The WinPack FAQ Page

I've been meaning to do this page for ages! I send out a lot of replies to WinPack help requests, and many of them are to the same questions which are asked time and time again. I used to send some replies as bulletins, in the hope that my answer would help more than one person, but for various reasons I've now stopped doing that. I hope that the replies to the Frequently Asked Questions which I have listed below will help people to get over these common problems.

I'll add to the questions whenever I find myself answering something and thinking "Geesh! I've said this a lot of times before!"

Click on a question to see the answer:-

- Why won't my Selections List Editor selections work?
- Why does the BBS.TXT script misbehave at WAITPROMPT?
- Why do I have problems now my BBS has started using FBB V7?
- Why does WinPack think my AEA TNC is connected all the time?
- What's all this about a speech "viewer" in WinPack V6.3?
- Why do I have problems with WinPack and my Kantronics TNC?
- Why do I sometimes get gaps between message numbers?
- Why do I have problems now the BBS has moved frequency?
- How do I use WinPack with my Baycom modem?
- How do I register WinPack and how do I pay from overseas?
- Why can't I use all my Windows fonts in WinPack?

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Problem: I have used the WinPack Selection List Editor and put WINPAC
           in the [TO] section, but bulletins to the WINPAC topic are NOT
           automatically downloaded.

           Substitute other topics, and [FROM], [AT], [TITLE TEXT], etc,
           according to taste!

           (This question is only relevant if you DON'T use the FBB
           unproto beacons.)

Answer: For WinPack to be able to automatically download the
           selections you make in the Selections List Editor, it has to
           know the layout of the bulletins list. The layout varies from
           BBS to BBS because the sysop can alter it.

           To tell WinPack how the bulletins list is laid out you use the
           options on the "Options", "Bulletin Columns..." sub-menu.

Roger Barker, G4IDE
December 1997

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Problem:   When WinPack connects to the BBS, either in an Auto BBS
           session or when I press F2, it gets to WAITPROMPT and then
           sits there until I cancel the script, even though the BBS has
           sent the prompt.

           (Another variation of this is that the WAITPROMPT disappears
           before the prompt is received from the BBS, and WinPack may
           then abruptly disconnect.)
----------------------------------------------------------------------
Answer:    It is very important to input the correct setting for "BBS
           prompt" in "Personal/BBS Info". Unless this setting is
           correct, the BBS.TXT script will stick at WAITPROMPT or
           terminate prematurely.

           Help is available if you press F1 when the "Personal/BBS Info"
           window is open.

           Here are some examples of BBS prompts and the correct setting
           for "BBS prompt".

           Here's an example of a very common BBS prompt:-
           2:GB7IDE>
           Here is what you put in "BBS Prompt" in WinPack:-
           :GB7IDE
           note the ':' and note no '>' on the end.

           Here's another prompt:-
           (1) G8MZX de GB7IDE BBS 12:34 >
           Here is what you might put in "BBS Prompt" in WinPack:-
           ) G8MZX de GB7IDE

           Here's another prompt:-
           (3) GB7IDE (H for Help) A,B,C,D (most of the alphabet) >
           Here is what you might put in "BBS Prompt" in WinPack:-
           ) GB7IDE (H for Help)

           What you're trying to do is to put some text which occurs in
           the prompt, but is unlikely to occur anywhere else. WinPack
           always assumes that the prompt from the BBS ends with a '>',
           so you don't need to put it in. NOTE that the text you specify
           must be in the correct case.

           A common error is to put something like:-
           3:GB7SKG
           The '3' is a stream number, and will vary from connect to
           connect, so sometimes it will work and sometimes it won't.

           Another common error is, with a prompt like the example above
           with the time in it, to put:-
           ) G8MZX de GB7IDE >
           By putting the '>' on the end, you are specifying something
           which does not actually occur in the prompt. ") G8MZX de
           GB7IDE" occurs in the prompt and so does '>', but ") G8MZX de
           GB7IDE >" does not. As stated above, WinPack assumes that the
           BBS prompt ends with a '>', you don't need to put it in.

           One other thing which can *very rarely* give a problem is if
           you have an absolutely superb path to the BBS, and the BBS has
           very little welcome text, so the prompt arrives in the first
           frame almost the instant you connect. In that case remove the
           WAITCON from BBS.TXT.
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(The following was added to the FAQ on 2000-Jan-06 as a result
of someone sending a bulletin to WINPAC @ GBR saying that all
you needed in "BBS prompt" was '>'.)

