out ?!? What about the 465 addresses that I have built up over the years?" Yes, throwing out the EE+ 2 file will cause Easy Envelopes to create a new, empty file, and you will loose any stored addresses. In order to avoid this, copy the EE+ 2 file to another part of your system, or to a floppy about once a week. This will ensure that if your EE+ 2 file becomes corrupted, you can replace it with one that was recently backed up and keep all of your addresses intact. Simple huh?

Bar Codes
The US Postal Service uses a bar coding system to properly sort bulk mail. Easy Envelopes has the ability to print these bar codes to assist the Post Office in routing your letter. Easy Envelopes will also print five large bars on the top of the envelope near the stamp area. These bars are used to tell the scanner when to start reading the bar code..

A couple of things to be concerned with when using the bar code feature of Easy Envelopes. Make sure that the zip code is intact; no extra spaces or characters, and only 5 or 9 digits in the zip. And make sure that the bar code is being printed in the lower 1/4 inch of the envelope. Bar codes can also be placed above the address, but the current version of Easy Envelopes does not utilize this opportunity.

If your bar code is not printing consistently, check to make sure that your zip code is intact. Next, double-check the preferences to make sure you are telling Easy Envelopes to print them. Lastly, if you cannot get the bar codes on the envelope, print to a sheet of paper to check what Easy Envelopes is doing. If your result is something sporadic, your configuration may be wrong. Check your manual for more information on proper

configuration. If your result is close, say the bar code is slightly below where the envelope would be, you can adjust the height of the envelope, fooling Easy Envelopes into thinking that the envelope is smaller. This should bring the bar code onto the bottom of the envelope.

Also, and this is a big one, you should have US Letter chosen in your Page Setup dialog box. Easy Envelopes prints to your printer as if it were printing to an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper (the only standard across all printers). You should store the envelopes in a Multipurpose tray. With a properly configured setup, you should get nice envelopes every time.

The Hewlett-Packard printer drivers

I have found that a lot of people have HP printers. We have one here in the office, and it works just fine :). About a year ago, HP released a new set of printer drivers that all seemed to have a bug in them. This bug would give an "out of memory" message when you would try to print from Easy Envelopes. Many folks are quick to believe that it is Easy Envelopes causing the problem. But the real problem lies in the HP Drivers' handling of desk accessories that print. We found that this was the case with several other printing DA's, not just Easy Envelopes.

The problem can be solved in three ways.

Solution #1: Try changing the background printing setting in

the Chooser. This varies from situation to situation, but

generally turning background printing OFF does the trick.

Solution #2: Downgrade. By installing a printer driver that may

be a little older then the current ones may also eliminate the

problem. The earlier drivers handled DA printing differently.

Solution #3: Upgrade. HP has just recently released a new set

of printer drivers. These are PostScript Level 2 drivers, and

may force you to tweak your configuration, but the testing

that we have done on our version has proven successful. Of

course, we now choose an envelope setting in the Page Setup

dialog. You can't win 'em all.

There are some printers, like the HP DeskWriter, which require you to choose an envelope setting in the Page Setup dialog box. These are special circumstances that will require a little more experimentation. But do not fret, success can be achieved with a little diligence.

Well that about wraps it up. There is a new version of Easy Envelopes in the works. We are writing it from the ground up, we will be upgrading it to a full scale application, and we will also incorporate multiple file support, sorting, searching, flagging, importing, exporting, and some other things we have up our sleeve. As always, upgrades for registered users will be free of charge ($5 shipping if you would like it sent to you). As soon as Easy Envelopes Pro is finished and passes beta-testing, we will be sending out upgrade notification postcards.

If you have a question about Easy Envelopes, or any other product for that matter, please feel free to write or call(see Info. chapter for contact information). I can be reached at AmbrosiaSW@aol.com during the week, or on my couch on Sunday with my big box of Saints Fan Kleenex.

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