

"LIVING BBS USER'S MANUAL"

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Educators' Bulletin Board

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BEGINNER'S TUTORIAL

this is a document especially suited for beginners, it starts off with the essential question - "what is a bulletin-board system?". by the time you're finished reading this tutorial, you'll know how to use a bulletin-board system (or "bbs" for short) to leave messages and read messages on a personal computer bulletin-board!

WHAT IS A BULLETIN-BOARD SYSTEM?

a bulletin-board system (or "bbs" for short) is a simple form of a computer network. the bbs computer acts as a central spot to leave and read messages, much like the bulletin-boards that you find on walls.

usually bulletin-boards run on personal computers - ours runs on an apple][computer.

people who call bulletin boards often have their own computer, and can use the capabilities of their own computer to store and send information to a bbs. this connection of one personal computer to other personal computers makes a bbs a >personal computer< network!

SIGNING ON THE SYSTEM

this is how you start a conversation with the living bbs computer:

HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS

first, be sure that you have the necessary computer hardware to dial up our bbs. you will need a dumb terminal, or a personal computer running a terminal program. you will also need a modem to connect your terminal to the phone line.

if you've used your hardware setup to call other bulletin-boards or computer networks, its likely that the setup will work with the living bbs.

IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME?

the system wants to know if this is the first time you have signed on the living bulletin-board system. this message appears...

is this your first time (y/n) ?

the "(y/n)" means that you may type either "y" or "n" in response to this question. if it is your first time, type "y".

then the system will type a brief introduction message, it gives a brief description of the bbs, and the important browsing commands. you might find it useful to type "y" even if its not your first time!

.2.3: HOW WIDE IS YOUR SCREEN?

some people use screens which can display 80 characters on a line. other people have screens which can only display 40 characters.

the living bbs is set up to work with any size screen, but it can't tell how wide your screen is without asking you! this question appears...

screen width ? (20..80 columns)

the system wants you to tell it how many columns your screen has. type the number of columns (a number between 20 and 80) and then type (return). suppose you type "64(return)"... then the system will ask you...

"64 columns"
is this correct (y/n) ?

if the number was received correctly type "y", if it is incorrect, type "n" and the system will ask for the screen width again.

.2.4: WHAT'S YOUR FIRST NAME?

this is the next-to-last step in signing on the living bbs! the system displays this message...

type your first name, then (ret)

suppose your full name is "fred stevens", you would type "fred(return)"... then the system will ask for your last name...

.2.5: WHAT'S YOUR LAST NAME?

this message appears...

type your last name, then (ret)

continuing the example, you would type "stevens(return)".

.2.6: DID WE GET YOUR NAME RIGHT?

we ask this question...

"fred stevens"
is this correct (y/n) ?

if the name is correct, type "y". if the name is wrong (suppose your name is really "frank stevens") type "n". then the system will ask for your first and last names again, the process can be repeated indefinitely until your name is correctly received (one try is usually enough!).

finally, we're ready to travel around the living bbs message tree!

1.3: TRAVELLING AROUND THE MESSAGE TREE

there are two main activities on a bulletin-board system, reading messages and writing messages. logically, reading must come before writing - therefore, the first thing you should do is travel around our bulletin board and get the "feel" of it!

1.3.1: THE FIRST THING YOU SEE...

after signing on the bbs, the first thing you see is a display of the "highest level" of the bulletin-board. this is analogous to opening up a book and seeing the table of contents, if the bbs were a book, you'd be looking at the titles of chapter one, chapter two, etc.

there is more information underneath each of the categories, in fact there is usually a whole new table of contents!

item #1 in the table of contents should be...

1:introducing the living bbs

this item is there for new users of the system, it explains the basic reading commands and some of the writing commands.

to get to item #1, type "1(return)".

1.3.2: WHAT DOES "1(RETURN)" MEAN?

when you type "1(return)", you are telling us that you want to examine item #1 more closely, or "dive" into the material which is underneath it.

so what's "underneath" an item? each item has a "message" underneath it. there is also a list of "sub-items", which are displayed with their "item number" next to them.

some items have messages, others don't. some of them have sub-items, some of them don't.

1.3.3: WHAT'S UNDER "INTRODUCING...?"

the item, "introducing the living bbs" does have a message... it begins as "with the living bbs being such a new thing..." and ends with "one of them should be right for you...". it has three sub-items...

