

Creating Leaders with Custom Arrows

Leaders can be created with one of several different arrow styles or with your very own customized arrow. If you use multiple arrow styles within the same drawing, you might want to consider creating a pull down menu or custom toolbar for quick access to these different styles.

Setting the Leader Arrow Block

Most of the arrow styles included with AutoCAD are blocks that are programmatically created when you choose a particular arrow style. The names of the blocks are listed in the chart at the far right.

If you just want dimensions and leaders to use different arrow styles, simply choose the Leader Arrow style in the Dimension Style Manager. However, if you want to create a menu of different arrow style choices, you will need to go behind the scene a bit.

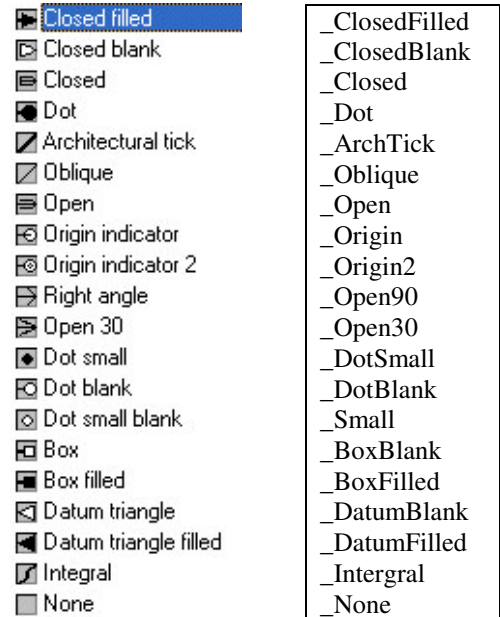
First you need to know that a Dimension Variable (DIMVAR) named DIMLDRBLK stores the name of the block used when a Leader object is drawn. To see how this works,

Type **DIMLDRBLK** and press **ENTER**. When prompted

Enter new value for DIMLDRBLK, or . for default <"">:

Type **_DOT** and press **ENTER**.

Now, draw a leader. You should have a filled dot at the arrow end of the leader.



Creating a Leader Pull Down Menu

To create a pull down menu you need to manually edit the **CUSTOM.MNS** file. To edit this file, you will need to open the **C:\Documents and Settings\user\Application Data\Autodesk\AutoCAD 2005\R16.1\enu\Support\custom.mns** file using Notepad or other text editor.

Note: user is your log in name.

If you can't find the folder path listed above, then hidden files and folders are not being shown.

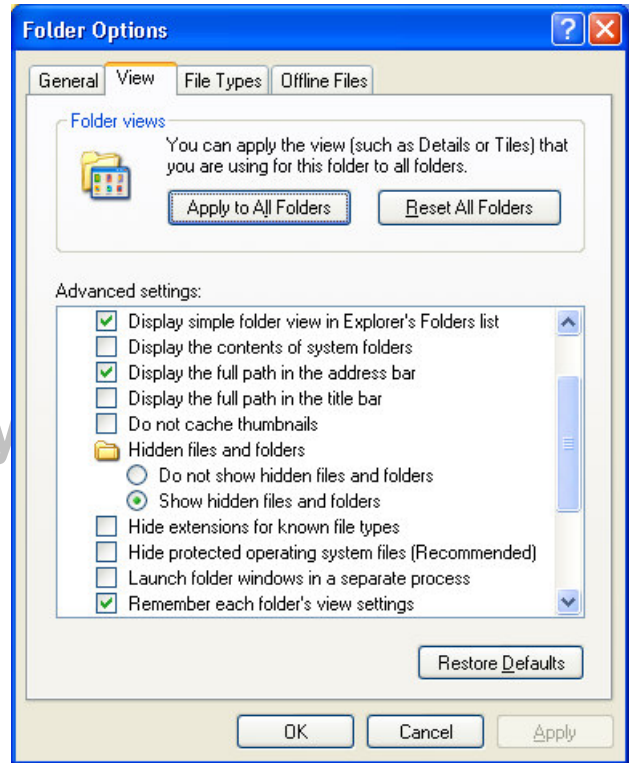
To displayed hidden files and folders, open **Windows Explorer** or **My Computer**.

Select **Tools** from the menu.

Left-click on the **View** tab.

Left-click on the **Show hidden files and folder** item.

Close the window by left-clicking on the **OK** button.



//

```
// AutoCAD menu file - C:\Documents and Settings\.....\custom.mns
//
***MENUGROUP=CUSTOM
***TOOLBARS
//
// End of AutoCAD menu file - C:\Documents and Settings\.....\custom.mns
//
```

You should see something like the lines of text above. Each input area name begins with three asterisks (***) . The area labeled *****TOOLBARS** defines the area where custom toolbars are defined. To add a Pull Down menu, you will need to include a *****POP** area. Since you can have many Pull Down menus, each one is numbered. The first is *****POP0**.

```
//
// AutoCAD menu file - C:\Documents and Settings\.....\custom.mns
//
***MENUGROUP=CUSTOM
***POP0
***TOOLBARS
//
// End of AutoCAD menu file - C:\Documents and Settings\.....\custom.mns
//
```

The next item you must add to the file is the label of text that will appear in the Menu bar. Labels in menu files are enclosed in square brackets. Some of the labels that are already shown in the menu bar are **File Edit View Draw Modify** and so on.

```
//
// AutoCAD menu file - C:\Documents and Settings\.....\custom.mns
//
***MENUGROUP=CUSTOM
***POP0
[Leaders]
***TOOLBARS
//
// End of AutoCAD menu file - C:\Documents and Settings\.....\custom.mns
//
```



Next enter the code that controls the menu item. The DimVar DIMLDRBLK is set to DOT and the Qleader command begun. This is where you must be careful as each character, including spaces, is evaluated just like you were typing it at the command line.

```
//  
// AutoCAD menu file - C:\Documents and Settings\.....\custom.mns  
//  
  
***MENUGROUP=CUSTOM  
***POPO  
[Leaders]  
[Dot]^c^cdimldrblk;_dot;qleader  
  
***TOOLBARS  
  
//  
// End of AutoCAD menu file - C:\Documents and Settings\.....\custom.mns  
//
```

[Dot]

This is the text that will appear in the pull down menu.

