Making AutoCAD Work Faster (for People Who Don't Want to Learn to Code)

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Who is this person talking to you?

T.J. Meehan AIA, LEED AP

- AutoCAD nerd since 1990 and self-professed "propeller head in training"
- Started my career as an architect (currently president of my local AIA chapter)
- Transitioned to a technology consultant working with architects, engineers, contractors, building owners
- V.P. of Technology Solutions at CADD Microsystems, Inc.
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QUICK POLL: How did you end up in this room?

A)

Every other class was full

B)

I just followed someone into the room

C)

I have no idea...it's Vegas and I'm still on A bender since 9pm last night

D)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the simplest way to build your own functions and take them with you
- Learn how to create dozens of time-saving functions in AutoCAD
- Walk away with a library of hundreds of these functions that you can use
- Understand the differences between script files, LISP files, and PGP files



What are we **NOT** going to cover today?

NO COMPLICATED CODING

- Creating anything more complicated than replicating commands on the command line
- No "IF/THEN" statements, no variables, no anything that looks like this guy wrote it:



From the 1993 film, Jurassic Park, from Universal Pictures

NO FANCY EDITORS

- Editing files in anything other than good 'ole Notepad
- No VLISP editor, no Visual Studio



Image from AfraLISP, www.afralisp.net



What are the **FILE TYPES** we're going to discuss?



PGP AutoCAD Program Parameters



SCR AutoCAD Script



LSP AutoLISP Application

- You can edit these files with any text editing program, such as Notepad
- You don't need specialized software
- Each has a special purpose (we'll get into this in detail)
- You can take these files with you (we'll also get into this)

Program Parameters (PGP) File

Program Parameters (PGP) File

PURPOSE

- Only need 1 of these files
- Part of every AutoCAD Installation
- Sometimes called the "Pig Pen" file
- Main purpose is to remember the "Key-ins" or "Aliases" for the standard commands

Typing in "T" at the command line starts MTEXT command

Typing in "C" at the command line starts CIRCLE command (even though we all want it to be COPY...more on this later)

acad.pgp -	- Notepad		
<u>File Edit Fo</u>	ormat ⊻iew <u>H</u> elp		
	and the second second second second		
; Samp	le aliases for AutoCAD commands		
, These e	xamples include most frequently used comma	ands. NOIE: It is recommended	
; that yo	ou not make any changes to this section of	the PGP file to ensure the	
proper	migration of your customizations when you	upgrade to the next version of	
AutoCAD	. The aliases listed in this section are	repeated in the User Custom	
; Setting	s section at the end of this file, which o	an sately be edited while	
; ensurin	ig your changes will successfully migrate.		
34.	* 3DARRAY		
BOMIRROR.	*MIRROR3D		
3DNavigate	.*3DWALK		
3D0,	*3DORBIT		
3DP.	*3DPRINT		
3DPLOT.	*3DPRINT		
3DW,	*3DWALK		
3F,	*3DFACE		
зм,	*3DMOVE		
3P,	*3DPOLY		
3R,	*3DROTATE		
35,	*3DSCALE		
А,	*ARC		
AC,	*BACTION		
ADC,	*ADCENTER		
AECTOACAD,	*-ExportToAutoCAD		
AA,	*AREA		
AL,	*ALIGN		
3AL,	*3DALIGN		
AP,	*APPLOAD		
APLAY,	*ALLPLAY		
AR,	*ARRAY		
-AR,	*-ARRAY		
ARR,	*ACTRECORD		
ARM,	*ACTUSERMESSAGE		
-ARM,	*-ACTUSERMESSAGE		
e			2
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Replace with LOCATION your product • By default, it is located here: C:\ Users \ **USERNAME** \ AppData \ Roaming \ Autodesk \ **ACA 2020** \ enu \ Support Manage Replace with your username User nterface Palettes Customization 🐖 Import CUI • You can also access it from within AutoCAD Export CUI from the Manage tab on the ribbon 🥳 Edit Aliases 🔹 Catalog Edit Aliases A Edit AutoCorrect List Edit Synonym List



FORMAT • The format is simple... What you want to type in C, *CIRCLE comma, spaces asterisk *

- A semicolon ; denotes a "remark" where you can put in notes
- The number of spaces between the comma , and the asterisk * does not matter (you can use TABs to help)



HOW TO USE

• There are instructions at the bottom of the PGP file...





TIPS / BEST PRACTICES

- 1. Only one PGP file can load in AutoCAD
- 2. Place the **path to your customization folder** in the Support File Search Path higher in the list than the default location to ensure your PGP file loads first (more on this later)
- 3. I suggest you **don't edit the Acad.pgp file that gets installed by default**. Instead, make a copy and place it in your customization folder. There are two reasons for this:
 - 1) the default installation folder is not usually backed up so you could lose your edits
 - 2) having your own folder makes it easier to manage
- If you are not sure which PGP file is loading, you can type following at the command line to know the path...

(findfile "acad.pgp")

The result will add some extra slashes, but you'll know which file is loading...







PURPOSE

- Ideal for saving a series of AutoCAD commands to a text file to run them all at once
- Examples:

Creating all your standard layers in a drawing

File cleanup steps (set Model Space current, Purge, Audit, Zoom Extents, etc.)

- You can build as many as you want and share them
- Script files **cannot access dialog boxes, toolbar buttons, palettes, etc.** They are command line syntax only!

LOCATION

- Script files can be saved anywhere
- Best to centrally locate them for sharing





- Simply text files you can edit in Notepad
- Format is to mimic what you would type at the command line...

COMMAND LINE



SCRIPT FILE





- Just like the command line, an **ENTER** or a **SPACE** count the same
- Notice the **three line returns at the end** to account for the three ENTERs you need to finish the command
- You'll also notice that the -layer command starts with a "-" (dash/hyphen) at the beginning. That's the universal designation to force a command to not use its dialog box but, instead, run completely from the command line. There are many popular commands that support this, including:

-LAYER -PLOT -BLOCK -PURGE And many others

SCRIPT FILE





HOW TO USE

- 1. Type SCRIPT (or even SCR, which is the alias for it)
- 2. Click the "Run Script" button on the "Manage" ribbon



Both methods will open a browse window for you to navigate to your script file



TIPS / BEST PRACTICES

1. Script files are **not version specific**, but occasionally command options or even the entire commands change...

Sometimes it is just the order of the options in the command Make sure you test on new versions of software before deploying

- Careful of extra lines/rows in the script file as each is considered an ENTER (and will repeat your last command)
- 3. If you open your file in Microsoft Word, you can use the **show/hide non-printing marks** button to find them.



4. Since SPACE is considered an ENTER, if you have to type something in that has a space in it (like a layer name), **enclose it in quotes**. For example...

-layer make "Arch Walls" color 4 ltype continuous



TIPS / BEST PRACTICES

5. You don't need to use a separate line for every piece of text. You can keep the entire command and all its options in one line, utilizing SPACE's instead of ENTER's. For example, this script file...

could instead be written this way	-layer make A-Wall	
-layer make A-Wall color 4 ltype continuous	color 4	
Often, people will put an entire command and its options on one line in the script file this way to save space and better see all the commands that are running. (Imagine if you were creating 100 layers how long the script file could be if you didn't place each command on a single line)	Ltype continuous	

AutoLISP (LSP) Files



INTRODUCTION

- Even though AutoLISP is a coding language, **DON'T PANIC**
- We are only going to cover it related to replicating a series of commands that you would type at the command line

A VERY BRIEF HISTORY

- AutoLISP is a programming language used in some of the very first releases of AutoCAD (circa 1986)
- It's a modified version of earlier LISP and XLISP programming languages, both of which designed for "list processing"
- AutoLISP continues to be supported today in all AutoCAD-based products.



