

# Automated Flash Cards with Print Shop Ensemble III

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“*Print Shop Ensemble III is the perfect tool for creating flashcards*”

## Introduction

*Print Shop Ensemble III* is the perfect tool for creating flashcards. The easiest way of doing this is to create a Signs/Posters project, landscape-oriented, and include two words within simple Mini-borders. This means that you can create two reasonably-sized flashcards (each of approximately 25 by 9 cm) with one A4 sheet. Mounted on cardboard these can be very effective in the classroom.

The best bet is to create the words by using the Headline object rather than the Text Block, for a number of reasons. In particular, the Headline object enables you to create quite thick letters which can be easily read from the back of the class. These can also be outlined and given varied inside colours.

## A Practical Example

A problem may arise if you have a large number of flashcards which need to be created: for example, a set of the calendar months, opposites, a series of verbs, adjectives or vocabulary words related to one particular topic. The above set-up would require a set of six sheets for the calendar months alone, for instance. Does that mean that you will have to create six separate files on disk, each one with two particular month names? Not necessarily. *PSE3* has a mail-merging facility which can reduce the whole operation to just one file.

Let us stick to the calendar months example for clarity's sake. All you need to do to create all twelve flashcards is one single Sign/Poster

project containing two flashcards. Create a mail-merging list with all the twelve month names, and instruct *PSE3* to do all the hard work, i.e. print the same Sign/Poster six times, each time with different month names on the flashcards. This is very simple to achieve once you know where to look and what to do. It will definitely save a lot of work on the teacher's part.

## Creating a Mail-merge List

Run *PSE3*. Select Signs/Posters, Start from Scratch and a Wide orientation. For Backdrops, select a blank page with No Layout.

You should now have a landscape-oriented blank page. But before proceeding with the creation of the flashcards themselves, we should first create a Name List File. This is a list containing all the twelve month names, so that *PSE3* will be able to read it and create the flashcards automatically later on.

From the Menu bar, select Extras, Edit Custom List. You will see a new requester. From the File menu, select New.

Among a number of things you will now see a line reading Filename: Untitled.LAB. Below this are a number of text boxes marked Line 1, 2, etc. Click on the Line 1 text field, and type in January. Hit the tab key to move to the Line 2 text field. Here, type in February. Click the Add Entry button.

The text fields will now be blank. This is because the first entry (containing two month

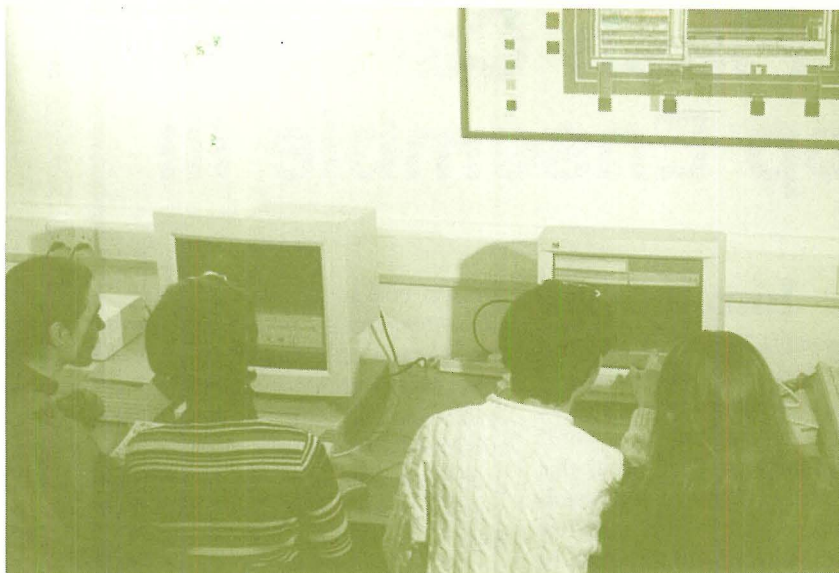


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January

February

*The flashcards may look something like this. Note that since we are using the Headline object, words are stretched accordingly to fit the fixed size. This is ideal for automatic insertion through mail-merge.*



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names) is now in memory, and *PSE3* is prompting you to enter the data for the next entry. In Line 1, type in March, and in Line 2 type April. Click the Add Entry button again, and repeat the operation until all month names have been entered, two per Entry. This last detail is important because we plan to put two flashcards on every A4 sheet. Because of this, we are not going to need the rest of the lines in each of the entries.

When you have finished entering all the months, click the arrow on the right of the Custom List Entry field. You will find a list of six entries, denoted by the first line of each. This confirms that you have entered all the data. We now need to save the list.

