

Mastering Your Master Menu

How to customize it for word processing and more

by William Murdick

For some time, Kaypro 16s, 10s, the Robie, and some versions of the 2X came with a Master Menu (MASMENU) system—the 16 (hard disk) still does. When the owner of one of these Kaypros turns on the machine (or puts a disk in drive A in the case of the 2X), instead of displaying the A0> prompt, the computer lists things it can do: word processing, spreadsheets, utilities, and so on.

If you move a highlighted bar to one of the categories and hit RETURN, you're given a sub-menu of all the programs that fall into that category. Then you select a program to run.

But what if you get new programs you want to add to the lists in sub-menus, or what if you want to create a customized Master Menu for workers in your office? This article is a tutorial on how to modify your Master Menu so that it will match the contents of your program disks. As an example, we will modify the word processing portion of the MASMENU on a Kaypro 10 to list different word processing-related programs. The same principles apply to altering MASMENU on an MS-DOS computer, except some of the filenames are different. When there is a difference in a procedure under DOS, I'll insert a comment to let you know. If you study the structure of the Model Menu, you should be able to apply the principles explained here in other ways.

Master Menu includes the programs MASMENU.COM, MASMENU.TXT, MASMENU.DAT, and MASPREP.COM. The first thing you should do is copy MASMENU.TXT and MASMENU.DAT onto a backup floppy disk before experimenting. Even if you're working with a floppy drive system, *make the backup*. If anything goes wrong you can restore the original menu system and start again. If you don't already own the set of Master Menu programs, ask your dealer for them. MASMENU will work on a Kaypro 2 with single-sided disk drives, so having massive disk storage isn't a requirement.

The basic process

In the primary work area of your disk—A0 for CP/M or the ROOT directory for DOS—you will find the various files used to create the Master Menu. The MASMENU.TXT file is the one you'll rewrite, using WordStar and the format I will show you. You will then run the MASPREP.COM program, which converts the content of your MASMENU.TXT file into a MASMENU.DAT file. MASPREP also locates any "fatal" typing errors on your part, displaying appropriate error messages.

The data in the MASMENU.DAT file is used by the MASMENU.COM file (MASMENU.EXE for DOS users), which is the main program that runs every time you first put a disk in drive A or reset your machine. When you're finished creating your new Master Menu, you can remove MASPREP.COM and MASMENU.TXT, leaving only MASMENU.COM and MASMENU.DAT (and one other small but important program explained later, PAUSE.COM).

Master Menu is divided into three vertical panels and one thin horizontal panel at the bottom. The left vertical panel lists categories of programs available to run on your computer. These include spreadsheets, word processing and telecommunications programs, utility operations (disk directories, copying disks, making backups, etc.), and software tutorials. The middle panel is for sub-menus, and the right-hand panel contains a description of the function or operation selected in the left or middle panel. The bottom horizontal panel is where you are prompted to enter document names, disk drive designations, and wildcard options with utilities like D.COM and STAT.COM.

Menu layout

I've provided a "Model Menu" to illustrate the possibilities. The Model Menu replaces the portion of your original Master Menu that deals with word processing. The new section will produce a category label, "word processing," in the left panel and, when you select this

item, a listing of the following programs in the center panel:

XtraKey
WordStar
The Word+
Word Count
Number
Crypt
SaveKey
Xscreen
Type-it

I have numbered the lines in the Model Menu for easy reference. (*Ed. note: The Model Menu listing can be found below. Enter it exactly as shown, except for the line numbers.*) In the following section, I will draw your attention to certain lines (by their number) in order to make some explanatory comments. Though the Model Menu begins with "word processing" in the left panel, your real MASMENU.TXT must retain the introductory text and any programs that precede or follow the word processing section.

