MS Excel Charts
in Adobe Illustrator

Excel charts in Illustrator?!

Yes, you can make a chart or graph right in Illustrator, but it may be easier for you to make it in Excel and then bring it into Illustrator. Once in Illustrator, the graph or chart can be fully editable.

In some cases, it's as easy as a copy and paste - though you might not like how it looks. You can copy and paste the graph into Illustrator. Once it's in Illustrator, you can edit its individual pieces. Reason being, the Metafile data Windows places on the clipboard isn't the most accurate with where it puts stuff. Objects which should be distributed by a fixed distance (such as grid lines) aren't once pasted into Illustrator.

You could also try holding down Ctrl and Shift when clicking on the Edit menu, then choosing "Copy Picture."

For best results, convert the chart to PDF and then Place it in Illustrator.

What you'll need:

☺   MicroSoft Excel
☺   Adobe Illustrator
☺   Adobe Acrobat

About Sprout...

I'm Jay Sprout. I've been a certified instructor for the New Horizons Computer Learning Center in Detroit, Michigan for three years. I am an Adobe Certified Expert in PhotoShop, Illustrator, Acrobat, PageMaker, and InDesign.

If you have any questions, you can contact me at jsprout@nhmichigan.com or jsprout@mac.com

For other tutorials and resources, please visit my website at www.sproutgraphics.com

I regularly teach classes in...

- Adobe PhotoShop
- Adobe PageMaker
- Adobe Illustrator
- Adobe InDesign
- Adobe GoLive
- Adobe Acrobat
- QuarkXpress
- MacroMedia Flash
- MacroMedia DreamWeaver
- MicroSoft Excel
- MicroSoft PowerPoint
- Beginning Windows
- Beg. - Adv. Macintosh OS 9 & X
- Computers Made Easy

When I'm not having a blast at what is sooo not a "real" job, I volutnteer at the Salvation Army where my wife, Nikki, is a youth pastor. I help support a small computer lab of Macs and PCs donated by New Horizons for an after-school program she directs there.

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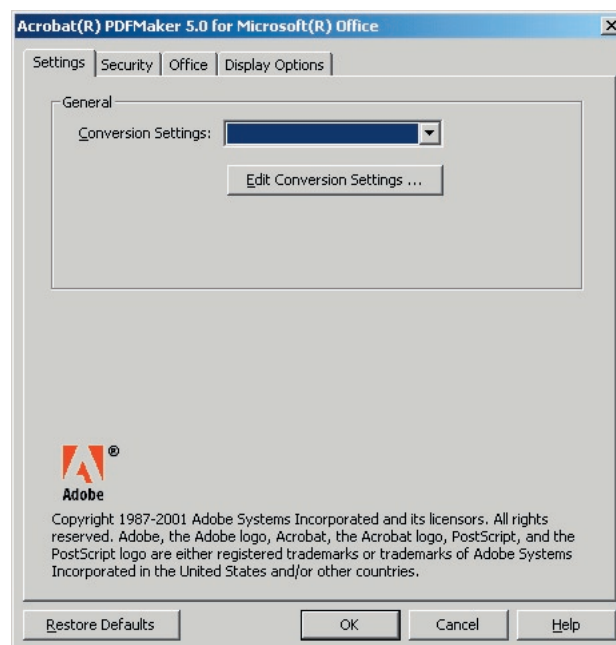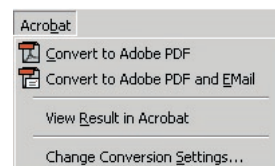
Let's Get Started, eh?

1. First, create the chart in MicroSoft Excel as normal (eg. using the Chart Wizard) and select it.

In Excel, you can create a PDF one of two ways (as long as you've installed the full Adobe Acrobat suite). You can either print to Distiller or you can use the "Create Adobe PDF" (it may also say "Convert to Adobe PDF") button that should appear on your toolbar.