^c^c

This string perform two cancels to make sure no other commands are active when the macro begins.

;

A semi-colon produces an **ENTER**. Use a semi-colon instead of “space” when block names, layers names, file names, etc. are input since these items *may* contain spaces.

Creating a CUSTOM.MNS

If you don't already have a Custom.mns file you can make one. Start by creating a new file using Notepad by selecting the **Start** button, then Programs, then **Accessories**, then **Notepad**.

Menu Group

The menugroup acts an identifier for the menu. It is used to load and unload the menu items. The name of the menugroup may or may not be the same as the name of the file. The *** indicates a menu section. On the first line of the file type:

```
***MENUGROUP=CUSTOM
```

Make sure you press **ENTER** and the end of the line of text. Input the boxed text from the previous pages.

Saving the File

This is the tricky part. The location of several customizable files changed in AutoCAD 2004. The change is the result of AutoCAD support for Power Users and Roaming Profiles. As a result, many support files have been moved from **C:\Program Files\AutoCAD 2004** to **C:\Documents and Settings\user\Application Data\Autodesk\AutoCAD 2004\R16.0\enu**. Substitute your profile name for *user* in the path.

Menu files are located in **C:\Documents and Settings\user\Application Data\Autodesk\AutoCAD 2004\R16.0\enu\Support**. If you were attending a class at CCAD, the location of the menu files would be **C:\Documents and Settings\Training\Application Data\Autodesk\AutoCAD 2004\R16.0\enu\Support**.

Loading the Menu

Begin AutoCAD. Type **Menuload** at the command line and press **ENTER**. Make sure the **Menu Groups** tab is on top. Select the **Browse...** button to locate the menu file. You will have placed this file in the **C:\Documents and**

Settings\user\Application Data\Autodesk\AutoCAD 2004\R16.0\enu\Support folder. By default you will be loading an MNS or MNC file.

After you locate the MNS or MNC file, left-click on the **Load** button. The Menugroup name defined in the menu file should be displayed in the list. The Menugroup name is frequently the same as the menu file name, but this is not required.

Once the menu is loaded the **Leaders** menu needs to be added to the **Menu Bar**.

Click on the **Menu Bar** tab.

Make sure **CUSTOM** is showing in the **Menu Group**.

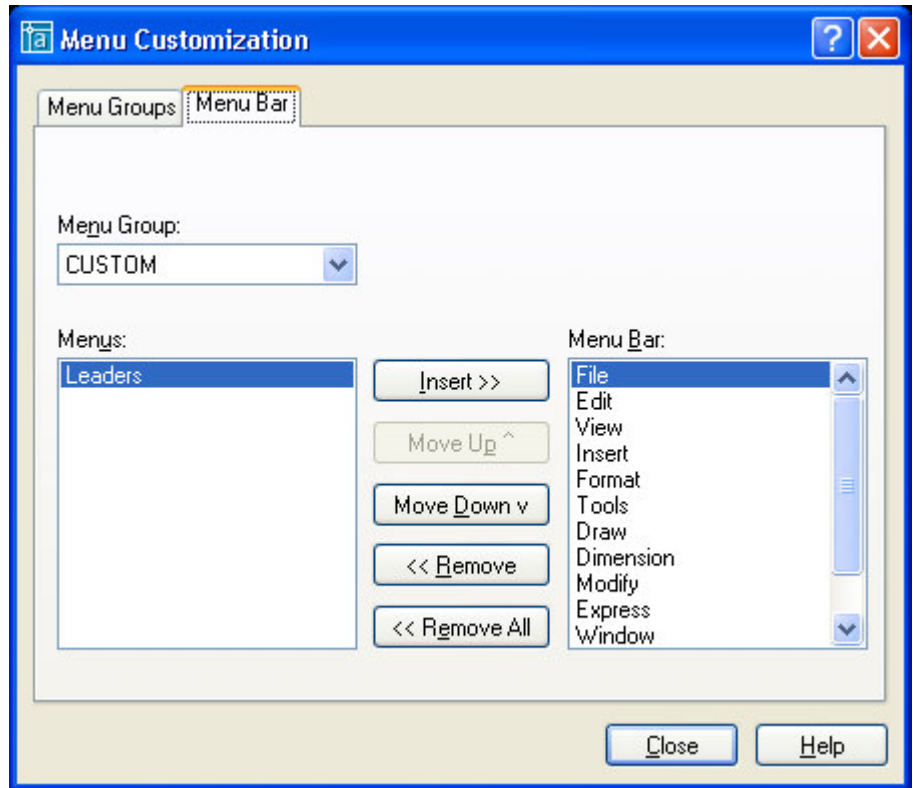
The **Leaders** menu should be listed.

You can insert the **Leaders** menu before any of the other labels on the Menu bar. You can also rearrange the Menu bar labels using the **Move Down** and **Move Up** buttons.

After you insert the **Leaders** menu, left-click on the **Close** button.

Give your new Dot Leader a try.

Add other arrow styles in the same manner.



Note: AutoCAD 2005 Path is **C:\Documents and Settings\user\Application Data\Autodesk\AutoCAD 2005\R16.1\enu\Support**.

Next time I'll discuss creating a custom arrow for leaders and dimensions.

AutoCAD Tip Sheet by



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