LISTING 1: MODEL MENU

```

1  --
2  -- Word processing menu
3  --
4  "Word Processing"
5  "This option leads to a sub-menu that contains
6  programs to meet your word processing needs."
7  {
8      "XtraKey," 0
9      "Keyboard macro program. WordStar key
10     definitions are automatically loaded."
11     **
12     Xtrakey wsfile
13     **
14     WordStar," 0
15     "Word processing."
16     **
17     b:
18     a:ws $"Document name:"
19     **
20     "The Word+," 0
21     "Checks your document for spelling and typo
22     errors. IMPORTANT: when entering the
23     document name, type B: in front of it if
24     the document is on Drive B."
25     **
26     tw $"Document name:"
27     pause
28     **
29     "Word Count," 0
30     "Counts words in a document. Type B: in
31     front if the document name if the document
32     is on Drive B."
33     **
34     wc $"Document name:"
35     pause
36     **
37     "Number," 0
38     "Numbers lines in a document. Type B: in
39     front of the document if the document is
40     on Drive B."
41     **
42     number
43     **
44     "Crypt," 0
45     "Encrypts your document so that a password
46     is needed to decrypt it. An encrypted

```

```

47     document printed or edited will appear as
48     gibberish."
49     **
50     crypt
51     **
52     "SaveKey," 0
53     "Makes permanent any key definitions
54     established for XtraKey."
55     **
56     Savekey wsfile
57     **
58     "Xscreen," 0
59     "Screen dump to printer or disk."
60     **
61     xscreen
62     **
63     "Type It," 0
64     "Typewriter program for filling in forms
65     and addressing envelopes."
66     **
67     typeit
68     **
69     }
70     --
71     -- Spreadsheets
72     --
73     "Spreadsheet"
74     "This option takes you to a sub-menu with
75     MicroPro's spreadsheet program CalcStar."
76     {

```

Model Menu listing explained

1—Two dashes serve to mark comments in the text file and are a method of leaving notes to yourself for future reference when editing MASMENU.TXT.

4—The "Word Processing" entry is in the left panel. Don't forget the quotes. This is where our Model Menu begins; your MASMENU.TXT will have a good deal of text before and after this point.

5-6—This is explanatory text that will appear in the far right panel.

7—Curly braces are used to delimit the starting and ending points of sub-menus. We indent sub-menu entries by one tab to visually separate them from entries that appear in the left panel. This is strictly for our convenience; the program doesn't care whether you indent or not.

8—This is the top entry in the word processing sub-menu (which appears in middle panel). The comma and zero mean this program is located in user area 0. You would enter the appropriate user area for your own application. DOS users cannot employ this method. In DOS you have to enter the necessary directory-changing commands as part of the command sequence triggered by selecting this entry. See the explanation of line 11 for more information.

9-10—Explanatory text that appears in right-hand panel.

11—Double asterisks partition text that appears on the menu from commands that are executed when that entry is selected. Commands executed by the Master Menu system are the same commands that you would otherwise type on the keyboard. This is where DOS users have to put the necessary commands to change directories if that's required. Error messages produced by MASPREP.COM can usually be traced to missing

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MASTER MENU

asterisks or missing quotes.

17-18—This starts WordStar with drive B as the logged drive. If you prefer drive A to be the initial logged drive, then eliminate line 17. The dollar sign followed by quoted text sets up the prompt for an entry in the bottom horizontal panel.

27—Shows the first use of PAUSE.COM. When you run certain programs, like D.COM and STAT.COM, which display information, the PAUSE.COM program freezes that information on the screen, allowing you to control the return to the Master Menu (by striking any key on the keyboard). Without the "pause" here in line 27, the information displayed at the end of The Word+ would flash on the screen too quickly to read and then disappear as the Master Menu returned.

68-69—If you left out either the asterisks or the curly braces, subsequent programs would attempt to be part of the sub-menu. Needless to say, this wouldn't quite work the way you envisioned.

73—This line is where the next section of the left-hand panel of your Master Menu starts. Yours may not be exactly the same as this example.

