

Decoding BBS Data files (TEXT)

By G8MNY

(Updated Oct 15)

For those of you who are still unable to use these Packet BBS bulletins, here is how to it manually.

The files are flagged as B\$D in the BBS TSD field. They may contain data such as pictures, programs, databases, sounds etc. often PKZip or JPEG compressed which has then been encoded in 7+ format to go over the BBS text system.

ENCODING

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| Data Files | Compressor Program | Compressed File  | BBS Text Converter Program | Sent BBS Text friendly Files |
|------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| .DAT \     |                    |                  |                            |                              |
| .TXT       |                    |                  |                            | SEND.P01 10K                 |
| .BAS \     | PKZIP              | NAME.ZIP         | 7Plus                      | / SEND.P02 10K               |
| .COM /     | or RAR32           | Or a PICTURE.JPG |                            | \ SEND.P03 10K               |
| .EXE       |                    | say 33k          |                            | SEND.P04 8K                  |
| .DLL /     |                    |                  |                            | Total=38k                    |
| Total=120k |                    |                  |                            |                              |

The part files (normally more than one) are numbered in HEX, part 1 = P01, P02 up to PFF = 255 parts. File size by 7+ default is limited to about 10k, but nowadays there is no good reason for this & larger files can easily be made with the 7PLUS/SB=36000 switch to make up to 36k files!

Paket6.2 program includes scripts for making & sending them etc.

Inside a 7+ bbs data file as well as the usual BBS headers & tails you will find this sort of thing...

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go_7+. 001 of 004 NAME.JPG      0076254 2280 08A (7PLUS v2.0) ██████'||¼
8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data
8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data
      SAY 500 lines of no space gobbly gook data!!
8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data
8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data 8bit data
stop_7+. (NAME.P01/04)      [368961E5] ██████e©0
    
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The 7+ part is less than 70 characters long per line, so no system should word wrap it, there are no spaces, so no system should concatenate them, & there are no special character sequence like CTRL C, ESC, etc. that will kill the comms link. All lines are the same length so some Rx errors can be manually spotted.

DECODING

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Rx BBS Files	Rx LOG File	Extract 7+ Program	7+ Parts	Decode 7+ Program	Compressed File	Uncompress Program	Data Files
(SENT.P01)				(SENT.P01)			.DAT
(SENT.P02)	\ .LOG	7PLUS	/	(SENT.P02)	\	7PLUS_NAME.ZIP PKUNZIP	/ .BAS
(SENT.P03)	/ 43k	-X	\	(SENT.P03)	/	or RAR32 33k	\ .COM
(SENT.P04)				(SENT.P04)		or PICTURE.JPG	.EXE
Total=42k				Total=38k			\ .DLL
							Total=120k

N.B. PKZIP, PKUNZIP, 7PLUS & RAR32 programs have /? or /H or -H help options.

Before downloading them, you need a program called 7PLUS, & possibly PKUNZIP or equivalents, you may well find these in the data area of your BBS where it can be downloaded using Yapp, pP or Bacomm, data transfer protocols. Some packet programs have the 7plus or Zip functions embedded for you.

THIS IS WHAT I DO

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- 1/ List the message index on the BBS with the B\$D messages of interest.
- 2/ Turn on your log file to record the download.
- 3/ Enter the BBS message Nos (e.g. R 497974 497973 497971 ) you may also want to log any descriptive text file, possibly to a separate log file. If the part numbers are consecutive or nearly so try.. R 497971-497974 as the order does not matter nor does the odd unwanted file.
- 4/ When finished (it may take quite a while) close the log file. It does not matter if other items are logged as well, but not from another stream! You can do this again & again until you have all the parts needed in a log or logs.
- 5/ Put these log(s) file into a separate directory (folder) with the decoding programs (e.g. C:\PAKET\7PLUS ).
- 6/ Extract the 7+ parts from the log or logs...  
 e.g. 7PLUS APR10.LOG -X  
 This should give you the same Hex numbered parts as was sent.  
 e.g. FILENAME.P01 FILENAME.P02 etc.
- 7/ Now decode the 7+ parts into one file.. same command but with no -X  
 e.g. 7PLUS FILENAME  
 If there are no errors, this give you the sent file. e.g. FILENAME.JPG or FILENAME.ZIP
- 8/ Unpack the ZIP file, you need PKUNZIP. e.g. PKUNZIP FILENAME  
 to give the original files... e.g. FRED.DAT, FRED.BAS, FRED.EXE etc.

Once you have unpacked the picture, programs, data, etc. & it works, don't forget to tell the sender it worked/failed etc. & what you had tried it on.

Then for good housekeeping install the item in a suitable directory (folder) & set up Windows desktop to open it etc. Purge out the old transfer files from the 7plus directory.

As you can see the whole thing is not that friendly done manually, if you write a batch file to handle the procedure, it will make it far more convenient until something goes wrong!

As I have said before, BBS SYSOP have to vet BBS content, & any difficulty in doing this often results in message deletion. Just 1 message part astray or damaged means the whole lot is a waste of space on the BBSs, & complex 2 way error procedure between the recipient & sender is needed to fix it. This is not always possible as the BBS SR or SP routing tables are different to the multi routing used for the original SB, so your reply may never get there!

This is why for most things I prefer the EVERY EFFICIENT ASCII GRAPHICS if it will do the job.

Of course you can write/use a script macro to do all the above for you automatically.

Dave VK2AWZ @ VK6ZRT writes.. Ok John on decoding 7+ files manually, and it certainly is a long process! However Winpac 6.8 does it automatically, when one has downloaded the 7+ files. What happens is that when the last one is received up jumps the inwards message icon, that says that the files are decoded and picture number (xxx) is stored in the decode directory. I go to this directory with Windows explorer and click on the respective xxx.JPG, that activates my preferred pictures program! 73 - Dave, VK2AWZ @ VK6ZRT

I6KZR Renzo writes he does it automatically with SALLY 7.

Why don't U send out an interesting bul?

73 De John, G8MNY @ GB7CIP