1:the command menu
2:the help command - ?
3:talk to an expert.

let's read all three items. press "1(return)". the system will display the message under "the command menu" - after you've read the message, type "2(return)", the system will display "the help command - ?". then type

"3(return)", you'll see "talk to an expert".

each time you select an item, the system displays the message underneath it. if the selected item has sub-items, the system displays them with the item number next to it. "introducing the bbs" has three sub-items, each of its "descendants" has >no< sub-items.

by now, you've acquired a basic skill, you can go "deeper" and "deeper" into our message tree. but we've completely digested all the information in this area, its time to "surface" and look at some of the places we >didn't< go to!

the opposite of going "deeper", or "diving", is "surfacing". type "s" for "surface". now the system will display...

==>introducing the living bbs

1:the command menu
2:the help command
3:talk to an expert

type "s" again, moving to the "summit of the living bbs"...

1.3.4: THE "M" (MENU) COMMAND

we've learned how to go deeper, by selecting an item number and typing (return). we've learned how to come out one level, thru the "s" command.

there is one other reading command, which you should know about - the "m" command. press the "m" key. the system will re-display the "summit" level.

you might ask, "why do we need the "m" command?". sometimes your screen will become cluttered with other information, you may find yourself wondering "where am i?".

whenever this happens, use the "m" command to get a clear picture of your surroundings. if you're still not sure where you are, try surfacing (the "s" command)...

1.4: MAKING A NEW MESSAGE

now you know how to "read" a bulletin-board database. the next thing is to show you how to write messages, and then you'll have a well-rounded education in bbs'ing!!! from the "summit of the living bbs" menu, select item #3, "fun questionnaire". you'll see a list of questions, the list is constantly growing, so it's impossible for us to say "select this item number" or "that item number".

let's pick the question "where are you calling from?", suppose its item #3. type "3(return)" to select the

question. you'll see a list of responses (other people who have answered the same question).

later, you can look at the other answers, but first let's add your answer to the list...

.4.1:

TYPE "N" FOR "NEW MESSAGE"

tell the living bbs that you want to make a new message by typing the "n" command. the system will ask you...

add new sub-message under:
"where are you calling from?"
is this correct (y/n) ?

sometimes people get confused about where they're leaving the new message, or sometimes accidentally press the "n" key. this question confirms that you really want to add a new message to the system.

as with other questions asked by the system, you should type "y" for "yes", "n" for "no". type "y".

.4.2:

TYPE THE "MESSAGE TOPIC"

the system asks for the "topic" of your message. like the headline of a newspaper story, your topic should draw the reader into your message, make them want to know more after reading your topic headline.

sometimes you can get an idea for your headline from the messages "around" your new message...

in this case, the message is simple, you're going to tell the system where you are calling from, suppose you are calling from paris, france.

type "paris, france(return)". then the system will ask...

"paris, france"
is this correct (y/n) ?

if it's correct, type "y", otherwise type "n".

.4.3:

THE NEXT STEP - TYPE THE MESSAGE

after a brief pause, the system will display...

press (backspace) to erase last char
empty line ends new message
start typing on line 3

```
0:from: fred stevens
1:msg #153, 12-oct-81
2:
3:
```

the system has set up the beginning of the message for you, lines 0 thru 2 are the first lines of the message. you will start typing your message on line 3.

let's make our message brief, type "i come from paris, france!". as you type the characters, you'll see them being displayed on line 3.

now the message is typed in, how do we get back to the reading commands?

type (return) to finish the line, this will cause the system to start a new line...

4:

now you have an empty line, to end the new message, type (return) to end line 4. that's what the "empty line ends insertion" message means!

then the question...

edit new msg (y/n) ?

appears. type "n", wait a moment and then the system will tell you how much disk space is used up, then it shows you the area where you added the message. you should see your headline

1:paris,france

as the first item in this menu.

.4.4:

READ YOUR NEW MESSAGE!

it's a good idea to check your new message after you've typed it in, to see how it will look to other callers.

type "l(return)" to read the message.

.4.5:

MAKING YOUR MESSAGE LOOK NICE

these are a few pieces of advice which will make your messages look pretty. first, if you make a mistake when typing in the message, use the (backspace) key to erase the last character on the current line. if you notice a mistake on a previous line, you'll have to use the message editing commands to correct the mistake. on many terminals (backspace) is typed by holding down the (control) key at the same time as the "h" key.

second, the system can help you make messages look nice. you do not have to type (return) at the end of each line (which is often necessary on other bulletin-board systems). if you've run out of room on your line, the bbs will automatically start a new line for you when you run out of room on the current line. it will also (automatically!) clean up the message, making sure that no word spans two lines. it even knows that it can break a word at a hyphen!

use (return)s to end a line only when you want to skip a line, otherwise let the bbs do all the line twiddling for

you!!! this is one of the things that machines do better than people!