If that button doesn't appear on your toolbar, you should find it under the View > Toolbars submenu. If you don't find any indication of it there, either, it's possible that Acrobat was installed *before* MS Office. Re-installing Acrobat should fix that.

We'll go over using the button first...

2. Before clicking on that button, let's take a look at what controls it. Under the Acrobat menu (to the right of the Help menu) click on "Change Conversion Settings." **This is completely separate from any settings you apply in the Print dialog when you print to Distiller.**

3. You'll see the Settings tab. Under the settings tab, either choose a default setting or click on "Edit Conversion Settings" to make your own custom setting.
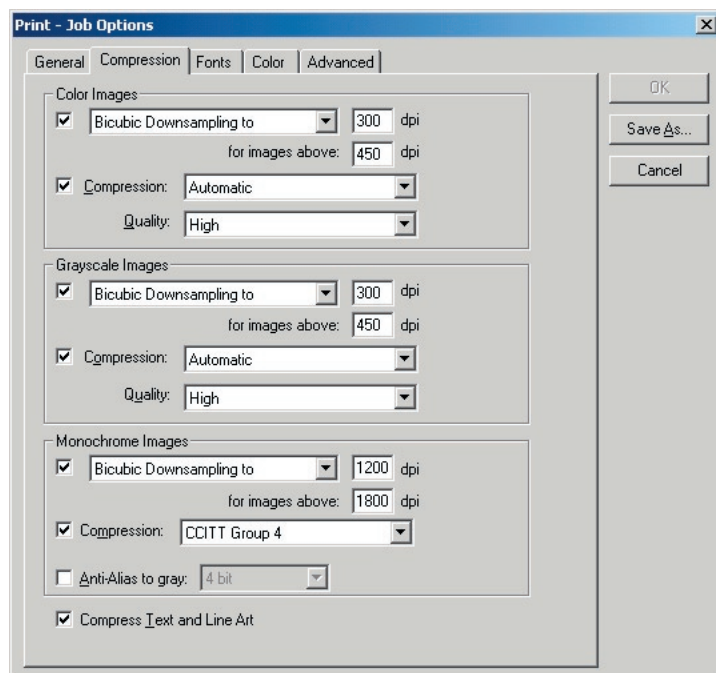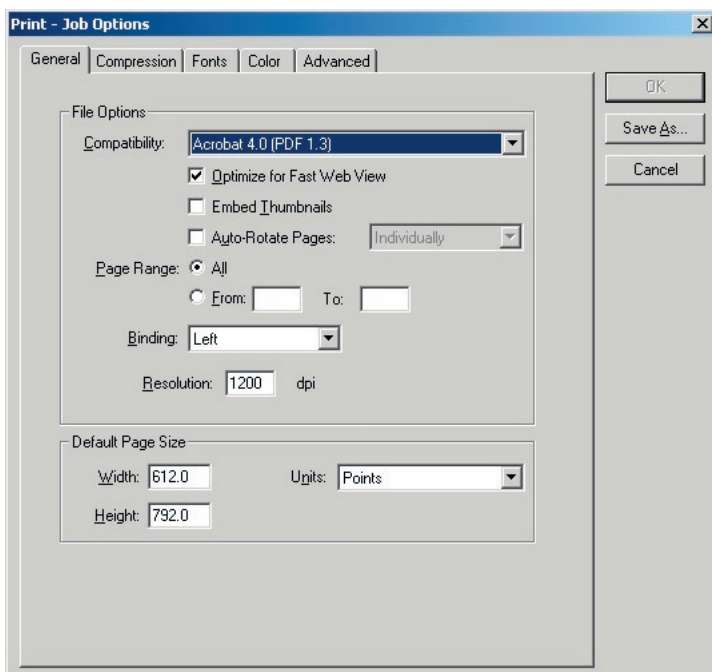
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4. Make your settings

General

Check "Optimize for Fast Web View" to get rid of any MicroSoft junk that – as a graphic – it doesn't need.

Never embed thumbnails.

