

THE COMMAND INTERPRETER

When 86-DOS is first initialized after the "system boot", a program called COMMAND is loaded and executed. COMMAND provides the interface between the user and the operating system by accepting lines of input from the console and converting them to system calls.

COMMAND prompts with a letter indicating the "default" disk drive, followed by a colon. Up to 16 drives are allowed in the system, labeled "A" through "P". The default drive is the one that will be used by any disk operation that does not specify a drive explicitly. Initially, the default drive is A, but the user may change this by entering a line consisting of a valid drive letter followed by a colon.

The general form of an input line for COMMAND is a command name followed by zero or more parameters. These parameters may be separated from the command name and each other by blanks, tabs, commas, semicolons, or "equals" signs. The number and meaning of the parameters is entirely dependent on the individual command.

Many commands accept a file name as a parameter. File names may have up to three parts: 1) an optional disk drive specifier; 2) the name; 3) an optional extension. The drive specifier, if present, consists of a valid drive letter followed by a colon. The name consists of 1 to 8 characters. The extension, if present, is a period followed by 1 to 3 characters. If the name or extension include a "?" in any position, then that position will match any character when a directory search is made for the file name.

The command themselves are of two types. The "internal commands" are built in to COMMAND and are executed immediately upon recognition. The "external commands", on the other hand, are kept on disk as program files and must first be loaded into memory before they can be executed. Any file on the disk with an extension of ".COM" is considered to be a valid external command.

The internal commands are the following:

DIR	List directory entries
RENAME	Rename files
ERASE	Delete files
COPY	Copy a file
TYPE	Display the contents of a file
CLEAR	Format a disk directory, erasing all files

Each is described below, with all valid forms of their parameters shown. In this list, "drive" means a valid disk specifier (a drive letter followed by a colon), while "file" means a file name as described above.

DIR	
DIR	drive
DIR	file

If no parameters are present, all directory entries on the default disk are listed at the console. If a drive specifier is present, then all entries on specified disk are listed. If a file name is given, then only matching files are listed.

RENAME file1 file2

Every matching occurrence of the first file name is changed to the second name. A disk drive specifier on the second file name is ignored. If question marks ("?",) appear in the second file name, then corresponding positions in the original name will be unchanged. Care should be taken not to give two files the same name.

ERASE file

All files matching the given file name are deleted from the disk directory.

COPY file1
COPY file1 drive
COPY file1 file2

The contents of file1 are copied into a second file. If a second file name is not given, then a copy with the same name is made on the specified (or default) drive. If the destination file already exists, it will be overwritten; otherwise, a new file will be created. Do not attempt to copy to a file of the same name on the same disk--the file will be destroyed.

TYPE file

The specified file is transferred from the disk to the console. Tab characters are expanded with blanks to every eighth column, but otherwise no formatting is performed.

CLEAR drive

Before any disk medium may be used with 86-DOS, its directory must be initialized to empty. To prevent catastrophe, the user will be prompted before formatting takes place. A "Y" response is required to continue.

Some External Commands

RDCPM file1
RDCPM file1 drive
RDCPM file1 file2

Very similar to COPY, except that the source, file1, is assumed to be on a disk formatted by a CP/M-compatible system. The destination file must be on a different drive, assumed to be formatted by 86-DOS.

ASM file

The resident 8086 Assembler, called by this command, is essentially identical to the SCP 8086/Z80 Cross Assembler, which is described in a separate manual. There are certain procedural differences:

1. The assembler is called ASM, not ASM86, and it runs on the 8086 under 86-DOS, not on the Z80 under CP/M.

2. The extension of the file must be "ASM", not "A86".

TRANS file

The Z80-to-8086 Source Code Translator, called by this command, is essentially identical to our version that runs on the Z80, which is described in the back of the Assembler manual. The only differences:

1. The Translator is called TRANS, not TRANS86, and it runs on the 8086 under 86-DOS, not on the Z80 under CP/M.

2. The extension of the output file is "ASM", not "A86".

HEX2BIN file

The specified file is assumed to be in Intel hex format, as produced by the Assembler. If no extension is given, "HEX" is assumed. A file of the same name but with an extension of "COM" is produced which is the absolute binary equivalent of the hex input file, offset downward by 100 hex.

SYS drive

Transfers a copy of the system from Drive A to the specified drive.