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Thank you for your enquiry about SIGNWRITER. If we know that you have access to an IBM-compatible computer and an Epson-type dot-matrix printer, there should be a **free demonstration disk** enclosed here for you to try. If there is no disk, but you do have suitable hardware, please ask for one. Most of what follows applies to all versions of the programs, and any differences in the Apricot, Amstrad PCW, or BBC versions are explained below.

Like all software publishers, Wight Scientific are constantly struggling to achieve a good balance in our programs between power and ease of use. Because we made our reputation selling programs to research scientists all over the world, our first priority is top value for money, rather than slick packaging. So, no glossy leaflet -- just plenty of facts about SIGNWRITER:-

SIGNWRITER is a combination of four programs:
1) a typographical word-processor for inputting signs (SIGNIN)
2) a character-printer for putting dots on paper (SIGNOUT)
3) a CAD program for creating and editing characters (DESIGN)
4) some number-crunching to prepare fonts for printing (FONTCALC)
in one innovative package that an individual or a small business can afford.

SIGNWRITER's main use is for showing information neatly at a distance, as in:
- special-offer notices, price tickets, etc. in shops
- signs at exhibitions
- hazard warnings in laboratories
- travel announcements
- community notice boards
- political posters
- labels on packages
- theatrical posters
- overhead transparencies, etc.

It is also a valuable graphic design tool, for example:
- to create company logos, letterheads, etc;
- to position dry-transfer lettering accurately;
- to rough-draft advertisements, highway signs, etc.

It offers an entry into desk-top publishing, particularly in:
- text using foreign alphabets, special symbols, etc;
- low-budget newsletters, e.g. for voluntary organizations.

And it has many specialized uses, such as putting slogans on T-shirts or neatly displaying the results from other computer programs.

SIGNWRITER stores the outlines of its characters as a series of lines and curves. While printing it calculates each character's outline to the nearest dot that the printer can put on paper and prints every dot within that outline. So its characters are crisp and dark, and their outlines stay smooth no matter how large you make them; in fact **THE BIGGER THE BETTER.** You can print the characters any size you want, not just choose among a limited number of fixed sizes. And characters can be much more complex than mere letters and numbers.

Let us consider each part of SIGNWRITER in turn:

SIGNIN is a specialized text-editor, which asks a series of simple questions to let you define the content and layout of a sign. It takes care of typographical details (proportional spacing, justification or centering, etc), lets you enter special characters or take its input from a text file, helps you revise a sign, etc. SIGNIN is simple to use at an elementary level, yet allows access to many advanced features. It does not display the whole sign graphically on screen, so the quality of the ultimate output on paper is not compromised to fit the limited size and resolution of video displays. Specialist users can even bypass SIGNIN altogether and write their own programs to input signs.

Printers: SIGNWRITER comes ready to work with any Epson-type (i.e. IBM Graphics Printer compatible) 8-pin dot-matrix printer. By changing a configuration file you can make it drive most other printers; the range supported is being widened all the time. Explicit instructions are currently provided for 24-pin Epson, some Oki, Toshiba 24-pin, Printronics MVP, HP Laserjets, and a few others. First-generation laser printers with limited memory can print only a tiny area in high resolution; a full A4 page needs a Laserjet Plus compatible. The best printer we have yet tried is the NEC P660, a cheap 24-pin dot-matrix machine, fast in its 180 x 180 dots per square inch Epson LQ emulation, with exquisite quality in its slow 360 x 360 mode.

Support: Wight Scientific has an excellent track record of support to its program users all over the world. We listen to suggestions from users, if you have a problem we try to be helpful, and if you find a bug we jump! The programs are written to allow plenty of scope for future development. SIGNWRITER has already been enhanced substantially since its launch in April 1986 and the process has a long way to run still. The price includes one free upgrade, and subsequent upgrades cost £5 each.

Fonts: SIGNWRITER comes with one all-purpose, medium-weight, sans-serif, upright font. It contains most of the letters, numbers, punctuation, symbols, and foreign letters in the IBM PC's "extended ASCII" character set, so you can print most European languages and technical texts. Here is a sample printout, exactly as it came out of a 2-year-old, much-used Epson RX-80 with a part-worn ribbon:

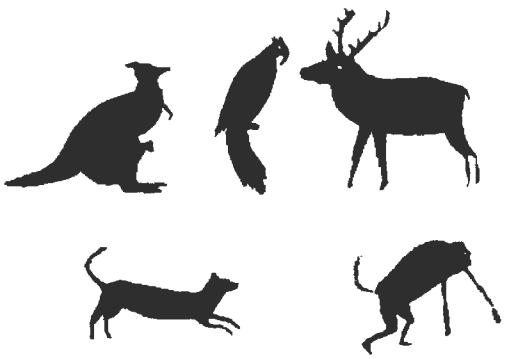
This little sign shows how signs can go sideways and also how the characters stay legible, though less pretty, down to the very tiniest sizes:

IF
you
can
keep
your head
when all around
are losing theirs,
you don't know what's going on my friend.

