



ORD BBS

User's Manual

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Introduction: What this BBS can do for you

The Office of Research and Development's Bulletin Board System (BBS or "Board") is designed to facilitate the exchange of technical information and ORD products among EPA Headquarters, laboratory and Regional staff and contractors; States; other Federal agencies, universities, industry, and the public. It is easy to use and requires little computer expertise. The BBS offers

- an electronic message system,
- brief bulletins with information about ORD products and activities,
- files for downloading,
- participation in conferences (subject-oriented subsets of the BBS), and
- online databases for identifying ORD publications.

This guide is an overview of the major components and capabilities of the BBS. In addition to this guide, there is online help for each command. To use help once you are on the system, type **H** followed by a space and then the first letter of the command. There is also a file (HELP.ZIP) on the BBS that you can download to your computer (see page 17 for instructions on how to download). The file contains the text of all help screens for the BBS.

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Getting started

Equipment

In order to use the ORD BBS you will need the following:

A Personal Computer or Terminal: Almost any computer or terminal will do, as long as it can be connected to a telephone line via a modem.

A Modem: A modem is used to connect your computer or terminal to a telephone line. Almost any 1200 or 2400 baud modem will work fine. A Hayes compatible modem is recommended, and is required by many communications programs running on IBM PC or AT compatible computers. You may also require cables and telephone jacks to connect your modem to your computer or terminal and to the telephone system.

You do not need a sophisticated communications software package to work with the ORD BBS—any communications software will be adequate to connect to the BBS.

A Communications Program: This is necessary only if you are using a computer to connect to the Board (terminals have built-in communications programs). CrossTalk, the EPA standard microcomputer communications program, is a good choice for use with the ORD BBS. Smartcom and Procomm are other common communications programs.

Configuring your system

Before connecting to the ORD BBS, you must first set certain parameters in your terminal or communications program so that your system “speaks the same language” as the ORD BBS. Most terminals or communications programs have a “setup” or “communication parameters” screen that allows you to make these settings.

General

The BBS will accept calls with communications parameters set at 7, E, and 1 (7 data bits, even parity, 1 stop bit). However, if you use these parameters, you must change the settings to 8, N, and 1 as soon as you are connected to the BBS (BEFORE you type anything on the keyboard, including the <enter> key).

First, you must set your system to operate at 1200 or 2400 baud (depending on your modem's capabilities), 8 data bits, 1 stop bit, and no parity. If you later dial up the Board (as described below) and receive only "garbage characters," then it is very likely that one or more of these parameters has not been set correctly on your system. If this is the case, then hang up, reset these parameters, and try dialing in again. These settings can be changed in all communications programs. The following are the procedures for using CrossTalk software on an IBM-compatible PC and Smartcom software on a Macintosh computer. If you have trouble setting up or connecting to the Board, call 513-569-7272 (8-684-7272 FTS).

Setup using CrossTalk on a PC

The following commands can be given from the CrossTalk command line. Type the letters in bold on the left, press the <enter> key and then type the bold characters in the next column.

CrossTalk Setup		
NAME	ORDBBS	Optional
NUMBER	513-569-7610	(Don't forget the "9" or "8" prefix if your phone system uses one. Use 8-684-7610 if you are calling FTS.)
SPEED	(1200 or 2400)	Choose 1200 or 2400 depending on the speed of your modem.
MODE	Originate	Sets full duplex and enables outgoing calls.
DATA	8	
PARITY	N	
STOP	1	
EMULATION	VT100	Optional, but is required for PC graphics.
INFILTER	Off	Optional, but is required for PC graphics.

Setup using Smartcom on a Macintosh computer

Under the Connection menu, select "Phone number." Enter 513-569-7610 or 8-684-7610 FTS (include the "9" or "8" prefix if your phone system uses it). Click OK to save.

Under the Settings menu, select "Speed and Format". Make sure the "Transmission speed" is set at 1200 or 2400, "Bits per character" is set at 8, "Stop bits" is set at 1, and "Parity" is set at none. Click OK to save these settings.

