USB Serial Adapters

As the computer hardware industry advances we, of the court reporting industry, find that some of the advances are, at best, inconvenient. For example, most computer manufacturers have eliminated serial ports, floppy disk drives and parallel (printer) ports on most new laptops and some desktops. You can, however, purchase serial ports, floppy disk drives and parallel ports which plug into the USB ports on the computer.

A USB to serial adapter is a cable about 8" long. One end is an USB plug which plugs into a USB port on your computer and the other end is a standard 9-pin male serial adapter which plugs into one end of your real-time cable. Note that you can use a second USB to Serial adapter so that you can send your real-time to attorneys, judges or other viewers.

While there are several manufacturers of USB to Serial adapters on the market, we (as have some other vendors) have found that some of them simply do not work well. The USB to Serial adapter that we find works well (and the one that we sell for $45) is the IO Gear. There is a slight qualification to the recommendation of the IO Gear and that is their newest driver on the CD that comes with the adapter, does not work well with the newest versions of Windows XP. So we use an older version of their driver available from their web site and have had great success with it. When we sell the USB to Serial adapter, we include a diskette or CD with this driver. The following discussion is geared specifically to the IO Gear USB to Serial adapter and the Windows XP operating system, but parts of the discussion are applicable to any adapter and other versions of Windows.

Note: The purchase and installation of a USB to Serial Adapter is a hardware issue and is not covered by the AristoCAT Support ad Update Agreement. If the following instructions do not seem to work and you purchased the adapter from someone other than AristoCAT, you need to call the place where you purchased the adapter or the manufacturer of the adapter.

Installing the Driver for the USB to Serial Adapter

Remember that these instructions are for Windows XP only. If you are installing the adapter on another version of the Windows operating system, refer to the instructions that came with the adapter.

1. Insert the floppy diskette or CD labeled "**USB-Serial Port Driver for Windows XP**" into your floppy diskette or CD drive.
2. Insert the USB to Serial adapter into one of the USB ports on your computer.
   Note: Be sure to use the same USB port every time you plug in the adapter. If you use a different USB port, the COM port setting will probably change and your real-time will not work unless you change the COM port setting in your information file.

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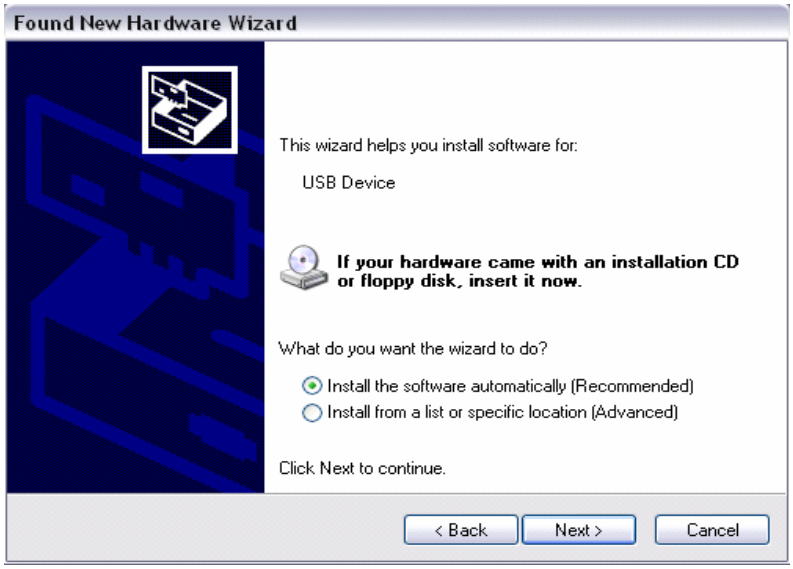
3. Windows will detect that you have inserted a new hardware device and will automatically start the New Hardware Wizard. If you have Windows XP with Service Pack 2, you will get a dialog box asking if you want to search for the driver on the Internet. Check the “No, not this time” box. If you do not get this dialog box, that is okay and you should continue with the next step.

4. Next a dialog box appears asking if you want Windows to automatically search for the driver. This is what you want Windows to do, so click the Next button.

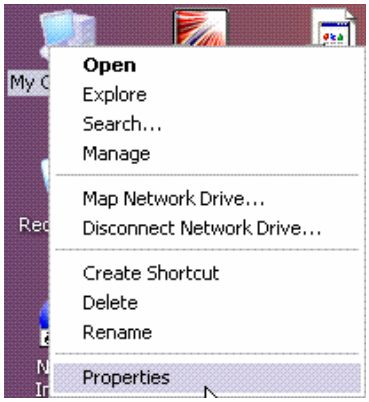


5. Now you will get a dialog box indicating that this driver has not passed Windows. Click on “Continue Anyway”.

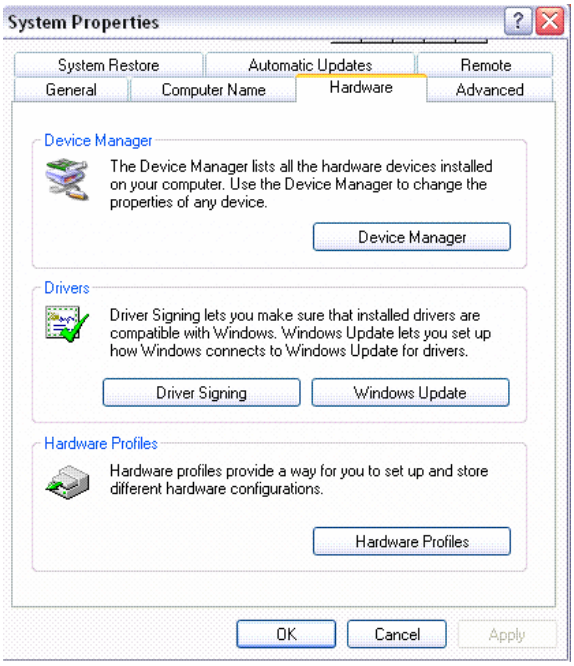
   Next Windows will do a few tasks and then give you a message that the new hardware is ready to use. Click the Finish button.

Determining the COM Port Setting of the Adapter

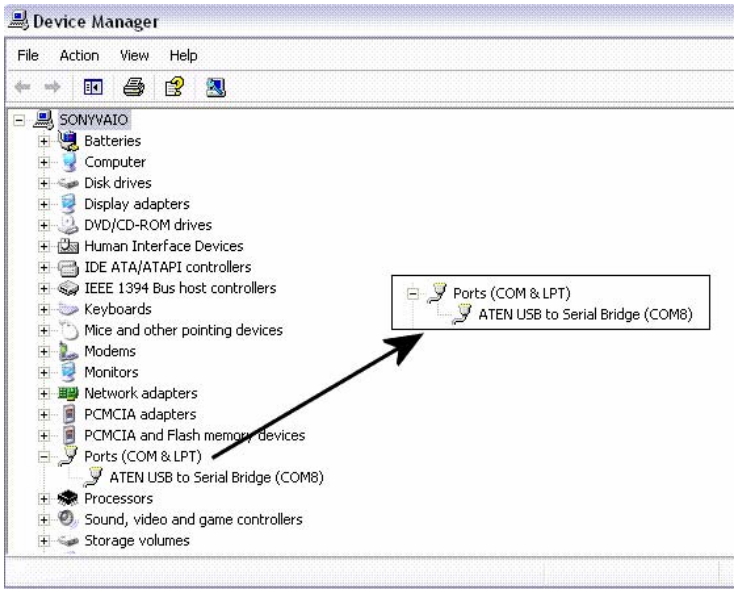
Now you need to determine the COM port setting Windows assigned to the adapter. You will need to place this COM port setting in your information file under the Tran Options tab. In most instances, the adapter will be assigned as COM 4, so you would enter 4 in your information file.



1. Right-click on the “My Computer” icon on your Desktop (on some systems, the My Computer can be found under the Start button.)
2. A menu will appear, left-click on the Properties menu item.



3. A dialog box will appear, click on the “Hardware” tab.
4. Now click on the “Device Manager” button.



5. Click on the plus (+) sign to the left of the Ports (COM and LPT) item.
6. Look for your adapter device name (ATEN USB to Serial Bridge (COM8) under Ports (COM and LPT) and see which COM port assignment the adapter is using.
7. Enter this COM port value in your information file under the Tran Options tab.

Trouble Shooting the USB to Serial Adapter

You should now try your adapter by hooking up your writer and writing real-time for a while. If your adapter is working correctly, the real-time should work just as if it were plugged into a built-in serial port. The following is a list of symptoms we have either experienced ourselves or feedback from other customers:

1. You cannot establish communications – this could be the wrong COM port value in your information file. Follow the earlier steps to determine the COM port value for your adapter. And make sure that value is entered in your information file. You should also make sure that you are using the correct real-time cable and that all of the equipment (writer, cable, software) is working and properly connected.
2. Nothing is appearing on the real-time screen – if you are using an IO Gear adapter, then it might be the wrong driver. If you are using an adapter not from IO Gear, then it might be the adapter.
3. Real-time goes for a while and then stops - if you are using an IO Gear adapter, then it might be the wrong driver. If you are using an adapter not from IO Gear, then it might be the adapter.
4. The real-time testimony appears on the screen in spurts – that is, you will write for a while and nothing appears on the screen, then several paragraphs of testimony appears all at once and then nothing appears for a while and this pattern repeats itself. Again this can be caused by an incorrect driver.

Note: Remember that you're not just dealing with the AristoCAT software but several hardware devices, the computer's operating system and software for the adaptor.