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%% EGS FAQ                                     By Brian Wright %%
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Welcome to the EGS (Enhanced Graphics System) frequently asked questions document. This document will be maintained as frequently as is necessary when new questions arise. Within this document you will find questions which are generally and frequently asked by people new to the EGS software system. Hopefully some of these questions and answers will help you. If you find that your questions are not answered by this document, feel free to email to the maintainer of this document (the name is located at the bottom of this document).

This document will be primarily used for EGS related questions, but graphic board specific questions as related to EGS may also apply and therefore be included.

#1

Question: What exactly is EGS?

Answer:

EGS is the Enhanced Graphics System developed by Viona Development. It is a retargetable graphics system (via a set of libraries) for use primarily with specific Amiga graphic boards. EGS can also be run on the native Amiga graphics system (ECS, AA (aka AGA), and possibly OCS with enough memory). EGS is mainly licensed by specific graphics board manufacturers for inclusion with their graphics boards (for example, Spectrum and Piccolo both use EGS). EGS also includes software tools to adjust resolution, screen colors, pointers and screenmodes.

EGS, when run in the native Amiga modes (OCS, ECS or AA), is limited to the resolutions and depths of that system. EGS does not extend or in any way alter your graphics capabilities. It makes use of whatever graphics system and capabilities you currently have.

#2

Question: Why do I need EGS?

Answer:

EGS is an alternative to Intuition in that it supports depths up to 24 bit (16.7 million colors). Intuition is only capable of up to 8 bit depths (256 colors...even in 3.x versions). EGS provides you with a way to deal with depths above 8 bit in as fluid a way as Intuition. In some ways, EGS is superior to Intuition.

EGS also gives non-AA equipped Amigas a way to deal with higher screen depths and higher resolutions (provided you have a display device capable of displaying them). In fact, since EGS gives you a way to deal with greater depths and resolutions, certain display board's capabilities will surpass that of AA.

#3

Question: How much hard disk space does EGS require?

Answer:

EGS requires between 4 and 5 megs (at minimum) HD space. More than that if you intend on storing 24 bit images.

#3.1

Question: How much RAM is required to run EGS?

Answer:

EGS requires at least 2 megs of system RAM (per the Spectrum manual). However, the more you have, the better EGS will operate. If you have 5 megs of RAM, you will be able to run most of the tasks comfortably at 8 bit. You might find, however, that at 24 bit you run out of RAM quickly.

If you never run any EGS programs and operate strictly off the emulation, you'll almost never run out of RAM. In fact, with a display board, you free up CHIP ram because you are using the external board for the screen information.

#3.2

Question: Why do I need so much RAM?

Answer:

EGS swaps whatever is not currently in the display buffer on the board into your system RAM. For example, if you have a 768x482 24 bit screen open and you push that screen to the back, the data on the board will be swapped out into your system RAM. If another EGS screen is popped to the front, that RAM is swapped back onto the board. Therefore, you will need enough system RAM to swap all non-displayed EGS screens into.

#4

Question: Will virtual memory systems work with EGS?

Answer:

Yes, for the most part. Almost every EGS tool that came with the Spectrum works very well with Gigamem. The first program that you run will allocate the memory for the EGS Screen that opens the screen first. That first program run will also be the one that swaps in and out when you move the screen from front to back. Until you close all windows on the screen, the EGS screen will remain active and the VM will remain reserved (see question #5).

Any VM system you install will greatly increase the usability of EGS by giving your system much needed RAM. Remember though, VM is slower and requires HD space with which to swap into. The VM system will also require an MMU equipped Amiga which includes the A3000, A4000/040 and any full 020/030 accelerated Amigas with an MMU.

#5

Question: How does the EGS screen system work?

Answer:

The EGS screen system opens what's called the EGS Default Screen. This screen is much like a 2.x/3.x default screen where you can shanghai programs. The only difference is that this EGS screen is strictly for EGS programs. All of the EGS tools included appear on this screen. This doesn't mean that all EGS programs require this default screen for use.

In fact, any EGS program can either choose to use the EGS Default Screen or open their own custom EGS screen for any specific legal size or depth.

EGS screens are currently not draggable. This includes the Workbench emulation. In other words, any screen which is either native EGS or has been promoted up to an EGS resolution will not be draggable. This could change in the future.

#5.1

Question: How do the front to back gadgets function?

Answer:

The front/back gadgets work a little differently with EGS installed. EGS screens are kept as a separate list of screens from the list of Intuition screens. Therefore, because Intuition knows nothing of EGS, it is unable to flip to any other screens than Intuition screens. Because EGS is aware of Intuition, EGS screens can flip to the next available whether Intuition or not.

