

Enclose a Paragraph in a Box
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You're writing a sales letter, a product brochure or an instructional manual, and you want to do a simple thing: draw a box around a paragraph. The paragraph might be a key point, a major conclusion or an important warning. Whatever the reason, you want to highlight the paragraph by putting it in a box.

The obvious way to put a paragraph of text in a box is to use a graphics box – such as a Figure, Text or User Box. This approach works, but suffers from two major drawbacks: 1. Either you can't see the text or you can't see the box on the document screen, and 2. If you change the amount of text in the box, you must manually change the size of the box accordingly.

A better approach is to use a one-cell table. The concept is simple. Create a table by pressing Columns/Table (Alt-F7), (2) Tables and (1) Create. Type 1 and press (Enter) to set the table to one column; type 1 and press (Enter) to set the table to one row. Press Exit (F7) to return to the document screen. Now you can type your paragraph into the single-cell table.

If you want shading, single lines around the box or a different box width, it's an easy matter to move the cursor into the box. Just press Columns/Table (Alt-F7) and use the table-editing features to make the box look like you want.

This approach has the added advantage that any time you edit the text in the table, the height of the cell will automatically increase or decrease to accommodate new or deleted text.

Furthermore, the box and text always appear on the edit screen. You don't need to jump back and forth between graphics edit and View Document to see how the box will look in your document.

In fact, you could write a macro that creates the single-cell table. Better still, you could write a macro that automatically puts the box (really the single-cell table) around an existing paragraph. That's what the macro discussed below is all about.

Creating the macro

The macro is included as PARABOX.WPM. Be sure to place it in the directory that contains your macros.

Boxing the paragraph

To use the macro, follow these two simple steps:

1. Move the cursor to the paragraph you want boxed. The cursor can be anywhere within the paragraph.
2. Press Macro (Alt-F10), type "parabox" and press (Enter).

This boxes the paragraph. If you want to edit the box, move the cursor into the box (single-cell table), press Columns/Table (Alt-F7) and use one or more of the Table commands to change the width, position, line style, shading, text alignment or any other feature of the box.

If you want to include more than one paragraph in the box, delete the two hard returns separating the paragraphs, invoke the macro, then at the appropriate place inside the box, insert the two hard returns. To indent the paragraph with a tab, be sure to press (Home), (Tab), since you are inside a table.

Understanding the macro

The concept of the macro is simple: it moves the paragraph into the edit buffer with Move (Ctrl-F4) (line 8), creates a single-cell table (line 9), edits the table so all lines are single (line 10) and retrieves the paragraph into the table (line 11).

The macro also does some housekeeping. Lines 2-7 make sure the cursor is in the normal document screen and that text is on the screen. This avoids problems if you try to use the macro in a table or in a text column.

Line 12 searches for the hard return ({Enter}) at the end of the paragraph in the box and deletes it with the {Backspace} command.

Lines 13-15 delete any other trailing hard returns that occur within the box. Here, the command {SYSTEM}Right~ detects the character under the cursor, the command {KTON} (key to number) converts that character to a number and the {WHILE} statement proceeds as long as the number is 32778, which is the number for a hard return.

Thus, lines 12-15 delete all trailing hard returns, assuring that no blank lines occur after the text within the box.

Line 16 then moves the cursor just past the box, and line 17 uses {Cancel} 1 to undelete the just-deleted hard returns.

Thus, the combination of lines 12-15 and 16-17 moves hard returns from inside the box to just outside the box. In line 18, a {Backspace} deletes one hard return so an extra line is not added after the box.

The next time you want a paragraph boxed in, use this macro and get the job done in a hurry.