Other fonts are available at £5 each: Romefont, Handfont, and Zoofont.
Bold-, Olde-, Hbrw-, Grek-, and Arab-fonts are in the pipeline.

ROMEFONT

Wight Scientific
is pleased to announce that
Handfont
is ready



This was printed on an HP LaserJet Printer

How to order SIGNWRITER:
Available direct from Wight Scientific or from your dealer. Our prices:

IBM PC-compatible or Apricot	£80 + VAT
Amstrad PCW8256	£49.95 including VAT
BBC	£29.95 including VAT

These prices include delivery by post. Several foreign-language (IBM PC) editions are available too. Dealer enquiries welcome.

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SIGNOUT prints the sign by putting dots on paper. This takes several minutes for a typical sign -- though you can request a much faster low-resolution or reduced-size printout to get an idea of what a sign will look like. SIGNOUT can print across or down the paper, up to the full width of your printer's carriage, and can produce mirror images, white on black, frames, etc.
DESIGN lets you examine individual characters on the screen, to modify their outlines or create new characters. You could produce an entire foreign alphabet or your business logo and then be able to print them any size for evermore. DESIGN has facilities normally found only in expensive computer-aided-design packages, e.g. rotating, scaling, mirror imaging, and merging characters. SIGNWRITER's way of storing character outlines is fully explained, if you are interested, and ultimately you have full artistic control over what you print.
Quality: SIGNWRITER is "instant" by comparison with a trip to a typesetter or buying and sticking down dry-transfer lettering, but it still takes practice to make signs look really professional. Something simple, like a one-line banner saying "This way to the Exhibition" might literally take you only 2 minutes to input, whereas composing a neat multi-line advertisement full of unusual symbols might take you several hours of struggle, looking at proofs and making fine adjustments. And learning to use DESIGN effectively takes practice, too.

SIGNWRITER's output is not appropriate where people are going to peer closely at characters and compare them critically with expensive typesetting, but its quality is still remarkable. Most Epson printers put 120 dots to the inch across the page and 216 to the inch down, whereas laser printers typically put 300 to the inch and typesetting is equivalent to something like a thousand. By photographic or photocopy reduction of large characters you can make the dots disappear, till the only imperfections visible are in the quality of the font and the layout (which are ultimately under your control).
Competitors: There are many other "presentation graphics" packages, often complementary to SIGNWRITER rather than directly competing. For example, some programs define their characters as groups of dots on a rectangular matrix (e.g. Fancy Font, Fontrix, Polyprint, and the font packs of laser printers). In general they are typographically less powerful than SIGNWRITER, offer only fixed sizes of character, do not let you design your own characters, and give poor contrast and ragged outlines on large characters. On the other hand, they offer a wider range of fonts and funny pictures off the shelf, and on small characters their quality of output can look excellent. Other presentation graphics programs make an IBM PC's screen look a bit like a Macintosh (Gem, Windows, Newsroom, Clickart, etc.). They let you haul images around on the screen in a way that SIGNWRITER cannot match, but once again their ultimate output of large characters on paper is disappointing.
IBM PC version: The master version of SIGNWRITER runs on IBM compatibles with DOS version 2 or later and at least 128K of memory. One sign can have up to 100 lines, each with up to 70 characters. Sign inputting and outputting puts only text on the screen, so it works with any display adapter. However, to see what happens on-screen while DESIGNing characters you need a graphics display. The standard version requires a Color/Graphics Adapter or equivalent, as found in most "clones". The Hercules monochrome graphics board needs a special version of DESIGN; if you have a Hercules, please mention it when you order.
Apricot version: Available now with the same features as on IBM-type machines. On-screen design needs a recent BIOS (found in most Apricots and easy to obtain if you do not have it). Normal disks are double-sided; single-sided on request.
Amstrad PCW version: This has essentially the same features as its 16-bit parent, but runs about half as fast, has less sign capacity, needs more disk-shuffling, is specific for the Amstrad printer, has a cruder manual, and lags 1-3 months behind in incorporation of new features. However, its print quality is superb.
BBC version: A 128K quart crammed into a 32K pint pot! Almost all the features of the PC version are there, but the BBC version requires more disk-shuffling, cannot manage such complex signs, and prints out more slowly: a full A4 page that would be a cup-of-tea job on a 16-bit PC is a go-away-and-have-supper job on the BBC! On the other hand, BBC SIGNIN has a full-screen editor, and pop-down menus. It runs on all configurations of disk drives (specify when ordering: 40 or 80 track, number of drives and of sides) and does not use up your precious ROM slots. Works only with Epson-type printers.