



progeCAD 2007 Professional

Reviewed by: [Mark Goldstein](#), April 2007

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Requires: Microsoft Windows 98 through Windows Vista, Intel Pentium III or faster, PC with 512MB RAM, 300MB available hard disk space

MSRP: US\$245.00

progeCAD is a computer aided 2D & 3D design program. It's based on the IntelliCAD engine which just happens to be one of AutoCAD's most powerful challengers. Because AutoCAD is the most widely used professional CAD software on the market today, anything that competes in AutoCAD's sandbox has to be able to not only vie for attention in a difficult and entrenched environment, but also provide some incentives to move off the industry standard. ProgeSOFT is a serious company with a serious CAD product and offers extensive technical product support, so we decided to give progeCAD a heavy duty test. We reviewed progeCAD over a two month period in a busy architectural and industrial design studio. The results may surprise you.

First and foremost, progeCAD is a serious tool. Second and no less important, the user interface and menu layout are very similar to AutoCAD, so if you're coming from that world, progeCAD will be easy to get to know. Throughout general project use, progeCAD seemed stable. Because it also offers a familiar layout, getting up and running at full speed with the software took only a couple of days. The organization behind the IntelliCAD engine is unique in the computer-aided design industry, consisting of a consortium to update the source code and provide some marketing support, and members who sell the software on a nonexclusive basis. The common goal is to create something that is powerful, less expensive than industry giant AutoCAD, and of course fully compatible with AutoCAD DWG files. Because it's the first question asked by anyone who is asked to consider an AutoCAD alternative, the very first issue we addressed at the beginning of the review period was DWG compatibility. I'm happy to report that compatibility is generally excellent.

Presenting a complete description of the all the features in progeCAD would require hundreds of pages of text. Even that might not be enough. In any case, and because it's a direct competitor to AutoCAD, progeCAD has to offer just as vast a feature set. So the overall point of this review was to determine if progeCAD is a pretender to the crown or a genuine, professional tool capable of fully replacing AutoCAD. The short answer is a qualified yes. Reasons abound. For example, you can import and edit raster images and raster to vector conversions. There are approximately 10,000 standard symbols and block objects supplied and integrated into the product content along with libraries of symbols and blocks for electrical, mechanical, architectural, civil engineering and survey applications. progeCAD is also compatible with AutoLISP, ADS, VBA and COM routines. The properties palette should be familiar to AutoCAD users and has been beefed up with more extensive controls for color, layer, text height, line weight, line type, geometry and so on.

AutoLISP is a dialect of the LISP programming language built specifically for use with AutoCAD. AutoLISP code can be written to interact with a user through functions that allow the user to input points, selection sets, numbers and other data. In a busy shop, LISP can be helpful. We found that progeCAD generally handled LISP routines quite well, although some infrequent problems occurred which resulted in only partial loads. At least one of the problems may have attributable to some sloppy coding, but the same routine worked fine in AutoCAD.

Our testers used progeCAD to complete a pair of building drawings and several other more complex industrial project designs. Feedback from the designers and engineers was good especially after we told everybody about progeCAD's competitive pricing. The IntelliCAD engine clearly shows the great strides that have been achieved by its developers and progeSOFT has done a very good job of packaging the software. All of the tools needed to complete new designs, reproduce older designs and edit a vast array of existing AutoCAD files are present and generally located in the same place as you'd find them in AutoCAD. When you get into trouble, the large printed reference manual and the detailed online help system represent good sources of information. One of the people using progeCAD (and the only co-op student) got into some trouble while trying to create a complex, polygon mesh consisting of faces connecting a large number of vertices. The manual walked her through the process quite nicely.

The test group only made one negative comment that seemed to be supported by everyone, and it had to do with program speed and responsiveness. The test group felt that progeCAD was not responsive enough when working on large files. Because the group was actually using progeCAD for productive purposes (as opposed to benchmarking the product), a problem that occurred during one project turned out to be a bit of a showstopper. Basically, a large (12MB) AutoCAD Architectural Desktop (ADT) drawing brought a Pentium 4/3.2GHz hyperthreading, 2GB RAM, Windows XP Professional system down to a slow grind while progeCAD churned for almost four full minutes to load the file. Workspace redraws on edits to the large file were also very slow. There were no errors in the files and progeCAD didn't introduce any, but we have to say that working with smaller files was a lot more fun.

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Cons: We found a couple of issues related to small, complex drawings with lots of radii and tapered faces, which occasionally don't reload properly or throw code error messages and refuse to load at all. This was an issue which we tracked down in one of the busy ProgeCAD user support forums and we were able to reproduce the problem. Loading some LISP routines seemed to cause problems from time to time, but tech support at progeSOFT responded quickly. If you're new to CAD, this is not the program to start with—it's a direct competitor to AutoCAD and as such remains complex. In any case, CAD is not something you generally just pick up on your own. Take a course. Even if the course is based on AutoCAD (most likely), you'll find that moving between AutoCAD in class and progeCAD at home or in the office is painless. The progeMEC mechanical drafting add-on is expensive at \$599 and clearly out of line with the reasonable pricing of progeCAD 2007 Professional. Seems to run in Windows Vista Business and Windows Vista Ultimate but only if you're logged on as Administrator.

Pros: As best we can tell, progeCAD is fully compatible with all AutoCAD DWG files from v2.5 through 2007. That's good news, because progeCAD is also fully compatible with your wallet. At \$245, it's only one quarter the price of AutoCAD LT 2008 and only a bit more than 6%(!) of AutoCAD 2008's stunning list price of \$3995. progeCAD and its underlying IntelliCAD engine are well supported. While we are thoroughly impressed with AutoDesk's flagship product, anyone who needs fully professional 2D/3D CAD on a budget must consider progeCAD 2007 Professional. With over 300 hatches, a powerful layer manager, local editing of block attributes, the new JPG drawing export function, PDF to DWG import functionality, and the new Express Tools, progeCAD steps up into the big leagues of 2D/3D CAD software. Previous complaints about AutoCAD font compatibility during DWG import have been nicely resolved. progeCAD 2007 Professional is ideal for small and medium size projects and offers great value for the money. Recommended.

KSN Product Rating: