How to Use Bar Codes with FileMaker Pro

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1. Convert your FileMaker data into bar codes that can be printed and scanned.

Download **Barcode Basics** from http://www.briandunning.com/bar-codes/. This special tool includes a script that will process whatever text or numeric string you specify and place it into a field, which, when properly formatted, will be a perfectly formatted bar code that conforms to the requirements of scanners. Barcode Basics is available in several different popular kinds of bar code formats.

Contrary to popular opinion, you do **not** need any special bar code fonts. Bar code fonts are fine for your own computer, but they don't work so well when someone else tries to run your FileMaker database to create bar codes and they don't happen to have that special font on their machine. Barcode Basics eliminates any need to have special fonts or plug-ins installed. This makes your FileMaker solution 100% portable and it always retains its abilities to generate bar codes, for all users.

2. Scanning data into FileMaker

This step is even easier. Most commercial scanners, the kind that you would plug into a computer, are really almost no different from keyboards. They send data into your computer almost exactly as if someone had typed it on the keyboard.

There is no special FileMaker plug-in or anything needed to read data from a scanner. All you have to do is place the cursor into a field, pull the trigger on the scanner, and the decoded text or numbers will appear in the field exactly as if they had been typed.

You may choose to set up a looping script that places the cursor into a field, waits for some input, and then continues when the Enter key is pressed. The script can then create a new record with the scanned data (or do whatever you want with it), perhaps beep in approval, and then place the cursor back into the field to wait for more data. In this case, your scanner can be configured to append a Return or Enter character onto the end of each scan. This arrangement will permit you to scan repeatedly with each scan going safely into FileMaker, without ever having to touch your keyboard or mouse.

Looking for a scanner? There are many available, and they're all over the Internet. Just start searching Google. You're probably interested in a scanner with a USB interface, so Google for "USB barcode scanner" or go somewhere like Amazon.

Need to scan remotely? If you want to walk around your building scanning stuff while not connected to a computer, you'll need to take it a step further, and you may want to hire a consultant. Many such scanners can communicate wirelessly to a server, or can store the scanned data until such time as the device is plugged into a computer.

I hope this information is helpful. Happy Scanning!

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