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MinnowBoard Guide: Getting Started

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Summary

In this guide, we will examine the various features of the MinnowBoard and boot the Angstrom embedded Linux distribution. This guide is for new users who are just getting started with the MinnowBoard.

Contents of the box

When you purchase a MinnowBoard, the following items are included in the box as shown in Figure -1:

1. MinnowBoard
2. 5V Power Adaptor
3. 4GB micro SD card preloaded with Angstrom Linux Distribution(Yocto Project Compatible)
4. USB Cable

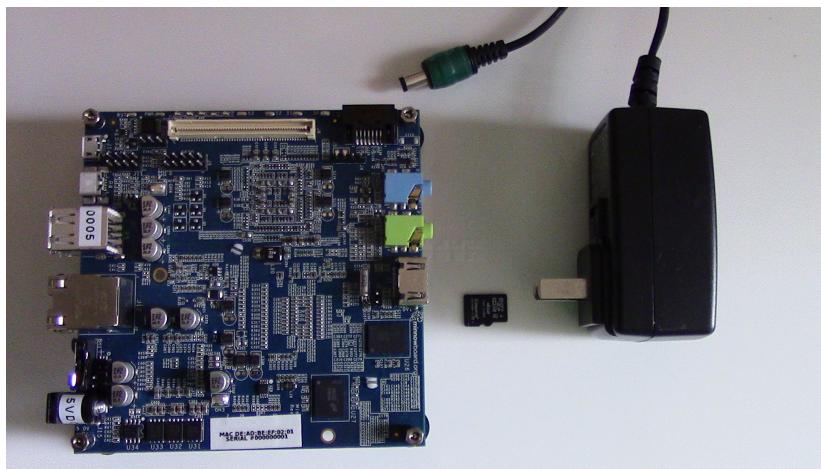


Figure-1: Box contents

Anatomy of a MinnowBoard

This section outlines the various components on the MinnowBoard. Figure -2 below annotates the important components on the top side of the MinnowBoard.

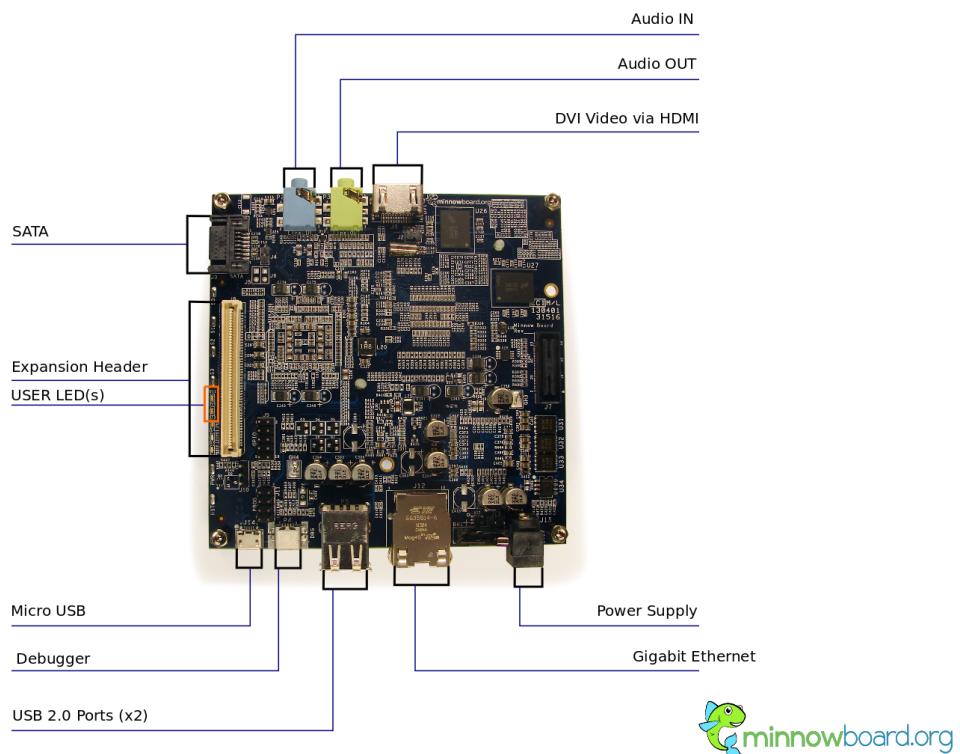


Figure-2: *MinnowBoard top side*

Below is a brief description of the micro USB and debugger ports which are annotated in Figure -2.

- Micro USB: This port can be used to access the contents of the MinnowBoard's microSD card as a removable drive on your desktop computer. Simply boot the MinnowBoard up and connect it to your desktop computer using a micro-USB cable.
- Debugger: This mini-USB port allows you to interact with the serial console of the MinnowBoard, so you can log into it and view debugging messages even when an external monitor and keyboard are not connected to

the MinnowBoard. You need to use a terminal emulator on your desktop computer to access the serial console at a baud rate of 115200. This is demonstrated later in this guide in the Booting Angstrom section.

Figure -3 below annotates the important components on the bottom side of the MinnowBoard.

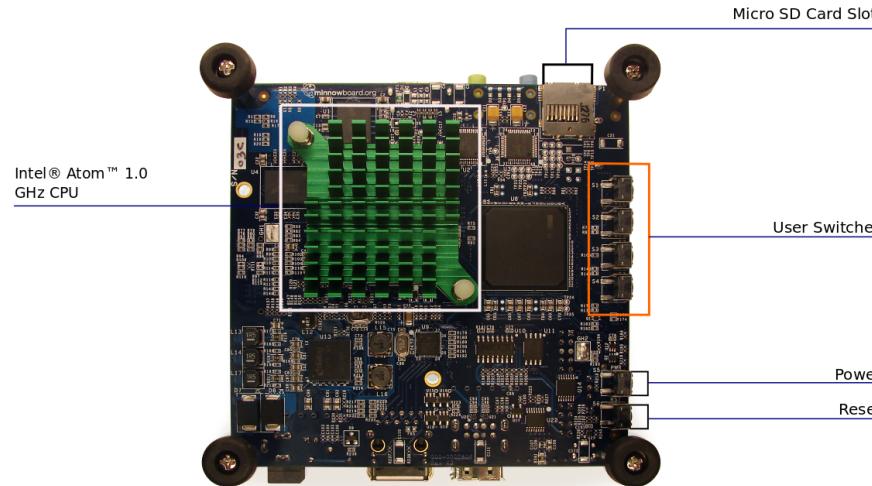


Figure-3: *MinnowBoard bottom side*

Specifications

For detailed specifications of the MinnowBoard, please visit our website below:

<http://www.minnowboard.org/technical-features/>

Preparing the MicroSD Card

Please note that this section is completely optional. The MinnowBoard already comes with a microSD card that is preloaded with a working Angstrom Linux image. In case you want to use a newer image or want to program the microSD from scratch, this section covers it all. These steps were created using an Ubuntu 12.10 64-bit system.

Note:- This section is for Linux users only. If you are using Windows, please skip to page 10 . If you are using Mac, please skip to page 17

- First download the latest Angstrom Linux image for MinnowBoard using the following link:

<http://dominion.thruhere.net/koen/angstrom/minnow/production-Angstrom-development-GNOME-image-eglibc-ipk-v2012.12-minnow-2013.07.10.img.xz>

At the time of writing this guide, the latest image available for download was 'Angstrom-development-GNOME-image-eglibc-ipk-v2012.12-minnow-2013.07.10.img.xz'

- Insert the microSD card into a microSD compatible writer in your desktop computer. Now, identify the disk device filename for your microSD card. You can do this by opening the Disk Utility application (sometimes also called Disks) in Ubuntu and clicking on the microSD card entry. See the Device field to determine the raw device name of your microSD card. Note that this device name should specify an entire disk device (e.g, /dev/sde), and not an individual disk partition (e.g, /dev/sde1)
- Now, make sure all possible disk partitions from the microSD card are unmounted by typing the command below into your terminal:

```
$ sudo umount /dev/sdX?*
```

Here 'sdX' stands for the raw device id of the microSD card.

- Now unpack the image to the microSD card by typing the command below in a terminal window:

```
$ xzcat Angstrom-development-GNOME-image-eglibc-ipk-v2012.12-minnow-2013.07.10.img.xz | sudo dd of=/dev/sdX
```

Booting Angstrom

- First insert the card into the microSD card slot label side up as shown in Figure -4. Push the microSD card into the slot until it clicks into place.

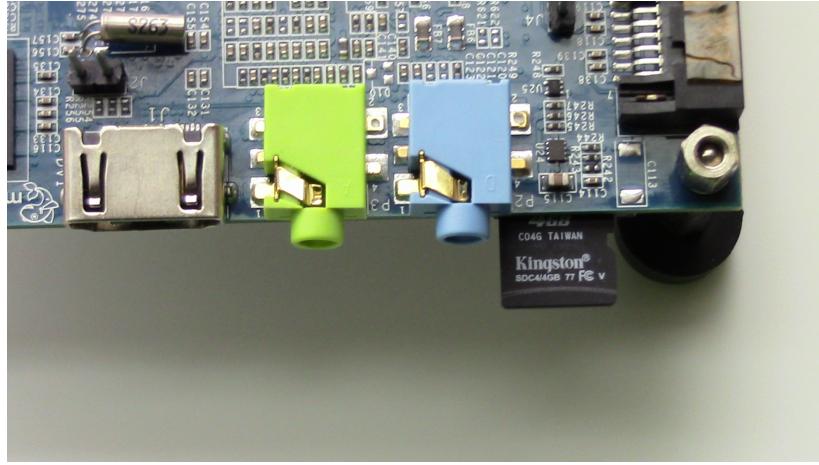


Figure-4: Connecting the micro SD card

- Next, connect an external keyboard and mouse to the MinnowBoard. Then connect a USB mini cable to your computer and the MinnowBoard as shown in Figure -5. This connection will be used to access the serial console of the MinnowBoard.

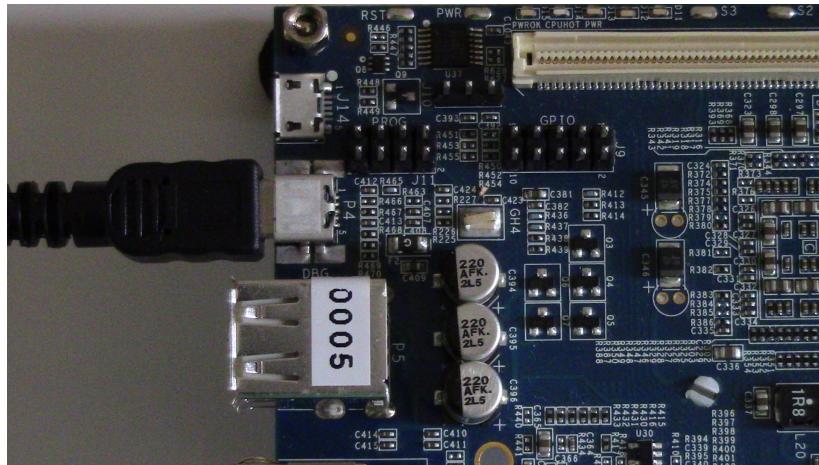


Figure-5: Connecting a USB mini cable for serial console access

- Now power up the MinnowBoard, connect the 5V/2.5A power supply to it as shown in Figure -6:

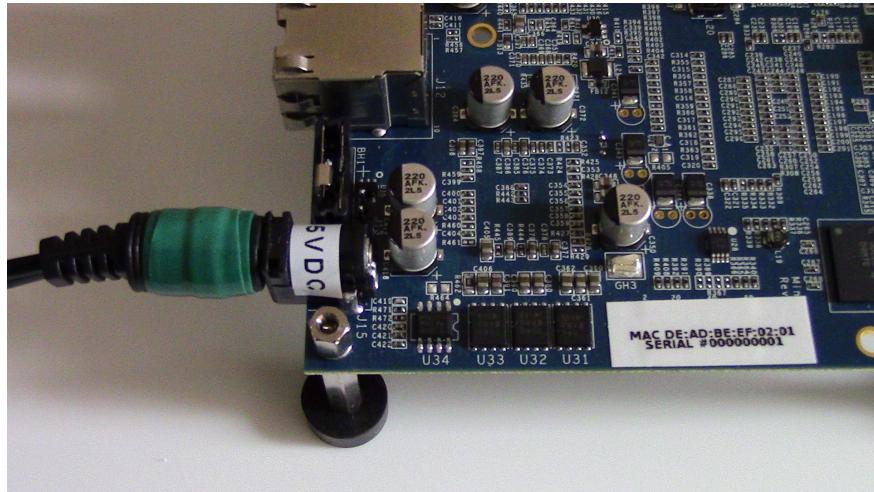


Figure-6: Powering up the MinnowBoard

- Access the MinnowBoard's serial console via a terminal emulator:

```
$ sudo screen /dev/ttyUSB0 115200
```

Note:- You can also use minicom, but screen is much easier to use! Also in most cases the virtual USB serial port is ttyUSB0. If it does not work, try ttyUSB1

- You should see a similar Angstrom login screen as shown in Figure - 7. The username is 'root' and there is no password - just press the Enter key.

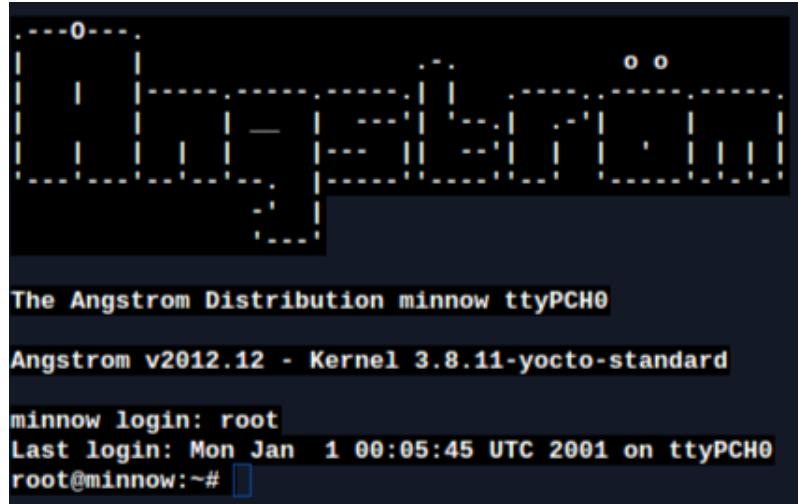


Figure-7: Angstrom

- If you have an external display connected to the MinnowBoard via the HDMI port, you should see output similar to that shown below in Figure - 8

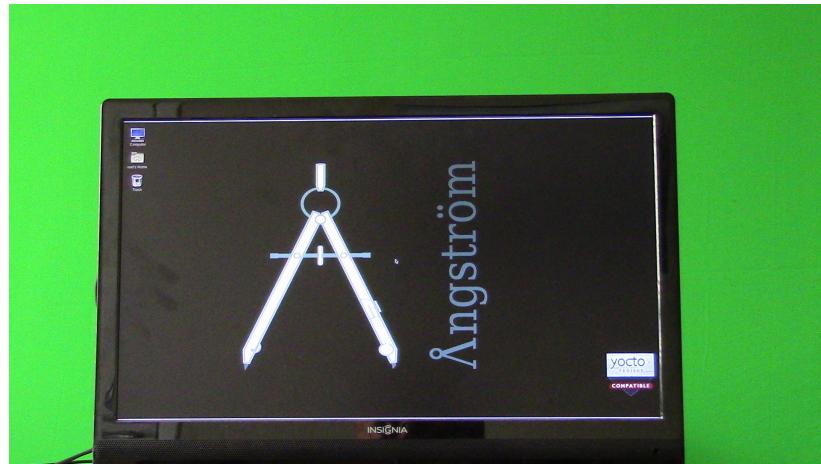


Figure-8: Angstrom

Figures - 9,10 show my setup.