I'd set the resolution to something a bit lower like 150 unless you need it to match a higher. That 1200 dpi number is from the Print setting chosen in the Edit Conversion Settings window. It's better than Screen's 72 dpi, but may be too high for your needs.
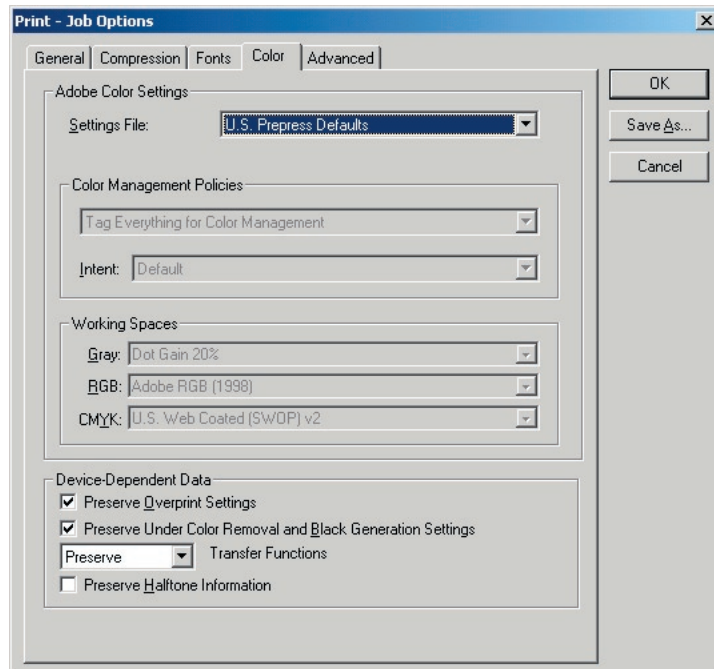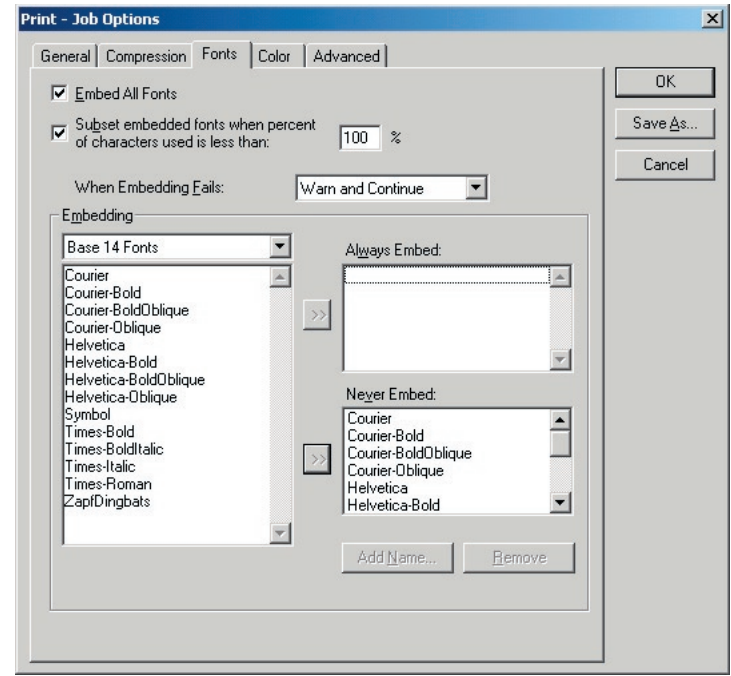
Compression

Whatever your heart desires. Sorry to disappoint you, but resolution is another handout altogether. You can find "Why Size Matters" at www.sproutgraphics.com.

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Fonts

If you use any fonts in your Excel chart that Illustrator won't have, you can embed them here. If you're not using anything unusual, deselecting these options will conserve file size.

