The Linux Serial HOWTO

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This document describes how to set up serial communications devices on a Linux box.

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1 Introduction

This is the Linux Serial HOWTO. All about how to set up modems and terminals under Linux.

1.1 Other sources of information

- man pages for: `init(1)`, `getty(1m)`, `login(1)`, `gettydefs(4)`, `setserial(8)`
- Your modem manual
- "Managing UUCP and Usenet" by Tom O'Reilly and Grace Todino, O'Reilly and Associates, Inc. ISBN: 0-937175-93-5
- UUCP HOWTO: for information on setting up UUCP
- Printing HOWTO: deals with setting up a serial printer
- NET-2 HOWTO: everything about SLIP, CSLIP, PPP, etc
- Term HOWTO: everything you wanted to know about `term`

1.2 New versions of this document

New versions of the Linux Serial HOWTO will be periodically posted to `comp.os.linux.announce` and `news.answers`. They will also be uploaded to various Linux FTP sites, including `sunsite.unc.edu:/pub/Linux/docs/HOWTO`. The Serial HOWTO is also available at the following URL: `http://sunsite.unc.edu/mdw/HOWTO/Serial-HOWTO.html` for WWW clients such as `mosaic`.

1.3 Feedback

Please send me any comments, suggestions, or additional material. I'm always eager to hear about what you think about the HOWTO. I'm also always on the lookout for improvements! Tell me exactly what you don't understand, or what could be clearer. You can reach me at `gregh@cc.gatech.edu`.

If you find any wrong information, please contact me ASAP.

1.4 Disclaimer

Your milage may vary. The answers given may not work for all systems and all setup combinations.

2 Supported serial hardware

Linux supports, (ie is known to work with):

- standard PC serial boards
- standard PC internal modems

Multiport serial boards:

- Usenet Serial Board II
- Boca 4-port (BB-1004)
- Boca 8-port (BB-1008)
- Boca 16-port (BB-2016)
- AST FourPort boards and clones

In general, Linux will support any serial board which uses a 8250, 16450, 16550, or 16550A (or compatible) UART, or an internal modem which emulates one of the above UARTs.

Linux does not currently support any intelligent serial boards, but will likely do so sometime in the future.

Special note on the BB-1004 and BB-1008, they do not support DCD and RI lines, and thus are not usable for dialin modems. They will work fine for other purposes.

3 What are the names of the serial ports?

There are the 4 serial devices corresponding to COM1 - COM4:

```
/dev/cua0, /dev/ttyS0 (COM1) address 0x3f8 IRQ 4
/dev/cua1, /dev/ttyS1 (COM2) address 0x2f8 IRQ 3
/dev/cua2, /dev/ttyS2 (COM3) address 0x3e8 IRQ 4
/dev/cua3, /dev/ttyS3 (COM4) address 0x2e8 IRQ 3
```

The `/dev/ttyS`*n* devices are for dialin and `/dev/cua`*n* devices for dialout. *n* is the serial port number. In this document, I refer to COM1 as `ttyS0`, COM2 as `ttyS1`, COM3 as `ttyS2`, and COM4 as `ttyS3`.

On some installations, two extra devices will be created, `/dev/modem` for your modem and `/dev/mouse` for your mouse. Both of these are symbolic links to the appropriate `/dev/cua`*n* device which you specified during the installation (unless you have a bus mouse, then `/dev/mouse` will point to the bus mouse device).

There has been some discussion on the merits of `/dev/mouse` and `/dev/modem`. I prefer using the real device names, and not the symbolic links. Use them if you like, but *make sure they point to the right device.*

On the other hand, if you use the links, and they point to the correct devices, using `/dev/modem` may be simpler for some people. It's really up to you what you use.

3.1 Major and minor device numbers of serial devices in /dev

```
/dev/ttyS0 major 4, minor 64    /dev/cua0 major 5, minor 64
/dev/ttyS1 major 4, minor 65    /dev/cua1 major 5, minor 65
/dev/ttyS2 major 4, minor 66    /dev/cua2 major 5, minor 66
/dev/ttyS3 major 4, minor 67    /dev/cua3 major 5, minor 67
```

Note that all distributions come with these devices already made correctly.

3.1.1 Creating devices in /dev

If you don't have a device, you will have to create it with the **mknod** command.

Example, suppose you needed to create devices for **ttyS0**:

```
linux# mknod /dev/cua0 c 5 64
linux# mknod /dev/ttyS0 c 4 64
```

You can also get the **MAKEDEV** script, available on the usual FTP sites. This simplifies the making of devices. For example, if you needed to make the devices for **ttyS0** you would type:

```
linux# cd /dev
linux# MAKEDEV ttyS0
```

This handles the devices creation for the dialin and dialout devices.