****
Don't be tempted to take the easy option of putting simply:-
>
It may appear to work, but it will probably cause problems at
some stage. It will certainly cause problems if the sysop
configures the BBS so you see something like this when you
connect:-

<   Welcome to GB7XXX!   >
< A great BBS for testing your WinPack prompt setting. >
If you have only put '>' in "BBS prompt" in WinPack
then the chances are that you'll never get as far
as the real BBS prompt, which is on the next line:-
(1) GB7XXX BBS>

It will also give you a problem if you don't use the FBB
unproto beacons, and so WinPack has to collect the message
list by connecting to the BBS and listing it. Packet users
will quite often surround the message title with '<' and '>'.
When WinPack lists the messages, it will stop at any line
ending with '>'.
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Roger Barker, G4IDE
2000-Jan-06

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Problem:  My local BBS has now changed over to FBB V7 and WinPack is
          giving problems.

          (The problems may be that compressed download and forwarding
          cannot be used, or that the BBS disconnects you when you try
          to upload mail after you have downloaded some messages, or
          that WinPack sticks at WAITPROMPT, or that automatic bulletin
          selection no longer works.)
-------------------------------------------------------------------------
Answer:   There are some significant differences in the way that FBB V7
          behaves compared to V5.15.

          1. Users need to have the 'F' flag set in their status, or
          they usually can't use compressed download and compressed
          forward at all. You need to consult your sysop about getting
          the 'F' flag set.

          2. FBB V7 will NOT allow a user to use both compressed
          download and compressed forward in the same session. Therefore
          WinPack users should either not use compressed forwarding, or
          they should edit PACKET.INI and put "SPLIT_SESSIONS=TRUE" in
          the [FBB] section. This stops WinPack trying to use both
          compressed forward and compressed download in the same
          session. Please note that from V6.3 onwards "Split Sessions"
          can be set from the "Mail", "Mail Options" window in WinPack,
          you don't need to edit PACKET.INI.

          3. When a BBS changes over to FBB V7, the BBS prompt may
          change, so you may need to change "BBS prompt" in "Personal/
          BBS Info". If you find the BBS sends you a multi-line prompt,
          the best thing to do is to manually connect to the BBS and
          send the 'X' command to put yourself in expert mode. WinPack
          does not handle the multi-line prompt very well. PLEASE NOTE
          that when you open the "Personal/BBS Info" dialogue, help is
          available if you press F1. Help on setting the prompt is also
          available in the WinPack BBS Prompt FAQ - BBSPRMPT.TXT.

          4. When a BBS changes over to FBB V7, the layout of the
          message list may change. If you don't use the unproto headers,
          you may need to work through the various options on the
          WinPack "Options", "Bulletin Columns..." sub-menu.

          5. (This point is really only of interest to sysops.)
          There is a "feature" in FBB V7 that can result in the BBS
          behaving as if a user's 'F' flag isn't set, even though it is.
          If "Forward only with known BBS" is set to "No", and the user
          ports have guest status, then the BBS will not accept a SID
          banner from a user. That means the users are unable to use
          compressed download and compressed forward. The solution is to
          set "Forward only with known BBS" to "Yes", which is also a
          slightly more secure setting.

          6. If you have problems with FBB V7 after the sysop has
          changed over to it from FBB 5.15, then tell him! He may also
          find a copy of this FAQ useful.


Roger Barker, G4IDE
2000-Jan-06
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Problem:   When I use WinPack with my PK-232, WinPack thinks that the TNC
           is connected all the time.

           (More or less any other AEA/Timewave TNC can be substituted
           for PK-232).
-----------------------------------------------------------------------
Answer:    With most AEA/Timewave TNCs it is most important that you use
           the TNC command "DCDCONN ON", this makes the DCD output from
           the TNC reflect the connected state. The default is that the
           DCD output is permanently on, which makes WinPack, and many
           other programs, think that the TNC is connected.

           If the TNC is a PK-88 then the setting of JP3 inside the TNC
           is used to control the behaviour of the DCD. Again the default
           setting is that DCD is permanently on.


Roger Barker, G4IDE
December 1997
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Question: I am confused about the use of the speech "viewer" and the
          Sound Blaster Texto'LE program in WinPack V6.3!
---------------------------------------------------------------------
Answer:   WinPack V6.3 has support for a special message "viewer" which
          can be used to speak messages. An example speech viewer was
          supplied with the V6.3 update, and this example viewer made
          use of the Sound Blaster Texto'LE program.

          The use of a speech "viewer" was an idea put into WinPack as
          an area for possible experimentation. Apart from being a
          novelty, with a little bit of development I'm sure it could
          have some practical uses.

          The actual speech "viewer" is SPKVIEW.EXE. As distributed with
          the WinPack V6.3 update, that calls Texto'LE, but it was never
          my intention that SPKVIEW could only be used with Texto'LE.
          The idea was that alternative text to speech programs could be
          patched in by altering SPKVIEW.INI. Also, I hope that other
          people might produce better speech "viewers" than SPKVIEW.

