

Running Wordstar 6 on Windows 7 (64-bit) Using DOSBox

DISCLAIMER: As explained below, I managed to get Wordstar 6 for DOS running on a Windows 7 (64-bit) computer using DOSBox. But so far, I've been unable to solve the printer problem which I explain at the end of this post. This means that I can't print anything to paper from within Wordstar. Since I use Wordstar for coding, this inability to print to paper doesn't much bother me. (I can use Wordstar to print to ASCII text files just fine, and I can then use some other application to print those files to paper if I need to.) But if printing Wordstar documents to paper is important to you, this method of running Wordstar on Windows 7 needs further work.

Getting Wordstar to run on Windows 7 using DOSBox is a two-phase process: first Setting up DOSBox and then Configuring Wordstar.

Phase 1: Setting up DOSBox

DOSBox is free Open Source software that you download (though they would appreciate a donation).

1. Download DOSbox from www.dosbox.com/download.php?main=1 and install it as you would any other piece of downloaded software. (I save it to file, then double-click on the saved file, and follow the onscreen directions.) In the folder where you installed DOSBox there should be a useful `README.TXT` file. After installation, you should have a DOSBox icon on your desktop or in your Start folder. Double-click on it and you should see two windows, one labeled `DOSBox Status Window` and the other `DOSBox version number`. The second window should have a DOS command prompt like this: `c:\.`

In order to run Wordstar in DOSBox, you have to enter several DOSBox commands. You can type them in by hand each time, but it's easier to set them up to run automatically by editing the DOSBox configuration file as follows:

2. The DOSBox configuration file is named `dosbox-number.conf` where *number* is the version number of DOSBox. For example, `dosbox-0.74.conf`. By default, this file should be located in your: `c:\users\name\AppData\Local\DOSBox` folder. Open up this file with a text-editor like Notepad. (If you use a word processor like Word, be sure to always save the file as unformatted plain-text.)

What you enter in this file depends on where your Wordstar software and Wordstar data files are located. These steps assume that your Wordstar software files are located in a folder named `c:\dosapps\ws` and all your Wordstar document files are in a folder named `c:\myfiles` (and its subfolders).

CAUTION: Windows assumes everyone stores their working files in some subfolder of `My Documents`. But Wordstar was created before spaces were allowed in folder names. I don't know how Wordstar would react to documents stored somewhere under `My Documents`. Rather than futz with it, I just created a special folder for my Wordstar documents without any spaces anywhere in the name such as `c:\myfiles`.

3. Scroll down to the bottom of the configuration file to where it ends with:

```
[autoexec]
# Lines in this section will be run at startup.
```

```
# You can put your MOUNT lines here.
```

Enter the following lines at the bottom, so that it looks like:

```
[autoexec]
# Lines in this section will be run at startup.
# You can put your MOUNT lines here.
mount c c:\dosapps\ws
mount d c:\myfiles
path z:\;c:\;c:\dosapps;c:\dosapps\ws;
```

The `mount d c:\myfiles` line tricks Wordstar into thinking that your document files are stored on a mythical (virtual) `D:\` drive.

The path you enter should start with `z:\;` and then specify the **DOSBox folder** path to your Wordstar files (not the Windows folder path). For example, if you mounted `c:\dosapps\ws` to drive E, you would need to set your path to `path z:\;e:\;e:\dosapps;e:\dosapps\ws;`

For some reason I can't fathom, the path you specify has to iterate each element in sequential order down to where the Wordstar software is stored. You have to use `c:\;c:\dosapps;c:\dosapps\ws;`, you can't specify just `c:\dosapps\ws;`. I don't know why that is, it doesn't make sense to me and maybe I'm doing it wrong. But that's what seems to work.

If all your Wordstar document files are in `c:\myfiles` or subfolders of `c:\myfiles` you're good to go. But if you have Wordstar document files in other folders such as `c:\otherfiles` and `c:\morefiles` you have to mount each of those folders using a different drive letter. For example:

```
mount e c:\otherfiles
mount f c:\morefiles
```

This tricks Wordstar into thinking that the `c:\otherfiles` and `c:\morefiles` folders are on mythical `E:\` and `F:\` drives.

If you want to automatically start Wordstar, add the drive letter of the folder that you want to start in and the command to load Wordstar to the end of the DOSBox configuration file. For example, if you want to start in the `/myfiles` directory and you assigned that to drive `D:\` you would add:

```
d:
ws
```

At this point in the process, if you try to load Wordstar (automatically or manually) it will start to load, you'll see the familiar Wordstar start-up, but then it'll crash. Don't panic. Proceed to Phase Two below.

Phase 2: Configuring Wordstar

Now you have to configure Wordstar to run in DOSBox. The following steps assume that your Wordstar software is stored in your system's `c:\dosapps\ws` folder and that you've used a DOSBox `mount` command to map that folder to a DOSBox mythical `c:\` drive.

1. From within the DOSBox command window, go to DOSBox's mythical `c:\` drive by entering `c:` at the `z:\` command prompt.

```
c:
```

The command prompt should now be `c:\`

(For those not familiar with working on a command line, whenever a step says to enter something, you type it in, and then hit the [Return] key.)

