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Apple File Exchange: A Description (Discontinued)

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Overview

Apple File Exchange (AFE) is an application that lets users:

- copy files and directories from one file system to another
- convert files from one file format to another
- transliterate the characters in a file from one character set to another

AFE copies files among three file systems: Macintosh, ProDOS, and MS-DOS.

System Requirements

Apple File Exchange runs on any Macintosh that supports double-sided disks. If you want to use Apple File Exchange to read and write MS-DOS disks, your Macintosh must have a SuperDrive installed.

Apple File Exchange is not compatible with any operating system beyond System 7.1. You should use PC Exchange to get the same file translation capabilities in operating systems after System 7.1.

Advantages of Apple File Exchange

For developers writing translation routines, AFE has important advantages over other file conversion utilities:

- It performs batch translation of dissimilar files. Files of different types can be translated in a single operation
- It can move files between Macintosh disks, 800K ProDOS disks, and 5.25-inch MS-DOS disks.
- It is generally available.
- It provides a consistent, easy-to-use human interface for all translations.
- It provides a framework that allows quick development of new translation routines. Apple File Exchange handles the user interface and provides file system calls that are the same for all file systems. This frees developers to concentrate on actual file conversion.

Translators

A translator is a routine invoked by AFE when it copies a file. These routines are used to convert a file from one format to another. As part of translation, translators may also transliterate a file -- that is, convert the printable characters in the file to the equivalent characters in another character set.

Although AFE includes several built-in translators, most translators are produced by independent software publishers. The built-in translators perform a number of fundamental translations, such as converting text files from one file system to equivalent text files on another. All other translations are performed by translators that are separate from AFE.

All translators, with the exception of the fundamental translators built into AFE, are kept in translator files in the Apple File Exchange folder.

Translator Menus

Translations are performed using selection menus, or translator menus.

Translator menus are the AFE menus that display currently available translators. Depending on the disks currently selected, AFE displays either one or two translator menus:

- If the file systems of both the source and destination disks are the same, there is only one translator menu. The Mac-to-Mac menu is an example.
- If the file systems of the source and destination disks are different, there are two translator menus. One menu contains translators that handle translations from the first file system to the second (for example, Mac to ProDOS), while the other menu contains translators that handle translations in the opposite direction (for example, ProDOS to Mac).

Active and Inactive Translators

The translators shown in translator menus are either active or inactive.

- Active translators are those that Apple File Exchange will attempt to use when translating a file.
- Inactive translators are those that Apple File Exchange will not attempt to use when translating a file.

Users activate and deactivate translators by selecting their names in the menu. Selecting an active translator makes it inactive, while selecting an inactive translator makes it active. An active translator is shown with a check mark to the left of its name in the menu.

General-purpose and Special-purpose Translators

Each translator menu is divided into parts:

- At the top of the menu are special-purpose translators. These translators are used in cases where either the source file format or the destination file format is used by a limited range of applications. Except in very rare cases, translators written by suppliers other than Apple will be special purpose translators (for example, MultiMate to MacWrite).
- If translators have been imported to this menu from another menu, they appear in the middle of the menu.
- At the bottom of the menu are general-purpose translators. These convert file formats used by a wide variety of applications to other widely-used formats. One example is a translator that converts text files from one file system to equivalent text files on another file system. Another possible example would be a translator for encrypting files. Except in very rare cases, the only general-purpose translators will be those that are built into Apple File Exchange.

The parts of the translator menu are separated by dotted lines. Special-purpose translators are shown in alphabetical order, while general-purpose translators are arranged by their resource ID numbers.

General-purpose translators have two important limitations that distinguish them from special-purpose translators:

- They can't be imported into other menus.
- In the dialog box that allows the user to select a translator when more than one translator can translate a file, general-purpose translators are not shown. It is assumed that one or more of the general-purpose translators can translate any file.

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