3.1.2 Notes for multiport boards

The devices your multiport board uses depends on what kind of board you have. These are listed in detail in the **rc.serial** which comes with the **setserial** program. You will need to create these devices for sure! Either use the **mknod** command, or get the **MAKEDEV** script. Devices for mulitport boards are made by adding 64 + the port number. So, if you wanted to create devices for **ttyS17**, you would type:

```
linux# mknod /dev/cua17 c 5 81
linux# mknod /dev/ttyS17 c 4 81
```

Note that "64 + 17 = 81". Using the **MAKEDEV** script, you would type:

```
linux# cd /dev
linux# /dev/MAKEDEV ttyS17
```

4 What is getty_ps?

This is just another version of `getty`, which is a program that handles some of the login process when you log in to a UNIX box. It was written by Paul Sutcliffe, Jr. <`paul@devon.lns.pa.us`>. Kris Gleason <`gleasokr@boulder.colorado.edu`> currently maintains it. 2.0.7e is the latest version, and supercedes any older versions. Most Linux distributions come with `getty_ps` installed as the default `getty` but you should check to make sure. At your Linux prompt, type:

```
linux# strings /etc/getty | grep RINGBACK
```

If `grep` returns "`RINGBACK`" then you have the right `getty`. If you do not have this version of `getty`, I highly recommend that you get it. It can be found on the standard Linux FTP sites. (Kris has promised me to implement a version feature in the next release, to avoid doing this `grep` sillyness.)

4.1 Installing getty_ps

Get the package from a Linux FTP site, and install according to the instructions.

Be sure that the new `getty_ps` works correctly *before* you remove all the other versions! I recommend changing one of your virtual console lines from:

```
c2:23456:respawn:/etc/getty tty2
```

to:

```
c2:23456:respawn:/etc/getty_ps tty2 VC console
```

Put this line in your `/etc/gettydefs`:

```
VC# B9600 SANE CLOCAL # B9600 SANE -ISTRIP CLOCAL #@S @L login: #VC
```

and restart `init`:

```
linux# kill -HUP 1
```

If you can log in on a console with `getty_ps`, it's working. Move `getty_ps` to `getty` or link it. Be sure to update your `/etc/inittab` to correctly invoke the new `getty`. The entries need to be in the form of:

```
id:runlevel:action:/etc/{uu}getty [options] line [speed [term [lined]]]
```

`getty_ps` also uses `syslogd` to log messages. See the man pages for `syslogd(1)` and `syslog.conf(5)` for setting up `syslogd`, if you don't have it running already. Messages are logged with priority LOG_AUTH, errors use LOG_ERR, and debugging uses LOG_DEBUG. If you don't want to use `syslogd` you can edit `tune.h` in the `getty_ps` source files to use a log file for messages and debugging instead, but you'll have to recompile the whole thing.

Once you have installed getty_ps, and are certain it is working, you can remove any other versions of getty you have. Be sure to check in /bin, /etc, /usr/bin, /usr/etc, /usr/man/man1, and /usr/man/cat1 for any thing called getty - there are old versions lurking everywhere. Also, you can safely remove the old config file /etc/gettytab - you only need /etc/gettydefs. From this point on, all references to getty will refer to getty_ps. References to uugetty will refer to the uugetty that comes with the getty_ps package.

5 What is setserial?

setserial is a program which allows you to look at and change various attributes of a serial device, including its port, its IRQ, and other serial port options. It was written by Ted T'so <tytso@athena,mit.edu>. The newest version is 2.10, and can be found on the Linux FTP sites. You can find out what version you have by running setserial with no arguments.

On boot, only the ttyS{0-3} ports are configured, using the default IRQ of 4 and 3. So, if you have any other serial ports provided by other boards (such as an AST Fourport), or if ttyS{0-3} have a non-standard IRQ, you *must* use this program in order to configure those serial ports. For the full listing of options, consult the man page.

6 How do I dial out with my modem?

6.1 Hardware requirements

First, make sure you have the right cable. Your modem requires a straight through cable, with no pins crossed. Any computer store should have these. Make sure you get the correct gender. Your DB25 serial port on your PC is *always* male. Do not confuse it with the parallel port, which is the female DB25. Hook up your modem to one of your serial ports. Consult your modem manual on how to do this.

