

Cut Coding Time With New Grid Control

By Larry Eads

The upcoming Visual PRO/5™ v2.0 release has many new features designed to enhance and simplify your Business Basic programming. One of the most significant new aspects of this release is the inclusion of a graphical grid control.

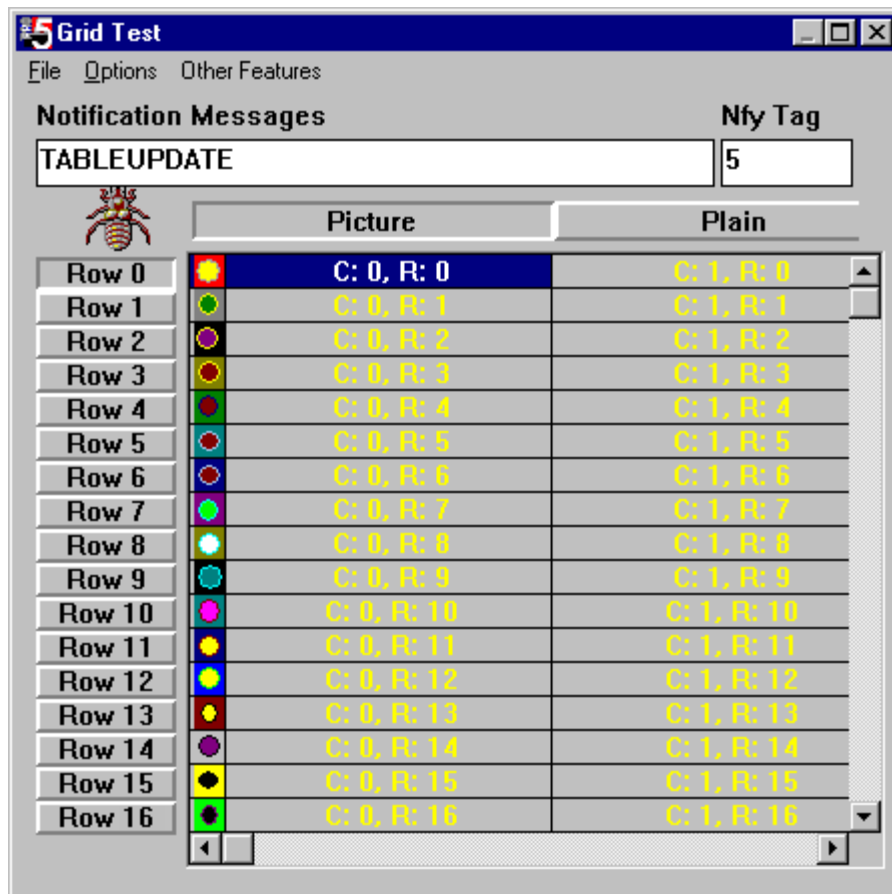
In some respects, a grid control is similar to a spreadsheet program in which data is displayed in rows and columns, and an operator can scroll both vertically and horizontally to display, modify, and enter new data.

But as any programmer who has created programs of this type will attest, writing this type of logic is one of the more time-consuming portions of any user interface. In addition to data entry and scrolling, the programmer must also accommodate deletion, insertion, and addition of rows, in the initial data entry and in any subsequent data modifications.

Use A Grid Control For...

Programming many data processing applications can be simplified with a grid control feature. Order processing is a typical example. Usually, order header information is followed by entry of one or more items to be ordered. As each line item is entered, the items scroll off the top of the screen while the operator continues to enter more items. The operator can scroll forward and backward in the order to review and modify the individual items.

A grid control can simplify similar applications in which the data exceeds the capacity of a single display screen. Detail deduction entry for payroll, complex general ledger distributions, or detail bill of materials entry are but a few applications where the use of a grid control can significantly reduce a programmer's coding effort.



Two important grid features highlighted in this sample program are animated cursor support and real-time display of grid messages that respond to operator interaction. The animated cursor support can be seen by moving the mouse around the grid. Readers will be able to quickly locate the clever animated cursor "bug" that appears. The Notification Messages displayed in the upper left corner of the program provides an example of the real-time messages that respond to operator interaction. Double-clicking or entering data into a cell brings up a variety of messages in the Notification Messages field.

While this sample program is intended to exercise the grid control, it also contains code that illustrates event loop handling and general program flow when writing event-driven user interfaces. Menus, headings, and data formatting are also illustrated to provide a framework of reference when writing application logic.

We've barely scratched the surface of this new grid control's capabilities. I encourage all developers to take a few minutes to download the Visual PRO/5 v2.0 Early Access release and explore the possibilities this powerful new control can bring to GUI application development efforts.