Under the Settings menu, select "Autotype protocol". Click on the circle next to "Normal" on the top line. Under "End of Line", make sure the boxes next to "Insert word wrapping at column..." and "Insert line feeds" are unchecked. If they are checked, click on the box to uncheck them. Click OK to save.

Under the Settings menu, click on the circle next to VT102. Click OK to save.

When you close the file, save the changes and name the file ORDBBS.

Additional settings

Select "full duplex" or "no local echo" if your system allows these settings. If you dial up the Board and every letter you type is displayed twice on your screen, you should check these parameters before continuing.

Finally, select VT100 (or "ANSI-BBS") terminal emulation if you are using an IBM-compatible PC and your system permits it. This will usually allow you to select "graphics mode" on the Board. After you dial up, if some of the screens "look funny" (for example, there are extraneous characters in the text, or boxes come out as letters rather than lines), then it is likely that your terminal emulation is not compatible with the Boards's graphics mode. In this case, you should simply set color/graphics mode off on the Board after you dial up. Type **M** from the "Main Board Command?" prompt to toggle color/graphics mode on/off. Graphics mode cannot be used on a Macintosh.

There are often many other settings that can be made on a terminal or in a communications program. The other settings will depend on your computer, modem, or your own personal preferences.

Online registration



For experienced users. . .

To make the sign-on process faster, you can enter your first name, last name, and password on the same line:

john doe password

You do not need to be pre-registered to dial into the BBS. When you sign on for the first time, you will choose your own password and supply the registration information. After you see the welcoming screen, the system will prompt you for your name, password (of your choice), organizational affiliation, telephone numbers, and your interest in the BBS. The system will then process the information and give you a message saying it has saved the registration information. You will then have full access to the Main Board. See page 15 for information about participating in conferences. Record your chosen password in a safe place. You will not be allowed back in the

BBS if you forget it. Do not share your password with anyone else—each user should sign on in his or her own name.

Message capabilities

Reading messages There are several approaches to reading messages on the Board. The two most common are browsing public messages and reading individual messages addressed to you. Letters in parentheses are the subcommands that can be used. They are fully explained below and in the BBS's online help.

Browsing (R, RS, +, -)

This approach allows you to read all public messages which include messages addressed to "ALL" users, as well as messages left to individual users. To browse all public messages that were left since the last time you read messages, type **R S**. To browse all messages, type **R**. You will then see a prompt listing the high and low message numbers (e.g., 2-100). To read messages beginning with the most recent, type the higher number followed by a minus sign (e.g., **100-** in the example above). To browse messages in the order they were left, type the lower number followed by a plus sign (e.g., **2+** in the example above).

Scanning for individual messages (Y, YS, TS)

There are several ways to scan messages. You can scan messages when you sign on by answering yes (pressing <Enter>) to the prompt that reads, "Scan Message Base Since 'Last Read' (Enter)=Yes." You can also see which messages are addressed to you or from you by typing **Y** (or **Y S** for those left since the last time you read messages).



For experienced users. . .

To scan for messages on the Main Board and all the conferences at once, type:

Y A S NS

The BBS will scan the Main Board message base and respond with the message:

```
Msg #s for you:  
Msg #s from you:  
# of messages found
```

The first line lists the message numbers of the individual messages addressed to you. The second line lists message numbers of the individual messages you left for other users. The third line lists the total number of active messages that you have not yet read.

To scan the names of the addressee, sender, and subject of messages (but not the message text), type **Q**. You will be prompted to enter the number of the message from which you wish to start scanning.

Once you have found message numbers for the messages you wish to read, type **R** and then the number of the message (*e.g.*, **R 4**). To reply to a message you have just read, type **RE** at the "End of Message Command" prompt. For an explanation of the other end of message options, type **H** at the prompt.

To search the message subjects for a particular word or phrase, type **TS**. You will be prompted to enter the word or phrase to be searched and the message number with which to start the search.

