

THIS & THAT

by
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Some time back someone asked me what a PDF file was. That person had received a PDF file as an Email attachment and was having trouble opening it to view its contents. I think more should be said about PDF files than I described back then. Ergo...well you get the idea.

I'm going to get just a bit technical here, so if your eyes glaze over, you know, just quietly and deliberately change the page and get on with your life. However if you want to discover a very convenient and little known fact about computer use, stick with me. I think you'll be happy you did.

Adobe is a company that is known for its powerful and important computer programs. They are expensive, and difficult to learn, but they are the very top of the line in image processing. One of the important programs Adobe provides is named "Adobe Acrobat Reader." Oddly enough, it's free, and can be downloaded from Adobe's Web site by using the following URL:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readtep2.html>.

If you want to view PDF files, you will need a copy of the Adobe Acrobat Reader program installed on your computer.

Ah, you ask, what is a PDF file? Well,

every file has three (sometimes four) letters at the end of its name...just after a period (.) symbol. These letters are called the file's *extension*, and are used to describe, to the computer, the way in which the information contained inside the file is formatted. Programs that can decode that format, will open and show you what's inside. Programs that can't decode that stuff will return a "Cannot Open" message indicating that you can't use that program to view the file.

The PDF (which is short for Portable Document Format) file format was developed by Adobe expressly for the purpose of allowing computer users to send files between different computers and guarantee that when their content is printed, it will appear exactly the way it does on the sender's computer.

This format problem is not an issue when you send pictures and music between computers. Picture and music programs go to a lot of trouble to keep the information inside them uniform across programs and computers. But when it comes to word processing documents, there can be big differences between the way a file appears between computers. That's where Adobe, and PDF files come in handy.

Let's say you create a word processing document using Corel's Word Perfect program, and you send it to someone who has a different version of that program, or doesn't use it, rather they use Microsoft's Word program. How do you view the document? And too, word processing text formats, even using the same program, are also dependant on the the actual printer being used. The way a document appears on your computer may be quite a bit different from the way it shows on

your friend's computer.

Adobe recognized this, and developed a file format designed to capture your document the way it appears on your printer. When a file like that is printed, using the Adobe Acrobat Reader program, on your friend's computer, the result will match what you see on your computer.

If this feature sounds like something you might want to have, read on.

You can download a PDF File Creator program, free of charge, from the internet by going to <http://sourceforge.net/projects/pdfcreator>. Select the

PDFCreator-0_8_0_AFPLGhossript.exe copy to use on your computer. When you install this program, it will appear as a new PDFCreator printer on your computer's list of printers; which you can select when you print a file from any program.

When you print something to a PDF file, it doesn't go to your printer. Rather, it goes, in the PDF printed file format, to a file that you name and is saved in a folder of your choice; all on your hard drive.

When you want to print that file, just start your Adobe Acrobat Reader, use the File/Open function to gain access to that PDF file, then use the File/Print (to printer) function of the program to print it out on an actual printer.

If you do things this way, your friend will see on his or her computer exactly what you see coming from your computer.

Now, where this really comes in handy is when you want to have copies made of your word processing document at an office services place like Kinko, Staples, Office

Max, Office Depot, and the like.

If you email your PDF formatted document, or burn and bring a CD with the file on it, to one of those places, they can use that file to create your copies. The result is clearer copies that match exactly, in appearance, the way they looked when you created them.

I told you this would be a bit technical. Here's what to do now...Send this article to a friend. It serves several purposes; two of which are:

1. Passing on good, useful information, and
2. Giving someone a non-habit forming but very powerful sleep inducer.

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