

# How to Execute a Batch File from the Command Line (CMD)

*Easily run .BAT files from CMD and troubleshoot common errors*

Written by Nicole Levine, MFA

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If you need to run a batch file at the Windows Command Prompt, you'll just need to know the location of the batch file. To run the file at the command line, simply type the full path to the batch file and press **Enter**. Or, if you don't want to type the full path to the file, you can use the `cd` command to enter the folder containing the .BAT file, type the batch file's name, and then press Enter. This wikiHow guide will teach you simple ways to run a batch file from the Command Prompt in Windows, including how to run them automatically, help you fix common errors, and show you a few other cool ways to run batch files on your PC.

## Executing a BAT File from CMD: Quick Steps

1. Open the Command Prompt (as administrator, if needed).
2. Use "cd" to enter the folder containing the .bat file.
3. Type the name of the file, including the .bat file extension.
4. Press **Enter** to run the batch file.

## Running from the Batch File's Folder

### 1. Open the Command Prompt.

If your batch file performs administrative tasks, open Command Prompt as an administrator. If the batch file only requires access to files in your user account, you don't need to start it as an administrator.<sup>[1]</sup>

- Press the **Windows key** on your keyboard.
- Type `cmd`.
- If your batch file doesn't need administrator rights, click **Command Prompt**.
- If your batch file **does** require administrator rights:
  - Right-click **Command Prompt**.
  - Select **Run as administrator**.
  - Click **Yes**.

## 2. Type `cd` followed by the full path to your batch file's folder.

The `cd` command stands for "change directories." For example:

- If the file is at `D:\Music\MP3s\Unsorted`, you'd type `cd D:\Music\MP3s\Unsorted`.
- If the batch file is on your desktop, you'd type `cd \Users*YourLoginName*\Desktop`.
  - If you use OneDrive to automatically back up your personal files, you'd use `cd \Users\YourLoginName\OneDrive\Desktop` instead.
  - If you don't know your login name, type `cd \Users` and press **Enter**. Then, type `dir` and press **Enter** to see a list of users.

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## 3. Press `↵ Enter`.

This will move you into the folder containing your batch file.

- Type `dir` and press **Enter** to see a list of all files in the current folder. You should see your batch file (ending with `.bat`) here.

## 4. Type the name of the batch file and press `↵ Enter`.

For example, if your batch file is called `program.bat`, type `program.bat` and press **Enter**. This runs the batch file.

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# Running from Anywhere

## 1. Get the full path to your batch file.

If you want to run a batch file without using `cd` to enter its folder first, you'll just need to know the full path to the file. For example, `C:\Users\wikiHow\Scripts\mybatchfile.bat`. Here's an easy way to find the full path to your batch file:

- Navigate to your batch file. If you're not sure where you saved it, you can search for it.
- If you're using Windows 11, right-click the file and select **Copy as path** (Windows 11).
- On Windows 10 and earlier, right-click the file and select **Properties**. Highlight the path next to "Location" and press **Ctrl + C** to copy it to your clipboard.

## 2. Open the Command Prompt.

If your batch file performs administrative tasks, open Command Prompt as an administrator. If it only requires access to files in your user account, you don't need to start it as an administrator.

- Press the **Windows key** on your keyboard.
- Type `cmd`.
- If your batch file doesn't need administrator rights, click **Command Prompt**.
- If your batch file **does** require administrator rights:
  - Right-click **Command Prompt**.
  - Select **Run as administrator**.
  - Click **Yes**.

## 3. Type or paste the full path to your batch file.

To paste the path you copied earlier, press **Ctrl + V**.

- Alternatively, you can type the full path to your file manually (e.g., `C:\Users\wikiHow\Scripts\mybatchfile.bat`).
- Because the .BAT extension is executable, you don't need to type any commands before pasting or entering the path to the file.

## 4. Press **Enter** to run the batch file.

The batch file will now run. Any commands in the batch file will execute as specified in the script.

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## Running Automatically

### Run the batch file at a specific time and date.

You can use Windows Task Scheduler to automatically run a batch file at the time and date of your choice without having to open the command prompt first—instead, Task Scheduler will open the command prompt at the appropriate time and

execute the batch file automatically. You can have the batch file run once or on a regular schedule.<sup>[2]</sup>

- Press the **Windows key** and type `task scheduler`.
- Click **Task Scheduler**.
- Expand the "Task Scheduler Library" folder.
- Create a new folder: Right-click **Task Scheduler Library**, click **New Folder...**, type a name, and click **OK**.
- Right-click your new folder and select **Create basic task**. Type a name for your task and click **Next**.
- Choose when (and how often) you want the batch file to run. For example, if you want it to run on a certain date, select the date. Then, click **Next**.
- Select **Start a program**, click **Next**, and then click **Browse** to select your .BAT file.
- Click **Finish**. The batch file will now run automatically at the selected time and date.

