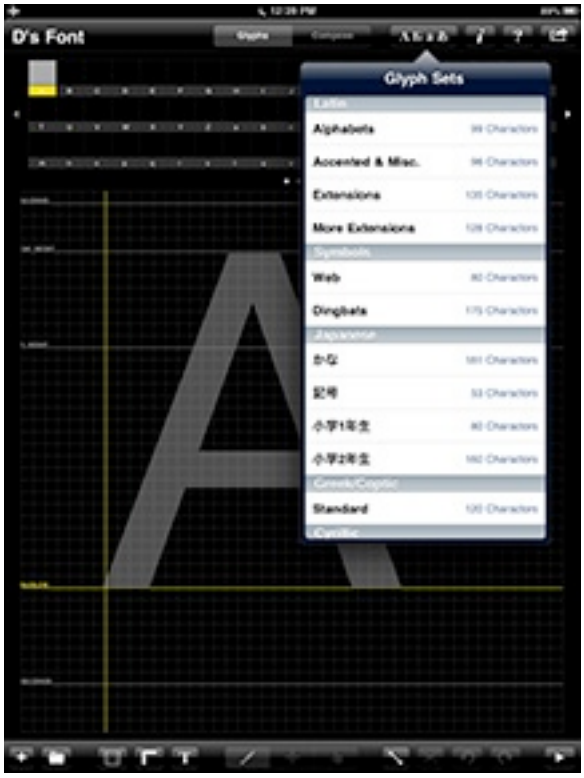
Reviews

iFontMaker

by L. Davenport

The other day, when I was perusing the internet, I came across a short article recommending iFontMaker for creating fonts for your Mac, using the iPad and your finger. This intrigued me enough to purchase the App. After creating my first font in under ten minutes, I decided I had to share the wealth with others. Here are the steps you will need to take to create your first TrueType font using iFontMaker:



This is iFontMaker's opening window plus the "Glyphs Sets" menu that lets you choose which set of glyphs you want to create.

Step one

Install and open the App on your iPad. What you are presented with is a black screen that has a small boxes lining the top of the screen. When you look closely, you will see alphabetical, numeral, and special character "glyphs" placed at the bottom of each box. A template of the letter "A" is faintly drawn at the center of the screen and a grid pattern covers the "A" along with lines crossing the "A" that represent the glyph's Baseline, x Height, Cap Height, Ascender and Descender boundaries.

Step two

Open the Font Settings, name your font, and list the Author name. BTW: This is also the place where (if you want) you can adjust the: Descender/Ascender boundaries, Capital Height, x Height, Letter spacing, and Scale Weight for an individual glyph or for all of the glyphs..

Step three

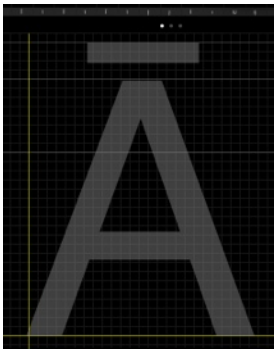
Decide if you want to leave it set to the default Sans-serif typeface font template or if you want to change it to a Serif font (that has semi-structural details on the ends of some of the strokes). FYI: the font that this review is written with is a Serif font. Notice the extra lines (or feet) at the bottom of each stroke of the letter "A". Now look at the letter "A" in the first screenshot - no extra lines. There is a pop-up-menu that list a handful of different Serif and Sans-serif fonts. Simply choose the one you want to use as your font template.

Step four

Take your finger (or stylus) and trace over the letter "A" (I chose a stylus for better control and because its tip was smaller than the end of my finger - easier to see where I was drawing). BTW: You can change the brush size if you don't like the width of your stroke.

Every time you draw a line, it appears in bright white to differentiate it from the template. Also, as you draw, each line will appear in the first thumbnail box at the top left of the screen. If you are satisfied with how the glyph (letter) looks, click on the next box which in turn places a template for the letter "B" at the center of the screen. Continue drawing your letters, symbols, etc. until you reach the last box.

But, if on the other hand you are not satisfied with your drawn letter "A", there are tools that let you delete or modify the glyph. FYI: Every stroke you make becomes a separate modifiable stroke e.g. if you drew the outside of the "A" in one fluid motion - it would be one stroke. But if you drew one side then the other, followed by a third stroke crossing the two to finish the letter - it would be three strokes that can be individually rotated, shortened, lengthened, etc. There is also another tool that draws dots at the center of each stroke. By clicking and dragging these dots you can change the direction or shape of each stroke. I used it quite often to smooth out a curve or to add a curve to the end of a stroke. So,



Each character/glyph comes with a template that you can draw over to create the character.