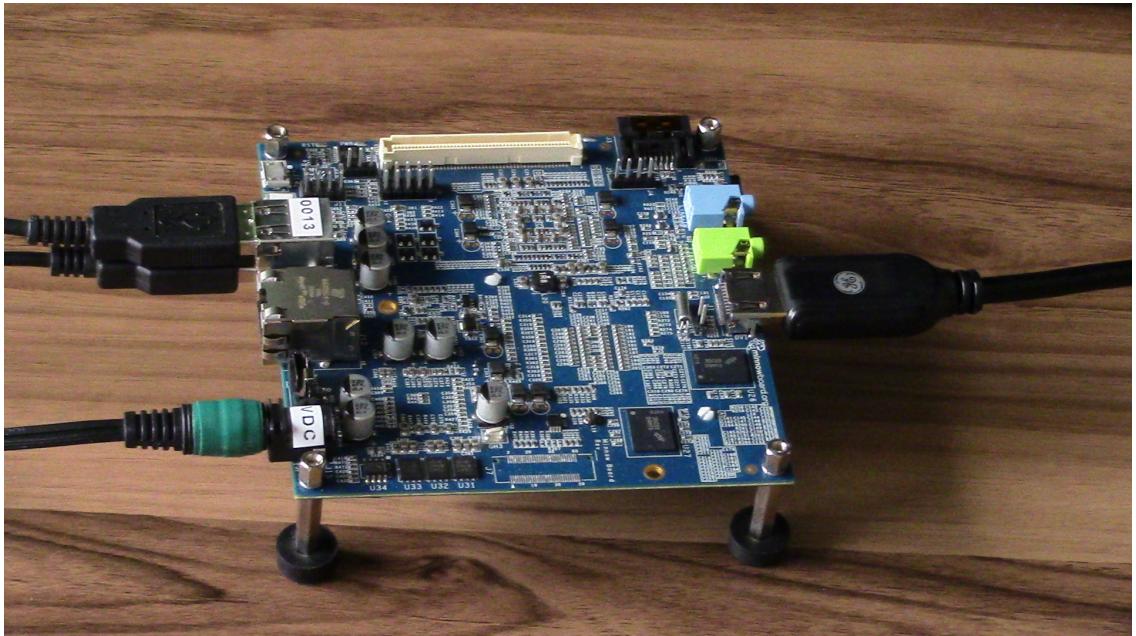


Figure-9: My Setup

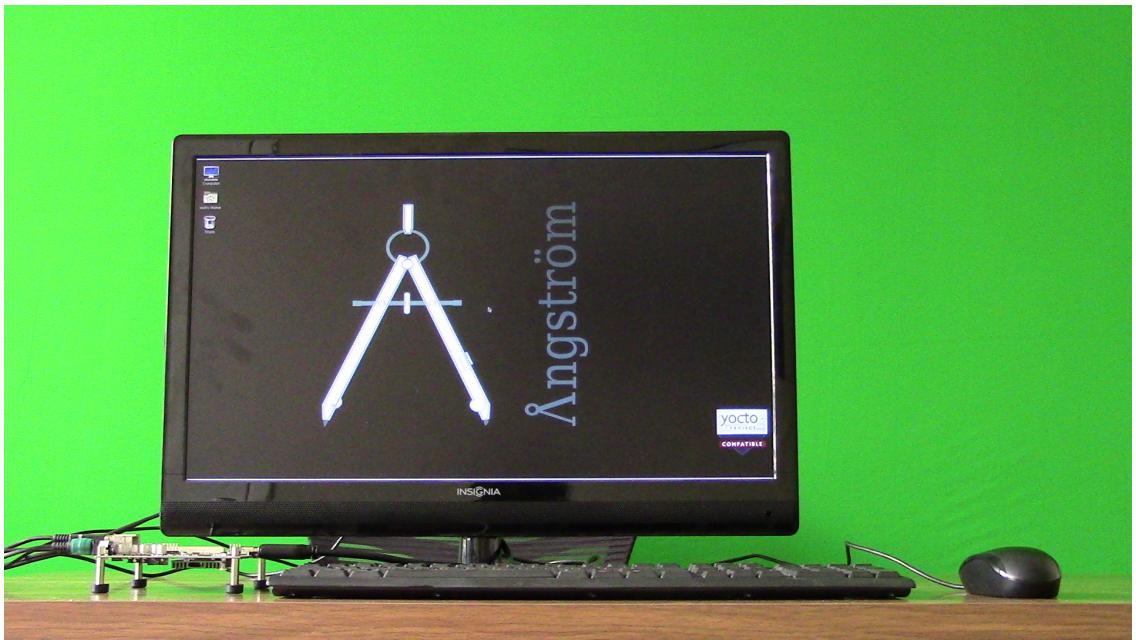


Figure-10: My Setup

Windows Section

This section is for those who are using a Windows machine to interact with the MinnowBoard.

FTDI Driver

- Please go to the FTDI Driver(it enables communication between the development board and computer over USB) website below:

<http://www.ftdichip.com/Drivers/VCP.htm>

- Now click on the highlighted "setup executable" link under the 'Category' section as shown in Figure - 11 to download the driver.

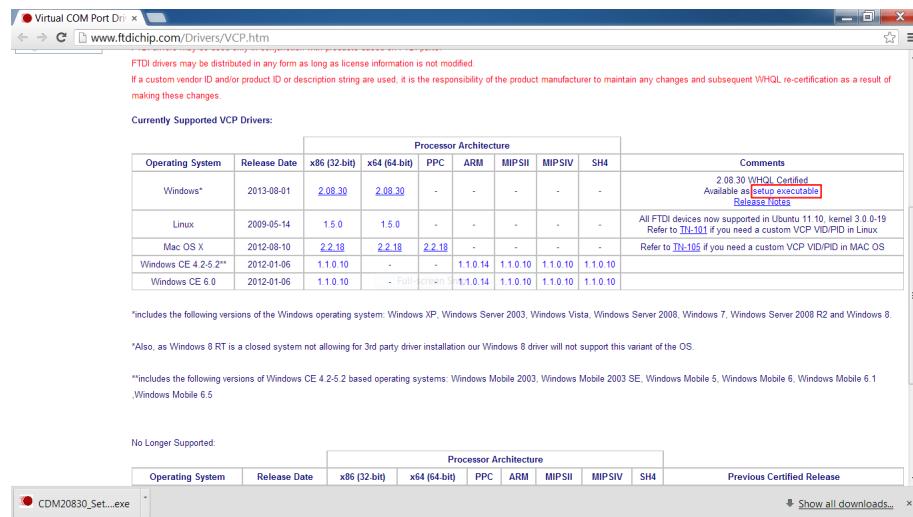


Figure-11: Download FTDI Driver

- Double click on the downloaded file to start the installation process. Then click on the 'Extract' button as shown in Figure - 12 below:

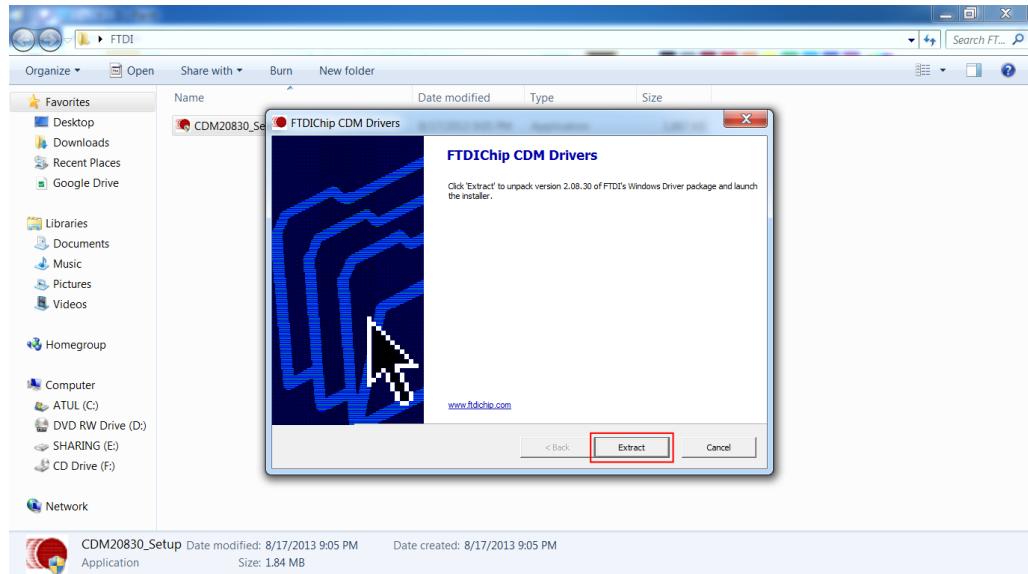


Figure-12: Extract the driver

- You will now be greeted with the driver installation wizard. Click on the 'Next' button and proceed forward as shown in Figure - 13.

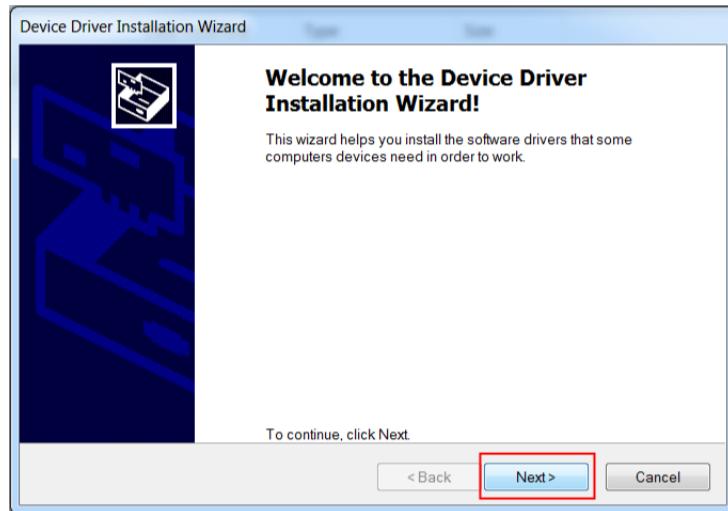


Figure-13: Device Driver Installation Wizard

- If the installation was successful, you should be greeted by a screen similar to the one shown in Figure - 14. Click 'Finish' to exit the installation.

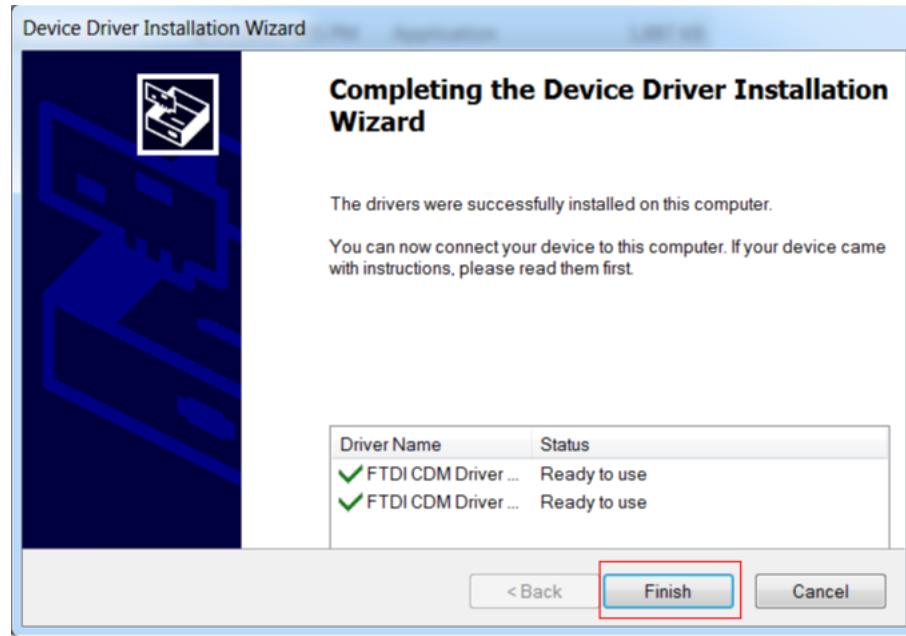


Figure-14: FTDI Driver installation successful

Serial Terminal

We will be using Teraterm as our terminal application. Please follow the steps below to set up Teraterm:

- Download the latest version of Teraterm using the link below:

<http://en.sourceforge.jp/projects/ttssh2/releases/>

At the time of writing this guide, the latest version was 'teraterm-4.78.exe'

- Install the Teraterm software by double clicking on the exe file downloaded earlier. If it displays a security warning, accept it and click on 'Run' as shown in Figure - 15 below:



Figure-15: Teraterm installation

- Now just follow the on-screen instructions to install the software. Select the 'standard installation' as shown in Figure - 16 below:

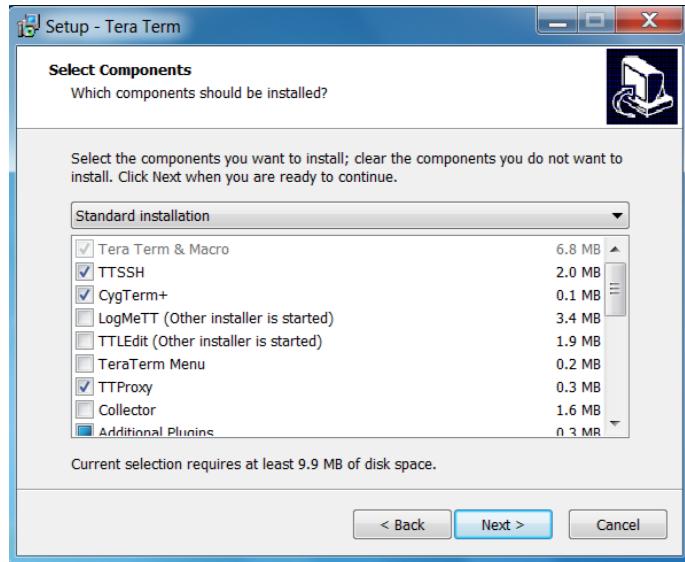


Figure-16: Perform Teraterm full installation

- Launch Teraterm. Then go to Setup>Serial port and change the settings as shown in Figure - 17 below:

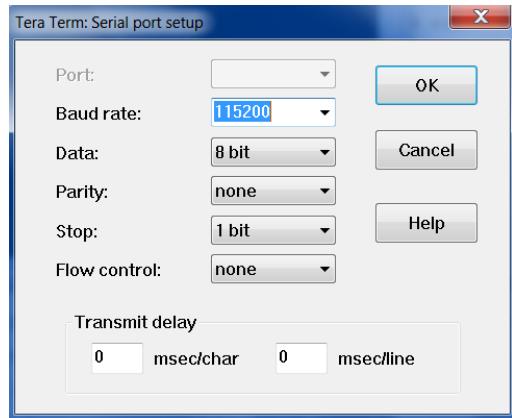


Figure-17: Teraterm Serial Port setup

- Then go to File>New connections and select the Serial option and chose the appropriate COM port as shown in Figure - 18 below

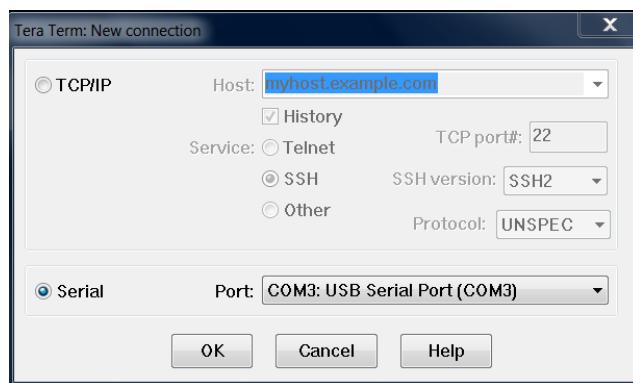


Figure-18: Setting up a new connection

- Then connect the required accessories as described earlier in this guide and power up the MinnowBoard. If all went well, you should see a login screen in Teraterm as shown in Figure - 19 below:

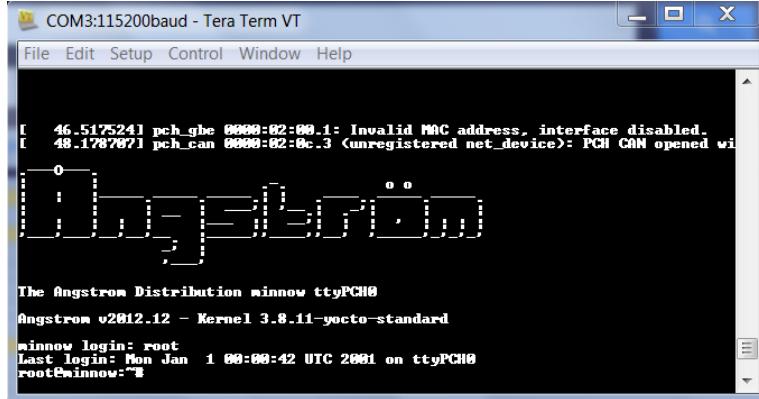


Figure-19: Angstrom login

Preparing the microSD card

- First, download the latest Angstrom Linux image from the link below:

<http://dominion.thruhere.net/koen/angstrom/minnow/production-Angstrom-development-GNOME-image-eglibc-ipk-v2012.12-minnow-2013.07.10.img.xz>

- Next, download the 7-zip utility from the link below and install it:

<http://www.7-zip.org/download.html>

- Decompress the previously downloaded Angstrom image using 7-zip as shown in Figure - 20 below. The resulting file should have an extension '.img' .

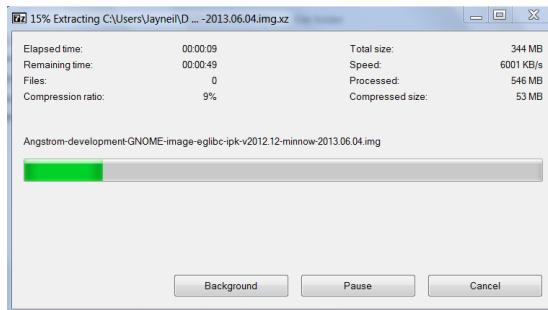


Figure-20: Decompressing the image

- Image Writer for Windows is needed to write the .img file to a microSD card. Download and install Image Writer using the link below:

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/win32diskimager/files/latest/download>

- Insert the microSD card into the computer using an appropriate adapter. Next, launch the image writer software we just installed earlier. Select the Angstrom image and write it to the microSD card as shown in Figure - 21 below.

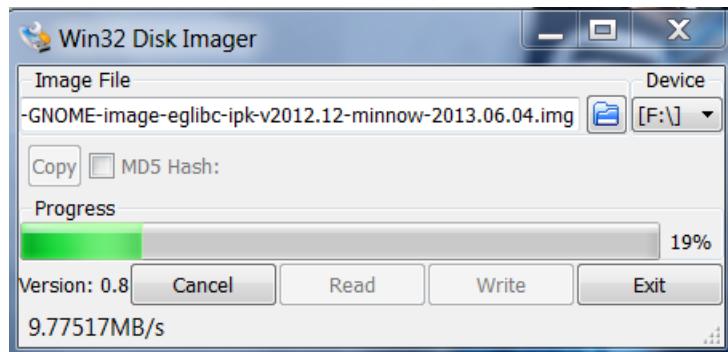


Figure-21: Writing the image to microSD card

Mac Section

This section is for those who are using OS X to interact with the MinnowBoard.

Serial Terminal

We will be using the 'screen' command which is by default a part of the bash shell on OS X. To use screen command, the FTDI driver(it enables communication between the development board and computer over USB) has to be installed. Please follow the steps below to install it:

- Download the latest ftdi driver for Mac OS X from the link below and make sure that you select the correct file corresponding to your computer architecture(32/64 bit).
<http://www.ftdichip.com/Drivers/VCP.htm>
- Double click on the downloaded file to start the installation procedure.
- You will have two files inside the downloaded driver package as shown below in Figure - 22. The first file, ending with 10_3 is specific for Mac OS X version 10.3 . The second file is for all other versions, newer than 10.3 .

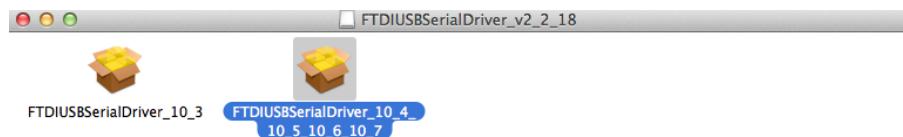


Figure-22: FTDI driver

- Based on your Max OS X version, select the appropriate and double click it to proceed further.

- You will now be greeted with an ftdi installer screen as shown in Figure - 23.

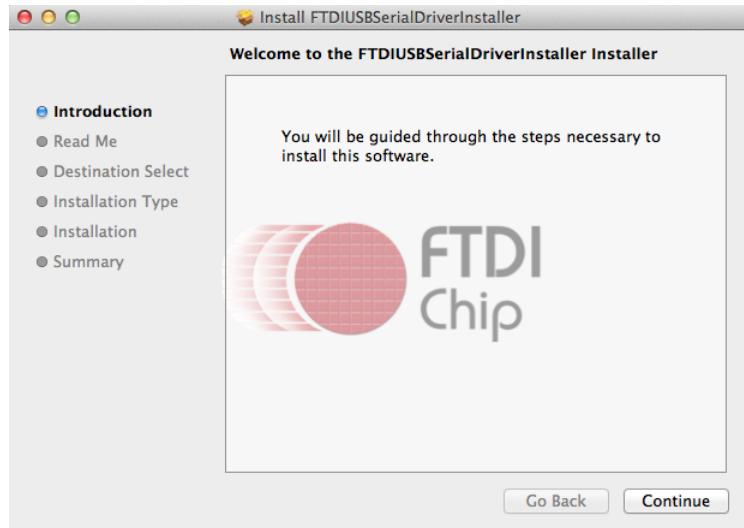


Figure-23: FTDI installer screen

- Proceed forward by pressing the 'continue' button till you reach the “installation type” screen as shown below in Figure -24.

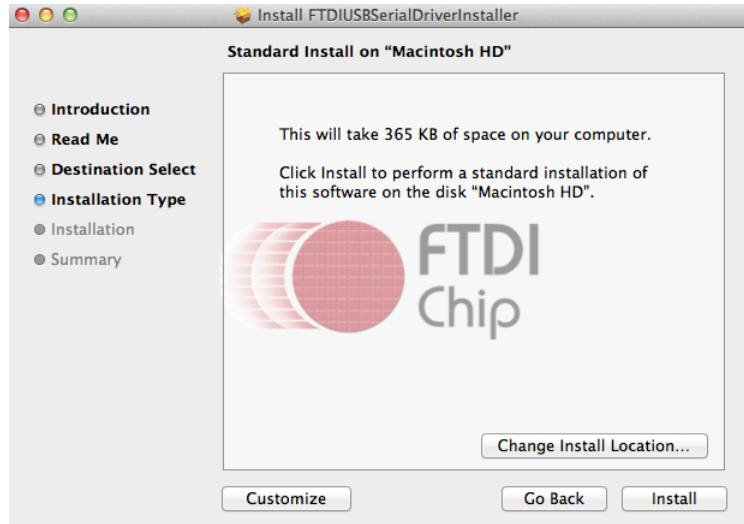


Figure-24: FTDI driver installation

- Now press the 'install' button and wait for it to finish as shown in Figure - 25.

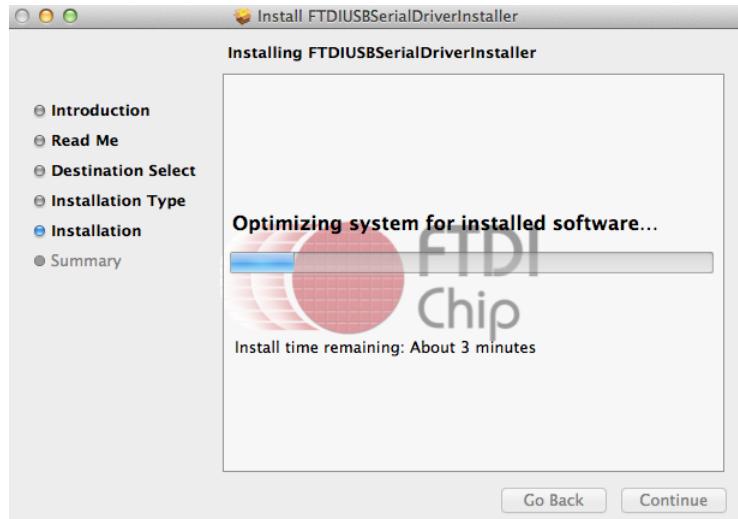


Figure-25: FTDI driver installation in progress

- If the installation was successful, you should be greeted by a screen similar to the one shown in Figure - 26

