
Subject: Re: Different Platforms

Posted by [davidf](#) on Wed, 19 Nov 1997 08:00:00 GMT

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Neil Winrow (ncw@dl.ac.uk) writes:

> I have written a number of widget programs, which are visually correct
> on my PC, however when they are run on the silicon graphics machines the
> layout starts to go terribly wrong. The character sizes are wrong, and
> the labelling carried out using the 'XYOUTS' call is all wrong. The
> whole window sizing falls down. The programs are going to be used on
> PC's, silicon graphics, and MAC's. Could anyone offer me a few pointers
> on how to correct these problems to run the programs on the different
> platforms.

There is nothing quite like trying to get IDL widget programs to run on PCs, SGIs and Macs to get you to question your sanity. And, of course, as soon as you have it figured out, someone buys a Sun and then you have to deal with *those* tinsy-tiny 12-point fonts. You soon realize that "font size" must be one of those words like "true love" that is open to all kinds of interpretation.

I once got so frustrated I took a survey of the 10 best IDL widget programmers I knew. "How do you size strings in your widget programs?", I asked. Would you believe I got 10 completely different answers and that almost every single answer had more to do with occult science than with computer science? I wouldn't be able to withstand the public ridicule if I published the answers here.

SGIs seem to be the worst. I don't know why. They have HUGE default fonts. Liam Gumley, who should know, suggests you try something like this in your SGI start-up file:

```
Device, Set_Character_Size = [ 6, 9 ]  
Widget_Control, Default_Font = '7x13'
```

I have had fairly good success with a program named STR_SIZE that you can get from my web page. It calculates the proper character size to get a target string to be a particular size (in normalized coordinates) in the output window. But this means setting the CharSize keyword on all graphics output commands. (Not a bad idea when you are writing what you hope will be portable IDL applications, by the way. Then, at least,

if your programs look lousy on some person's system they can change the CharSize parameter, which I usually have as a keyword to the main program.)

I've had pretty good luck with something like this:

```
rightSize = Str_Size('This is a default string', 0.25)  
Plot, data, CharSize=rightSize
```

Let us know what you come up with. I'll add it to the list.
It will make interesting reading 100 years from now. :-)

Cheers,

David

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