From the Font settings menu, you can change the font's weight and boundaries plus give your font a name and list the author's name.

though you don't have Bezier curves, you are given enough tools to get your desired look for your glyphs. BTW: You don't have to draw each glyph exactly as pictured. I don't draw my lowercase a like this: "a". I draw it like this: "a". So I ignored the a's template and drew it the way I wanted.

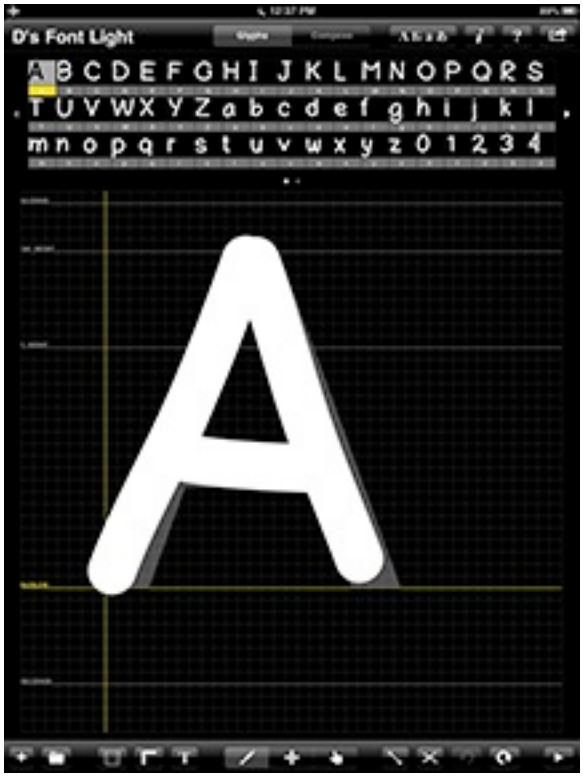
Step five

Click on the Compose or Panagram buttons to see what your letters will look like when typed together. If you are not satisfied, readjust the spacing, etc.

Step six

You can stop here and have your font created, or you can continue creating additional glyphs. Besides the 99 Alphabet/numeric and a few special characters in the basic template, there are templates for: Accented & Misc. (96 characters), Extensions (135 characters), More Extensions (128 characters), Symbols, Japanese, Greek, Cyrillic and Thai glyphs.

A nice feature that helps speed up the glyph creation is the ability to copy a single stroke or the whole glyph. This comes in handy when you create the "Accented & Misc." glyphs since most of them are variations of existing glyphs, such as a capital letter A with a bar or dot sitting above the letter, e.g: Ā Â Ä ÃÅ. Simply go back to the letter "A", copy it, paste it into the new location, and add the dot or bar over it - done. Proceed to the next glyph. Since there are usually multiple variations of "Accented & Misc." glyphs, I would just go from one glyph to the next and repeatedly paste in my letter "A". Then I would go back and add the dots, bars, squiggly lines, etc. to complete each glyph. (True confessions - I was recreating these accents over and over again for all the various glyphs that require that accent (above the "I", "O" "Y", "G", etc.), until it occurred to me that not only could I copy/paste the letters, but I could also copy/paste the accents). Why recreate that squiggly accent over and over again when you don't have to. Being able to copy/paste is a real time saver. BTW: not only can you copy and paste individual glyphs, but you can duplicate your whole font set, rename it, and tweak if further as a different font set. I intend to do that with my future fonts - I want to create a Serif font with the extra details on the ends of some of the strokes. I don't want to take the time to create all of the extra Accented, Extensions, and More extensions glyphs but I want them available if I need them. By duplicating my first font, I will have all of the extra glyphs. All I have to do is redraw or modify the basic alphabets, numbers, etc. glyphs.



If you look at the top of this screenshot, you will see thumbnails of all the glyps (letters & numbers) that I drew. Also notice that I did not exactly follow the letter "A" template that sits under my drawn "A".

Step seven

Now that you are satisfied with the look and spacing of your font, it is time to have the glyphs converted into a True Text font. So be sure the internet is turned on for your iPad and then click on the "Build Font via 2TTF.com" button. A minute or two latter you will be informed that the new font has been created. You can click the "Email" button so iFontMaker will email you a URL link to your font found on the 2ttf.com web site, (so you can download your font using your Mac) or you can click on the "Browse" button (on the iPad), which will be take you directly to the 2ttf.com web site. The site shows various sizes of your font. Sliding the two slider bars changes the spacing of your font. With not having thorough documentation, I am not sure if this is letting you further modify your font or just showing you what your font will look like with the different spacing, so I played it safe and left it set at the default. All that is left to do is to download it. I chose to download it to my iPad and then send it over to my Mac using the Apple cable and iTunes.

