



# Alpha Five Made Easy

The Basics and More for Version 8

by Susan Hussey Bush

## Chapter 5 - Reports, Letters & Labels

Sample Chapter (Partial)

### *About the book and Alpha Five...*

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*Alpha Five Made Easy* is a step-by-step manual for learning the Alpha Five database software and is intended to be used with the companion databases provided with purchase of the book. It contains almost 475 pages of step-by-step exercises with screen shots. This sample will give you a peek at the material contained in the book.

The full chapter on *Reports, Letters and Labels* is actually 62 pages long. We have included its *Table of Contents* so you can judge for yourself the depth of the material.

Users of all levels will find this book is the quickest way to tap into the fabulous Alpha Five features.

For more information and to purchase the book, go to  
[www.libertymanuals.com](http://www.libertymanuals.com).

**Frances M. Peake**, professional database designer and co-owner of Proctor & Peake, Inc., enthusiastically endorses Alpha Five Made Easy and answers a question about Alpha Five.

**“The plain-English explanations of each Alpha Five feature in this book show Susan's experience applying the program in a real-world business environment. Readers will find every chapter full of valuable information, regardless of their experience level. On behalf of Alpha Five users and enthusiasts everywhere, thank you Susan, for writing this book!”**

“With regards to Alpha Five, we are long time Q&A users and have been looking for a replacement that is easier than Access®, dBase®, etc., but has the power to write strong applications without a lot of coding. Is Alpha Five the product we are looking for? I would appreciate your opinion.” —RADeV, Jr.

“You indicate that you are looking for *“the power to write strong applications without a lot of coding.”* In that case, yes, Alpha Five is a better choice than Access. I develop applications in both and I tell you that you can go so much farther in Alpha Five without having to do programming. In fact, you may not have to do any coding at all. Alpha Five offers a lot of commands and properties that simply do not exist in Access, where you would have to write your own procedures and functions to do the same thing.

“Even when you need to automate a process, Alpha Five has a number of alternatives to writing code, such as “Action Scripting” that lets you perform the steps you want to automate and generates the code for you. There are, of course, some things that you might dream up that will require writing code in Alpha Five.”

—FMP

## About the author



From her first computer experience in 1984 - a used Apple I presented by her father after he upgraded to an Apple II - Susan Hussey Bush has been hooked on this amazing (and sometimes frustrating) tool of the modern world. The 1985 purchase of the state of the art IBM XT with an astounding 10 mg hard drive opened the door to database development. That first flat database, *Nutshell*, showed her that one did not have to be a programmer to develop applications. Later, she began the search for a relational database that did not require programming skills. *Alpha Four*, a DOS product, met those requirements. When *Alpha Five* was released, she moved to the Windows version. After expending considerable effort learning the program and designing on her laptop, it was stolen. The only copy of the database was gone and a serious setback resulted. The good news is that by the time she started over,

*Alpha Five* version 3, with significant improvements over the earlier versions, had been released.

The development of a database for her government bidding company, Liberty Food Marketers Co., then began in earnest - this time with backups! Today, that application contains more than 60 tables and 75 sets. As a non-programmer, Susan has set up 100 saved operations to import, reformat and export data. She has since sold the business to her son, Dave, who continues to use *Alpha Five* to stay current with the demands of government bidding and to offer customers outstanding service.

Susan has a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Architectural Design. She brings that training to her database design, focusing on well organized, attractive forms and reports. *Alpha Five* allows her to create database applications reflecting her belief that software should be user-friendly. She is excited about adding Version 8 features to her databases.

Presently living in Flat Rock, North Carolina, she travels extensively with her husband, Richard Bush. There are seven children and eight grandchildren in their blended family, spread across the country. Mike, Liz and Walter Hussey live in the Florida Keys. JR Hussey and his wife, Carin Young, live in San Francisco. In Rumson, New Jersey, Susan's hometown, Dave Hussey keeps busy with Liberty Food Marketers Co. Rick Bush's daughters, Taylor, Jordan and Lindsey live in Pea Ridge, Arkansas. He and his oldest daughter, Hailey, live in Neosho, MO, where Richard grew up. Ross and Mariola Bush live in Rolla, Missouri where Mariola recently graduated as a Civil Engineer and Ross is studying the law. Residing in Fort Smith, Arkansas are Missy, her husband, Jeff Brown and son Jake. Kathleen and Sands Orris and their sons, William and Foster make their home in Cumming, Georgia.



