

Compare Two Documents Copyright 1991 James H. White¹

My COMPARE program is designed to perform word-for-word comparison of WordPerfect documents, what some folks call "legislation- style" document comparison. If you've used Wordperfect's comparison routine (Alt-F5, 6, 2), you're accustomed to phrase oriented redlining, where each document phrase is shown as deleted or redlined. In Wordperfect's comparison, a phrase is a section of text delimited by comma, period, colon, semicolon, question mark, exclamation mark, or hard return. So, if you change one word in a long clause, WordPerfect will show the entire clause struck and then show the entire new clause in red- line.

For most of my work, a word-for-word comparison is more useful than phrase by phrase, and I wrote this utility program to accomplish such comparison. While I wrote it for other use, I was surprised to discover the program was extraordinarily useful for comparing versions of programs.

COMPARE works (mostly) by brute force, with every word in a source document compared with every word in a secondary document to create a giant list of paired pointers. Speed and file size are optimized with a couple of tricks, but the basic approach is still a word-by-word comparison. The resulting pointer list is culled to eliminate criss-crossing pointers and maximize the matches between the two documents. By default, deleted material will be shown in strikeout, added material will be shown in double underline.

How It Works

Once you've unzipped the included COMPARE.ZIP file to a directory of your choice – the files do not need to be in the WordPerfect directory – you will see two files:

- COMPARE.EXE
 - CONFIGCD.EXE
1. Double click COMPARE.EXE and then follow the prompts to specify your two files. You must type the full path and file name for each file.
 2. The program will then prompt you to create a new comparison file. Again, you must type the full path and file name for this file
 3. Now launch WordPerfect and open the comparison file, which you can either preview or print.

The CONFIGCD.EXE utility allows you to specify the method of comparison display. You may select strikeout to designate deleted material, or [brackets], <crooked brackets> or <^> to show that material has been deleted without setting it out at length. For new material, you may select redlining (as in WordPerfect), underlining, double underlining, bold, or you may combine bold with any of the other three designations.

¹ Mr. White, has kindly granted permission to use his software freely and without registration. See the included WHITE EMAILS.PDF file.)

Requirements and Limitations

Documents may be up to 64K in size. This is an intentional limitation to avoid unreasonably long processing times. On the rare occasion when I need to compare longer documents, I split them into smaller pieces and compare the resulting subdocuments.

A hard disk is essential. While the COMPARE program would run from floppy, the amount of disk access would slow the operation down excessively. Also, there must be a fair amount of available space on the disk for the temporary pointer files. How much is needed depends on the size of the documents and the degree of change between the two documents, but as much as a meg might be necessary.

Choose a display option that does not duplicate codes in your original documents.

I think of this version of the program as a "late beta" edition. It works, and works well, but there may be glitches that could show up in documents which contain obscure WordPerfect codes.

Caveats

In documents with limited changes, the program will generate a couple of "File error" messages (882 and 917). These are left over from debugging work and do not affect the operation of the program.

The double underline codes may not work with certain printer drivers, since the printer does not support this typography. If a COMPARE document is retrieved with such a driver selected, WordPerfect will convert these codes to single underline.