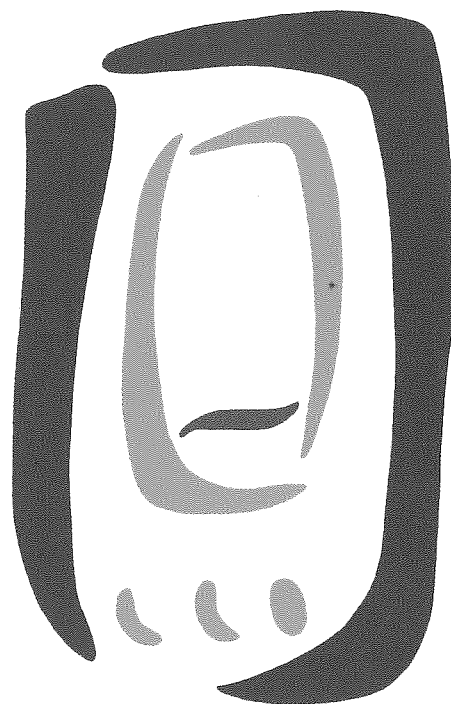


The Little **Palm** Book



Corbin Collins

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Peachpit Press

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Graffiti and the Onscreen Keyboards

A seamless way for humans and computers to communicate has long been the Holy Grail of information technology. Science fiction tells us that we will soon be conversing with our computers like old school chums. And wouldn't it be nice to arrive at work in the morning, tell your machine in your normal voice what you want done, and then go have a coffee while it does your job?

Unfortunately, that sweet little scenario is still quite a ways off. People and computers are vastly different, and it's a struggle to get one to understand anything generated by the other. Simply getting an affordable machine to understand your handwriting turns out to be not at all simple. Apple's Newton was one of the more notable handwriting-recognition failures and was famous for misreading what you wrote. If you wrote, "Hi my name is Bob" the Newton might understand it as "Hit my mane you slob."

That's why the Palm's successful Graffiti writing system is so smart: it doesn't try to bring the mountain to Mohammed. In other words, instead of trying to teach the Palm to recognize the idiosyncratic way *you* write letters and numbers in your normal handwriting, the Graffiti system asks that you learn a simple alphabet that is almost exactly like the one you already know.

Graffiti is the primary way of inputting your writing and data into your Palm, but it isn't the only game in town. Two onscreen keyboards are built into your Palm, one for letters and one for numbers. The keyboards are great in a pinch, especially when you need an extended or accented character, and they are always only one tap away.

The third way of entering text and other data into your Palm is to type it into your regular computer and then HotSync. You'll learn more about that in Chapters 9 and 10.



And actually, there are still other ways to get stuff into your Palm: the \$79.99 GoType keyboard is one. And add-on programs like Jot! that let you use the whole Palm screen as the Graffiti area are another—more on these in Chapter 11.

Learning Graffiti

With Graffiti, you can use the stylus to enter any character found on a standard keyboard. If you write your characters precisely the way Graffiti wants you to, you will be able to write text, punctuation, and numbers into your Palm with 100 percent accuracy. Learning basic Graffiti letters and numbers is easy and fast. Mastering punctuation and extended characters takes a bit longer.



I already mentioned it but it bears repeating: Never use an ink pen or anything else with a hard tip to write on the Graffiti screen. If you can't find your stylus, in a pinch you can use a toothpick (which will also work as a reset pin—and you can store it in your battery door).



At home base—the Applications screen—tap the Graffiti icon to call up the Graffiti practice program (see **Figure 3.1**). The

screen that appears shows a representation of the Graffiti writing area, divided into the letters side and the numbers side. In Graffiti, you write letters on the left side of the little marks, and numbers on the right.

It may seem counterintuitive at first to have to split up numbers and letters, but doing so simplifies the strokes for you and makes it easier for the Palm to understand what you're writing. How? Well, think about how you'd make write the letter "i" and the number "1." Because any Graffiti character should be as simple as possible, a simple downstroke on the screen should be enough to signify an "i" or a "1"—but unless the Palm knows one is a number and one is a letter, you'd have to come up with a slightly different strokes, which would make them harder to remember, which would make the whole system less useful.

Tap the Try It! button to get to the screen shown in Figure 3.2.

Read the screen and tap Next to get to the next screen, where you actually *can* try it (see Figure 3.3).

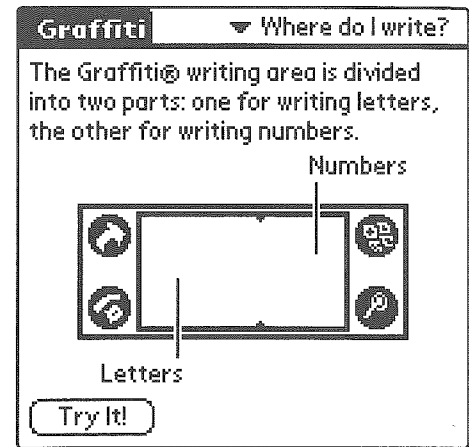


Figure 3.1 The Graffiti practice program starts off by explaining the two sides of the Graffiti area.

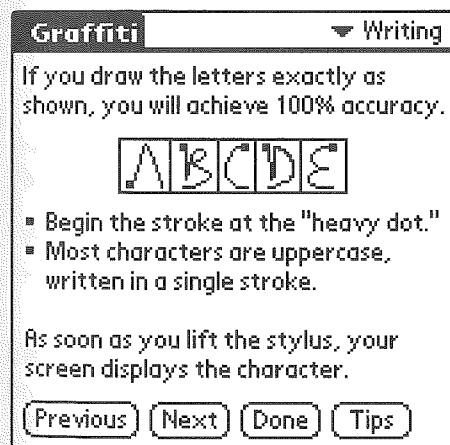


Figure 3.2 Some beginning tips and a peek at the first five characters in the Graffiti alphabet.

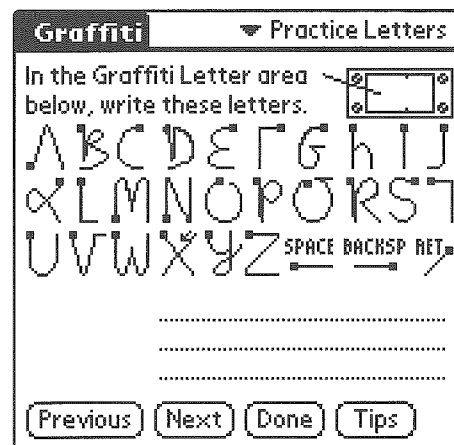


Figure 3.3 Here's where you can practice your Graffiti skills by writing letters.

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