With a special section on  
the transition from  
Alpha Four to Alpha Five  
by Frances M. Peake



# Alpha Five Made Easy

The Basics and More for Version 8

**Step-by-step instructions  
and useful tips  
for users of all levels**



**Susan Hussey Bush**

**ALPHA FIVE MADE EASY**

**The Basics and More for Version 8**

**by Susan Hussey Bush**

**with a special section on**

**Alpha Four to Alpha Five: The Transition**

**by  
Frances M. Peake**

**Liberty Manuals Company  
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## *Important Notes*

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## Chapter 5.

# *Reports, Letters and Labels*



*Alpha Five has awesome reporting capabilities.*

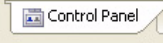
*The power of a database is the multitude of ways the data can be viewed. The same information that confirms a sale can show a complete report of purchases by all customers.*

Notes:

## Preparation for the Lesson.

Open Alpha Five and navigate to the following file:

- c:\A5\_Ver8Book\ABC\_V8\_Lessons\ABC Seminars.adb\*

-  Click on the Control Panel tab in the Window Bar at the bottom of the screen to bring the Control Panel to the front.



SPECIAL NOTES

As fields are added to the form, the *Summary Genie* may pop-up. Accept the default settings and click *Finish*.

These techniques may be applied to any report. To do so, open the report in design mode to begin the segment.

These exercises are designed to be done in book sequence. If you do the Operations section before this Reports section, the report may not match the steps in the book because, when removing duplicate names, some client names may have been deleted. To work around this problem, reinstall the data from the companion disk. It will overwrite any changes you have made.



Because this is a long chapter, it has been broken into a series of exercises. The quill and inkwell mark the beginning and end of each exercise.



LOOKING AHEAD!†

The following reports may be previewed at the Alpha Five Control Panel Reports tab. There are also buttons for some of the reports on the Clients form.

- Quick Report: MyFirstReportDemo
- Custom Reports:
  - Registrations
  - Receipt: To Print Preview, enter any ID from 00001 – 00007. (Button on ClientInfo form)
  - Schedule: To Print Preview, enter 00001
- Sub-Report: MyRegistrationsGenieDemo
- Letters: Confirmation Letter



## Learning Report basics

Alpha Five presents a quick and easy way to get started with reports. We will first design a report using the genie and then will update the report with some custom design.

Open the **RegistrationsGenieDemo** report to see a completed report for this segment.

FINISHED REPORT

## Quick Reports mean a quick start

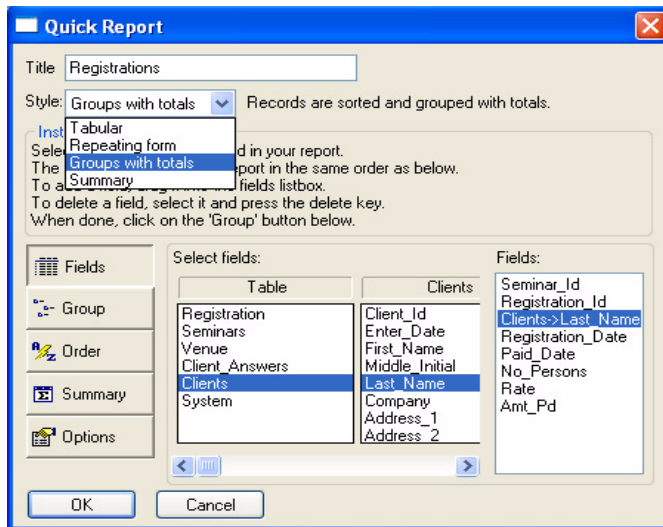
First, we will make a Quick Report.

\*. Depending on how Alpha Five is opened, the file extension **.adb** may not appear. (For instructions on opening an existing database, see “Opening an existing database” on page xxxvi.)

†. For experienced or returning users. May be helpful to beginners who want to see the results of the exercise.



1. *Alpha Five Control Panel Tab: Reports.*
2. Click the **New** button.
3. *Data Source: registration\_rept.set*
4. *Method: Choose Use Quick Report.* (Click OK)
  - The Quick Report definition dialog box opens.