For example, you have two screens open: an EGS screen and the Workbench screen. If you hit the front/back gadget on the Workbench, nothing happens. This is due to Workbench and Intuition not knowing about EGS. If, however, you were on the EGS screen and hit the front/back gadget, it would flip to the next screen whether EGS or not. It can do this because it is aware of both the EGS list of screens and Intuition's list.

#6

Question: How do you set the resolutions for EGS?

Answer:

EGS adds screen resolutions to the system ScreenMode database. Any program that supports this database can access these new resolutions and take advantage of EGS. Both Intuition and EGS use this ScreenMode database with which to select an appropriate screen. Promotion tools also use this database so that you may promote one screentype to another screentype.

To create entries for the ScreenMode database, refer to the DisplayAdjust program for more details.

#7

Question: What is screen promotion?

Answer:

Screen promotion is a method by which you can specify any specific application which opens a certain set resolution to open in any other resolution. Some various tools which support this are Promotor, ScreenModeChanger and Pprefs.

NOTE: Keep in mind that some applications do not like being promoted or, because of the way they handle their graphics, can't be promoted.

#8

Question: Does EGS have a Workbench emulator?

Answer:

Yes. Since EGS patches the ScreenMode database, you can use the system

Screenmode pref to put your Workbench into any resolution in the database.

#8.1

Question: What's the difference between EGS and the Workbench Emulation?

Answer:

EGS is an independant software display system capable of its own custom screens with windows on those screens. The Workbench emulation uses Intuition and the ScreenMode database to put Workbench as well as other Intuition screens onto your display board. Each system is seperate from one another. EGS applications can't be displayed on Intuition. Intuition applications can't be displayed on EGS (not yet anyway :).

#9

Question: Is EGS easy to install?

Answer:

Yes, it is. Just make sure you have enough space to install it. Your EGS distribution should have come with a Commodore installer script to make the installation process simple.

#10

Question: Will my A3000/A4000 equipped with an older revision buster work with any of the Zorro III boards (Spectrum or Piccolo)?

Answer:

Yes. You can run your graphics card in Zorro III mode without many, if any problems. It is not *required* that you buy a new buster for your machine. See question 10.2.

#10.1

Question: What is the revision number of the buster I will need if I decide to change it?

Answer:

The revision buster you will need is revision K or revision 11 (same thing).

#10.2

Question: Will I see any speed improvements by installing the new buster chip?

Answer:

At this time, it is unknown if you will experience any speed improvements by changing this chip. You will, however, clear up any potential DMA problems by replacing it.

NOTE: If you decide to replace this chip, it is recomended that you order the chip puller from your dealer at the time you order the chip. You may also let your local dealer change it if you do not feel comfortable enough doing it yourself.

#11

Question: What is the current version of the EGS system?

Answer:

The current version of EGS is version 6.0 of the libraries. Some systems may still be shipped with version 5.0 of the libraries. If you find you have version 5.0, contact your dealer for an update.

#12

Question: How will EGS library and software updates be handled?
Who will I get it from?

Answer:

At this moment in time, updates to the libraries and software will be handled through your board's manufacturer and not through Viona. Contact technical support from your board manufacturer/distributor to find out how they intend on distributing library and software updates.

#13

Question: With my Workbench running an EGS resolution, some programs have stopped functioning? What's happening?

Answer:

Poor programming. ;) No seriously.. Some programs try and adopt Workbench's screen size and depth. If you are running 800x600x256, the errant program may not know how to create such a screen and fail. This happens most likely because the program knows nothing of the Screenmode database and therefore can't request the appropriate Screenmode with which to open the screen. More than likely it is a 1.3ish program doing this. 2.0 and especially 3.x aware programs seem to have fewer problems in this respect.

The solution is to temporarily move your Workbench screen back to a non-EGS screenmode using standard ECS/OCS. The program should run fine with this setup. After you run the program, you should be able to put the Workbench back into the EGS resolution and leave the other program running. It is a hassle, but it should work. Otherwise, call or write the company and ask them to fix the program.

If this solution does not work, the program may be failing due to other reasons. At this point, you should consult either someone from Viona, someone from where you bought your graphics board, or email the EGS list on Internet.

This FAQ will be updated as questions are asked. I have added what I think are some of the most common questions. There are, I am sure, many more questions which still need to be asked and included. By all means, if you have a question, ask it. I'll try to get a response to it as quickly as possible. Whenever I see a FAQ type question and a good response, I will add it to the FAQ. If any of the current questions need revision or expansion, please let me know.

I am hoping in the future to put this document into other formats such as TeXInfo for porting over to such readers as ASCII and AmigaGuide to name a few. At first, however, I plan to work on it in ASCII just to get it started.

Please submit any questions to Brian Wright <wright@merlin.etsu.edu>.
Thanks much.