6.1.1 Notes on internal modems

For an internal modem, you will not need a cable. An internal modem does not need a serial port, it has one built in. All you need to do is configure it to use an interrupt that is not being used, and configure the I/O address. Consult your modem manual if you get stuck. Also, see section 8 if you need help on choosing interrupts or addresses.

Due to a bit of stupidity on IBM's part, you may encounter problems if you want your internal modem to be on ttyS3. If Linux does not detect your internal modem on ttyS3, you can use setserial and the modem will work fine. Internal modems on ttyS{0-2} should not have any problems being detected.

6.2 Talking to your modem

Make sure that nothing is using the serial port you hooked your modem to. Check to see if there is a getty watching it. If there is a getty process running on that port, check your /etc/inittab file for entries using

that serial port. Comment the line out (with a "#"), and restart `init`. Do not comment any lines that contain a `tty`*n* device, only ones containing `ttyS`*n* devices. `tty`*n* devices are your virtual consoles.

Use `kermit` to test the setup. For example, say your modem was on `ttyS3`, and it could handle 2400 bps. You would do the following:

```
linux# kermit
C-Kermit 5A(188), 23 Nov 92, POSIX
Type ? or HELP for help
C-Kermit>set line /dev/cua3
C-Kermit>set speed 2400
/dev/cua3, 2400 bps
C-Kermit>c
Connecting to /dev/cua3, speed 2400.
The escape character is Ctrl-\ (ASCII 28, FS)
Type the escape character followed by C to get back,
or followed by ? to see other options.
AT
OK
<ctrl>-\-C
(Back at linux)
C-Kermit>quit
linux#
```

If your modem responds to `AT` commands, you can assume your modem is working correctly on the Linux side. Try dialing another modem. If you don't like `kermit`, try one of the more advanced comm programs. Check out the section about comm programs if you need some pointers.

6.3 Dial out modem configuration

For dial out use only, you can configure your modem however you want.

I like to see result codes, so I set `Q0` - result codes are reported. To set this on my modem, I would have to preceed the register name with an `AT` command. Using `kermit` or some comm program, connect to your modem and do the following:

```
ATQ0
```

If your modem says `OK` back to you, then the register is set. Do this for each register you want to set.

I also like to see what I'm typing, so I set `E1` - command echo on. If your modem has data compression capabilities, you probably want to enable them. You may want to enable RTS/CTS handshaking. Consult your modem manual for more help, and a full listing of options.

7 How do I dial in and out with my modem?

Get your modem to dial out correctly.

7.1 Dial in and out modem configuration

For dial in and dial out use, you *have* to set up your modem a certain way (again, using the `AT` command on your modem):

```
E1       command echo ON
Q0       result codes are reported
V1       verbose ON
S1=0     never answer (uugetty handles this with the WAITFOR option)
```

If you don't set these correctly, your `INIT` string in your config file may fail, hosing the whole process. But, more on config files below...

```
&C1     DCD is on after connect only
```

If DCD is always on, `getty` will always think there is a connection, and may try to log people in.

Other things you should set:

```
&S0     DSR is always on
&D3     DTR on/off resets modem
enable your data compression (setting depend on modem manufacturer,
                              consult your modem manual)
autobaud                     (same applies here)
enabling RTS/CTS             (here too)
```

If your modem does not support a stored profile, you can set these through the `INIT` string in your config file. See below.

7.2 Example modem setup

Here is my modem setup, for a Telebit T1600. Most things should work for any Hayes compatible modem though. Don't worry if there are some things in my setup that aren't on yours.

```
T1600 - Version LA1.00  - Active Configuration
 B1  E1  L2  M0  P   Q0  V1  X12  Y0
&C1 &D3 &G0 &J0 &L0 &Q0 &R3 &S1 &T4 &X0
S000=0   S001=0   S002=43  S003=13  S004=10  S005=8   S006=2   S007=40
S008=2   S009=6   S010=14  S011=70  S012=50  S018=0   S025=5   S026=1
S038=0   S041=0   S045=0   S046=0   S047=4   S048=0   S050=0   S051:254
S056=17  S057=19  S058:2   S059=0   S060=0   S061:0   S062=15  S063=0
S064:1   S068:3   S069=0   S090=0   S093=8   S094=1   S100=0   S102=0
S104=0   S105=1   S111:30  S112=1   S180:3   S181=1   S183=25  S190=1
S253=10  S254=255 S255=255
```

7.3 Setting up uugetty

Replace the stock `getty` with `getty_ps` as described above. Update `/etc/gettydefs` to include entries for modems (note that the entries point to each other, these are not for fixed speed):

```
# Modem entries
38400# B38400 CS8 # B38400 SANE -ISTRIP HUPCL #@S @L @B login: #19200

19200# B19200 CS8 # B19200 SANE -ISTRIP HUPCL #@S @L @B login: #9600

9600# B9600 CS8 # B9600 SANE -ISTRIP HUPCL #@S @L @B login: #2400

2400# B2400 CS8 # B2400 SANE -ISTRIP HUPCL #@S @L @B login: #1200

1200# B1200 CS8 # B1200 SANE -ISTRIP HUPCL #@S @L @B login: #300

300# B300 CS8 # B300 SANE -ISTRIP HUPCL #@S @L @B login: #38400
```

If you have a 9600 bps or faster modem with flow control, you can lock your serial port speed and let the modem handle the translation to other bps rates. Then, instead of the step down series of lines listed below, `/etc/gettydefs` only needs to contain one line for the modem:

```
38400# B38400 CS8 # B38400 SANE -ISTRIP HUPCL #@S login: #38400
```

or

```
19200# B19200 CS8 # B19200 SANE -ISTRIP HUPCL #@S login: #19200
```

If you have your modem set up to do RTS/CTS hardware flow control, you can add CRTSCTS to the entries.

Next, make sure that you have a dialin and dialout device for the port and your modem is on. If you have your modem on `ttyS3` you will need the `/dev/cua1`, and `/dev/ttyS1` devices. If you don't have the correct devices, see the section on how to create devices, and create the devices.

7.4 Customizing uugetty

There are lots of parameters you can tweak for each port you have. These are implemented in seperate config files for each port, if you want. The file `/etc/conf.uugetty` will be used by *all* instances of `uugetty`, and `/etc/conf.uugetty.ttyS`*n* will only be used by that one port. Sample default config files can be found with the `getty_ps` source files, which come with most Linux distributions. Due to space concerns, they are not listed here. My `/etc/conf.uugetty.ttyS3` looks like this:

```
# sample uugetty configuration file for a Hayes compatible modem to allow
# incoming modem connections
#
```

```
# alternate lockfile to check... if this lockfile exists, then uugetty is
# restarted so that the modem is re-initialized
ALTLOCK=cua3
ALTLINE=cua3

# line to initialize
INITLINE=cua3

# timeout to disconnect if idle...
TIMEOUT=60

# modem initialization string...
#
# format: <expect> <send> ... (chat sequence)
INIT="" \d+++\dAT\r OK\r\n ATH0\r OK\r\n AT\sE1\sQ0\sATS0=0\r OK\r\n

WAITFOR=RING
CONNECT="" ATA\r CONNECT\s\A

# this line sets the time to delay before sending the login banner
DELAY=1

#DEBUG=010
```

Add the following line to your `/etc/inittab`, so that `uugetty` is run on your serial port:

```
S3:456:respawn:/etc/uugetty ttyS3 38400
(^port without "tty"        ^port ^-- put your highest modem speed here)
```

Restart `init`:

```
linux# kill -HUP 1
```

Now Linux will be watching your serial port for connections. Notice that we use `uugetty` for modems. This is because it does things like checking lock files.

Dial in from another site and log in to you Linux system. Rejoice.

`getty` and `uugetty` have a lot more options, see the man page for `getty(1m)` for a full description. Among other things there is a scheduling feature, and a ringback feature. RTFM :-).

8 How do I set up a terminal connected to my PC?

8.1 Hardware requirements

Make sure you have the right kind of cable. A null modem cable bought at a computer store will do it. But it must be a *null modem* cable! Make sure you are using your serial port, and not your parallel port.

At a minimum, you should have (for a DB25 connector):

```
RxD   Receive Data          2 - 3       TxD   Transmit Data
TxD   Transmit Data         3 - 2       RxD   Receive Data
GND   Signal Ground         7 - 7       GND   Signal Ground
```

If you want to have flow control and hardware handshaking, you must have a full null modem cable:

```
      Frame Ground          1 - 1             Frame Ground
RxD   Receive Data          2 - 3       TxD   Transmit Data
TxD   Transmit Data         3 - 2       RxD   Receive Data
RTS   Request To Send       4 - 5       CTS   Clear To Send
CTS   Clear To Send         5 - 4       RTS   Request To Send
DSR   Data Set Ready        6 - 20      DTR   Data Terminal Ready
GND   Signal Ground         7 - 7       GND   Signal Ground
DCD   Carrier Detect        8 - 20      DTR   Data Terminal Ready
DTR   Data Terminal Ready  20 - 6       DSR   Data Set Ready
DTR   Data Terminal Ready  20 - 8       DCD   Carrier Detect
```