          The structure of SPKVIEW.INI is described in SPKVIEW.TXT.
          Please note that there is an error in that file - the key to
          activate the speech viewer is Ctrl_T, not Ctrl_S.

          As regards the controversy which has occurred on the UK packet
          network about what Sound Blaster packages include Texto'LE,
          all I can say is that I have an SB16 "Plug and Play" card.
          With that I received a CD labelled "Sound Blaster CD", and one
          of the utilities on that CD was Texto'LE.


Roger Barker, G4IDE
December 1997
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Problem:   I am using WinPack with a Kantronics TNC. I am also using
           Windows 95 and the COM port on my PC is fitted with a 16550
           (buffered) UART. I use compressed forwarding. I can upload
           small messages to the BBS ok, but when I try to upload a
           longer message, such as a 7plus part, I get an error message
           and WinPack disconnects from the BBS.
-----------------------------------------------------------------------
Answer:    When Kantronics TNCs are used with Win95 and 16550s, there
           seems to be a problem in that when the input buffer of the TNC
           gets full, overrun occurs and one or two characters are lost.
           My guess is that when the TNC buffer fills and it signals
           busy, it then does not have enough room left in the buffer to
           accept the few characters that may be queued in the UART.

           I have personally observed this problem with a KPC-3 and a
           KAM, and I have reports of it happening with other types of
           Kantronics TNCs. I have never seen it happen with any other
           make of TNC. The problem occurs between the Win95 comms
           drivers and the TNC, it is not a problem in WinPack.

           One solution is to run the link between the PC and the TNC at
           no faster than 2400 baud. This is the technique I used when I
           had a KAM. However, Ken, GW3TMH, reports that he has
           successfully tried a different solution with his KPC-9612. His
           method is technically superior, because it allows the link
           between the PC and the TNC to be kept at a high speed - which
           is essential if you want to use 9600 baud on air:-

           In Control Panel, select System, Device Manager, Ports (COM &
           LPT) and then Properties, Port Settings, Advanced... for the
           port you use with your TNC. Leave "Use FIFO buffers" checked,
           but move the Transmit Buffer slider fully to the left. This
           disables the transmit FIFO on the port, but leaves the receive
           FIFO working.

           A final comment - like with any other TNC, you must use a
           cable that connects the RS232 handshaking lines. A simple
           three wire cable is not sufficient. See the "Setting Up The
           TNC" section of the WinPack help.


Roger Barker, G4IDE
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Problem:   I sometimes get gaps between the message numbers in the
           bulletins list. I am using the FBB unproto beacons.
-------------------------------------------------------------------------
Answer:    There will always be some message numbers missing, because
           WinPack will not include other people's personal mail in your
           list. However, if you find that a whole block of numbers is
           missing, and this correlates with having had your system
           turned off for some time, then it is because of the
           following:-

           When you send an unproto sync request to an FBB BBS, the BBS
           will only roll back the unproto beacons up to a set number of
           messages. How many it will roll back is set by the sysop and
           varies widely. My local BBS will roll back up to a few
           hundred, but other BBSs may have the limit set as low as ten.

           If your sync request asks the BBS to roll back by more than
           its limit, then it sends a special unproto message to your
           system telling it to update your message pointer, this results
           in a gap occurring in your bulletins list.

           The following example may help:-

           You have had your WinPack system switched off. The last
           message number you received before you switched it off was
           10,000. Whilst your system has been off, the BBS has seen
           another 1,000 messages, so its latest message number is
           11,000. The sysop has set up the BBS so that the unproto
           beacons will only roll back by a maximum of 100 messages.

           You switch on your system and it sends a sync request based on
           message number 10,000. The BBS sees that this would mean
           rolling back by 1,000 messages, but its limit is only 100, so
           it sends an instruction to your system to update your message
           pointer to 10,901. The BBS then sends the unproto beacons for
           message numbers 10,901 to 11,000.

           (This is actually a slight simplification, because if you have
           any personal mail between message numbers 10,000 and 10,901,
           the message numbers will be skipped only up to your first
           personal message, that number is then beaconed, and another
           block of numbers is then skipped, etc.)


Roger Barker, G4IDE
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Problem: Like most BBSs in the UK, my local BBS has recently moved
           frequency. Ever since it moved I have had extreme difficulty
           connecting to it. It's as if WinPack doesn't want to work on
           the new frequency!

Answer: The recent move of the packet BBS frequencies in the UK also
           coincided with a move to 12.5kHz channel spacing.

