

Chapter 1

Easier DOS: The DOS Shell

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DOS comes with an easy-to-use (yeah, right) *shell program*. The word *shell* means that the program insulates you from cold, prickly DOS, keeping you in a warm, fuzzy graphics environment, supposedly making life easier on you. Inside the shell, you can do all the things you could do outside the shell, though everything's easier, thanks to the pretty graphics and fun, shell-like ways of doing things. Okay, so it may not be that easy, but it's free with DOS, so who's complaining?



Remember that all these functions are particular to the DOS Shell program, specifically the one that comes with DOS Versions 5.0 and 6.0. The DOS Shell isn't available with MS-DOS 6.2 onward (which includes Windows 95 and Windows 98). Microsoft no longer offers the program or makes it available.

Starting the DOS Shell

To start the DOS Shell, you type its name at the DOS prompt:

```
C> DOSSHELL
```

Press Enter, and in a few moments you see the DOS Shell program on your screen.

The DOS Shell was installed when your computer was first set up for DOS. If you see a `Bad command or file name` error message, your system was probably set up without the shell. Oh, well.

Do You Have a Mouse?

Let's be serious here: You can get the most from the DOS Shell program only if you have a mouse. You can do things without a mouse, but the shell was really designed with a mouse in mind.

- ✓ If you don't have a mouse, buy one. If you can't afford one, force someone else to buy a mouse for you.
- ✓ This same flawless logic also holds true for Windows: You need a mouse to run Windows.

Quitting the DOS Shell

Okay, you've seen the DOS Shell. La-di-da. To quit the DOS Shell and return to plain old command-line DOS, press F3.

You can also press the Alt+F4 key combination to quit the shell.

If you have a mouse (and you should), you can click the File menu and then choose the Exit menu item.

If you don't have a mouse but would like to use the menus, press Alt+F to *drop down* the File menu, and then press X to quit the shell.

- ✓ The F3 key is compatible with the DOS Shell program offered with DOS Version 4.0 and with an older shell program called the Microsoft Manager. The Alt+F4 key combination is compatible with all versions of Microsoft Windows, used there to close a program or to quit the Windows environment.

Changing the Display in the DOS Shell

You can look at the DOS Shell in a number of ways, all depending on the horsepower of your computer's graphics.

Use the mouse to choose the Options menu by clicking it. Then click Display. If you don't have a mouse, press Alt+O and then type a D. What you see is the Screen Display Mode dialog box, as shown in Figure 1-1. Press the arrow keys to select one of three types of displays: text, graphics, or the number of lines of information on-screen. Click the OK button or press Enter to see the new screen, as shown in Figures 1-2 and 1-3.

Figure 1-1:

Clicking the Display item on the Options menu gives you the Screen Display Mode dialog box.

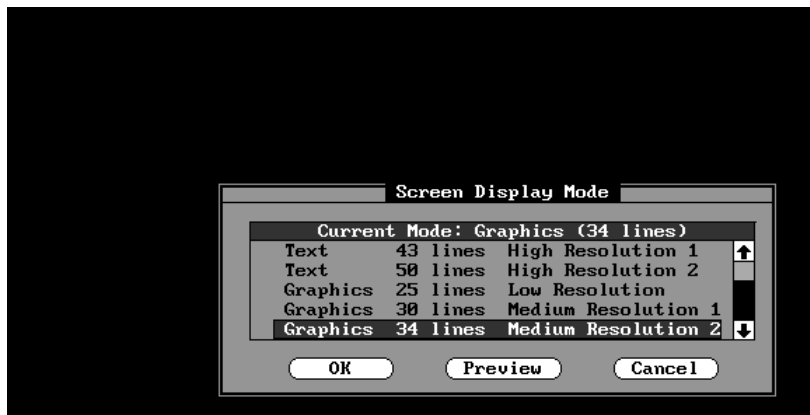
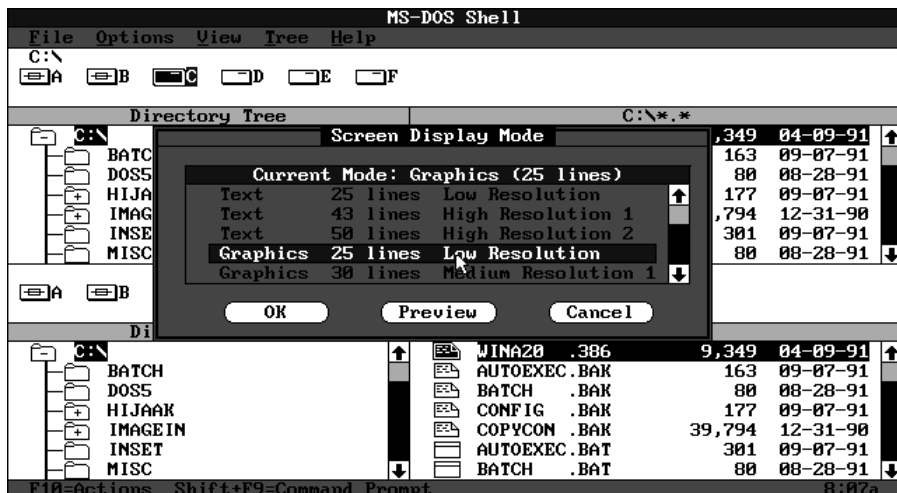
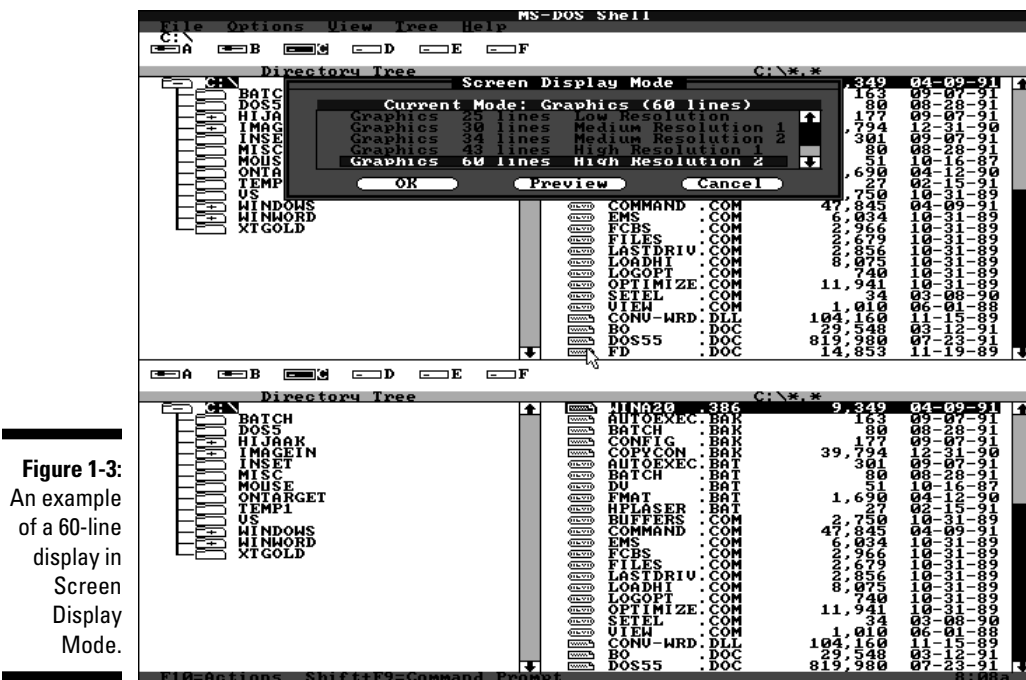


Figure 1-2:

Changing a screen to a 25-line display.





Another way to change the way the shell looks is to change its layout. You do this from the View menu. You activate the View menu by clicking it with the mouse pointer or by pressing Alt+V, as shown in Figure 1-4. Then, you can select from five views:



- ✓ **Single File List:** Shows only files and directories
- ✓ **Dual File Lists:** Shows two sets of files and directories (good for copying and comparing information, as shown in Figure 1-5)
- ✓ **All Files:** Shows only files (good for locating lost files)
- ✓ **Program/File Lists:** Shows files, directories, and a list of programs to run
- ✓ **Program List:** Shows only programs to run



Moving between Different Parts of the Shell

You work in only one area of the shell at a time, which can be frustrating because your eyeballs may be trained on one part of the screen while the computer is “using” another part. Major pain.

To move between each of the different *panels* in the shell, click the mouse in the appropriate one or press the Tab key until that area’s panel is highlighted.

Working with Files

To work with a file by using the shell, you must first select the file. You do this by using the mouse to click the file's name. That action highlights the file's name, letting you know that it's selected.

Copying files

To copy a file by using the mouse, first select it by clicking it. Next, drag the file to the proper subdirectory or disk drive, as shown on-screen. A confirmation dialog box appears; click in the Yes button's area.

To copy a file by using the keyboard, highlight the file by pressing the spacebar. Press the F8 key to copy the file. The Copy File dialog box appears; enter the subdirectory destination for the file.