If you have a DB9 connector on your port, try the following:

```
                          DB9   DB25
RxD   Receive Data          2 - 3       TxD   Transmit Data
TxD   Transmit Data         3 - 2       RxD   Receive Data
GND   Signal Ground         5 - 7       GND   Signal Ground
```

Alternatively, a DB9-DB25 null modem cable:

```
                          DB9   DB25
DCD   Carrier Detect        1 - 20      DTR   Data Terminal Ready
RxD   Receive Data          2 - 2       TxD   Transmit Data
TxD   Transmit Data         3 - 3       RxD   Receive Data
DTR   Data Terminal Ready   4 - 6       DSR   Data Set Ready
DTR   Data Terminal Ready   4 - 8       DCD   Carrier Detect
GND   Signal Ground         5 - 7       GND   Signal Ground
DSR   Data Set Ready        6 - 20      DTR   Data Terminal Ready
RTS   Request To Send       7 - 5       CTS   Clear To Send
CTS   Clear To Send         8 - 4       RTS   Request To Send
(RI Ring Indicator          9 not needed)
```

If you are not using a full null modem cable, you might have to do the following trick: on your computer side of the connector, connect RTS and CTS together, and also connect DSR, DCD and DTR together. This way, when the computer wants a certain handshaking signal, it will get it (from itself).

Now that you have the right kind of cable, connect your terminal to your computer. If you can, tell you terminal to ignore modem control signals. Try using 9600 bps, 8 data bits, 1 stop bit, no parity bits for the terminal's setup.

8.2 Setting up getty

Replace the stock `getty` with `getty_ps` as described above. Add an entry for `getty` to use for your terminal in `/etc/gettydefs`:

```
#9600 bps Dumb Terminal entry
DT9600# B9600 CS8 CLOCAL # B9600 SANE -ISTRIP CLOCAL #S @L login: #DT9600
```

You can add `HUPCL` so the login is killed whenever you switch of the terminal (provided you use a proper null modem cable).

Edit your `/etc/inittab` file to run `getty` on the serial port:

```
S1:456:respawn:/etc/getty ttyS1 DT9600 vt100
```

Restart `init`:

```
linux# kill -HUP 1
```

At this point, you should see a login prompt on your terminal. You may have to hit return a couple of times to get attention. Rejoice. Party. Log in on your terminal and PC. `talk` to yourself from accross the room.

9 Can I use more than 2 serial devices?

You don't need to read this section, unless you want to use 3 or more serial devices... (assuming you don't have a multiport board).

Providing you have another spare serial port, yes, you can.

The number of serial ports you can use is limited by the number of interrupts (IRQ) and port I/O addresses we have to use. Each serial devices must be assigned it's own interrupt and address. A serial device can be a serial port, an internal modem, or a multiport serial board.

Multiport serial boards are specially designed to have multiple serial ports that share the same IRQ for all serial ports on the board. Linux gets data from them by using a different I/O address for each port on the card.

9.1 Choosing serial device interrupts

Your PC will normally come with `ttyS0` and `ttyS2` at IRQ 4, and `ttyS1` and `ttyS3` at IRQ 3. To use more than 2 serial devices, you will have to give up an interrupt to use. A good choice is to reassign an interrupt from your parallel port. Your PC normally comes with IRQ 5 and IRQ 7 set up as interrupts for your parallel ports, but few people use 2 parallel ports. You can reassign one of the interrupts to a serial device, and still happily use a parallel port. You will need the `setserial` program to do this. In addition, you have to play with the jumpers on your boards, check the docs for your board. Set the jumpers to the IRQ you want for each port.

You will need to set things up so that there is one, and only one interrupt for each serial device. Here is how I set mine up in `/etc/rc.local` - you should do it upon startup somewhere:

```
/etc/setserial /dev/cua0 irq 3          # my mouse
/etc/setserial /dev/cua1 irq 4          # my dumb terminal
/etc/setserial /dev/cua2 irq 5          # my 2400 bps modem
/etc/setserial /dev/cua3 irq 9          # my telebit modem
```

Standard IRQ assignments:

```
IRQ  0    Timer channel 0
IRQ  1    Keyboard
IRQ  2    Cascade for controller 2
IRQ  3    Serial port 2
IRQ  4    Serial port 1
IRQ  5    Parallel port 2
IRQ  6    Floppy diskette
IRQ  7    Parallel port 1
IRQ  8    Real-time clock
IRQ  9    Redirected to IRQ2
IRQ 10    not assigned
IRQ 11    not assigned
IRQ 12    not assigned
IRQ 13    Math coprocessor
IRQ 14    Hard disk controller
IRQ 15    not assigned
```

There is really no Right Thing to do when choosing interrupts. Just make sure it isn't being used. 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7 is a good choice. "not assigned" means that currently nothing standard uses these IRQs. Also note that IRQ 2 is the same as IRQ 9. You can call it either 2 or 9, the serial driver is very understanding.