5. Set the following parameters:
  - Title: Registrations.*
  - Style: Groups with totals.*
6. Click the **Fields** button (should be default).
7. *Select fields: Table:* Choose **Registration**. Double click or drag the following fields to add them to the Fields box on the right side:
  - Registration ID.**
  - Seminar ID.**
  - Registration Date.**
  - Paid Date.**
  - No Persons.**
  - Rate.**
  - Amt Pd.**



HINT!

To remove a field from the Fields box, drag it off to the right, out of the box. It should be removed from the list.

8. *Table:* Choose **Clients**. Double click the following field to add it to the Fields box:
  - Last Name.**

**REORDERING THE FIELDS**

- The fields appear on the report in the order listed in the Fields box. We will change the order of the fields so they will be more logical for this report.



HINT!

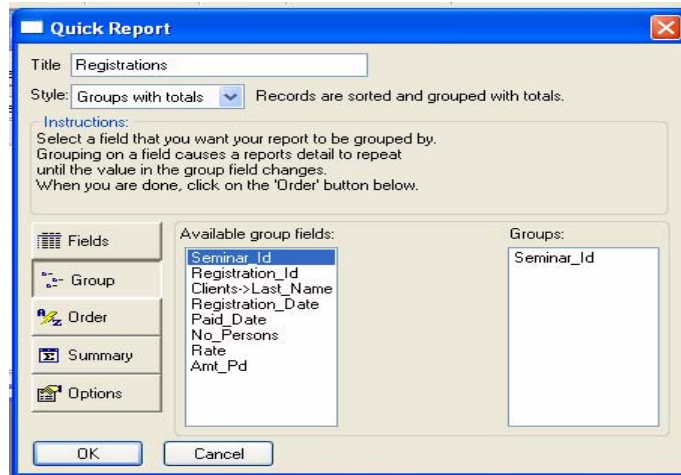
9. *Fields*: Click **Seminar ID**, drag it up to the top of the list.

If you have trouble getting the field to the top, move it to 2nd place. Then move the top field below it—like a Rubix cube!

10. Drag **Clients->Last Name** to the 3rd position.

11. Click the **Group** button.

- The entry box on the right changes to **Groups**.



12. Double click **Seminar ID** to place it in the *Groups* box.

13. Click the **Order** button.

14. Double Click **Clients->Last Name** to move it to the *Sort fields* box.

15. Click the **Summary** button.

- The genie has filled in the fields—all numeric—that are eligible for a summary operation.

16. Click the **Options** button.

17. Click the checkboxes as follows:

- Fields*: **Bold**.
- Page*: **Page Number, Day/Date, Center Title**.

18. Click OK.

- The Report Editor appears. We will explain in detail each of the sections, but first let's make one quick change and then take a look at the report.

19. Right click on the large title in the report, **Registrations**.

20. Choose Properties.

- Properties are changed here in the same manner as on forms.

21. *Tab*: **Font**; *Color*: **Red**. (Click OK)

22. CTRL + S to save.

- Save as MyFirstReport. (Click OK)

23.  *Print Preview* the Report.

- Click the Preview button on the Reports Toolbar.
- Or choose File > Print Preview.

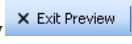
## Understanding the Print Preview tabs

When you go to Print Preview from the Report Editor, an additional tab is opened in the Window Bar below the report.

- If the tabs are not showing, choose View > Window Bar from the Top Menu to open that section of your screen.

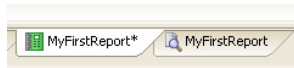


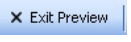

These tabs allow you to move quickly between Print and Print Preview. There are certain notations, however.

- If you change the report, and then click the Print Preview TAB, the change will not show.
- To show the change, click Exit Preview  on the Print Preview

Toolbar and reclick the Print Preview  Button on the Report Editor Toolbar.

- If you did not save the report before clicking the Print Preview TAB, an asterisk will appear on to the Report Editor tab.\*



- In order to save the report, you need to first click  Exit Preview on the Toolbar and then save the report. When you reopen  Print Preview, the asterisk will be gone, indicating a saved and therefore current design.

## Understanding the Print Preview Toolbar

The Print Preview Toolbar gives a wide range of options for saving the individual reports. For example, many companies are requesting that invoices be E-mailed. You can save the report in one of four formats common to most computer systems and E-mail the report with the click of a single button.



### VIEWING PAGES

The first group of buttons are for viewing certain pages in the report.