Color

If you're using a Color Management System) – and yes, that's *another* handout – duplicate Illustrator's settings under this tab. If not, just leave it set to "none."
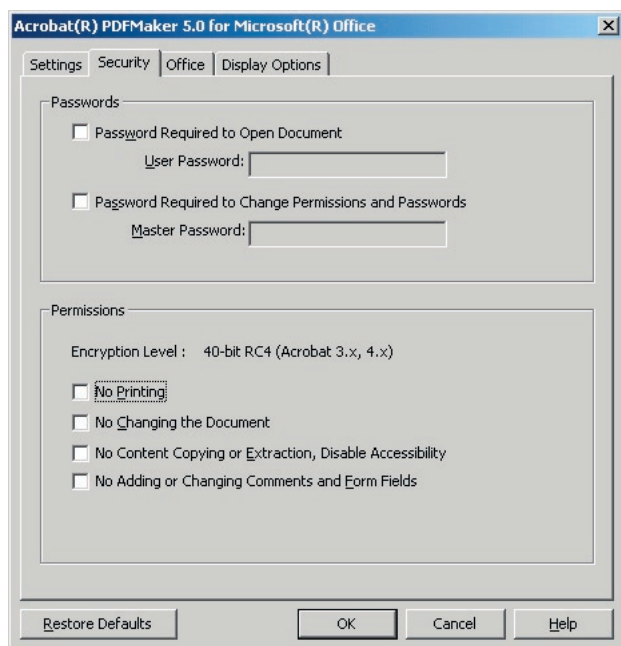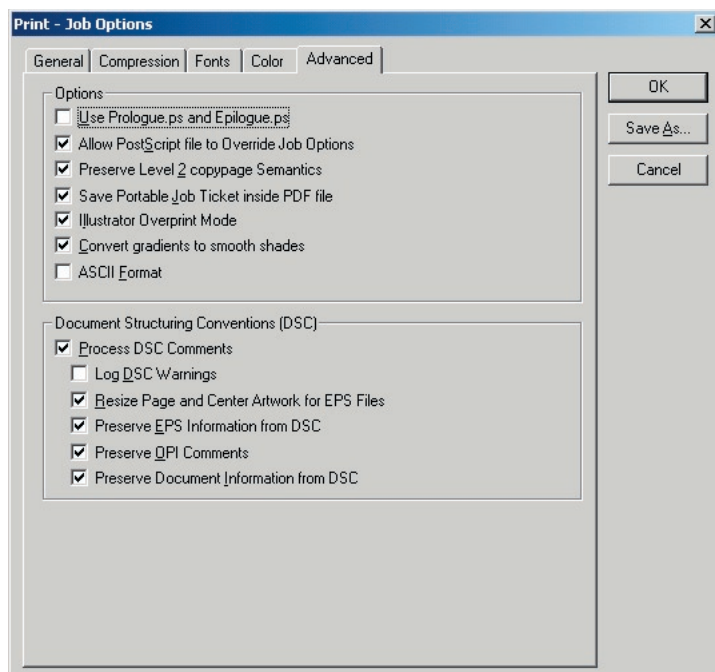
Advanced

More than likely, you won't need to go here at all. What I tell people in my Acrobat classes is "If you don't know *why* you'd touch it – *don't* touch it."

After changing your Settings...

After you've made all your preparations, you can either click "OK" or "Save As..."

If you click "Save As..." you can then name these settings something like "Exported Charts" and it will show up under every Acrobat related menu in every application that looks to Distiller for instructions.

Either way, you'll end up back in the original window the "Acrobat > Change Conversion Settings" command brought you.

