ILLUSTRATOR WINDOWS HINTS: WORKING WITH THE AIPREFS FILE

The AIPrefs file is a hidden file which saves a large number of updated general preferences when you stop working with Illustrator, and applies them when you start again. The following hints show you how to work with it.

The file comprises more than 2500 lines. Among the countless preference settings are the default font (only up to Version 10; from Version CS on, the default font is specified in the startup files, Adobe Illustrator Startup_CMYK and Adobe Illustrator Startup_RGB, and the change must be done in Window>Type>Character Styles), the general preferences (Alt+E+N/Edit>Preferences in AI10), the settings for new documents (Ctrl+N/File>New in AI10), and the show/hide status of tools and palettes as well as their positions in the working area. Document specific preferences such as Show/Hide Edges (Ctrl+H/Alt+V+D/View>Show/Hide Edges in AI10) cannot be changed within this file.

Except for the default font, all the changeable preferences may be changed while working in Illustrator, so unless you have set the AIPrefs file to Read-only *there may be changes in the settings every time you close Illustrator,* and the settings may change place in the file.
 Unfortunately, corruption of the AIPrefs file may occur, unless you have set it to Read-only; corruption of one or more AIPrefs settings may be the most frequent cause of strange behaviour to break down the workflow; *see Illustrator Windows Hints: When things disappear or become unavailable.*

The AIPrefs file is neither changed nor deleted when you reinstall Illustrator, but you may delete it or modify it at any time *when Illustrator is closed.* The names in the file are case insensitive.

When the AIPrefs file is deleted, the original preference settings are restored at next startup.
 Therefore, *in cases where other means prove ineffective or none comes to mind, the traditional recommendation is to delete the AIPrefs file:* a deletion will remove corrupted settings.
 However, just deleting the AIPrefs file has a serious drawback: you will have to reset all your preferences.
 Luckily, a gentler and more efficient solution is available: reviving the AIPrefs file.
 Furthermore, it may be expedient to be able to switch between different sets of preferences.
 For all these reasons it is worth including the AIPrefs file in the your Illustrator toolbox.

Since the file is hidden and has a long path, *the obvious first step in working with the AIPrefs file is to make a shortcut to the file and its folder:*

CREATING AN AIPREFS SHORTCUT

The AIPrefs file is placed in a folder named after the version: up to version 10 it is Adobe Illustrator X, X = version (Adobe Illustrator 10 in AI10); *from version CS it is Adobe Illustrator X Settings,* X = CS for CS, X = CS2 for CS2, etc; the exact path depends upon the Illustrator and Windows versions. At the same time, the file is hidden. If you have more than one version and/or more than one user, each version/user of Illustrator will have its own AIPrefs file, each placed in the corresponding folder.

Therefore it is convenient to *start by changing the Windows settings to show hidden files and folders,* both in Windows Explorer and in Search; in both cases this belongs to advanced options.

The simplest way to create a shortcut to the folder is to *search for Adobe Illustrator X,* right click, choose *Create Shortcut,* and place it where it is most convenient, maybe on the desktop.

With this, it is always easy to open the folder and create custom and backup AIPrefs:

CREATING AND USING BACKUP AND CUSTOM FILES

The easiest handling of custom and/or backup AIPrefs is obtained by *creating each file placed in a separate subfolder* with a descriptive name, *by simply copying and pasting.*

Whenever it is convenient or necessary *replacing the current AIPrefs file,* this can be done by copying and pasting the desired version from its subfolder. This *must always be done when Illustrator is closed: otherwise the replaced version of the AIPrefs file will recur when you close Illustrator.*

This means that *when you have created an adequate set of backup and custom files you will never have to just delete the AIPrefs file with the subsequent rebuilding of your preferences.*

Ticking Read-only in AIPrefs file Properties, the preferences can neither be changed nor corrupted until you untick; the Read-only property is also copied when pasting.

This will effectively prevent one of the most frequent causes of workflow breakdown. However, it prevents you from changing the settings, and you will often get a message about it when you close Illustrator.

