

# Appendix B. Automating the installation using preseeding

This appendix explains how to preseed answers to questions in `debian-installer` to automate your installation.

The configuration fragments used in this appendix are also available as an example preconfiguration file from `../example-preseed.txt`.

## B.1. Introduction

Preseeding provides a way to set answers to questions asked during the installation process, without having to manually enter the answers while the installation is running. This makes it possible to fully automate most types of installation and even offers some features not available during normal installations.

Preseeding is not required. If you use an empty preseed file, the installer will behave just the same way as in a normal manual installation. Each question you preseed will (if you got it right!) modify the installation in some way from that baseline.

### B.1.1. Preseeding methods

There are three methods that can be used for preseeding: *initrd*, *file* and *network*. Initrd preseeding will work with any installation method and supports preseeding of more things, but it requires the most preparation. File and network preseeding each can be used with different installation methods.

The following table shows which preseeding methods can be used with which installation methods.

Installation method	initrd	file	network
CD/DVD	yes	yes	yes <sub>a</sub>
netboot	yes	no	yes
hd-media	yes	yes	yes <sub>a</sub>
Notes: a. but only if you have network access, and set <code>preseed/url</code> appropriately			

An important difference between the preseeding methods is the point at which the preconfiguration file is loaded and processed. For *initrd* preseeding this is right at the start of the installation, before the first question is even asked. Preseeding from the kernel command line happens just after. It is thus possible to override configuration set in the *initrd* by editing the kernel command line (either in the bootloader configuration or manually at boot time for bootloaders that allow it). For *file* preseeding this is after the CD or CD image has been loaded. For *network* preseeding it is only after the network has been configured.

**Important:** Obviously, any questions that have been processed before the preconfiguration file is loaded cannot be preseeded (this will include questions that are only displayed at medium or low priority, like the first hardware detection run). A not so convenient way to avoid these questions from being asked is to preseed them through the boot parameters, as described in Section B.2.2.