From the file menu, click Save As, name the file (ex. Monthnames) and click OK. The list is now ready to be used by *PSE3*.

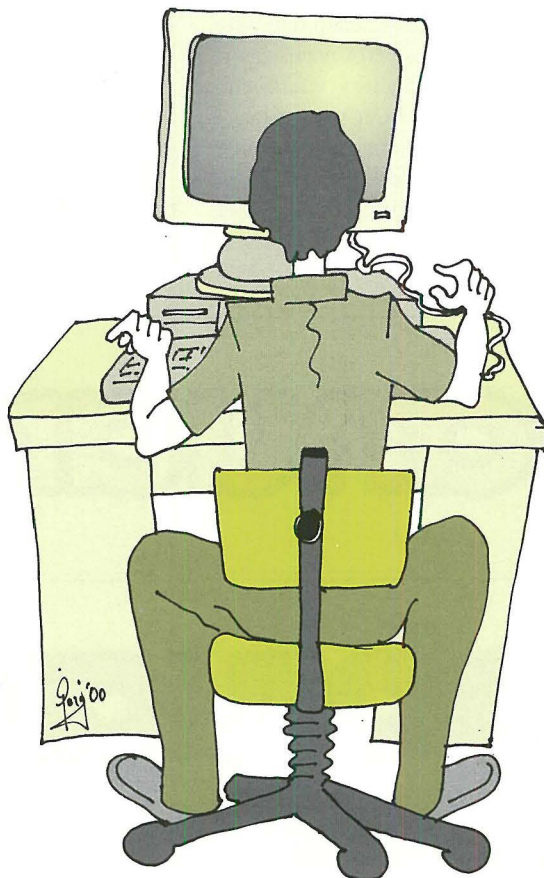
## Creating and Printing the Flashcards

Now that the list is complete, we can proceed in creating the template which will determine the settings of the flashcards. Create a Mini-border by selecting Object, Add, Mini-Border. This will create a Mini-border placeholder at the centre of the page. Double-click it to select

the type of border you need. In our case, a Thin Border should suffice. Resize the border so that it fills up the whole width of the page and approximately half the height. Move it to the upper half of the page.

Create a Headline (Object - Add - Headline). Move it approximately to the centre of the Mini-border, and resize it to take up the space within the border.

Double click to edit it. Select a clear, sans-serif font (one without any embellishments, like Malta, Maltv, Moderne, Arial Black, etc). Set it to Bold. Select Effect 2 and click on Customise. In the new requester, select Thick Outline. Select a text colour other than white and click OK.



Now we will enter the text required. Instead of typing in the text ourselves, we will instruct *PSE3* to find the Custom List we have just saved with the month names, and take the words from there. To do this, click on the button List Merge. Select Line 1. You will note that the first month of the year has appeared automatically on the page.

Now we will repeat the same operation for the second flashcard, on the bottom half of the page. This is much easier to do. On the Edit menu, select Select All. All objects on the page will be highlighted. Again, select Edit and Duplicate. A second copy of all objects will now appear. While they are all still highlighted, drag them down to the lower half of the page. Make sure to drag down all the objects together.

Double click away from the page to deselect all objects. Double click on the Headline in the lower half of the page. Click the List Merge button and select Line 2. The second month of the year should now appear on the second flashcard.

Save your work. The whole operation is now finished. Note that you have only created one Sign/Poster (i.e. one page). When you print the document, though, *PSE3* will print six sheets, and every sheet will have a different pair of flashcards.

There are some points you need to keep in mind. If you load the file during a different session and you use the merge list for other sets of words, you must make sure that you print the right set. Before printing anything, from the Menu go to Extras, Edit Custom List, File, Open and load the required file (ex. Monthnames.LAB). In this way you will make sure that *PSE3* will print the list you really want (by default, *PSE3* will automatically reload the last merge list accessed).

Should you want to print only a selection of the list in the file, go to the File menu and select Print. Click on the List Entries button. From the list offered, select the items you want printed by holding CTRL and click on each selection. Click OK and again OK. In this way *PSE3* will print only the selected flashcards.

## Conclusion

A note about *Print Shop Premier 5*. Although the above still can be done with *Premier* unfortunately there is no way of using the mail merge facility within the Headline object. I cannot understand why this feature has been overlooked. The only place where you can use merge lists within *PSP5* is in Text Blocks. Although this may be satisfactory, Text Blocks do not have the wider range of effects supported by Headlines and the end results may not appear that attractive.

The *Print Shop* files of the project discussed in this article can be downloaded from  
<http://www.geocities.com/norcomm99/>