

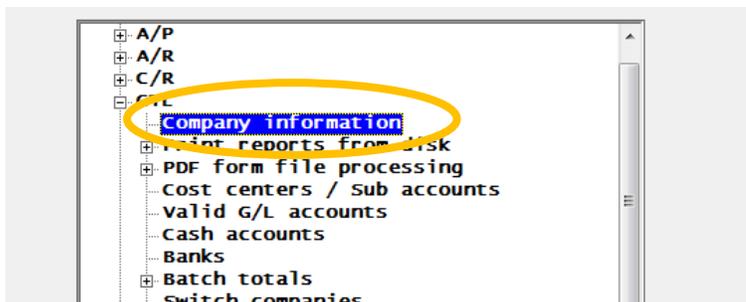
## PBS Tips and Tricks #21 – Usage of Dates in PBS

By the time you read this, the year will have changed. The days will be starting to get longer and won't we all be glad to see 2020 in the rear-view mirror!

Dates in the PBS accounting system are entered and generally displayed and printed using only the last two digits of the year. However, internally the year is stored as the full four digits. This means that a date entered as 122520 (format MMDDYY) will be displayed as 12/25/20 (format MM/DD/YY) and stored internally as 20201225 (CCYYMMDD). In other words, it is stored as the full date with Century (CC)-Year(YY)-Month(MM)-Day(DD).

The change from entry to display formats is a minor formatting change done in the program by simply parsing the MM, DD, YY portions into their separate parts and inserting "/" between the parts.

However, to retain full data compatibility back to 1900, the system also has to interpret the two-digit year and create the full four-digit version. It does this by referring to a "water-shed" year parameter in the Company information control file:



New	Edit	Save	Save / New	Delete	Cancel
<b>General</b>   Package / screen controls   Account setup   Printers   E-mail					
Company report name	Passport Software, Inc.				
Company display name	Passport Software, Inc.				
Address line 1	181 Waukegan Road				
Address line 2	Suite 200				
Address line 3	Northfield IL 60093				
Phone	847-729-7900				
Year 2000 cutoff	30				
Batch controls	Cross reference file				

Because this is so important, shown below is the “old” classical or “character based” screen many are still using:

Company information		Passport Software, Inc.			
1. Use line 25?	Y	2. Save registers?	Yes		
3. Use change log?	Yes	# days before warning	120		
4. Year 2000 Cutoff	30	5. Use batch controls?	No		
6. Account number					
Segment name	Size	Alphanumeric?	Fill-req	Suppress spaces?	
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	
Main account	4	Numeric	Zeros left	(Not applicable)	
Sub-account	3	Numeric	Zeros left	(Not applicable)	
7. Number of cost center segments?					
Separation character?					
8. Cost center					
Segment name	Short name	Size	Alphanumeric?	Fill-req	Suppress spaces?
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
			Numeric	Zeros left	No
Field number to change ?	<input type="text"/>				

This data is on the second page of the classical view of the Company information.

This “Year 2000 cutoff” value is compared to any dates (specifically the 2-digit year) being entered. If the entered value is less than, or equal to, the 30 as above (or whatever the value is), the ‘20’ is placed in front of the two-digit year. This means that any dates with years from ‘00’ to ‘30’ will be 20xx dates. And, most importantly, any date greater than the Year 2000 cutoff will be treated as coming from 19xx.

Since the CC of 20 will be with us for about 80 more years why even bother? Why not make this hard coded? After all, accounting transactions prior to the year 2000 take us back 20 years to RealWorld days: 20-year-old data is not worth much for practical purposes. And it probably should have been purged or at least archived! Yes, but – consider Payroll: birthdates, hire dates etc. These will have to have 19xx dates. Only twenty-year-olds and I would be exempt. To a lesser extent there is also data associated with AR and AP like first transaction date – indicating how long a customer or vendor relationship has lasted. Many of our client companies are more than twenty years old, so having these dates is a real possibility.