If you have a serial card with a 16-bit bus connector, you can also use IRQ 10, 11, 12 or 15.

Just make sure you don't use IRQ 0, 1, 6, 8, 13 or 14! These are used by your mother board. You will make her very unhappy by taking her IRQs.

9.2 Setting serial device addresses

Next, you must set the port address. Check the manual on your board for the jumper settings. Like interrupts, there can only be one serial device at each address. Your port will usually come configured as follows:

```
/dev/cua0, /dev/ttyS0 address 0x3f8 ttyS0
/dev/cua1, /dev/ttyS1 address 0x2f8 ttyS1
/dev/cua2, /dev/ttyS2 address 0x3e8 ttyS2
/dev/cua3, /dev/ttyS3 address 0x3e8 ttyS3
```

Choose which address you want each serial device to have and set the jumpers accordingly. I have my modem on `ttyS3`, and my mouse on `ttyS1`.

When you reboot, Linux should see your serial ports at the address you set them. The IRQ Linux sees may not correspond to the IRQ you set with the jumpers. Don't worry about this. Linux does not do any IRQ detection when it boots, because IRQ detection is dicy and can be fooled. Use `setserial` to tell Linux what IRQ the port is using.

10 Can Linux configure the serial devices automagically?

Yes. To get Linux to detect and set up the serial devices automatically on startup, add the line:

```
/etc/setserial /dev/cua0 auto_irq skip_test autoconfig
```

to your `/etc/rc.local` or `/etc/rc.serial` file. Do this for every serial port you want to auto configure. Be sure to give the correct location of where your `setserial` program lives, and give a device name that really does exist on your machine.

10.1 Notes for multiport boards

For board addresses, and IRQs, look at the `rc.serial` that comes with the `setserial` program. It has a lot of detail on multiport boards, including I/O addresses and device names.

11 How do I set up my serial ports for higher speeds?

Use `setserial`, with the `spd_hi` flag to configure your serial port to use 57600 bps. Use `spd_vhi` to use 115200 bps. Then, set your speed to 38400 bps. This is now the new speed you have set. There is no speed named 57600 or 115200.

Make sure you have 16550A UARTs :-).

12 Noteworthy communications programs and utilities

Once you get everything working, you may want to check out these more advanced programs, all are available on the usual FTP sites.

- Seyon - X based comm program
- xconn - X based comm program
- Minicom - friendly serial communication program
- Procomm - procommish comm program with zmodem

These programs offer more features that just `kermit` alone, including telephone directories, auto-dialing and so on.

- Another useful program is `term`. `term` multiplexes many connections over one serial line. It is somewhat similar to SLIP, and offers some SLIP functionality. These include `rlogin`, `telnet`, `ftp`, `ncftp`, `finger`, `rdate`, `xmosaic` and `tredir`. `tredir` is a special program which lets you redirect remote TCP/IP ports to your local machine. This allows for remote NNTP, and SMTP access. The good thing about `term` is that is runs entirely in user space, meaning it requires no kernel support, or sysadmin support (like SLIP does).
- `screen` is another multi-session program. This one behaves like the virtual consoles.
- `callback` is a program that will have your modem call you back immediately from where you just called.
- `mgetty+fax` handles FAX stuff, and provides an alternate `getty`
- Other things can be found on `sunsite.unc.edu:/pub/Linux/system/Serial` and `sunsite.unc.edu:/pub/Linux/apps/comm`. These are the directories where all the serial type things are kept.

13 More serial tips

Here are some serial tips you might find helpful...

13.1 `kermit` and zmodem

To use zmodem with `kermit`, add the following to your `.kermrc`:

```
define rz !rz < /dev/cua3 > /dev/cua3
define sz !sz \%0 > /dev/cua3 < /dev/cua3
```

Be sure to put in the device your modem is on. Then, to use it, just type `rz` or `sz <filename>` at the `kermit` prompt.

13.2 Setting terminal types

To set your terminal type automagically when you log in, look at `/etc/ttytype`. Put in the device, and corresponding terminal type, and your `TERM` variable will be set when you log in.

