

Chapter
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Preferences

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Overview

Preferences affect the creation of *new* graphs, panels, tables, layouts, notebooks, and procedure windows, and the *appending* of traces to graphs and columns to tables. In addition, preferences affect the command window, default font, and font size menus in new experiments.

You can turn preferences off or on using the Misc menu. Normally you will run with preferences on.

Preferences are automatically off while a procedure is running so that the effects of the procedure will be the same for all users. See the **Preferences** operation (see page V-478) for further information.

When preferences are off, factory default values are used for settings such as graph size, position, line style, size and color. When preferences are on, Igor applies your preferred values for these settings.

Preferences differ from *settings* (the Miscellaneous Settings dialog) in that settings generally take effect immediately, while preferences are used when something is created. See **Miscellaneous Settings** on page III-407.

Igor Preferences Directory

Preferences are stored in a per-user directory. The location of this directory depends on your operating system and configuration, but here are some typical locations:

Mac OS X `hd:Users:<user>:Library:Preferences:WaveMetrics:Igor Pro 6 PowerPC:`
 `or`
 `hd:Users:<user>:Library:Preferences:WaveMetrics:Igor Pro 6 Intel:`

Windows `C:Documents and Settings:<user>:Application Data:WaveMetrics:Igor Pro 6:`

where *<user>* is the name of the current user. The preferences directory may be hidden by some operating systems.

You can find the operating-system-defined location for preferences by executing this command:

```
Print SpecialDirPath("Preferences", 0, 0, 0)
```

Deleting the preferences directory effectively reverts all preferences to factory defaults. You should use the Capture Prefs dialogs, described in **Captured Preferences** operation on page III-427, to revert preferences more selectively.

Other information is stored in this directory, such as the screen position of dialogs, a few dialog settings, colors recently selected in the color palette, window stacking and tiling information, page setups, font substitution settings, and dashed line settings.

How to Use Preferences

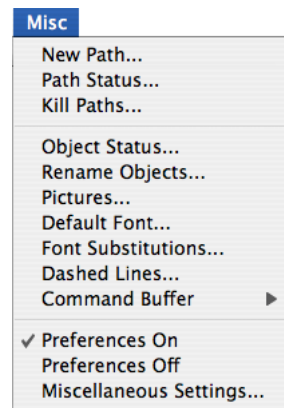
Preferences are always on when Igor starts up. You can turn preferences off by choosing Preferences Off in the Misc menu.

You can also turn preferences on and off with the **Preferences** operation (see page V-478).

Preferences are set by Capture Preferences dialogs, the Tile or Stack Windows dialog, and some dialogs such as the Dashed Lines dialog.

There is just one set of preferences for all experiments. This means that preferences set while running one experiment will be in effect when you run the next experiment. This is handy because you only need to specify your preferences once.

In general, *preferences are applied only when something new is created* such as a new graph, a new trace in a graph, a new notebook, a new column in a table, and then only if preferences are on.



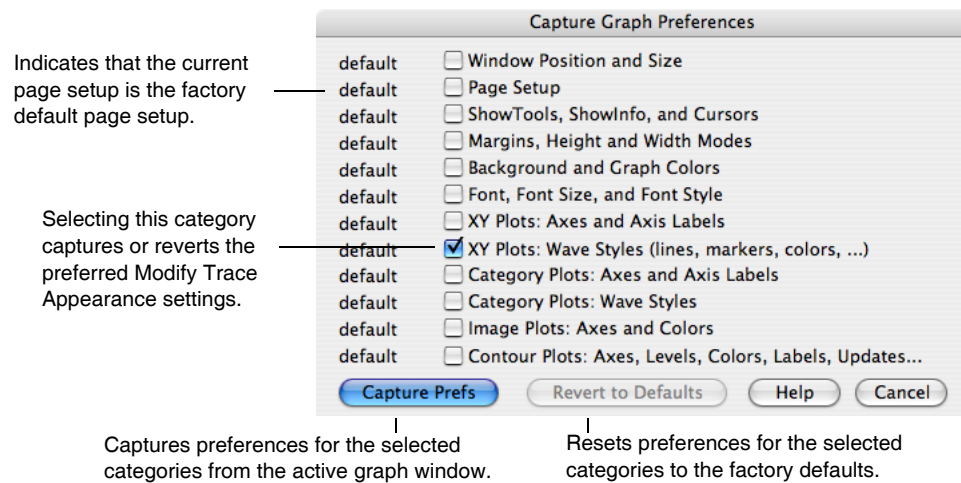
Preferences are normally in effect only for *manual* (“point-and-click”) operation, not for user-programmed operations in Igor procedures. See **When Preferences Are Applied** on page III-428.

