



What is a Batch File?

The Windows batch file has been around since the early days of DOS, and was once a critical element of actually being able to boot into a working system. There's a lot you can do with a batch file but let's just take a moment to see what one is.

.BAT MAN

A Windows batch file is simply a script file that runs a series of commands, one line at a time, much in the same fashion as a Linux script. The series of commands are executed by the command line interpreter and stored in a plain text file with the .BAT extension; this signifies to Windows that it's an executable file, in this case, a script.

Batch files have been around since the earliest versions of Microsoft DOS. Although not exclusively a Microsoft scripting file, batch files are mainly associated with Microsoft's operating systems. In the early days, when a PC booted into a version of DOS (which produced a simple command prompt when powered up), the batch file was used in the form of a system file called Autoexec.bat. Autoexec.bat was a script that automatically executed (hence Autoexec) commands once the operating system had finished dealing with the Config.sys file.

When a user powered up their DOS-based computer, and once the BIOS had finished checking the system memory and so on, DOS would look to the Config.sys file to load any specific display

requirements and hardware drivers, allocate them a slot in the available memory, assign any memory managers and tell the system where the Command.com file, which is the command line interpreter for DOS, was. Once it had done that, then the Autoexec.bat file took over and ran through each line in turn, loading programs that would activate the mouse or optical drive into the memory areas assigned by the Config.sys file.

The DOS user of the day could opt to create different Autoexec.bat files depending on what they wanted to do. For example, if they wanted to play a game and have as much memory available as possible, they'd create a Config.sys and Autoexec.bat set of files that loaded the bare minimum of drivers and so on. If they needed

```
File Edit Search Options Help
AUTOEXEC.BAT
ECHO OFF
PROMPT $P$G
PATH D:\WINDOWS;C:\DOS;C:\PCE;C:\UTIL
set TEMP=D:\WINDOWS\TEMP
REM LH C:\UTIL\MOUSE.COM
F1=Help Enter=Display Menu Esc=Cancel Arrow=Next Item 00001:001
```