2. Load the Wordstar configuration program:

```
wschange ws
```

(This assumes that your Wordstar program is `WS.EXE`. If it's something else, `WSHTML.EXE` for example, you'd enter `wschange wshtml`.)

The `WSCHANGE` Main Menu should be displayed. This kind of menu system was created before computers came with a mouse and cursor, before you could "click on" something. To use it, you select a menu item by typing in the letter of the item you want. For example, to select the `Computer` submenu, you type `c` in the lower-left box. To work your way back up a menu structure, you enter `x`.

You keep typing menu letters until you get down to the item you want. At that point, you'll usually be told what the current setting is, and you'll be asked if you want to change it. Enter `y` for "Yes" (or `n` for "No"). If you enter `y` you'll see some instructions on how to do whatever it is. (The letters you enter are not case-sensitive.)

3. Configure Wordstar to recognize your mythical DOSBox drives. These steps assume that you've mounted DOSBox mythical drives `C`, `D`, and `E`.

- a. Go to the Valid Disk Drives configuration menu from the Main Menu by entering:

```
C A A
```

Your valid drives will be listed. If you're doing this for the first time, most likely only your `C` hard drive will be listed, plus maybe one or more floppy drives.

- b. Enter `y` for "Yes" you want to change the drives.

(Note that once you say you want to make changes, all drive listings are eliminated. You can't just add one drive, you have to re-add all the old ones plus the new one.)

- c. Enter the first drive letter you want to add. This should be `C`. (Note that you just enter the letter, no colon or `\`.) You are asked if this is a floppy drive. Enter `n` for "No."

- d. Now use the same process to enter the other DOSBox mythical drives you've mounted. In this example, that's `D` and `E`.

If your computer actually has a floppy drive you can try to add its letter (usually `A`), but I don't know if Wordstar/DOSBox will be able to read or write to a floppy.

- e. When you're done entering your drive letters, press [Return]. You're taken back to the list of drives. If the list is now correct, enter `n` for "No" you don't want to make any more changes. You're taken back to the `Computer` menu. Enter `x` and you're taken back to the Main Menu.

4. Specify the location of the Wordstar software files. These steps assume that your Wordstar software files are stored on the DOSBox mythical `C` drive.

- a. Go to Wordstar Files Menu #1. From the Main Menu enter:

C D

- b. Go to the Define Default Search Path menu.

A

- c. Go to Search Path for Wordstar Files Menu.

A

The current search path is displayed.

- d. You're asked if you want to change it. You probably do.

Y

You're asked to enter a new value...

- e. Assuming that your Wordstar software files are in a Windows folder named `c:\dosapps\ws` and you've mounted that folder to DOSBox mythical drive C, type a **period** followed by [Return].

.

As an alternate method, if you mounted the Windows folder `c:\dosapps` (note missing "`\ws`") to DOSBox mythical drive C, you would enter `\ws` here followed by [Return].

- f. Return to Wordstar Files Menu #1.

X

- g. Go to Reassign Drive and For All Wordstar Files.

B

- h. Enter the drive letter where the Wordstar files are stored. In this example, that would be C followed by [Return].

C

- i. Return to the Main Menu by pressing **X** until you get there.

- j. Finish the configuration by pressing **X** again and then **Y** for "Yes," you're finished.

Wordstar should now run (hopefully).

File Issues

When using Wordstar, keep in mind that so far as Wordstar is concerned all your document files are stored on your DOSBox mythical drives. This means that Wordstar doesn't recognize your Windows file structure. Suppose you mounted the Windows folder `c:\myfiles` to the DOSBox `D:\` drive. To Wordstar, the Windows subfolder `c:\myfiles\project1\schedule` is

d:\project1\schedule.

Suppose you also mounted the Windows folder `c:\otherfiles` to the DOSBox `F:\` drive. If you're working in the Windows `c:\myfiles` folder (mythical drive `D:\`) and you want to save a file to the Windows `c:\otherfiles\budget` folder, you'd tell Wordstar to save it to the `f:\budget` directory.

Note that Wordstar is old school. In the old days, all filenames **had to follow the 8.3 rule**. That meant that no filename could have more than 8 characters to the left of the period, and no more than 3 characters to the right of the period. And no spaces in the name at all. For example, the filename `EIGHTCHR.TXT` is allowed, but filenames like `EIGHTCHR.TEXT` or `WAYTOOLONG.TXT` or `MY POEM.TXT` are not. Wordstar won't correctly handle files with names that violate the 8.3 rule. If you want to use Wordstar to edit a file that violates the 8.3 naming rule, you have to first rename the file.

The Printer Problem

By default, Wordstar assumes that your printer is connected to your computer's Parallel port (LPT1). But modern computers don't come with a parallel port, and neither do modern printers. Oops. It's possible from within Wordstar to specify using a Serial port (COM1, COM2, etc) instead of the Parallel port, but today's computers don't come with Serial ports either and neither do printers. Drat! The result is that when you try to print something, Wordstar can't find a Parallel or Serial port to send to, so printing fails (and probably crashes the program).

As I understand it, DOSBox emulates printer ports to COM ports, so it might be possible to somehow find a software method of mapping a USB port or a networked printer to fool Wordstar into thinking it's a Serial port, but I haven't had time to research it.