# An alternative to windowing

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Hammer Computer Systems' E-Z-DOS-IT offers an alternative to traditional windowing programs. Rather than divide the screen like an electronic quilt, E-Z-DOS-IT toggles back and forth between programs, letting those not displayed execute in the background. The manufacturer calls it concurrent processing system-level software.

The software features a user-friendly copy protection scheme. While only two copies are allowed from the master disk, the package comes with an "uninstall" option. If a user needs to reformat his hard disk, he can uninstall E-Z-DOS-IT back to the master disk without losing one of his two allowable copies.

E-Z-DOS-IT is simple to set up and execute. From DOS, a user enters the command SETUP to get the setup menu. Several setup screens are allowed, although only one can be executed at a time. Function keys and TAB are used to move through the setup procedures.

I was annoyed only that the screen I marked as the default screen (a handy feature in a system that allows several schemes for concurrent programs) was neither recalled when I later reentered the setup program nor marked as the default by the software. That meant I had no way of knowing if the screen I wanted to be the default actually was—short of running the program. To label it as the default screen, a user must manually label the screen.

After completing the setup, I returned to DOS and entered EZDOSIT, the command to run the concurrent program function. The first few times nothing happened. It turned out that my keyboard buffer extender, KBfix, was interfering with E-Z-DOS-IT. Out went KBfix.

A few more tries resulted in memory overflow errors. I pared down the number of programs to run concurrently (I had a mixture of in-house Basic programs and commercial software for word processing and telecommunications) to fit within my system's available 256K RAM.

Once this was done, E-Z-DOS-IT worked well, requiring only holding the CTRL and ALT keys plus a number representing the desired program to toggle back and forth from one application to another.

When toggling between applications, the user can either type in the command to run the desired application or have E-Z-DOS-IT call up the program through a batch file specified in the setup. However, the batch file for the first application must be called AUTOEXEC.BAT, which is the main bootup batch file for IBM DOS.

Consequently, a user can't have his terminal boot automatically with E-Z-DOS-IT and any other initial processes and then go on to the first application desired. Instead, any initial processes must be entered by another batch file, either manually or as a toggle option in E-Z-DOS-IT.

The manufacturer said E-Z-DOS-IT has been tested successfully on popular programs such as Lotus 1-2-3, WordStar, Smartcom II, Sidekick, and dBase III. However, the company said many users have reported problems running Basic programs. One customer service representative said I was lucky that my two Basic programs ran without a hitch. (The programs read text from a disk file, evaluate it, and write back to another file.)