Print - Job Options

General | Compression | Fonts | Color | Advanced

Options
- ☐ Use Prologue.ps and Epilogue.ps
- ☑ Allow PostScript file to Override Job Options
- ☑ Preserve Level 2 copypage Semantics
- ☑ Save Portable Job Ticket inside PDF file
- ☑ Illustrator Overprint Mode
- ☑ Convert gradients to smooth shades
- ☐ ASCII Format

Document Structuring Conventions (DSC)
- ☑ Process DSC Comments
- ☐ Log DSC Warnings
- ☑ Resize Page and Center Artwork for EPS Files
- ☑ Preserve EPS Information from DSC
- ☑ Preserve OPI Comments
- ☑ Preserve Document Information from DSC

OK | Save As... | Cancel

Acrobat(R) PDFMaker 5.0 for Microsoft(R) Office

Settings | Security | Office | Display Options

Passwords
- ☐ Password Required to Open Document
  - User Password:
- ☐ Password Required to Change Permissions and Passwords
  - Master Password:

Permissions

Encryption Level : 40-bit RC4 (Acrobat 3.x, 4.x)
- ☐ No Printing
- ☐ No Changing the Document
- ☐ No Content Copying or Extraction, Disable Accessibility
- ☐ No Adding or Changing Comments and Form Fields

Restore Defaults | OK | Cancel | Help

Just to review...

What you've just done is change how the PDFMaker Macro converts your PDF - in other words, you changed what that button does.

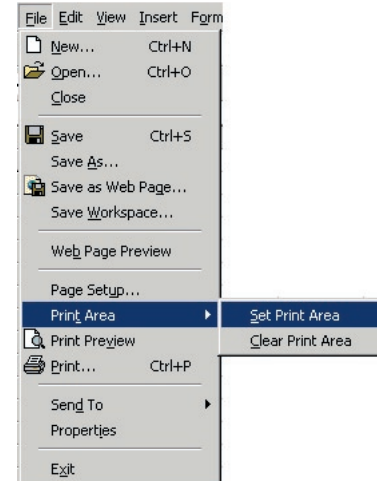5. Click on the PDF Maker button (the tool tip will say "convert to Adobe PDF"

6. In Illustrator, File > Place

7. Edit it like you would any other object
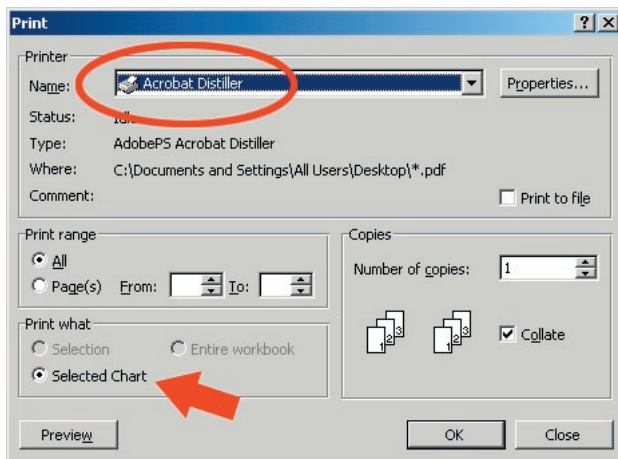
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Using Distiller to make the PDF
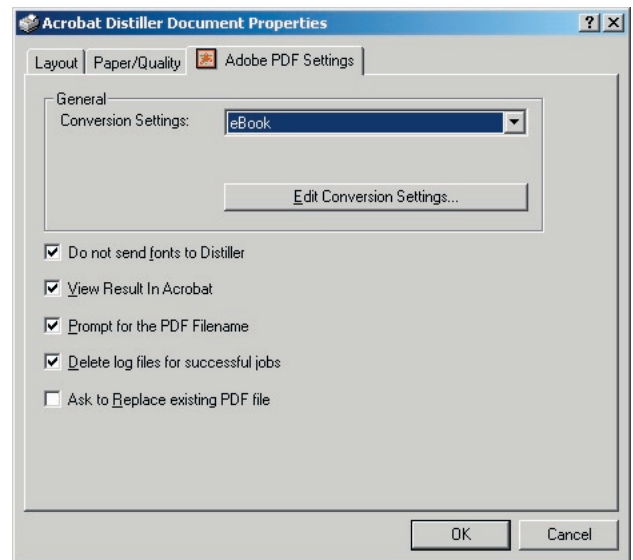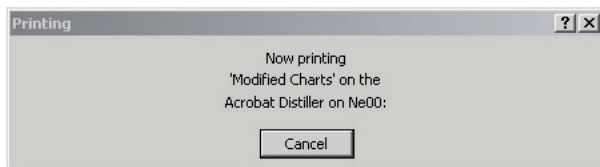You can also print to Distiller.

