

Shhh! The Undocumented DOS Commands

=====

Version 1.06

Copyright (C) 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 by Kevtronics

Portions are featured in the November 1996 issue of DOS World Magazine.

Last updated on Friday, January 1, 1999.

Available on the World Wide Web at:

<http://ourworld.comuserve.com/homepages/kevtronics/undoc.txt>

If you're looking at this from my Web site, you may be asking, "why is this still in text-file format?" Well, I still like to upload this list to CompuServe and Usenet so I choose to keep it in plain ASCII text format instead of embellishing it with HTML features. So please excuse the bland appearance while you enjoy the following details on the dozens of DOS commands Microsoft and IBM don't want you to know about!

These commands may or may not work with your version or brand of DOS. Most of them require DOS 4.0 or higher but some may work with earlier versions.

Note: "MS-DOS 7.x" refers to both the MS-DOS 7.0 that comes with Windows 95 and the MS-DOS 7.1 that comes with Windows 95 OEM Service Release 2. Windows 98 includes a slightly updated version of MS-DOS 7.1, which may be called MS-DOS 8.0 (I don't have a Windows 98 package available to find out). If and when I do obtain Windows 98 (surely not by donating \$90 to Mustapha Gates), I will list any additional undocumented DOS commands it contains.

Gossip: There are rumors that Microsoft has produced a special version of MS-DOS for the U.S. government and military, called MS-DOS 6.23. U.S. armed forces members have reported seeing original installation disks for MS-DOS 6.23 and claim that they use MS-DOS 6.23 on their computers. I'm not sure what the differences between MS-DOS 6.22 and 6.23 are. If anyone knows, please let me know.

Command	Description
;	(CONFIG.SYS only) A short-cut for the REM command.
::	(Batch files only) Another short-cut for the REM command, but faster (DOS just skips over any :: lines rather than processing them).
ANSI.SYS /L /S /SCREENSIZE	(CONFIG.SYS only) /SCREENSIZE={number} or /S={number} sets the maximum number of lines to reserve for a screen buffer. Default is /S=25 -- use /S=43 or /S=50 to support full use of EGA/VGA 43/50-line screens. Or use /S=1 to save memory when the screen save/recall function is not used. Anyone know what /L does?
ATTRIB, ATTRIB -A -H -R -S *.*	(ATTRIB followed by a comma) Same effect as ATTRIB -A -H -R -S *.* (removes attributes of all files in the current directory).
AVAILDEV	(CONFIG.SYS only) Only in DOS 2.x; see end of file for detailed information.

BACKUP /HD When auto-formatting a disk for backup use, /HD causes the disk to always be formatted to high density (1.2 or 1.44 Mb).

CHKDSK /! According to IBM, /! is a goof-up in the code of CHKDSK. When used, it does not affect the operation of CHKDSK in any way. Only in IBM's PC DOS 7.0 and possibly PC DOS 2000.

COMMAND /F Automatically (F)ails floppy disk drive errors. Works either at the DOS prompt or in your SHELL=COMMAND.COM... line in CONFIG.SYS. Requires DOS 3.3 or higher.

COMMAND /D Undoes the /F switch temporarily. Type EXIT to return to the auto-fail version of DOS. Use at the DOS prompt or in batch files only. Requires DOS 5.0 or higher.

COMMAND /T (Only in MS-DOS 7.x, the DOS that comes with Windows 95 and 98.) Undocumented switches for COMMAND.
/Z

COMMENT comment_ID (CONFIG.SYS only) Allows you to put comments onto the end of CONFIG.SYS commands. For example,
COMMENT ; lets you use:
DOS=HIGH ; Loads DOS into high memory
Requires DOS 4.0 or higher.

CPSW (CONFIG.SYS only) Only in DOS 4.0x; turns on (CPSW=ON) or off (CPSW=OFF) code page switching.

DIR, (DIR followed by a comma) Displays ALL files in the current directory, including hidden and system files. Does not work in MS-DOS 7.x, the DOS that comes with Windows 95 and 98.