What this actually means is that this cut-off date needs to be adjusted occasionally for each company. As the years move forward, we also have to move the cut-off data. When appropriate, Passport Software will make recommendations to change this value, so you don’t get into trouble. As of several years ago many of our customers had a twenty in the cut-off date. This year that will become a problem. We will be issuing a notice to all customers to check this value because if it is 20, on January 1<sup>st</sup>, any transaction dates will be placed into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Note: new versions of the software perform a date check for this and when you create a new PBS system the date is now set to 30.)

It is also important to note that any transactions already posted and stored in the data files are “protected” because they are stored with the four-digit date and therefore “obsolescence proof”. For example, any history is immune to what the cut-off date is. The cut-off date only applies to new transactions.

Why not adjust up to 60 or 70 so you don’t have to worry about this for another 40 or 50 years? That will work for any new transactions, but you better make sure you don’t hire anyone over the age of 60. With that in mind, our ‘30’ recommendation is quite conservative since that cut-off is 90 years ago. You would also be pretty safe with 40 or even 50. So, you choose. Checking on it in each of your companies once a decade or

even more frequently take seconds and ensures dates are correct. As mentioned, Passport will put out reminders at the time of key date changes like 2020.

One additional note that may be useful:

Generally speaking, the display and printing format of dates is hard-coded. It follows the American standard of MM/DD/YY. As the world moves toward more and more electronic based transactions, we may see some change in this assumed standard. For example, most of us have taken a picture of a check and used that to deposit the check. It used to be that the instrument of dollar transactions was only cash or a check; now it is electronic/check images. That has meant changes to the readability of checks themselves and that has involved changes to the standards of check formats and so too, the machines that read them.

Although the PBS standard check is still accepted across the US, that may not continue. (For example, in Canada, where check standards are more rigidly enforced, it is not.) As a result, and to cover this possibility, PBS offers several options specifically for printing the formatted date on a check. This is set up in the Cash Account file for the bank account being used with the checks. This file governs the next check number, next transaction number (for EFT/ACH) and now the date format as it applies to a check printing. You can choose a date format for the printed check that suits you or your forms supplier. The standard and default is of course, MM/DD/YY. Here is the drop-down for selection of the other date formats:

The screenshot shows a software interface with a table of cash accounts and a 'General' tab. The table has two columns: 'Account #' and 'Description'. The first row is highlighted in blue and shows '1000-000' and 'Cash First Bank #13557-00'. The second row shows '1010-000' and 'Cash Good Bank #13726-002'. Below the table is a 'General' tab with several fields: 'Account number' (1000-000), 'Last check #' (None), 'Last PR check #' (empty), 'Date format' (MM/DD/YY), 'Date separator' (MMDDCCYY), 'Last AP ACH #' (DDMMCCYY), and 'Last PR ACH #' (None). A dropdown menu is open for the 'Date format' field, showing options: MM/DD/YY, MMDDCCYY, DDMMCCYY, and CCYYMMDD.

Account #	Description
1000-000	Cash First Bank #13557-00
1010-000	Cash Good Bank #13726-002

**General**

Account number: 1000-000    Cash First Bank #13557-000

Last check #: (None)

Last PR check #:

Date format: MM/DD/YY

Date separator: MMDDCCYY

Last AP ACH #: DDMMCCYY

Last PR ACH #: (None)

When selecting anything other than the standard MM/DD/YY format, you also have the choice of what spacer is inserted between components. (Space/a blank has become a common selection to improve readability).

**General**

**Account number** 1000-000  Cash First Bank #13557-000

**Last check #** (None)

Last PR check #

**Date format** DDMCCYY

**Date separator** Space

Last AP ACH #

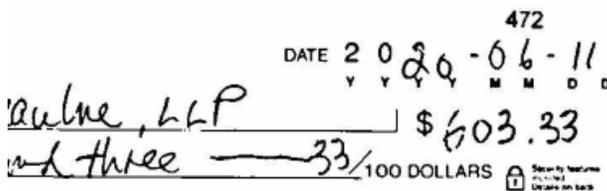
Last PR ACH #

**Comments**

None  
Dash  
Period  
Space  
Slash

Here is a sample of a hand-written check written several months ago.

Note the CCCC MM DD format used and the space used as separator (i.e., not slashes).



Our advice is to review dates and potentially look forward to changes in the format of dates on checks.

Have a good New Year!