DOS 5

SELF-TEACHING GUIDE

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Ruth Ashley
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Preface

The disk operating system (DOS) is the most basic, and in many ways the most important, piece of software you own. Yet many people totally ignore it; worse, they avoid it. This is similar to buying a new house and never going into the kitchen, the basement, or the attic. Not only does it waste valuable resources, it could actually be dangerous. In this Preface, we will explain why you need to understand DOS and how this book can help you make the most of the operating system.

Why You Need to Know DOS

DOS contains many features that help you manage the various elements that make up your system: hardware, software, data files, disk media, and memory.

Essential Features

Some DOS features are essential; your system and your applications can't function without them. You have probably already learned how to use the essential features, but if you're like many people, you use them by rote. Many people don't really understand the DOS commands and functions they have been "taught" to use, nor are they aware of what options and alternatives are available.

Efficiency Features

Other DOS features are less essential but can be used to make your system more efficient—they speed up disk access, or they make more room in memory, for example. If you learn how to understand and use such features, you can make all your applications run faster.

Data Protection and Recovery Features

DOS includes a number of features to protect the most valuable part of your system—your data. Not only can you take steps to prevent data loss in the event of a catastrophe, you can also recover much of your data after the fact. The danger lies in not knowing *how* to protect and recover your data.

If you've used your system at all, you have probably already discovered how easy it is to delete the wrong files, format the wrong

disk, or spill something on a diskette. You've probably also heard of viruses, although you may not realize how vulnerable your system is to a virus attack, how you can prevent them, and how to recover from them. You also have to worry about hardware malfunctions, software malfunctions, fire, flood, earthquakes, theft, vandalism, power surges . . . you get the message.
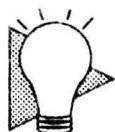
About This Book

This book is designed to help you learn the latest version of DOS— DOS 5. It is intended for people who have never learned anything significant about DOS before, no matter how long they've been using a computer and other software. This book doesn't cover all of DOS. But it shows how to use the most important and useful features. When you have finished the book, you'll have much better control over your personal computer and your data. And you'll be better prepared to use the DOS 5 documentation to learn about advanced features.

Assumptions

This book makes some basic assumptions about your system, which are:

▲ You have at least one hard disk, it has been prepared for use, and it is named drive C:. If you have more than one hard disk drive, that's okay. No other hardware assumptions have been made. You may or may not have a mouse. Any size diskette drive(s) and any type of monitor will do.

▲ DOS has been installed on your hard disk, on drive C:, in its own directory named DOS. As long as you (or another person) installed DOS 5 using its own Setup program and didn't override the default drive and directory name, this assumption will be true.

TIP

Throughout this book, this icon signals a *tip*. It indicates an important piece of information that we want to highlight because it can save time and money, make life easier, and/or protect your data. This particular tip is: If you haven't installed DOS 5 on your computer yet, Appendix A contains some helpful hints about how to go about it.

How to Use This Book

Self-teaching guides do more than present information—they help you learn it. The material in this book is presented in a sequence that promotes a gradual but steady increase of knowledge and skills. For example, by the end of Chapter 1, you'll be able to boot, start up the DOS shell, use menus, dialog boxes, and the onscreen help system, exit the shell, and shut down your system safely. By the end of Chapter 2, you'll be able to format diskettes, unformat them again, and make backup copies. The succeeding chapters continue to build your repertory of useful procedures.
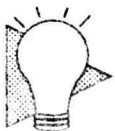
TIP

Read this book in sequence unless you're in an emergency situation and need to know how to solve a problem right away. The step-by-step format and exercises will help you gain the maximum skills. If you do have an emergency, the index or table of contents should help you find the section you need.

Guided Steps

As you study the text, you'll encounter numbered practice steps such as the ones that follow. These steps guide you in trying out each new procedure at your keyboard. For example:

1. When you see guided steps, take the book to your computer (but not right now). You might find it easier to study the book at your computer, if that's possible.
2. Do each step carefully. Read the entire step first, then try it.
3. If the results aren't what is described, restart the entire procedure. You might have missed or misread a step.

The guided steps take time and you may find that you want to skip them. You are encouraged not to skip them for two important reasons:

▲ There's less chance of your missing or misinterpreting something that's important.
▲ Your monitor will display the object being discussed so that you can see it while you read about it.

CHECK YOURSELF

At the end of every major topic you'll see a "Check Yourself" section where you can bring together all the detailed steps you have learned into one smooth (we hope) procedure.

The "Check Yourself" sections contain less detailed instructions than the guided steps. This is your chance to see if you have learned what you need to know about the topic. Almost all "Check Yourself" practices are meant to take place at the computer.

ANSWERS

If you need some help during a "Check Yourself" practice, look in the "Answers" section for detailed instructions. You might also want to refer to earlier guided practice steps.

PRACTICE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

Each chapter has one final "Practice What You've Learned." This section lets you review and practice the procedures you have
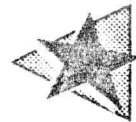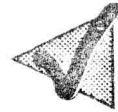
learned in the chapter. It also brings together separate topics from the chapter into meaningful procedures.

ANSWERS

By the time you reach the end of the chapter, you shouldn't have any trouble with the procedures in "Practice What You've Learned" if you have followed all the guided steps and "Check Yourself" practices. But if you do encounter a problem or forget a detail, the "Answers" section reminds you how to do each procedure.

Getting Additional Help

As you work through the book, and especially when you've completed it and are using DOS on your own, you may find that you need more help. We can neither predict all your questions nor anticipate all the variations of hardware and software that might combine to create unique problems in your system.

If you need additional help, a number of resources are available. You might want to try them in the order shown:

1. This book: Try the glossary and the index.
2. The online help system for the DOS shell, which you'll learn about in Chapter 1.
3. The DOS 5 documentation.
4. Any filename that ends with .TXT in your DOS directory. These .TXT files contain information not included in the DOS 5 documentation. Chapter 4 shows you how to view and print files.
5. A friend or colleague who knows DOS.
6. Your hardware or software dealer.
7. The Microsoft technical support system. Microsoft has a large staff of knowledgeable people who can answer your questions and guide you through problem solutions by phone. If you can't find the correct phone number in your DOS 5 documentation, you can call directory assistance in Redmond, Washington (206–555–1212) and ask for Microsoft's technical support

number. When you call technical support, you'll get a recorded message telling you what phone numbers to call for help with MS-DOS.

WARNING

This icon signals a *warning*. Ignoring it could result in damage to your system or data. In this particular case, the warning is financial: Microsoft charges for its technical support. The recorded message explains what the cost will be.
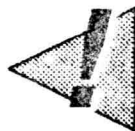
Conventions

This book uses a number of typographical conventions to make certain types of information clear.

italics   Information in italics is generic information that is meant to be replaced with specific text when the command is used. For example, when you see the expression DIR *drive*, you are supposed to substitute a drivename for *drive*. If you want to see the directory of drive C:, for example, you would enter DIR C:.

TIP

Italics are sometimes used in regular text paragraphs for emphasis or to indicate a new term.

ALL CAPS   All caps indicate text you must type on your keyboard. You can type it in uppercase, lowercase, or a mixture of both. Drivenames, commands, directory names, and filespecs are also shown in all caps.

[Square brackets]   Information in square brackets is optional. For example, when you see DIR [/P], you may or may not add the expression /P after

DIR. Optional information is not completely arbitrary, however. If you add /P to a DIR command, it has a different effect than DIR alone.

. . . Three dots mean that something is repeated. For example, when you see the command MIRROR *drive* [. . .], you can enter more than one drivename after the word MIRROR.

| A vertical bar indicates a choice between two options. For example, the expression BREAK ON | OFF means that you can enter BREAK ON or BREAK OFF.

Key+key Two or more key names connected by a plus sign are meant to be pressed simultaneously, similar to a chord on a piano. Usually the first key is a shifting key (Ctrl, Alt, or Shift) and the other is a function key (F1–F12) or a character key such as A, 1, or *. For example, Ctrl+C means to hold down the Ctrl key while you press C. Ctrl+Alt+Delete means to hold down both Ctrl and Alt while you press the Delete key.

Key,key Two or more key names connected by commas are meant to be pressed in sequence. For example, Alt,F,O means to press first the Alt key, then the F key, then the O key.

Overview of Appendixes

This book includes several appendixes you might find helpful. Appendix A will help you install DOS if you haven't already done so. Appendix B helps you use the DOS full-screen editor, which you might need to create and modify ASCII text files if you don't have a word processor with ASCII capabilities (of if you don't know how to use them). There is also a glossary to help you with unfamiliar terminology.

Acknowledgements

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