- .5: THE HELP COMMAND: "?"
if you can't remember what some command does (and you don't have the manual handy) type "?". the system will send you a (approx) 20-line description of the entire command repertoire.

obviously, it is impossible to capture the >entire< command set in 20 lines, you will need to keep this manual handy.

but for a quick refresh of your memory, or for adventurous bbs-hackers, the help command really helps!

- .6: THE QUIT COMMAND: "Q"
when you are finished using the bbs, type "q". the system will ask you..
call it a day (y/n) ?

if you want to log-off the system, type "y", otherwise type "n".

: REFERENCE MANUAL

the rest of this manual is in "reference format", we cover the features in more detail, and often assume a certain level of computer sophistication.

2.1: COMMANDS

the way you communicate with the living bbs is thru the use of "commands" - which are single keystrokes (like ? or m), optionally preceded with a repetition count (like 12).

examples of valid commands are "12s" and "n".

you >do not< need to type a (return) following each command - once you have typed a valid command the bbs will "accept" the command and "execute" it.

2.2: WHAT ARE VALID COMMANDS?

you can always tell what commands are valid by reading the "prompt" which the bbs puts up before every command. the prompt looks like:

living bbs (q? ms neh #@):

the legal commands are "q", "?", "m", "s", "n", "e", "h", "#", and "@" - in other words the legal commands are shown inside the parentheses.

the commands are grouped according to their function, separated by spaces. the ones which are used most often are listed first, the ones which are used least often are listed last.

of course its alright with us if you are unconventional and use the last commands more often than the first commands.

if you type an "invalid" command, the system will beep at you and re-display the prompt.

2.3: WHAT IS A "MESSAGE TREE"?

let's start with "message". a message is a short piece of text on whatever topic you like. most messages are automatically labeled (by the system) with the name of the person who wrote the message and the date that the message was written.

all messages are public, anyone can read anyone else's message. the only person who can modify a message is the person who wrote it (the system operator - or "sysop" is the one exception to this rule).

now what about the message "tree"? a tree is a very convenient way to organize a bulletin-board database. we can keep the messages about parakeets in south america separate from the messages on skyscrapers in new york. this allows readers with no interest in parakeets to steer clear of the parakeet section.

the living bbs "database" is structured as a tree of messages. the "biggest" message is titled "summit". all other messages are descendants of "summit".

every title (or "headline") has a message underneath it. it also has a sequence of sub-messages or "children" underneath it. these children are messages written by other users (often in response to the "parent" message).

each sub-message is numbered, starting with sub-message #1. to examine sub-message #4, type "4(return)".

2.4: @ FOR "TERMINAL MODE WITH SYSOP"

sometimes the system operator (a ~~small~~ human being) is nearby and !may! be willing to talk to you over the "terminal channel".

he/she can explain mysterious aspects of the system, or fix a problem which you might have found in the system.

when you type "@", the message:

terminal mode, @@@ to exit

appears. any characters which you type will now appear on the living bbs computer's screen. if the system operator responds, you will see her/his keystrokes on your screen.

to return to the living bbs prompt, type three "at-signs" - "@@@".

2.5. # FOR "BROWSE-BY-MESSAGE-NUMBER"
if you're a regular user of our bbs, you know why we added this facility!!! when you sign on a familiar bbs, what do you want to know? you want to know "what's new?", you've already seen the old stuff. rather than browse thru already-read material, use the "#" command to browse the messages in chronological order...

2.5.1: THE SCANNING CURSOR
you move a cursor from message to message, initially the cursor is placed on the newest message in the system.

most of the following commands do something with the scanning cursor.

2.5.2: "P" FOR "PRINT MESSAGE"
the "p" command will print the entire message underneath the scan cursor. no sub-messages are displayed!

2.5.3: "U" FOR "MOVE CURSOR UP"
to move the scanning cursor to an older message, use the "u" command. if you're at message #200, "lu" will get you to message #199. "3u" will get you to message #197...

2.5.4: "D" FOR "MOVE CURSOR DOWN"
the "d" command moves the cursor to a newer message. if you're at message #200, "d" will get you to message #201, "ld" will get you to message #210...

2.5.5: "J" FOR "JUMP TO A MESSAGE"
if you want to go directly to a given message, type "j". the system will prompt you for a message number, and then move the cursor to that message.

2.5.6: "Q" FOR "QUIT THE MSG SCANNER"
"q" returns you to the living bbs command menu, and diving and surfacing commands. the tree cursor is placed on the same message as the scanning cursor.

2.6: E FOR "EDITING A MESSAGE"
to get into the living bbs text editor, type "e" from the "living.bbs" prompt. after a brief pause the editor's

msg edit (q? piadx @)

prompt will be displayed.

a list of the living bbs editor commands follows...