1. Create the chart as normal and select it.

2. You can either set your print area using the File > Print > Set Print Area command (as seen on right) or you can specify it in the Print dialog (below).

3. To change your settings using this method (in Windows), click on Properties in the upper right. This displays the Acrobat Distiller Document Properties box.

5. Click OK and you'll see this...

4. Under the Adobe PDF Settings tab, click on Edit Conversion Settings. For details, please see pages 3–5.

6. When that's done, the Save As box will pop up and all you have to do is click Save.

7 . In Illustrator, File > Place and edit it like you would any other object

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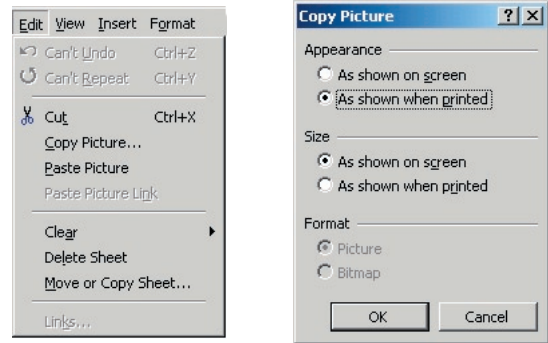# in Adobe Illustrator

Perhaps a simpler method...

A not very well known, but perfectly cool method is a variation on Copy & Paste (which can also be used).

Hold down Control and Shift while clicking on the Edit menu in Excel and you'll see "Copy Picture" instead of the normal copy and paste choices.

Once you've chosen "Copy Picture..." you'll get the Copy Picture box asking the quality and dimensions you'd like it to have.

From there, all you need to do is Edit > Paste in Illustrator.

Be forewarned however, that the quality when using this method is not always what you really want.

Other cool tips...

Transparency

If you're using MS Excel XP (aka 2002) or Excel X for the Mac, you can use the way-cool transparency features when formatting your chart to make them especially cool looking.

If you don't have the latest and greatest version of Excel, you can use Illustrator's transparency features once you've placed it.

Other cool effects...

In Excel, you can stack graphics inside column charts for some really nifty effects as well. Illustrator also has some neat features, but I don't think Illustrator's chart capabilities are as user-friendly as Excel's.

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Other Resources...

http://www.vectorbabe.com
Sandee Cohen has written oodles of books and articles
I am grateful for. When I see her name on something, I
know it's worth my time and money. For instance...

Real World Illustrator by Sandee Cohen and Deke
McClelland (If he wrote it, you should own it)

The Illustrator Wow! Book by Sharon Steven
Not for the beginner or the light of heart, but abso-
lutely beautiful.

http://studio.adobe.com
A motherlode of free tutorials for almost all their
applications.

http://www.adobe.com
Their regular website contains trial versions of their
applications as well as a HUGE support forum where I
have always found answers to my problems.

http://www.elementk.com
You can subscribe to a free email tip a week or you can
fork out $160/year for Inside Illustrator magazine.

The Illustrator 10 Bible by Ted Alspach and Kelly
Murdock isn't bad at all.

Spending a couple hours drinking cappuccino in your
neighborhood mega-bookstore's cafe with the follow-
ing magazines (don't forget a pad of paper to take notes
and your laptop to practice with) is a great way to pass
the time and learn some stuff...

☺ MacDesign
☺ Graphics Exchange
☺ Dynamic Graphics
☺ Design Graphics
☺ MacAddict
☺ MacWorld
☺ and many more...