           Many BBSs and users have effectively ignored this and are
           still using exactly the same filters and deviation settings in
           their rigs on the new 12.5kHz channels as they previously used
           on the 25kHz channels. However, some BBSs, when they moved,
           fitted 12.5kHz receive filters. Your BBS sysop can tell you
           what filter his BBS is using.

           If the BBS is using a 12.5kHz filter, and you are still
           transmitting with your deviation set to around 5kHz, then you
           will have great difficulty connecting. The solution is to
           reduce your deviation to around 2.5kHz. (Or just turn it down
           until you can connect reliably.)

Roger Barker, G4IDE
December 1997

Question: I want to use WinPack with my Baycom modem. How do I do it?

Answer: WinPack does not have its own Baycom driver, but it can be
           used with a Baycom modem via the BPQ node software, or via PC
           Flexnet.

           Baycom/BPQ/WinPack

           I would be the last person to suggest that this is easy to set
           up! However, a lot of people have managed it. You need to load
           the BPQ node software underneath Windows, configured to use a
           Baycom driver. You then run WinPack in BPQ mode (this is
           selected from "Options", "Comms Setup").

           BPQ is quite a complex piece of code, it has a lot of
           documentation with it, but it is in several DOC files, so you
           need to do quite a bit of reading to work out how to use it.
           The version of BPQ you need is 4.08a - it is the last version
           that was released and the only version with support for
           running underneath Windows.

           The Baycom driver you should use is the NODE2BAY package which
           is available from this web site. DO NOT try and use a
           DOS BPQ/Baycom driver such as BPQAX25, if you get it to work
           underneath Windows you will be very lucky, because there are
           sound technical reasons why it shouldn't work!

           The NODE2BAY package contains a file called NODE2BAY.TXT,
           which gives some useful information on setting up BPQ. PLEASE
           take note of the comments about possible problems with the CTS
           output of some Baycom modems when used with modern
           motherboards!

           Finally, the WinPack online help also contains some sections
           on using WinPack with BPQ.

           Baycom/PC Flexnet/WinPack

           From V6.3 onwards WinPack supports PC Flexnet. Since Flexnet
           has its own Baycom driver, it allows you to use Winpack with a
           Baycom modem. To use PC Flexnet with a Baycom modem, you must
           be running Win95.

           A description of PC Flexnet and what it does is beyond the
           scope of this note. WINPFLEX.TXT which comes with the WinPack
           V6.3 update gives more information and it also contains the
           URL for the Flexnet web site.

Roger Barker, G4IDE
December 1997

Question: How do I register WinPack?

Answer: Registration is an option on WinPack V6.1 and later. If you
           select "Help", "Help Contents", "Registration", then you will
           find all the information you need. Registering WinPack gets
           rid of the "unregistered copy" nag boxes.

           Payment From Overseas

           I appreciate that paying the 10 UK pounds registration fee
           from overseas can be a bit of a problem. I don't need to have
           a credit card facility for my main business, so unfortunately
           I am unable to accept credit card payments for WinPack
           registration.

           Here are some ways you can pay, in my order of preference:-

           1. In most countries you will find that your bank can supply
           you with an International Money Order. This is effectively a
           cheque made out in UK currency and drawn on a UK bank.

           2. I can accept payment by Eurocheque made out in UK pounds.
           However, this must be a proper Eurocheque, with the "ec
           eurocheque" logo. I occasionally receive ordinary personal
           cheques from other EC countries with the amount made out in UK
           pounds, but these are not accepted by UK banks.

           3. I am happy to accept cash payment in the following overseas
           currencies - US dollars, French francs and Italian lire. When
           you convert 10 UK pounds to one of these currencies, please
           add on 20 percent to allow for the cost of me changing the
           currency over here.

           4. I can accept payment by personal cheque. However, selling
           overseas personal cheques to my bank costs quite a lot, so
           please add on 20 percent to cover this cost.

Roger Barker, G4IDE
December 1997

Problem: I have a lot of fonts on my PC, but when I select any of the
          font options in WinPack it only offers a few fonts.

Answer: The only fonts which are really suitable for packet use are
          fixed pitch fonts which support the ASCII character set. Most
          Windows fonts are proportionally spaced and support the ANSI
          character set, so they are not suitable.

          If you use proportionally spaced fonts in WinPack, then the
          bulletin list and any messages which are set out in a tabular
          format will look a complete mess. Fancy signatures will also
          look a mess.

          If you use fonts which support the ANSI character set, then
          some characters will be displayed incorrectly. In particular
          the line drawing characters often used in signatures will be
          incorrect.

          Whenever you start WinPack, it causes Windows to temporarily
          install the special WINPACK font. Unless you have a *really*
          good reason to use a different font, you should always use
          the WINPACK font. However, it is a screen font and so is not
          available for printing.

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