A number of settings are impossible to change although they seem to appear with options in the file; this includes the ButtCap and the MiterJoin in the Stroke palette, the hidden rulers and grid, and the Overprint Fill and Stroke options in the Appearance palette.

As mentioned above, *all the changeable settings in the AIPrefs file may be established by changing preferences while working in Illustrator, except for changing the default font:*

CHANGING THE DEFAULT FONT, UP TO VERSION 10

The original default font in Illustrator is Myriad Roman; its name in the AIPrefs file is Myriad.

However almost all users will improve their workflow by changing the default font; for users who use more than one font on a regular basis it may be convenient to create custom AIPrefs files with different default fonts.

The easiest way of *changing the default font* is to open the AIPrefs file with a text editor such as Notepad or Wordpad, search for the name of the current default font, replace it with the name of the desired font throughout the file, and save the file. This *must always be done when Illustrator is closed:* otherwise the current AIPrefs file will apply when you close Illustrator.

To obtain a successful change of default font, it is crucial to write the font name in a special way, following a rather intricate set of rules which have required a good deal of ingenuity to both establish and recognize:

1) *The name of the font must be written* as it appears in the drop down menu in Illustrator, only *without spaces and without a possibly prefixed font house name* such as ITC;
2) *In some cases it is possible or even necessary to add the font style after a hyphen,* even if it is the default style such as Roman. *In certain cases,* however, *another default style must be substituted for the actual one;*
3) *In other cases it is not possible to specify a font style;*
4) *If no font style is added, the default font style* in the drop down menu *applies;* this is the first style, in most cases Roman or Regular;
5) On occasion, *a font style must also be written without the space if the name is in two words,* such as BoldItalic for Bold Italic.

The following cases show how the rules may lead to viable and non viable font names in the AIPrefs file in quite unpredictable ways:

ITC New Baskerville with possible font styles Roman, Italic, Bold, Bold Italic:
NewBaskerville-Roman: Viable with font style Roman
NewBaskerville-BoldItalic etc: Viable with font style Bold Italic etc
NewBaskerville: Non viable

Times New Roman PS MT with possible font styles Roman, Italic, Bold, Bold Italic:
TimesNewRomanPSMT: Viable with font style Roman
TimesNewRomanPSMT-Roman: Non viable
TimesNewRomanPSMT-BoldItalic etc: Non viable

Palatino Linotype with possible font styles Regular, Italic, Bold, Bold Italic:
Palatino Linotype-Roman: Viable with font style Regular
Palatino Linotype-BoldItalic etc: Viable with font style Bold Italic etc
Palatino Linotype-Regular: Non viable
Palatino Linotype: Non viable

Minion with possible font styles Regular, Italic, Bold, Bold Italic:
Minion-Regular: Viable with font style Roman
Minion-BoldItalic etc: Viable with font style Bold Italic etc
Minion: Non viable

As it appears, *it may be necessary to try more than once to insert a viable font name in the AIPrefs file.*

The only test is to close the AIPrefs file, open Illustrator, open a document, and see which font is ticked in the font drop-down menu (Alt+T+F/Type>Font in AI0); this font is the current default font.

Each time a non viable font name has been tested, Myriad appears as the current default font, and a new line with Myriad will be inserted in the AIPrefs file when Illustrator is closed.

Therefore:

a) *Until you have succeeded in replacing Myriad* with another font, you will have to *search for Myriad;*
b) *Once you have replaced Myriad* successfully and wish to change the font again, you will have to *search for the current default font;*
c) *Each time you have unsuccessfully tried to change the font, Myriad recurs as current default font, and all other font names will appear in additional lines* in the AIPrefs file; you may delete these lines or keep them as reference.

In the search for the font to replace, *the main name in full or in part is sufficient,* such as Myriad, NewBaskerville/Baskerville, TimesNewRomanPSMT/TimesNewRoman/Times.

CHANGING THE DEFAULT FONT, FROM VERSION CS ON

The default font is specified in the startup files, Adobe Illustrator Startup_CMYK and Adobe Illustrator Startup_RGB, and the change must be done in Window>Type>Character Styles.