- First page.

---

\*. This asterisk appears only at Print Preview. Its purpose is to note that a certain part of the *Print Preview* view no longer accurately represents the entire report editor design. There may be other parts that you want to examine, however.

---

- Previous page.
- Go to page <number> (Enter the number of the page to which you want to go.)
- Next page.
- Last page.

#### PRINTING THE REPORT

The next group is for printing the report.

- Print.
- Print Setup.

#### VIEWING OPTIONS

The next group gives options for viewing the report on screen.

- Zoom.

There are two zoom settings, in and out.

You may also zoom by moving the cursor onto the report. It changes to a magnifying glass. Click on the report to zoom in or out.

- Two pages.

Shows 2 pages on the screen at one time. Zoom must be set to lesser magnification so there is room on the screen for both pages.

- Color.

Toggles areas with color off/on.

#### 24. Click **Color**.

- The red Registrations title is changed to black.

#### 25. Click **Color** again.

- The Registrations title is set back to red.

#### RETURNING TO DESIGN MODE

The next button returns to Report Design Mode.

-  Exit Preview

#### SAVING REPORTS AS PDF, HTML, RICH AND PLAIN TEXT FILES

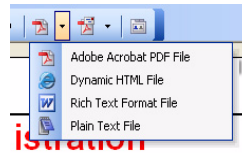
The next two buttons have multiple choices. The first forms the report in a different format where it can then be saved from that program. The second forms the report in the selected format and opens a Send Email form, with the report attached. The major advantage is that reports can be viewed by users who do not have Alpha Five installed on their computers.

In addition to these formats, reports may be saved and printed within Alpha Five itself.

#### 26. Click the drop down arrow adjacent to the button next to *Exit Preview*.

- When you hover over the down arrow, bubble help reads: **Select format for saving report.**

- There are 4 file types to which you can save and/or send the report.



NOTE

Our purpose at this time is to give an overview of the features available. Instructions for enhancing these formats is detailed in “Enhancing PDF, HTML & Rich Text report formats” on page 205.

- The icon on the button is for the last format used.



- Adobe Acrobat PDF. Most users have Adobe Acrobat Reader on their computers. It is also available as a free download at [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com).



- Dynamic HTML File. Form will open in Microsoft Internet Explorer.



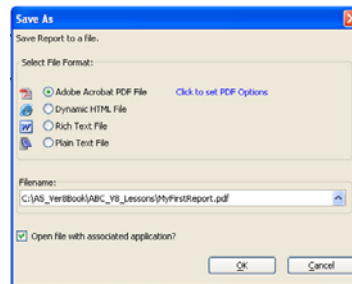
- Rich Text File. This can be read and edited by users of Microsoft Word and Corel WordPerfect.



- Plain Text File. Removes all formatting. Can be read by any computer.

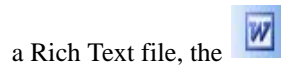
SELECTION OVERVIEW

- To use or change formats:
  - a. Click the current button or its drop down arrow.



- b. Choose the desired format.
- c. If you like, you can preview at the format options now, but we will examine them in detail at “Enhancing PDF, HTML & Rich Text report formats” on page 205.

- The report will be formed in the chosen format.
- That format will remain the default. In other words, if you format a report as



a Rich Text file, the icon will appear on the Toolbar.

- It can, of course, be changed to a different format at any time.



NOTE

If you do not save the report prior to going to Print Preview, you will get an error message advising you to return to design mode and save the record.

**27. Choose Adobe Acrobat PDF File.\***

28. *File name:* Accept the default.
  - C:\A5\_Ver8Book\ABC\_V8\_Lessons\MyFirstReport.pdf
29. *Open file with associated application?* Check (Yes)
30. Click OK.
  - The program may ask for permission to overwrite an existing field. (Yes)
  - If it is unable to find a PDF driver, Alpha Five will ask for permission to try to install it. (Yes)
  - If the PDF driver is installed correctly, the report appears on the screen.
31. Close **Acrobat**.

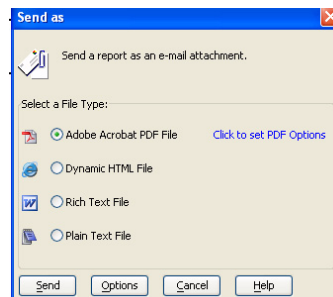
## SENDING EMAIL ATTACHMENTS\*

The process for sending email attachments is essentially the same as above.

