Getting Started with Graphics-Toolbox

Here are some tips to get you started with Graphics-Toolbox. It is much easier to use than other graphics programs, but there are still some fundamentals that need to be understood.

1. The manual is very clearly written and it has a lot of images from the program to illustrate the features. The features are grouped in logical ways, so if you read through the manual from the beginning, you will be learning the functions in a logical progression. It may be useful to print out the 89-page manual and have it next to you while you are working. You can add your own notes in the margins. You can also have the pdf file open in a program like Acrobat Reader while you are working in Graphics-Toolbox and switch between them to read about a function and then try it out. The manual is always accessible; a manual button is on the bottom of page 2. Click it to open the pdf version whenever you need it.

2. Graphics-Toolbox does not have the typical Windows drop-down menu bar along the top. All of the functions are illustrated with icons. If you hover over an icon, the name of that function appears in a box just above the Feedback Area. If you right-click a button, a Help message will appear, explaining how to use the function.

3. The Drawing Area in Graphics-Toolbox is like a big desk - not a sheet of paper, like Word or Photoshop. You collect all of your images, manipulate them as you wish, combine them and layout your page, and then frame the final page before printing or saving. You do not print or save the whole Drawing Area unless you specifically have framed the whole drawing area. You can save and print just small images and open them later, placing them into new projects.

4. Each of the icons look like that button's function. Think about it as this: you must select a button and then you can execute that function. For instance: click on the Line button, move your cursor into the Drawing Area, then draw a line; or, click on the Pencil icon, move your cursor into the Drawing Area, then you can freehand draw. The manual and Help messages can give you the specific steps for executing the various functions, but it all starts with clicking the desired icon/button.

5. There are several framing tools, in the top row, that allow you to frame different types of images effectively. In addition to framing images for saving and printing, many of the functions specifically work within the framed area. For instance, Color Change is a very easy function that allows you to change all of the solid areas of a color within the frame, to another color.

6. To open a file or a saved image, use the Read button. The Save button is right next to it. These buttons open up the typical Windows browser screen so that you can access your computer's drives.

7. Files can be saved in any of the industry accepted graphic file formats. The manual explains some of the specifics and advantages of the most popular ones.

8. There are several ways to zoom in and out in Graphics-Toolbox, but the most fluid is with the mouse's roller ball. Point at the area in which you wish to zoom and pull the ball toward you. It will zoom in on your cursor point, essentially pulling the image toward you. Zoom out by pushing the roller ball away from you.

9. While zoomed in, you can pan with the right mouse button. Stay within the Drawing Area, not out into the gray background. Point near the edge of the Drawing Area and click the right mouse button to move in that direction. Point at the right side of the Drawing Area and click the right mouse button and you will pan to the right. Point at the top of the Drawing Area and click the right mouse button and you will pan up, etc.

   The roller ball and panning takes a little practice, but most people catch on quickly and then it is very easy to move around the Drawing Area smoothly and efficiently.

10. The color in the large box at the top of the screen is the Current Color. Click on any of the colors chips in any of the color cards and it will become the Current Color. All of the Basic Drawing Tools, Outline, Color Fill and Text will be executed in the color in the Current Color box.

11. The Feedback Area is the area above the Exit and Undo/Redo buttons. Most of the functions have sub-command buttons that appear in this area when they are clicked. Feedback information is also provided to help complete the function accurately. For instance, when drawing a Rectangle, sub-commands appear allowing you to choose a solid or hollow square or solid or hollow rectangle. After making the first click in the Drawing Area, measurements appear in the feedback area, changing as you move your mouse to help you accurately draw your shape. They disappear when you make the final click to complete the shape.

12. Use our online Tutorial Slide Shows to create some projects. If you activate a slide show on our website, www.greatsoftwaretools.com, and have Graphics-Toolbox open at the same time, you can move back and forth, creating your own project while following our directions step-by-step.

Like anything new, there is a learning curve, but these steps should give you a good start. Add the manual and website and you will soon be controlling your images like a pro!

Have fun!