DOSKEY /APPEDIT (As far as I can tell, only in MS-DOS 7.x, the DOS that comes with Windows 95 and 98.) Some undocumented switches for DOSKEY. Anybody know what they do?
/COMMAND
/PERMANENT
/SCRSIZE
/XHISTORY

DRIVPARM (CONFIG.SYS only) Documented in DOS 4.0 through 6.x; undocumented in DOS 3.2, 3.3, PC DOS 7, and PC DOS 2000. Works fine in MS-DOS 3.2/3.3 and PC DOS 7.0/2000, but requires special handling in PC DOS 3.2 or 3.3; see end of file.

FDISK /MBR Re-writes the hard disk drive's Master Boot Record. Useful if you hard disk drive just won't boot up properly after you format it or after you suffered from a MBR-corrupting virus. Requires DOS 5.0 or higher.

FDISK /PRI Other undocumented FDISK switches. /STATUS is documented in DOS 6.0 and higher. /Q and /STATUS require DOS 5.0 or higher. /STATUS shows the current status of your disk drive partitions.
/EXT
/LOG
/Q
/STATUS
/X

FORMAT /AUTOTEST No-questions-asked format; just formats then
 exits. No prompt for volume label and no disk
 information is displayed. Requires DOS 4.0 or
 higher.

FORMAT /BACKUP Like /AUTOTEST except asks for volume label and
 displays disk information (free space, etc.).
 Requires DOS 4.0 or higher.

FORMAT /SELECT Removes the format from a formatted disk; press Y
 then Enter at the pause. No messages displayed.
 DOS 4.0x's Setup program used this switch to
 remove a 12-bit FAT format from a hard disk before
 reformatting it with a 16-bit FAT, which allowed
 use of hard drives bigger than 32 Mb. Requires DOS
 4.0 or higher.

FORMAT /U Suspiciously not documented in MS-DOS 7.x, the DOS
 that comes with Windows 95 and 98.

IFS (CONFIG.SYS only) Only in DOS 4.0x. Loads
 Installable File System drivers. Uses the same
 format as DEVICE (IFS=C:\DOS\IFSDRVR.SYS etc.).

INSTALLHIGH (CONFIG.SYS only) Works the same as INSTALL
 except loads the program into upper memory.
 Requires DOS 6.0 or higher.

LH In DOS 5.0 or higher, LH is not documented in
 the /? help as an abbreviation for LOADHIGH but
 it works fine.

MULTITRACK (CONFIG.SYS only) The default is MULTITRACK=ON,
 and MULTITRACK=OFF solves compatibilty problems
 with antique hard disk drives. Requires DOS 4.0
 or higher. See end of file for more information.

QBASIC /EDCOM In DOS 5.0 or higher, this is the undocumeneted
 QBASIC switch EDIT.COM uses to start the Editor.
 /EDCOM *must* be typed in all capitals. /EDCOM
 may be combined with /? to provide help on the
 Editor's options.

QBASIC /QBHELP In MS-DOS 6.0 or higher, this is the undocumented
 QBASIC switch HELP.COM uses to start MS-DOS Help.

RESTORE /Y Some undocumented switches for the RESTORE
 /Z command. Anybody know what they do?

SCANDISK /CLIP - Only in MS-DOS 7.x. Shortens long file names to
 regular 8.3 format. (?)
 /HELP - Same as /?. Works with MS-DOS 6.x and 7.x.
 /MOUNT - Mounts DriveSpace volume. Same as using
 "Mount=Always" in SCANDISK.INI Only in MS-DOS 7.x.
 /NEW - ??? Only in MS-DOS 7.x.
 /NOLOST - No prompt for surface scan, no check for lost
 clusters. Only in MS-DOS 7.x.
 /NOUI - Only in MS-DOS 7.x. Uses normal DOS interface
 instead of Windows 95 graphical interface.
 /TEXT - Only in MS-DOS 7.x. Same as /NOUI. (?)

/TIME - Works with MS-DOS 6.x and 7.x. During surface scan, marks sectors that take longer than usual to read. These sectors may be on their way to failing totally. Same as using "ScanTimeOut=On" in SCANDISK.INI.