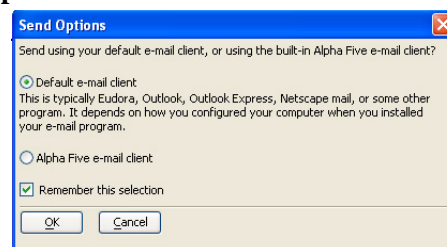
- a. Click the current button or its drop down arrow.
- b. Choose the desired format from the Send As dialog.

A third step is necessary, though. In order to actually send an email, you will need to tell Alpha Five which email client to use. For the purposes of this exercise, we will choose **Default e-mail client** to use your existing e-mail client, such as Outlook or Outlook Express. E-mailing with Alpha Five is discussed in Chapter 11 beginning on page 335.

32. Click the **Send a report via email** button.
33. Choose **Adobe Acrobat PDF File** format.



34. Click the **Options** button.

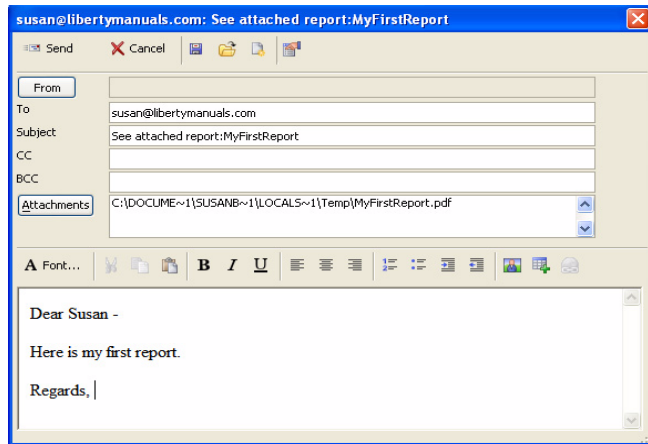


35. Choose **Default e-mail client**. (Click OK)

- 
- \*. This choice requires that Adobe Acrobat Reader be installed on your computer. You may get a free download at [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com). You may also choose another format if you prefer.
  - \*. If your computer is new and/or you have not set up an email account, you may be directed to go to the “Mail Icon on the Control Panel.” This means the WINDOWS CONTROL PANEL, not the Alpha Five Control Panel. Open the **Windows Control Panel** and click on **Mail** to set up the account.

36. Click **OK** and then Click **Send**.

- The report is formed and the send email window opens with the report attached.



37. Close the email window—or send yourself a test email! And while you’re at it, send me a copy! I’ll be sure to email you back a congratulatory note for getting this far!\*

**MORE WAYS TO CLASS UP YOUR REPORTS**

- Note that these file types support color as well as black and white type. That means you can put your color logo on a report and email it to your customer.
- You can also post these files on your web site for viewing. The PDF format works very well for this. Just put the link on your web page and store the actual file on the server.

ALPHA FIVE CONTROL PANEL

The final button on the toolbar takes you to the Alpha Five Control Panel.



38. If possible, print a copy of the report, now. You will find the print–out handy to use as a reference for the following exercises.

- Click the Print button on the Reports Toolbar.
- Or choose File > Print or CTRL + P.

39. Click **Exit Preview**.

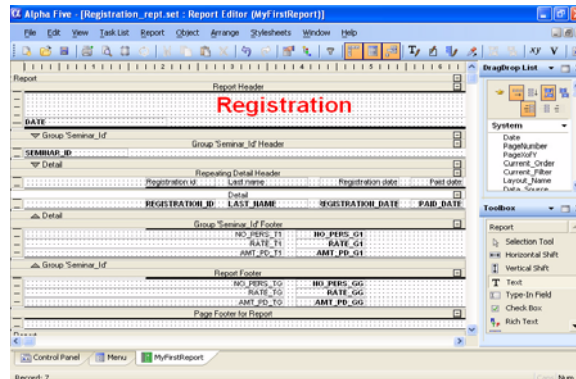
- You are returned to Design mode.