Entering (sending) messages

To enter a message, type **E** from the Main Board prompt. You will be prompted to enter the name of the addressee. You can either enter a person's name or hit return to address your message to all BBS users. You will then be prompted to enter the subject of

your message. The next prompt will ask you to enter the message security level. Press **<Enter>** to make the message readable by all users. To make the message readable only by the addressee, type **R** for "receiver only." Type **H** at this prompt to see other options. Once you have entered the message security, you will be prompted to enter the text of your message. When you have finished typing your message, hit **<Enter>** twice. You will then have a list of options including:

- A (for abort),
- C (to continue the message),
- E (to edit again), and
- S (to send the message).

Editing messages

To edit your message before you send it, type **E** from the Command? prompt after you have entered your message and hit **<Enter>** twice. You will be prompted for the line number of the line containing the error you want to correct. Then you will see a prompt that says "Enter (Oldtext;Newtext) or (Enter) alone for 'no change.'" This means you should enter the word or string of characters you wish to change followed by a semicolon and then the same word or string as it should appear. For example, if you typed the word *watse* instead of *waste*, you would correct it by typing *watse;waste*. When you finish, you will receive the same Command? prompt as before. Type **S** to send the message.

Because the online message editing capability is limited, for long messages it is preferable to prepare a file containing the text of your message offline in a word processor. To do this, save your text in ASCII (or text

only) format. Make sure the margins are set for 72 characters or less and there are 60 or fewer lines. Check your communications software for the proper command for sending a text file (in CrossTalk it is "Send;" in Smartcom on the Macintosh, click on the keyboard icon for "Autotype").

Using the online databases

The BBS has databases that can be searched online. To see what databases are available, type **OPEN** from the "Main Board Command?" prompt. You will get a menu of the databases available. The databases are referred to as doors. If you already know the number of the database you want to use, you may type **OPEN** followed by the number (*e.g.*, **OPEN 1**).

ORD Bibliographic Database

The ORD Bibliographic Database includes abstracts of all ORD publications since 1977. You can search by the following items:

- Title
- Abstract
- Author
- Laboratory
- Sponsor
- Performing organization
- EPA report number
- NTIS order number
- Contract or grant number
- Year of publication

You can combine searches to search more than one field at once. A complete guide to searching the database is available on the BBS in a file called OBDHELP.ZIP or OBDHELP.SIT.

Ordering publications

The BBS allows users to place online orders for some of the documents listed on the ORD Bibliographic Database. The documents that indicate "Available from CERI: Yes" in the full record display can be ordered at no charge from the Center for Environmental Research Information (CERI) by filling out a questionnaire on the BBS. To do so, type S at the Main Board Command prompt. Then choose the number of the option that reads "Order form for EPA ORD publications from CERI." You will be prompted to enter information about the publication and then your mailing address. You must have the EPA report number to order this way, so be sure to write down this number from the database.

Information Sources: News/Bulletins/Files

The BBS has a number of information sources including:

- the News screen (with news about activities on the BBS),
- bulletins (normally short and easy to read online), and
- files (usually lengthier and meant to be downloaded and used from the user's computer).

BBS News There is a listing of news about the BBS that automatically displays when you sign onto the board for the first time and thereafter whenever the news changes. It contains information about new features and files on the BBS, announcements of events, and notices about any interruption of service on the BBS. To display this file, type **NEWS** from the "Main Board Command?" prompt.

Bulletins Bulletins are ASCII, or "text-only," files that users can read online. Typical bulletins include schedules, announcements, staff rosters, program plans, bibliographies, or instructions for using the BBS. Most bulletins come from files uploaded by users.

To read a bulletin, type **B**. You will see a list of bulletins. Type the number of the one you wish to see. If you know the number of a bulletin, you can type **B** followed by a space and the number of the bulletin to bypass the list of bulletins (*e.g.*, **B 2**). Bulletins are also available for downloading. Each bulletin is in a file called BLTx where x is the number of the bulletin. See page 17

for information on downloading.

Files The BBS offers a number of files such as databases, utilities, and expert systems that users can download to their own computer.



For experienced users...

There are several ways to scan files:

- L** searches a file name
- Z** searches a text string
- N** searches for new files

Combine any of the above commands with an A (e.g., L A) to scan the Main Board and all conferences at once.

To see a list of files, type **F**. You will see a menu listing categories of files. Choose the number of the category that interests you. Then you will see a list of the available files. From this list, make a note of the filenames that interest you. You cannot download the files from this menu. See page 17 for information on downloading.

Participating in a conference

The BBS has a number of mini-bulletin boards known as conferences. These conferences have all of the same functions and capabilities as the Main Board (messages, files, bulletins, doors), but they are limited to a specific subject area.

The BBS presently has five conferences:

Expert Systems*—support, distribution, updates, and discussion of ORD's expert systems

Biotechnology*—a forum for discussion of biotechnology engineering and technology including the use of genetically and non-genetically engineered microbes

Regional Operations—primarily intended for Regional Scientists, but open to anyone

Water Regulations—a forum to exchange information about the Office of Water's regulatory agenda and ORD's research activities on water

Methods Standardization/QA News*—a weekly update on highlights of EPA methods research/standardization activities and on the availability of QA materials for use by environmental monitoring laboratories and regulatory agencies

In order to enter a conference, you must be

Conferences to come...

New conferences are added to the BBS occasionally. We anticipate adding two new conferences in the near future:

- Ecology
- Federal Technology Transfer Activities

“registered” for that conference. Some conferences, such as those starred on the previous page, are automatically open to all BBS users. Others require a request to register. To become registered for a conference, leave a comment to the SYSOP (System Operator) listing the conferences in which you wish to be registered (type **C** at the Main Board Command prompt to leave a comment to the SYSOP). The SYSOP will then change your user record enabling you to join the conference, generally by the next business day.

To join a conference, type **J** followed by a space and then the number of the conference you wish to join (*e.g.*, **J 1**).

To exit a conference and return to the Main Board, type **A** (for abandon). To exit a conference and join a different conference, type **J** followed by a space and the number of the conference you wish to join.

Uploading and downloading files

There are three steps involved in uploading or downloading a file from your computer to the bulletin board system:

- setting the file transfer protocol,
- giving the BBS the command for uploading or downloading, and
- giving your communications software the command to send or receive the file.

Transfer protocol The transfer protocol is the set of commands used by your communications software and the BBS software when sending or receiving files. The transfer protocol verifies that the data received is identical to the data the other system sent. The protocol detects errors in the data transmission and causes the data to be re-sent if an error occurs. You need to set the protocol on the BBS so it will match the protocol that your communications software uses. If you are not sure which protocol to choose, check your communications software manual to see which protocol(s) it supports.

The BBS supports Xmodem, Ymodem, Zmodem, Kermit, and several other transfer protocols. To set the transfer protocol (or change it), type **T** from the Main Board prompt and then choose the appropriate protocol from the list. Once it has been set, you do not need to change it for each upload or download. However, it can be changed, if necessary.

BBS commands The next step in the upload/download process (or first step if you already have a



For experienced users. . .

You can combine commands for either uploading or downloading on one line. For example:

d help.zip X

gives the command to download the file help.zip using the Xmodem file transfer protocol.

transfer protocol selected) is to give the proper BBS command to upload or download.

Downloading

To download, type **D**. You will then be prompted to enter the name of the file you wish to download. After you have entered the filename, the BBS will check to be sure that the file is available on the BBS and then will give you the following message:

```
Checking file transfer request. Please wait ..
Download time:
Download size:
Total will be:
Protocol type:
File Selected:
(ctrl-X) Aborts; Execute local command
```

(with the appropriate information filled in). You will then have about 60 seconds to give your communications software the command to receive the file (see below).

Uploading

To upload a file, the BBS command is **U**. After you type **U**, the BBS will ask you for the name of the file to be uploaded. After you enter the filename, the BBS will respond:

```
Checking file transfer request. Please wait ...
Before beginning, enter a description of
(filename)
(-----)
```

At this prompt, type in a description that will go in the directory of files to tell users the name and purpose of the file. If you wish to leave a longer description, leave a message to the SYSOP with the text of the

description. If you want the file to be visible only to the SYSOP, type a slash (/) as the first character of the file description. After you have entered the file description, the BBS will respond as follows:

```
Upload Drive: 17981440 Bytes Free Disk Space
Upload Status: Screened Before Posting
Protocol Type:
File Selected:
(ctrl-X) Aborts; Execute local command
```

(with the appropriate information filled in). You will then have about 60 seconds to give your communications software the command to transmit the file from your computer to the BBS (see below).