Editing MASMENU.TXT

To edit MASMENU.TXT you need to have a copy of it either on floppy disk or where you can get at it with WordStar (if WordStar isn't in user area 0). In any case, you should make backup copies of MASMENU.TXT and MASMENU.DAT. First, start WordStar and at the Opening Menu type N to "Open a Non-document File." Then type MASMENU.TXT and press RETURN.

The text you now see on your monitor should begin with the words "First, we have to define the ever-present cursor prompt." And below that, in quotes, will be the text that appears in the bottom horizontal panel of your Master Menu: "Use the up-arrow . . ." Using your own down-arrow key, move the cursor down to the first "Main menu title," which will be "Master Menu." Start by changing it so that your name appears in the title, e.g., "Susan's Master Menu." As you do your editing, you can use all the familiar WordStar commands, but you must hit RETURN at the ends of lines—there's no word wrap in the Non-document mode. The length of the lines you write is unimportant; I end them before they run off the right side of the screen.

Next, move down to where "Word Processing" appears in quotes. That's the first item to appear in the left panel of the original Master Menu. Delete the section between "Word Processing" and the beginning of the next item in the left-hand panel. Next type in everything that is in our Model Menu listing. Don't enter any line numbers—the first quote mark in "Word Processing" goes in column one. An easier method might be to prepare the new material ahead of time under some other filename, delete the old section of MASMENU.TXT, and then insert the new material with WordStar's ^KR command.

The last step

Having edited MASMENU.TXT, save it and exit to the A0> prompt (^KX). At the A0> prompt, type **MASPREP** and press RETURN. When MASPREP.COM is finished it will return you to the A0> prompt. If the Master Menu system was already running on your computer, press your reset button to load and run your new Master Menu. Otherwise run the YESMENU program (CP/M) and then press RESET. On DOS machines you will need to insert the command MENUSET as the last line of your AUTOEXEC.BAT file if it isn't already there. MENUSET is a DOS batch file that sets up some linkages necessary to run the Master Menu system under DOS.

Once MASMENU is running, check out each entry in the Menu. Read all the text to make sure there are no typing errors. If there are no problems, put backup copies of MASPREP.COM and MASMENU.TXT onto a document disk (in case you want to change your Master Menu again later). Then you can erase them from the program disk.

Finally, copy onto the program disk the various programs listed in your new Master Menu. This article has assumed that all the programs will be in user area 0 for CP/M or in the ROOT directory of a DOS machine. Of

course, you may want to arrange them differently on your own system.

The only real difference in using Master Menu on a floppy-based system like the 2X is that the number of categories, or programs, the menu can reference is limited. Since MASMENU.DAT, MASMENU.COM and the programs they list must all be on the diskette, that makes for a short menu. After all, there's only 390K to work with. Of course, the way around this is to create multiple MASMENU disks—one for word processing, one for spreadsheets, one for programming, etc.

Final words

The Master Menu approach is great for updating a personal system, but it has even wider applications. In an office, for example, it could be used to let data entry clerks perform specific tasks within a data base management program ("data entry" could be listed in the left panel; specific tasks could be listed in the submenu). So what are you waiting for? Master that menu!

William Murdick is an English professor at the California University of Pennsylvania. He runs a Kaypro word processing lab on campus, and he wrote a book on Perfect Writer published by PeopleTalk.

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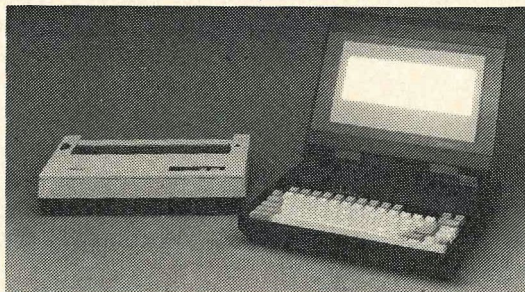
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