- ✓ Remember that to copy files by using the mouse, you must first press the Ctrl (Control) key. If you forget to do it, the file is moved and the original file is deleted.
- ✓ To copy a file in the DOS 5 shell, you must hold down the Ctrl key before you click the file. In DOS 6, you don't have to.

Deleting files

To delete a file, highlight it and then press the Delete key. A dialog box appears, asking whether you really want to delete the file. Select the Yes button if you do; otherwise, press Esc.

Moving files

To move a file, hold down the Alt key and then click the file. Using the mouse, drag the file to the destination directory or drive on-screen. A confirmation dialog box appears, asking whether you want to move the file. Click in the Yes area if you do; otherwise, press Esc to cancel.

If you lack a mouse, you can copy a file by first selecting it and then pressing the F7 key. Type a new destination for the file, and then press Enter.

- ✓ In DOS 5, you don't have to hold down the Alt key before clicking the file; just drag the file to move it.

Renaming a file

To rename a file, highlight it and then select the File menu's Rename option: Click the File menu by using the mouse and then click the Rename option. Or, if you only have a keyboard, press Alt+F and then press N.

A dialog box appears, giving you the file's original name plus a cute little box in which to type the new name.

- ✓ You can also use the shell to rename a subdirectory — which is something you cannot do at the DOS prompt. Simply highlight the directory name and then choose Rename from the File menu (as just described). Note that the same rules for renaming a file apply to a subdirectory.

Viewing a file's contents

To peek at a file's innards, highlight the file and then press Alt+F to drop down the File menu; press V to choose View file contents. Alternatively, you can highlight the file's name and press F9. Personally, I find that the F9 key works best.

Note that text files are displayed in a readable format. You can press the up- and down-arrow keys as well as PgUp and PgDn to scroll through the file for your viewing pleasure. (This method is much more enjoyable than tangling with the TYPE command. Ick.)

When you're done browsing, press Esc to return to the DOS Shell's main screen.

- ✓ Unreadable, or "Greek," files are displayed by using the horrid — and I hesitate to mention this subject — *hex dump* format. If this topic pleases you (or impresses your friends), cool. Otherwise, press Esc and hunt down more readable files.
- ✓ This feature is available only in the DOS Shell program that comes with DOS 6.

Finding a Lost File

Finding a lost file in the shell is a snap — much easier than any other way of finding a lost file. Here's what you do:

Click the File menu and then choose the Search item. If you don't have a mouse, press Alt+F and then press **H**.

Type the name of the file you want to find. Press Enter. After a moment, the search results are displayed. The file is listed by using its full pathname, which shows you where on the disk it's located. Press Esc to return to the shell.

- ✓ If the file isn't found, you see the message `No files match file specifier`. Odds are pretty good that the file isn't on that drive. Consider trying another drive; see the following section, "Changing from One Drive to Another," for details, and then try the file search again.

Changing from One Drive to Another

The shell shows you, near the top of the screen, a list of disk drives. Floppy drive A (and B, if you have it) is listed first, followed by drive C and any other hard drives attached to your PC.

To change, or *log*, from one drive to another, press the Ctrl key plus the letter of that drive. For example, to log to drive D, press Ctrl+D; to log to drive C, press Ctrl+C.

- ✓ You can also log to another drive by double-clicking it with the mouse.

Changing from One Directory to Another

To switch directories, you must make sure that the Directory Tree panel is active. Click in that panel by using the mouse or press the Tab key until that area's title is highlighted.

You select a directory by pressing the cursor keys or by clicking once on a directory's name by using the mouse. Any files in that directory are shown in the File panel to the right of the Directory Tree panel.

If the directory has a plus sign by it, it has subdirectories. Click on the directory by using the mouse or press the Plus (+) key to open the directory and list its subdirectories.

Running Programs in the Shell

A program in the DOS Shell can be run in three ways. The first is to locate the COM or EXE program file in the list of files, highlight that file, and then press Enter to run the program.

The second way is to choose the Run menu option on the File menu. Click the word *File*, and then choose Run by using the mouse, or press Alt+F and then press **R** to choose the Run option. Then, type the name of the program to run in the box provided.

The third way is possible only if someone has configured the shell to show a list of programs at the bottom of the screen in the Main panel. Click in that area by using the mouse or press the Tab key until that area is highlighted. Then highlight the name of a program to run and press Enter.

- ✓ You may need someone else to set up the shell to contain a list of programs to run on your computer. This process is one of those things that's beyond the scope of what you need to know, so bug your computer manager or a friend into doing it for you. It really does make running things convenient.