Say I have a vt100 terminal on `ttyS1`, I would put:

```
vt100 ttyS1
```

in `/etc/ttytype`.

You can also get `tset` from `sunsite.unc.edu:/pub/Linux/system/Terminal-management/`. See the docs that come with `tset` to learn how to use it. `tset` can establish terminal characteristics when you log in.

13.3 Color `ls` on serial connections

If `ls` is screwing up your terminal emulation with the color feature, turn it off. `ls -o`, `ls --color`, and `ls --colour` all use the color feature. Some installations have `ls` set to use color by default.

14 Linux FTP sites

```
sunsite.unc.edu:/pub/Linux      (NC, USA)
tsx-11.mit.edu:/pub/linux       (MA, USA)
nic.funet.fi:/pub               (Finland)
```

These FTP sites support annonymous FTP, which means login as `ftp`, and password as your email address, ie `logname@yourhost.yourdomain`.

15 What are locks?

Locks are simply a file saying that a particular device is in use. They are kept in `/usr/spool/uucp`. Locks are named `LCK..<name>`, where `<name>` is either a device name, or a UUCP site name. Certain processes create these locks so that they can have exclusive access to devices, for instance if you dial out on your modem, a lock will appear telling other processes that someone is using the modem already. Locks mainly contain the PID of the process that has locked the device. Most programs look at the lock, and try to determine if that lock is still valid by checking the process table for the process that has locked the device. If the lock is found to be valid, the program should exit. If not, some programs remove the stale lock, and use the device, creating their own lock in the process.

16 What are UARTs? How do they affect performance?

UARTs (**U**niversal **A**syncronous **R**eceiver **T**ransmitter) are chips inside your communication devices (terminal, serial card). There is one on each end of a connection. Their purpose is to convert data (bytes) to bits, send each bit down the serial line, and then rebuild the data again on the other end. The UARTs are asyncronous devices, because the time interval between transmission of data is not fixed. UARTs deal with data in byte size pieces.

Say you have a terminal hooked up to your PC. When you type a character, the terminal presents it to it's UART. The UART shifts that character (a byte) out onto the serial line one bit at at time, at a specific rate. Hence, we have the rates 110, 300, 1200, 2400, ... bits/sec (bps). This is simply a measure of how fast bits are being sent. On the other end, the receiving UART takes all the bits and rebuilds the character (byte).

There are several different types of UARTs. You have probably heard of dumb UARTs - the 8250 and 16450, and smart or FIFO UARTs - the 16550A. To understand their differences, first let's examine what happens when a UART has sent or received a byte.

The UART itself can't do anything with the data, it just sends and receives it. The CPU gets an interrupt every time a byte has been sent or received. The CPU then moves a received byte out of the UART's register

and into memory somewhere, or gives the UART another byte to send. The 8250 and 16450 UARTs only have a 1 byte buffer. That means, that every time 1 byte is sent or received, it interrupts the CPU. At low rates, this is OK. But, at high transfer rates, the CPU get so busy dealing with the UART, that is doesn't have time to tend to other tasks. In some cases, the CPU does not get around to servicing the interrupt in time, and the byte is overwritten, because they are coming in so fast.

That's where the 16550A UARTs come in. These chips come with 16 byte FIFOs. This means that it can receive or transmit up to 16 bytes before it has to interrupt the CPU. Not only can it wait, but the CPU then can transfer all 16 byte at a time. Although the interrupt threshold is seldom set at 16, this is still a significant advantage over the other UARTs, which only have the 1 byte buffer. The CPU receives less interrupts, and is free to do other things. Data is not lost, and everyone is happy.

In general, the 8250 and 16450 UARTs should be fine for speeds up to 19200 bps. After 19200, you might start seeing data loss, and a reduction in computing speed.

Keep in mind that these dumb UART types are not bad, they just aren't good for high speeds. You should have no problem connecting a terminal, or a mouse to these UARTs. But, for a high speed modem, the 16550A is definately a must.

You can buy serial cards with the 16550A UARTs for a little more money, just ask your dealer what type of UART is on the card. Or if you want to upgrade your existing card, you can simply purchase 16550A chips and replace your existing 16450 UARTs. They are pin-to-pin compatible. Some cards come with socketed UARTs for this purpose, if not you can solder. Note, that you'll probably save yourself a lot of trouble by just getting a new card :-).

17 Troubleshooting

17.1 I keep getting "line *nnn* of inittab invalid"

Make sure you are using the correct syntax for your version of `init`. The different `init`'s that are out there use different syntax in the `/etc/inittab` file. Make sure you are using the correct syntax for your version of `getty`.