If, for any reason, you are no longer in Design mode, do the following:

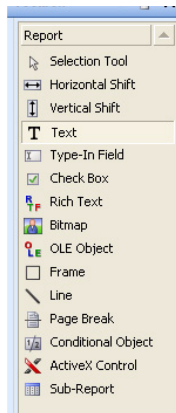
- *Alpha Five Control Panel Tab*: Reports
- Right click > Design: **MyFirstReport** (or **RegistrationsGenie**).

40. Maximize the Report Editor to make it as large as possible on the screen.

\*. My email address is susan@LibertyManuals.com.



PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO  
READ THIS



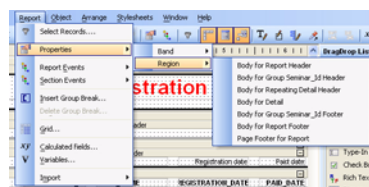
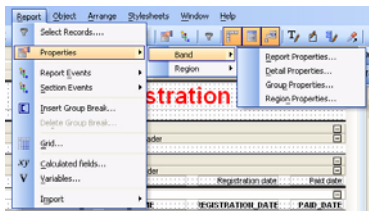
## Understanding the Report Editor<sup>\*</sup>

- **Toolbox:** The Report Editor Toolbox contains fewer tools than that of the Form Editor Toolbox, however, the use for each tool is the same. The Sub-Form button is replaced with the **Sub-Report** control
  - If you cannot see the full report editor, we recommend you make the Toolbox and DragDrop List as narrow as possible.
- **DragDrop List:** Same for both the Report and Form Editors.<sup>†</sup>
- **Report Toolbar:** Same as the *Forms Toolbar*,<sup>‡</sup> plus one new button, **Select**



### Records.

- **Reports Top Menu:** differs from the *Forms Top Menu*<sup>\*\*</sup> as follows:
  - **View:** There are 3 new options that toggle on/off various elements of the report. (See “Viewing Sections” on page 167.)
  - **Report:**
    - a. **Select Records.** Applies filters. (See “Filtering and Ordering Reports” on page 195.)
    - b. **Properties.**
      - Band
      - Report Properties, p. 193.
      - Detail Properties. p. 195.
      - Group Properties. p. 198.
      - Region Properties. p. 200
    - **Region**  
See “Understanding Region Properties” on page 200.
    - **Body for Report Header**

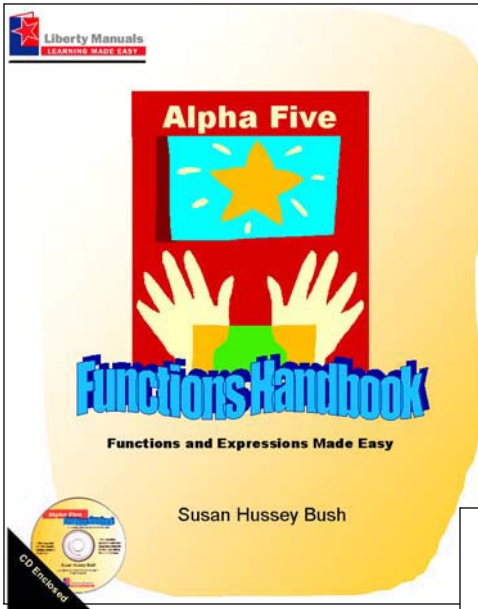


\*. This segment covers the basic elements of reports. For more information on the features available in reports, see A5 Help > User Guide > Reports.

†. See “Using the DragDrop List” on page 74.

‡. See “Understanding the Forms Toolbar” on page 61.


\*\* See “Understanding the Top Menu” on page 58.



Expand your Alpha Five applications with the

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**Alpha Five  
Functions Handbook**  
Functions and Expressions Made Easy

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\* "Get Outta DOS" and "Get Into Alpha Five!" Learning Seminars are produced by Frances M. Peake and Susan H. Bush. For more information, call 1-866-842-2100.

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*Frances M. Peake, professional database designer and co-owner of Proctor and Peake, Inc., enthusiastically endorses Alpha Five Made Easy and answers a question about Alpha Five.*

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"You indicate that you are looking for *"the power to write strong applications without a lot of coding."* In that case, yes, Alpha Five is a better choice than Access. I develop applications in both and I tell you that you can go so much farther in Alpha Five without having to do programming. In fact, you may not have to do any coding at all. Alpha Five offers a lot of commands and properties that simply do not exist in *Access*, where you would have to write your own procedures and functions to do the same thing.

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