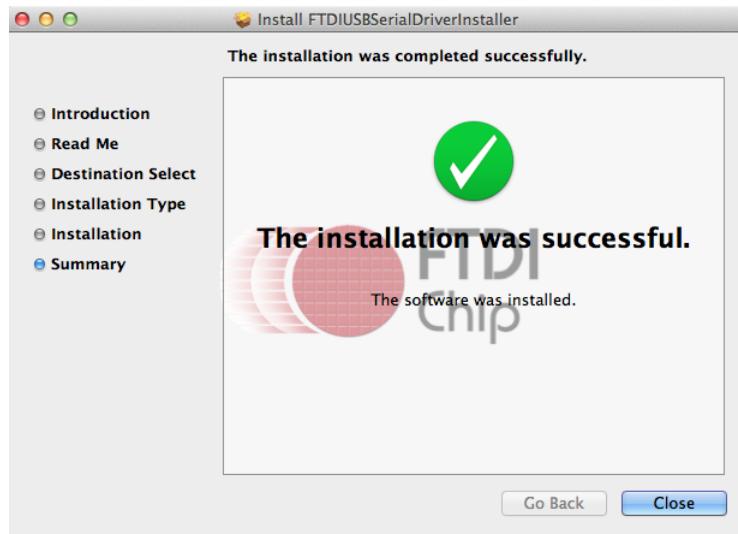


Figure-26: FTDI driver installation successful

- Then connect the required accessories as described earlier in this guide and power up the MinnowBoard.
- If everything went well, you will see new entries in the /dev directory:
`/dev/cu.usbserial-xxxxxxxx`
`/dev/tty.usbserial-xxxxxxxx`

Here, `xxxxxxxx` is either the device's serial number or, for unserialized devices, a location string that depends on which USB port your device is connected to. `/dev` can be accessed through the Terminal application. The Terminal application can be launched by selecting Go > Applications > Utilities > Terminal. Now fire up the terminal in Mac OS X and type the following command in it:

```
$ cd /dev
$ ls-l
```

- Access the MinnowBoard's serial console via a terminal emulator and you should be greeted by the Angstrom screen as shown in Figure - 27:

```
$ sudo screen /dev/tty.usbserial-xxxxxxxxx 115200
```

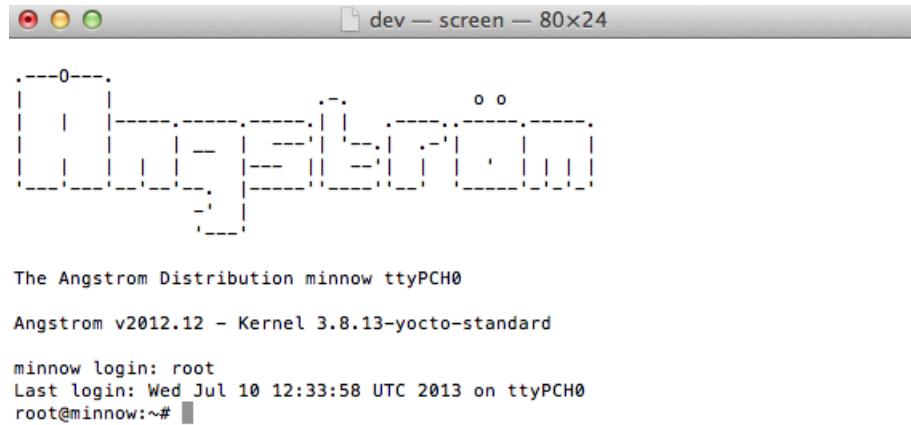


Figure-27: Angstrom

Preparing the microSD card

- First, download the latest Angstrom Linux image from the link below:

<http://dominion.thruhere.net/koen/angstrom/minnow/production-Angstrom-development-GNOME-image-eglibc-ipk-v2012.12-minnow-2013.07.10.img.xz>

- Next, install the “The Unarchiver” application(it is free) from the app store on Mac OS X as shown in Figure - 28



Figure-28: The Unarchiver

- Then unpack the downloaded angstrom image using the unarchiver application as shown below in Figure -29



Figure-29: Unpacking the Angstrom image

- Insert the microSD card into a microSD compatible writer in your computer. Now, identify the disk device filename for your microSD card. You can do this by typing the command below, before and after you insert the microSD card and comparing the outputs to see the newly added device:

```
$ df-h
```

Note:- If you notice closely, the microSD card entry will be in the form of /dev/diskNsX where 'N' and 'X' are numbers. diskNsX is basically the device id of your microSD card. So, to obtain the raw device id from this, remove the 's' and 'X' from the device id. The raw device id should be in the form of diskN .

- Now, make sure all possible disk partitions from the microSD card are unmounted by typing the command below into your terminal:

```
$ sudo umount /dev/diskN?*
```

Here 'diskN' stands for the raw device id of the microSD card.

- Now unpack the image to the microSD card by typing the command below in a terminal window:

```
$ sudo dd bs=1m if=Angstrom-development-GNOME-image-eglibc-ipk-v2012.12-minnow-2013.07.10.img of=/dev/rdiskN
```

Note:- In the above command we subtly replaced "diskN" with "rdiskN" because in the latter case, you are writing to a buffered device and hence the process becomes much faster!

Resources

- Please refer the websites below for more videos, tutorials, and projects you can do with your MinnowBoard:
 1. <http://www.minnowboard.org/>
 2. <http://www.elinux.org/Minnowboard>
 3. <http://www.angstrom-distribution.org/>