Once you have given the BBS the proper command for uploading or downloading, you must give your communications software a command. For uploading, the command is usually called SEND or TRANSMIT (in CrossTalk, the command to send an Xmodem transfer is "XX" followed by the filename; in Smartcom on the Macintosh, click on the "Send" icon) For downloading, the command is usually called RECEIVE (in CrossTalk, the command to receive an Xmodem transfer is "RX" followed by the filename; in Smartcom on the Macintosh, click on the "Receive" icon.). If you don't know the name of the command in the program you are using, check your manual. Once you have given your communications software the command to send or receive, the BBS will show that the file is being transferred and tell you when the transfer is complete.

Appendix—BBS Commands

[A]bandon a Conference	Exits a conference (if you're in one) and returns you to the Main Board menu.
[B]ulletin Listings	Displays a menu of bulletins and allows you to select one to read.
[CHAT] with other users	Allows you to communicate directly with someone else who is logged on through another telephone line. Note that the command requires the four letters CHAT, unlike most commands.
[C]omment to SYSOP	Allows you to leave a private message to the SYSOP (SYStem OPerator).
[D]ownload a File	Allows you to retrieve a file from the BBS to your computer.
[E]nter a Message	Allows you to type in a message to another user or users.
[F]ile Directories	Describes the directories from which files may be downloaded.
[G]oodbye	Logs off the system and hangs up the phone.
[H]elp	Displays context-sensitive help on any command in the menu.
[I]nitial Welcome	Redisplays the first welcome screen.
[J]oin a Conference	Displays a menu of conferences and allows you to join one.
[K]ill a Message	Deletes a message from the system.
[L]ocate a File	Allows you to scan the file download directories for a matching filename.

[M]ode (Graphics)	Changes to or from graphics mode, depending on your current setting.
[N]ew Files	Scans directories for new files uploaded since the date specified.
[OPEN] a Door	Allows you to temporarily "exit" PCBoard to run an application program (such as a database). Note that the command requires the four letters OPEN, unlike most commands. After you exit from the door, you will be returned to the main menu. This feature may not be available at the time you read this or within every conference.
[P]age Length	Allows you to alter the number of lines of text that are displayed on your screen before asking if you want "More."
[Q]uick Message Scan	Scans all public messages for number and subject.
[R]ead a Message	<p>Allows you to read messages. Sub-commands are as follows:</p> <p>[#] (Where # is the message number). Allows you to read an individual message if you know the number. Allows you to read a range of numbers (<i>e.g.</i>, 15+ to read messages 15 and higher)</p> <p>[S]ince. Allows you to read all messages that have been left since the last time you read messages.</p> <p>[Y]ou. Allows you to read all messages that are addressed to you.</p>

	[F]rom. Allows you to read all messages that have been left by you.
	[N]ext. Allows you to read the next higher message number from the one you are currently reading.
	[P]revious. Allows you to read the previous message number from the one you are currently reading.
[S]cript Questionnaires	Displays a list of script questionnaires available for answering.
[T]ransfer Protocol	Allows you to change the way the BBS will upload files from you or download files to you.
[U]pload a File	Allows you to send a file from your computer to the BBS.
[V]iew Settings	Allows you to see your default settings. This feature is currently disabled for most users.
[W]rite User Info	Allows you to change your password, address, or phone number.
e[X]pert On/Off	Supresses the menus and provides abbreviated command prompts. Changes to or from expert mode, depending on your current setting.
[Y]our Personal Mail	Scans the entire message base for mail addressed to you or left by you.
[Z]ippy Directory Scan	Allows you to scan the file download directories for a matching text entry of your choice.