You can have iFontMaker show you examples of your font as you are creating it to see how the glyphs look sitting side by side.

When you are satisfied with how your font set looks, click on the "Build Font via 2TTF.com" button.

Step eight

Testing. After un-zipping the file, I used Font Book to install the font. I also used FontBook's "Repertoire" menu item to confirm that all of the extra "Extensions" glyphs were there too - they were.

I loaded TextEdit and chose my font from the font menu and started typing - hurray! It showed up just fine!

FYI: the: http://2ttf.com/gallery has a quite a few examples of fonts that others have made. One made a font that has variations of cat faces in the alphabet glyphs. Another did the same thing with rabbit faces. A third created an outlined font, a fourth created all sorts of dingbats of creepy faces and skulls, etc. So you are not limited to the standard alphabet.

The following is an example of my first try at creating a font - including the accented glyphs. etc. Keep in mind that I wasn't too careful in drawing each glyph and didn't bother with adjusting the spacing etc. I just left everything as the factory default. I will now go back and start tweaking the glyphs and settings to reduce the amount of space that exists between the letters, etc. I may even continue with creating the Web and Dingbat symbols part of my font set.

Your glyphs are sent to the 2ttf.com web site to be converted into a TrueType font (free of charge). Once it is built, you can save it to your iPad and then send it to your Mac.

Alphabets: ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZabcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 0123456789!"“”#$%&'‘'()*+,-./:;?@[\]^_`{|}~

Extensions: ĀāĂăĄąĆćĈĉĊċČčĎďĐđĒēĔĕĖėĘęĚĕĜĝĞğĠġĢĝĤĥĦħĨĩĪīĬĭĴĵ ĲĳĴĵĶķĸĹĺĻļĽľĿŀŁłŃńŅņŇňŉŊŋŌōŎŏŐőŒœŔŕŖŗŘřŚśŜŝŞşŠšŢţŤťŦŧŪūŪūŬŭŮůŰűŲŲŴŵŶŷŸŹźŻżŽžſffifl

More Extensions: ƀƁƂƃƄƅƆƈƉƊƋƌƍƎƏƐƑƒƓƔƕƖƗƘƙƚƛƜƝƞƟƠ ƢƣƤƥƦ ƧƨƩƪƫƬƭƮƯưƱƲƳƴƵƶƷƸƹƺƻƼƽƾƿǀǁǂǃǄǅǆǇǈǉǊǋǌǍǎǏǐǑǒǓǔǕǖǗǘǙǚǛǜǝǞǟǠǡǢǣǤǥ ˇˇˇˇ ǪǫǬǭ ˇˇDZDz zǴǵǶǷǸǹǺǻǼǽǾǿ

The Skinny

Evaluation: I have always wanted to make my own fonts that I could use on my Mac, and now I can. iFontMaker is easy to use without ever re-setting any of the preferences. Children can even use it. From start to finish creating the basic characters/glyphs took under 10 minutes. Of course it took a lot longer when I wanted to include all of the extra accented glyphs etc. I created about 460 glyphs in all. I figured - if I was going to do it, I might as well create a complete font set.

The only negative I have is the lack of thorough documentation. They have some info on their web site, but not much. It was a matter of trial and error to figure out some things. Since the "Accented & Misc", "Extensions" and "More Extensions" glyphs were separate items on the drop-down-menu, I didn't know if they would automatically be added to the current font, or if they would be their own separate fonts. I found out later that they would be added. Also, using the "Duplicate Font" and the "Change Weight for all glyphs" features, I was able to create Light, Medium, and Bold versions of my font. But I have yet to discover how to marry these together so they appear as one font family where I can select the font weights from the "Choose the Typeface" menu (that shows the Regular, Italics, and Bold options). Currently I have to select them individually as separate fonts if I want a different weight size. But this is a minor thing. What do you expect for only $6.99? At least it works. And as you can see, I was able to figure out how to use the basic features without the documentation.

So if you want a font that you created and maybe mirrors your handwriting, this is a must-have. You can't beat the price.

Requires: iPad, Mac, an Internet connection to built your TrueType font and to download or share your font

Company: The 2TTF

Price: $6.99

No demo version - but the 2ttf and YouTube web sites have videos showing the creation of fonts using iFontMaker. YouTube even has videos showing the creation of Thai and Japanese fonts.