### Run a batch file automatically when Windows starts.

If you want the batch file to start automatically when your PC boots into Windows, you can copy or move the file to your Windows startup scripts folder. Here's how:<sup>[3]</sup>

- Press **Windows key + R** to open the Run dialog.
- Type `shell:startup` and click **OK**. This opens a File Explorer window to your Startup folder.
- Drag or copy the .BAT file into the folder.
- Now, when you restart Windows, the batch file will run during the startup process—no need to open the command prompt first.

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## Other Ways to Run Batch Files

### Double-click any .BAT file to run it instantly.

If you don't want to use the Command Prompt, you can easily run a batch file from any location on your Windows PC just by double-clicking it in File Explorer

- If double-clicking the batch file opens and closes a window without showing you any details, jump to the Troubleshooting section.

### Use the Run dialog.

To call up a batch script from the Run dialog:

- Press **Windows key + R** to open Run.
- Click **Browse**.
- Navigate to and select your batch file.
- Click **Open**.
- Click **OK** to run the batch file.
- Depending on what the batch file's purpose is, the window may briefly open and close. That just means the file has run, and there is nothing it needs to display.

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## Troubleshooting Batch Files

### **Executing the batch file at the prompt just takes me to the next line.**

Depending on the commands in your batch file, you may not see confirmation or output when you run a .BAT file from Command Prompt. You'll only see output if there's a command in the batch file that's supposed to display output.

- For example, if the batch file is just working with files on your PC, such as moving, renaming, and/or deleting, you won't see the commands as they run unless `@echo on` is at the top of the .BAT file.<sup>[4]</sup>
- You can also add `echo "your text here"` to your batch file to display a custom message when run.

### **I see "The syntax of the command is incorrect" when I run a batch file.**

This means that there's an error with one of the commands in the batch file. The error could be due to missing or incorrect symbols, leaving out a flag required by a command, or even missing quotation marks around paths. Open the batch file in an editor like Notepad and inspect the code for errors.

### **I'm getting the error "x is not recognized as an internal or external command."**

This error also indicates an error in the batch file. But in this case, the error occurs because a command in the batch file is not recognized by Command Prompt. Fortunately, the error tells you exactly which command is failing, so it should be simple to fix.

- For example, if a command in the .BAT file is misspelled or incorrect (e.g., "ifconfig" instead of "ipconfig"), or trying to start a program using its name instead of its full path.

## When I double-click a batch file, the window just closes.

If double-clicking your .BAT file quickly opens and closes a Command Prompt window, it just means the batch file doesn't have a "pause" at the end. If you want to keep the window open after the commands have run, just add "pause" to the end of the batch file.

- Right-click the batch file.
- Select **Open with > Notepad** (Windows 10) or **Show more options > Edit** (Windows 11).
- Add "pause" to the last line of the batch file.
- Save the file and run it again. Now, when you run the batch file, the window will stay open while displaying "Press any key to continue..." Once you press a key, the window will close.<sup>[5]</sup>

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## Expert Q&A

### Question

**After I run the batch script, it just opens another line and nothing happens.**

Nicole Levine, MFA  
wikiHow Technology Writer  
**Expert Answer**

Many batch scripts won't display any confirmation that the commands have run. If you wrote the batch script yourself, you can switch the value of "echo" to "on" to display the commands at the prompt as they run. You can also add "pause" to the end of the script to make it prompt the user to press a key to continue. But in general, as long as you don't see an error, that means the batch script executed properly.

### Question

**What does this error mean? '.' is not recognized as an internal or external command, operable program or batch file.**

wikiHow Staff Editor  
Staff Answer

The batch script is trying to run "." as a command, which is not a recognized command. Look for the extra period somewhere in the script and remove it.

### Question

**How do I get out after I run my batch file ?**

wikiHow Staff Editor  
Staff Answer

Just click the "X" at the top corner of the command prompt window to close it. Or, if the batch script is hung on a process and not letting you go to the next line, you can press Ctrl + C to stop the batch file from running.

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## Tips

## Warnings

- Never run a .BAT file as an administrator unless you know exactly what the file does. If the batch file is malicious, running it as an administrator could steal your data, install malware and viruses, and perform other dirty deeds.
- Be careful when downloading .BAT files from the web or as email attachments. Make sure your PC is always protected by Microsoft Defender (or your preferred antivirus software) before running files from unknown sources.

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## References

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