From the 2011 film, The Muppets, from Walt Disney Pictures



PURPOSE

- Extremely powerful and can dig deep into entities and the DWG file overall
- Includes its own User Interface (UI) called Dialog Control Language (DCL)
- You can write almost any function in AutoCAD via AutoLISP Gathering user input Querying the entities in the drawing Performing if/then statements and condition loops
- The original LISP language is even the bases for some Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications today





- Just like PGP and SCR files, an LSP file is **just a text file** that can be edited in Notepad
- Instead of a series of commands that all run at the same time (like a SCR file), LSP files **define a bunch of functions** that you run by typing in a command string that you choose
- For an LSP file, the command string looks like this...

```
(command "-layer" "make" "A-Wall" "color" "4" "" "ltype" "Continuous" "" "")
```

For a SCR file, the same command string looks like this (don't forget the two extra spaces at the end)...

-layer make A-Wall color 4 ltype continuous







• The **amount of spaces between the quoted strings does not matter** and you can use that to keep your files clean and readable. For example, if you were going to create several layers, you may format it this way:

(command	"-layer"	"make"	"A-Wall"	"color"	"4"	** **	"")
(command	"-layer"	"make"	"A-Wall-Patt"	"color"	"8"	11 11	"")
(command	"-layer"	"make"	"A-Wall-D"	"color"	"1"	11 11	"")

- One of the great things about the AutoLISP format is that it is **very easy to see exactly what is being typed** in at the command line, including the ENTER's.
- You can **run this format in your script files**, which is what I do to help maintain a clean look.



HOW TO USE

LSP file need to be **loaded in AutoCAD**. There are several ways to do this:



Using the command line by typing (load "MyLISPfunction.lsp")



Using the APPLOAD command, either every time or once and adding to the Startup Suite



Using one AutoLISP file to load another (you can have a LSP file that simply loads all your other ones, that way you can manage 1 file)



Use some built-in functionality with AutoCAD...as we will see in the next few slides





BASICS OF DEFINING A FUNCTION

- We've already discussed how you can write commands in LSP
- Now, let's bundle more than one command together into a function
- Our example is:

Zoom to the extents of the drawing Zoom out 10% Do so with only typing "ZZ" at the command line

• You already know the first 2 parts...

```
(command "zoom" "extents")
(command "zoom" ".9x")
```



BASICS OF DEFINING A FUNCTION

• To bundle these together, we add a start and an end...





ACAD.LSP

- Every installation of AutoCAD looks for a file called Acad.lsp
- But this file is **not installed** with AutoCAD
- We will take advantage of this by creating our own and putting all our LSP functions in it
- More on this later







SEMICOLONS

- Any text on a line written after a semicolon; is ignored
- Used to create notes / remarks
- You cannot have too many of these in your LSP files!
- For example:

```
(command "zoom" "extents") ;Zooms to Extents
```

TESTING VIA THE COMMAND LINE

- Always test your functions on the command line
- You can type in commands directly into the command line
- Some commands change their options depending on what you choose (e.g. -PLOT)



TESTING IN CHUNKS

- If you have an AutoLISP function that you built that you just can't seem to get to work, test it in chunks. You can do this by either:
 - Copying and pasting parts of your code into the command line to make sure they work as expected
 - 2. Add semicolons to remark out some lines of your code, slowly removing them to narrow down which line has the problem



From the 1985 film, The Goonies, from Warner Bros



LETTER CASE

- AutoLISP is not case sensitive
- Best to use upper and lower case consistently
- I tend to use upper case for function names and input values, lower case for every else
- For example, LSP to create standard revision layers...

```
(defun c:REVLAYERS ()
  (command "-layer" "make" "A-ANNO-REV1" "ltype" "CONTINUOUS" "" "")
  (command "-layer" "make" "A-ANNO-REV1" "ltype" "CONTINUOUS" "" "")
  (command "-layer" "make" "A-ANNO-REV1" "ltype" "CONTINUOUS" "" "")
)
```



PERIODS

• Used to force the function to use **native** command, even if undefined

UNDERSCORES

• Used to force the function to use **English** command, even if working in a different language

PAUSE

- If you are using a command that requires someone to pick a point, add the pause text in your function
- For example...

```
(command ". break" pause "first" pause "@")
```



S::STARTUP

- Special function in the Acad.lsp that runs any functions as soon as the file is loaded (on drawing open)
- For example...

```
(defun s::startup ()
  (princ "\n\n...My Custom AutoLISP functions loaded.\n\n")
  (princ)
)
```

- This is a great way to know if your Acad.lsp has loaded
- Notice the princ function which sends text to the command line
 Or a blank line, if nothing after the function
 The \n is just a line break



Setting It Up

FOLDERS AND FILES

Create a folder to hold your new custom files:

- One Acad.pgp file
- AutoCAD Script files
- One Acad.lsp file



SUPPORT FILE SEARCH PATH

For your custom files to be found, they must in your AutoCAD Support File Search Path.

Add this in your **OPTIONS** and move that folder to the top.



SECURITY OPTIONS

Also in your OPTIONS, you can "Load acad.lsp when opening each drawing" from the Security Options button.

	- <mark>19</mark> (Current dra	awing: [Drawing1.dv	vg	
ot and Publish System	n] User Preferences	Drafting	3D Modeling	Selection	Profiles	AEC E
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Examples > Offsets

These functions allow you to offset a preset distance by simply typing in that number. No need to even enter the OFFSET command...

- All values incrementing by 1, from 1 to 30
- All values incrementing by 2, from 32 to 70
- All values incrementing by 12, from 72 to 144
- Standard **stud sizes**:

158 for 1 5/8" 35 for 3 1/2" 358 for 3 5/8" 55 for 5 1/2" 558 for 5 5/8"

(defun	c:1	()	(command	"offset"	"1"))
(defun	c:2	()	(command	"offset"	"2"))
(defun	c:3	()	(command	"offset"	"3"))
(defun	c:4	()	(command	"offset"	"4"))
(defun	c:5	()	(command	"offset"	"5"))
(defun	c:6	()	(command	"offset"	"6"))
(defun	c:7	()	(command	"offset"	"7"))
(defun	c:8	()	(command	"offset"	"8"))
(defun	c:9	()	(command	"offset"	"9"))
(defun	c:10	()	(command	"offset"	"10"))
(defun	c:11	()	(command	"offset"	"11"))
(defun	c:12	()	(command	"offset"	"12"))
(defun	c:13	()	(command	"offset"	"13"))
(defun	c:14	()	(command	"offset"	"14"))
(defun	c:15	()	(command	"offset"	"15"))
(defun	c:16	()	(command	"offset"	"16"))
(defun	c:17	()	(command	"offset"	"17"))

Examples > Zoom

ZA	ZOOM all	(defun c:ZA ()(command "zoom" "all"))
ZE	ZOOM extents	(defun c:ZE ()(command "zoom" "extents"))
ZI	Z00M in 10%	(defun c:ZI ()(command "zoom" "1.1x"))
ZO	Z00M out 10%	(defun c:ZO ()(command "zoom" ".9x"))
ZP	ZOOM previous	(defun c:ZP ()(command "zoom" "previous"))
ZW	ZOOM window	(defun c:ZW ()(command "zoom" "window"))
Z2	ZOOM to 1/2" scale	(defun c:Z2 ()(command "zoom" "1/24XP"))
Z4	ZOOM to 1/4" scale	(defun c:Z4 ()(command "zoom" "1/48XP"))
Z8	ZOOM to 1/8" scale	(defun c:Z8 ()(command "zoom" "1/96XP"))
Z16	ZOOM to 1/16" scale	(defun c:Z16 ()(command "zoom" "1/192XP"))
Z25	ZOOM to 1:25 scale	(defun c:Z25 ()(command "zoom" "1/25XP"))
Z50	ZOOM to 1:50 scale	(defun c:Z50 ()(command "zoom" "1/50XP"))
Z100	ZOOM to 1:100 scale	(defun c:Z100 ()(command "zoom" "1/100XP"))
Z200	ZOOM to 1:200 scale	(defun c:Z200 ()(command "zoom" "1/200XP"))