SET NO_SEP=1 Removes the commas from numbers in DOS 6.2 and higher. Type SET NO_SEP= (nothing after the =) to turn commas back on. Documented in PC DOS 6.3 and higher but undocumented in MS-DOS 6.2 and higher.

SHARE /NC No Count -- When a program asks how many sharing locks are left, it always responds with whatever the maximum is, no matter how many locks actually are in use.

SWITCHAR (CONFIG.SYS only) Only in DOS 2.x. Lets you change the switch character (usually "/") to some other character using SWITCHAR=x. See end of file for more information.

SWITCHES /K Undocumented in DOS 4.0x; documented in DOS 5.0 and higher. Turns off support for 101-key "enhanced" keyboards to make old programs happy.

TRUENAME filename.ext Displays the true, complete path of the file name specified. Ignores ASSIGN, JOIN, or SUBST re-assignments. If no file name is specified, displays the current complete path. When used on a network or CD-ROM drive or file, TRUENAME responds in the following format:

//server/volume/dir/dir/file.ext

Interestingly, the /? switch works with TRUENAME in PC DOS 7 (only), but it's not listed in the on-line help system. Requires DOS 4.0 or higher.

VER /R In MS-DOS 5.0 or higher, displays the DOS revision number and where DOS is loaded (low memory, HMA, or ROM). In PC DOS 5.0 or higher, displays where DOS is loaded (the DOS revision number is always displayed in PC DOS).

XCOPY /Y Not documented in MS-DOS 7.x, the DOS that comes with Windows 95 and 98. /Y gets rid of overwrite prompts, /-Y causes them if COPYCMD=/Y.

Additional information about AVAILDEV, DRIVPARM, MULTITRACK, and SWITCHAR:

AVAILDEV

Syntax: AVAILDEV=TRUE or AVAILDEV=FALSE

Default: AVAILDEV=TRUE

This command controls the access to devices. Usually devices are accessed by name (e.g. CON or LPT1). This behavior might be undesirable however if the user decides to use a device name as file name. AVAILDEV has been removed from DOS version 3.0 and higher so that there is no ambiguity when accessing a network. If CONFIG.SYS contains the command

AVAILDEV=FALSE, the access to devices is only available using a non-existent file in the non-existent directory \DEV. For example, the device COM1 could be accessed as \DEV\COM1.

DRIVPARM

In PC DOS 3.2 and 3.3

When using PC DOS 3.2 or 3.3, DRIVPARM is undocumented but it can be made to work using this trick. In CONFIG.SYS, type:

Normal DOS 4.0+ DRIVPARM set-up switches.

```
\/  
DRIVPARM ^A^A^A {switches}
```

```
^\  
Type Ctrl-A, not Shift-6 A. In MS-DOS's Edit, type Ctrl-P  
then Ctrl-A (you will see a smiley face on the screen).
```

MULTITRACK

Syntax: MULTITRACK=ON or MULTITRACK=OFF

Default: MULTITRACK=ON

Starting with DOS 4.0, disk accesses have been optimized to get better performance when working with "newer" hard disk drives. Among other things, reading and writing of more than one track with a single BIOS call has been implemented. But some problems have been observed with hard disk drives of some manufacturers. So the MULTITRACK=OFF option limits disk access to a single track.

SWITCHAR

Syntax: SWITCHAR=char

Default: SWITCHAR=/

Until DOS 3.0 you could select the character that has to precede each switch. You could use the UNIX-style command syntax when using "-" as the switch character instead of "/". There is a DOS system function (Int 21h, function 37h, subfunctions 0 and 1), undocumented until DOS 3.0, to get or set this switch character. Not all commands in all DOS versions did actually support this feature. That the reason for the removal of this option is the growing use of network software, where a selectable switch character would cause problems.

If you find any other undocumented commands, or if you have any additional information on the commands listed above, please tell me! Send e-mail to:

Kevtronics
76362.2023@compuserve.com