17.2 When I try to dial out, it says "/dev/cua*n*: Device or resource busy"

This problem can arise when DCD is not set correctly. DCD should only be set when there is an actual connection (ie someone is dialed in), not when `getty` is watching the port. When `getty` sees DCD get set, it will lock the port and probably spawn `login`. Check to make sure that your modem is configured to only set DCD when there is a connection. DTR and RTS should be set whenever something is using, or watching the line, like `getty`, `kermit`, or some other comm program.

Another common cause of "device busy" errors, is that you set up your serial port with an interrupt already taken by something else. As each device initializes, it asks Linux for permission to use its hardware interrupt. Linux keeps track of which interrupt is assigned to whom, and if your interrupt is already taken, your device won't be able to initialize properly. The device really doesn't have much of any way to tell you that this

happened, except that when you try to use it, it will return a "device-busy" error. Check the interrupts on all of your cards (serial, ethernet, etc.). Look for IRQ conflicts.

17.3 I keep getting "Id S*n* respawning too fast: disabled for 5 minutes"

Make sure your modem is configured correctly. Look at registers E and Q. This can occur when your modem is chatting with `getty`.

Make sure you are calling `getty` correctly from your `/etc/inittab`. Using the wrong syntax or device names will cause serious problems.

17.4 I have a modem/terminal connected, but root can't login on it.

This is done on purpose for security reasons. Generally, you should only have root logins enabled on the console. It is considered dangerous to allow root logins on anything other than the console.

But, you asked... Edit `/etc/login.defs`, and find the line that says `CONSOLE`. Add the name of the serial device to it. Say I have my terminal on `ttyS1`. I would change the line:

```
CONSOLE tty1:tty2:tty3:tty4:tty5:tty6:tty8
```

to

```
CONSOLE tty1:tty2:tty3:tty4:tty5:tty6:tty8:ttyS1
```

17.5 I have my terminal connected to my PC, but after I type in a login name, it just locks up.

You probably don't have `CLOCAL` in your `/etc/gettydefs` entry for the terminal. You need `CLOCAL`. Here is what it should look like:

```
#9600 baud Dumb Terminal entry
DT9600# B9600 CS8 CLOCAL # B9600 SANE -ISTRIP CLOCAL #@S @L login: #DT9600
```

Next, `kill -9` the `getty` process so a new one will be spawned with the new entry.

17.6 At high speeds, my modem looses data!

If you are trying to run your modem at $>$ 19200 bps, and you don't have 16550A UARTs, you should upgrade them. See the section about UARTs.

17.7 On startup, Linux doesn't report the serial devices the way I have them configured!

This is true. Linux does not do any IRQ detection on startup, it only does serial device detection. Thus, disregard what it says about the IRQ, because it's just assuming the standard IRQs. This is done, because IRQ detection is unreliable, and can be fooled.

So, even though I have my ttyS2 set at IRQ 5, I still see

```
Jan 23 22:25:28 misfits vmunix: tty02 at 0x03e8 (irq = 4) is a 16550A
```

You have to use `setserial` to tell Linux the IRQ you are using.

17.8 rz and or sz don't work when I call my Linux box on my modem.

If Linux looks for `/dev/modem` when you try to transfer files, look at `/etc/profile`, and `/etc/csh.cshrc`. There are a bunch of aliases defined there on some distributions, most notably Slackware. These aliases mess up the zmodem programs. Take them out, or correct them.

17.9 getty or uugetty still doesn't work.

There is a `DEBUG` option that comes with `getty_ps`. Edit your config file `/etc/conf.{uu}getty.ttyS`*n* and add `DEBUG=777`. If you are running `syslogd`, debugging info will appear in your log files. If you aren't running `syslogd` info will appear in `/tmp/getty:ttyS`*n* for debugging `getty` and `/tmp/uugetty:ttyS`,*n* for `uugetty`. Look at the debugging info and see what is going on. Most likely, you will need to tune some of the parameters in your config file, and you may have to configure your modem differently, too.

17.9.1 Alternate versions of getty

You might like these better:

`mgetty`, a different version of `getty`, can also handle faxes. It can be found on the Linux FTP sites.

`agetty`, yet another version of `getty`. This version comes with most distributions. If not, it should be on the Linux FTP sites.

18 Contributions

There was no possible way to write this HOWTO alone. Much of the material is repeated verbatim from the original sources. Thanks to everyone who has contributed, the list of people has gotten too long to list. Special thanks to Matt Welch, Ted T'so, and Kris Gleason.

`END OF Serial-HOWTO`