2.6 : Q FOR QUIT THE MESSAGE EDITOR
when you quit, the editor asks you if you want to save the changes (if you made any). if you type "y" then the changes will be written out to disk, otherwise the message will remain unchanged.

- 2.6.2: ? FOR HELP
for a quick listing of all the message editor commands,
type "?".
- 2.6.3: P FOR "PRINT WHOLE MESSAGE"
type "p" and the whole message is printed with line
numbers shown.
- 2.6.4: I FOR "INSERT NEW TEXT"
to insert text before line 3, type "3i", to insert before
line 5 type "5i".

if no line number is specified, the system will ask you
for a line number to insert before.
- 2.6.5: A FOR "APPEND NEW TEXT"
append is just like insert, except that the text is placed
!after! the line number. "3a" inserts text after line 3.

if no line number is specified, the system will ask you
for a line number.
- 2.6.6: D FOR "DELETE RANGE OF LINES"
if you type "3d" then line 3 will be deleted. if you
simply type "d" the editor will prompt you for a starting
line and an ending line. if the starting line is 4 and
the ending line is 7, then lines 4, 5, 6 and 7 will be
deleted.
- 2.6.7: X FOR "EXCHANGE PATTERN"
this is a very useful command. first the editor will ask
for a search pattern:

type search pattern, then (ret)
?

we type "fox(return)". then the system asks for the
replace pattern:

type replace string, then (ret)
?

we type "epoxy(return)". then the editor starts searching
for "fox". the search begins with the first character of
the first line in the message and proceeds towards the end
of the message.

when a match is found, the line where the match was found
is displayed, with the pattern location shown with "*"s.
the question:

replace (y/n) ?

is displayed. there are four different responses to this
question, each with a different effect...

- 2.6.7.1: Y WILL DO THE REPLACE
type "y" if you want to replace this occurrence of the search pattern. after the replace is done, the search continues.
- 2.6.7.2: N WILL NOT DO THE REPLACE
type "n" if you want to skip this one and go on to the next occurrence.
- 2.6.7.3: (ESCAPE) GETS OUT OF EXCHANGE COMMAND
type (escape) if you don't want to do any more exchanges.
- 2.6.7.4: (RETURN) REPLACES WITHOUT PROMPTING
if you want to replace the remaining occurrences without being prompted, type (return). this question will appear:

replace rest of "fox"s (y/n) ?

type "y" if you really want to replace all the remaining "fox"s with "epoxy".
- 2.6.8: @ FOR "TERMINAL MODE WITH SYSOP"
exactly as in the living bbs menu, you converse with the system operator in "terminal mode".
- 2.7: H FOR "RE-TYPE HEADLINE"
if you own the message which the ==> cursor is on, then you can re-type the headline, effectively changing the name of your message. if you don't own the message, this is an error:

this message is owned by:
killer kowalski
you can't modify it!

we were sure that you wouldn't want to mess with killer's headline!

but what happens if you do own the message? ...
- 2.7.1: STEP #1: MAKE SURE!
the system prints the old headline and asks if you want to change it:

old headline:
the new double knits
re-type it (y/n) ?

if you type "n" then you return to the living bbs prompt, otherwise you go on to step #2.

2.7 ? : STEP #2: TYPE NEW HEADLINE

as in the "n" command, the system asks for a headline string:

type message headline, then (ret)

?

type the headline, no more than 37 characters, spaces allowed. if you type an empty headline, the original headline remains unchanged.

2.8: OPERATING SYSTEM FEATURES

part of the living bbs software is a special-purpose operating system. there are several features of this operating system which are of importance to the user, those are described in this section.

2.8.1: CONTROL C

to stop the output of an active command (and return to a prompt), type control c.

2.8.2: CONTROL S

to "freeze" the output of the bbs, type ^s, to re-start the bbs, type another ^{^Q}. this is useful when the bbs is printing faster than you can read, also useful for "loading" a sequence of commands, when the bbs is frozen, its a perfect listener - all your keypresses are safely stored in our typeahead buffer.

2.8.3: TYPEAHEAD

the system is exceptionally good at catching and saving characters which you type while the system is busy printing something. the characters you type will be saved and "consumed" once the living bbs computer is ready to accept a command.

2.8.4: TIMING OUT

to protect against "bbs-hogs" or people who stay on the system without doing anything, the system has an automatic "timing out" detector. what does this mean to you?

try it out. get up from your terminal for about three-four minutes. when you hear the terminal start to beep, come back and take a look, this is what you'll see:

are you there (y/n) ?

if you are there, type "y" and the system will wait another four minutes before asking again. "n" is an acceptable response, and it does the same thing that "y" does - its the act of responding that convinces the system that you are still there.