My all-time favorite is zoom to extents and then back out 10%...

```
(defun c:ZZ ()
  (command "._zoom" "extents")
  (command "._zoom" ".9x")
```

Examples > Views

Functions to let you change your	(defun C:TOP ()(command "view" "top"))
View Direction by typing in the	(defun C:FRONT ()(command "view" "front"))
ontion	(defun C:LEFT ()(command "view" "left"))
option	(defun C:RIGHT ()(command "view" "right"))
	(defun C:BACK ()(command "view" "back"))
	(defun C:SW ()(command "view" "swiso"))
	(defun C:SE ()(command "view" "seiso"))
	(defun C:NW ()(command "view" "nwiso"))
	(defun C:NE ()(command "view" "neiso"))
Functions to let you change your	(defun c:RV0 ()(command "ucs" "world")(command "plan" "world"))
View Rotation by typing in the	(defun c:RV45 ()(command "ucs" "new" "z" "45")(command "plan" "c"))
option	(defun c:RV90 ()(command "ucs" "new" "z" "90")(command "plan" "c"))
00000	(defun c:RV135 ()(command "ucs" "new" "z" "135")(command "plan" "c"))
	(defun c:RV180 ()(command "ucs" "new" "z" "180")(command "plan" "c"))
	(defun c:RV225 ()(command "ucs" "new" "z" "225")(command "plan" "c"))
	(defun c:RV270 ()(command "ucs" "new" "z" "270")(command "plan" "c"))
	(defun c:RV315 ()(command "ucs" "new" "z" "315")(command "plan" "c"))

Examples > Layers

LAYER ON ALL

```
(defun C:LOA ()
  (command "._-layer" "on" "*" "")
)
```

LAYER THAW ALL

```
(defun C:LTA ()
(command "._-layer" "thaw" "*" "")
)
```

Examples > Productivity

BREAK an entity at a point	(defun C:BA ()(command "break" pause "first" pause "@"))
COPY previous	(defun c:CP ()(command "copy" "p" ""))
MOVE previous	(defun c:MP ()(command "move" "p" ""))
Set the FILLET radius	(defun C:FR ()(command "fillet" "radius"))
Set the FILLET radius to 0	(defun C:F0 ()(command "fillet" "radius" "0"))

Examples > File Maintenance

AUDIT

PURGE ALL 4 TIMES

(defun c:PG ()

```
(defun c:AU ()
  (command "._audit" "yes")
)
```

```
(repeat 4
  (command "._-purge" "all" "*" "no")
  (command "._-purge" "regapps" "*" "no")
  (command "._-purge" "zero")
  (command "._-purge" "empty")
)
```

SET ALL ENTITIES TO "BYBLOCK"

```
(defun c:BB ()
  (command "change" "all" "" "properties" "color" "ByBlock" "ltype" "ByBlock" "lweight" "ByBlock" "")
  (command "._regenall")
)
```

)



What Did We Learn Today?





How you can **manage your custom copies** of these files and take them with you



Many examples of great (and simple) LISP functions

What's Next?

DOWNLOAD CLASS FILES

You can download the class files from the AU web site, including

- Sample Acad.pgp file
- Some AutoCAD Script file examples
- One Acad.lsp file with all the LSP examples you saw today plus many more!



SEE OTHER CLASSES

I recommend you go see:

- TR322385
 AutoCAD Scripting Extreme with VBA, Excel, and AutoCAD Core Console
- Presented by Michael Best
- San Polo 3503
- 4:30pm-5:30pm today

There are many other sessions at AU for this topic as well



CONNECT WITH ME

Fee free to reach out to me any time with questions you have on the information presented today.

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You can also usually find me at our booth in the Exhibit Hall for CADD Microsystems.



Questions





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