Captured Preferences

You set most Preference values by capturing the current settings of the active window with the Capture Prefs item in the menu for that window. (The dialog to capture the Command Window preferences is found in the Command/History Settings submenu of the Misc menu.) The dialogs are described in more detail in the chapter that discusses each type of window. For instance, see **Graph Preferences** on page II-289.

As an example, suppose you want your graphs to always draw appended waves with a one-half point blue line, rather than the factory default one point red line. You can set your preference by creating a graph with one wave displayed using a one-half point blue line, and then “capturing” that preferred setting with the Capture Graph Preferences dialog.

Choose Capture Graph Prefs from the Graph menu:



Save the wave style preference by selecting the XY Plots: Wave Styles category and clicking Capture Prefs. From now on, when you append a wave to an existing graph, or create a new graph containing a trace, the trace will be displayed with your preferred one-half point blue line.

Most capture preferences dialogs are like this Capture Graph Preferences dialog; they have various categories with checkboxes. Selecting a category means that you wish to change the preferences for that category. You may either capture the current settings for that category by clicking the Capture Prefs button, or you may revert the preferences for that category by clicking the Revert to Defaults button. If a category has been reverted to its default setting, “default” is indicated to the left of the checkbox. If “default” is not present, this means that the category settings have previously been captured.

Current Captured Preference Values

The Capture Preferences dialogs do not show the current *values* for the settings in the categories. The only way to discover what captured values are is to create a new window of that type and examine the settings with dialogs or readback functions. Any value not set to the factory default value must have been set by the preferences. (To check the factory default values, create a new window with Preferences off.)

For example, to determine what the values captured by the Capture Graph Preferences dialog are:

- Turn Preferences on (in the Misc menu).
- Create a new graph.
- Append some waves.

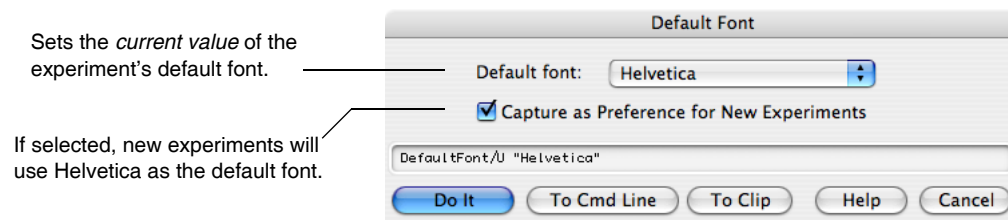
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- Create a graph recreation macro using the Window Control dialog, and examine the values assigned by the resulting macro (this works well because graph recreation macros generate commands only to change values from their factory defaults).
- Or, use the Modify Waves Appearance dialog to observe the settings for the displayed waves. These are the captured user-preferred values.

Capturing Other Settings

In addition to the preferences captured by the various Capture Prefs dialogs, Igor remembers a number of other settings. Many of these can be set using the Miscellaneous Settings dialog, described in **Miscellaneous Settings** on page III-407.

Some settings are captured in dialogs whose main purpose is to change the *current* value of some settings. Such a dialog is the Default Font dialog:



It can capture the preferred Default Font with or without changing the current value. The Dashed Lines and Tile or Stack Windows dialogs also work this way.

The positions of dialogs on your desktop are always remembered in the preferences file. On Macintosh only, Recent Colors are remembered if the appropriate checkbox in the Misc Settings dialog is selected.

On both Macintosh and Windows, the font sizes you add to the Text Size menu are automatically remembered, as well as fonts substitution settings and various other dialog settings.

When Preferences Are Applied

In general, *preferences are applied only when something new is created* such as a new graph, a new wave in a graph, a new notebook, a new column in a table, and then only if preferences are on. In some cases, preferences affect what happens when you create a new experiment.

Igor has, in effect, two independent settings for whether preferences are on or off. The Preferences On and Preferences Off items in the Misc menu control the setting for *manual* (“point-and-click”) operations, and is initially (and normally) set to “on”. Another setting is used when a procedure (macro or function) is executing, and is normally set to “off”.

We usually don't want preferences to affect the behavior of procedures. If we allowed preferences to take effect during procedure execution, a change in preferences could change the effect of a procedure, making it unpredictable. For more information, see **Procedures and Preferences** on page IV-174.