

# ChatScript Debugging Manual

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You've written script. It doesn't work. Now what? Now you need to debug it, fix it, and recompile it. Debugging is mostly a matter of tracing what the system does testpaand finding out where it doesn't do what you expected. Debugging mostly done by issuing commands to the engine, as opposed to chatting.

If the system detects bugs during execution, they go into *TMP/bugs.txt* You can erase the entire contents of the TMP directory any time you want to. But odds are this is not your problem. Debugging generally requires use of some :xxxx commands. I don't always remember them all, so at times I might simply say

## **:commands**

to get a list of the commands and a rough description.

**:commands off** will locally disable commands until a corresponding

**:commands on** is given.

## **Before it goes wrong during execution**

Before you chat with your chatbot and discover things don't work, there are a couple of things to do first, to warn you of problems.

## **Compiling (:build)**

Of course, you started with :build to compile your script. It wouldn't have passed a script that was completely wrong, but it might have issued warnings. That's also not likely to be your problem, but let's look at what it might have told you as a warning. The system will warn you as it compiles and it will summarize its findings at the end of the compile. The compilation messages occur on screen and in the log file.

The most significant warnings are a reference to an undefined set or an undefined ^reuse label. E.g.,

\*\*\* Warning- missing set definition ~car\_names

\*\*\* Warning- Missing cross-topic label ~allergy.JOHN for reuse

Those you should fix because clearly they are wrong, although the script will execute fine everywhere but in those places.

\*\*\* Warning- flowglow is unknown as a word in pattern

Warnings about words in patterns that it doesn't recognize or it recognizes in lower case but you used upper case may or may not matter. Neither of these is wrong, unless you didn't intend it. Words it doesn't recognize arise either because you made a typo

(requiring you fix it) or simply because the word isn't in the dictionary. Words in upper case are again words it knows as lower case, but you used it as upper case. Maybe right or wrong.

Editing the main dictionary is not a task for the faint-hearted. But ChatScript maintains secondary dictionaries in the TOPIC folder and those are easy to adjust. To alter them, you can define concepts that add local dictionary entries. The names of important word type bits are in src/dictionarySystem.h but the basics are NOUN, VERB, ADJECTIVE, and ADVERB.

concept: ~morenoun NOUN (fludge flwoa boara)

A concept like the above, declared before use of those words, will define them into the local dictionary as nouns and suppress the warning message. You can be more specific as well with multiple flags like this:

concept: ~myverbs VERB VERB\_INFINITIVE (spluat babata)

You can define concepts at level 0 and/or level 1 of the build, so you can put define new words whenever you need to.

When build is complete, it will pick up where it left off with the user (his data files unchanged). If you want to automatically clear the user and start afresh, use  
:build xxx reset

### After it goes wrong during execution

The most common issue is that ChatScript will munge with your input in various ways so you don't submit what you think you are submitting. The substitutions files will change words or phrases. Spell correction will change words. Proper name and number merging will adjust words. And individual words of yours will be merged into single words if WordNet lists them as a multiple-word (like "TV\_star"). So you really need to see what your actual input ended up being before you can tell if your pattern was correct or not. Thus the most common debug command is :prepare.

### Most Useful Debug Commands

**:prepare** this is my sample input

This shows you how the system will tokenize a sentence and what concepts it matches. It's what the system does to prepare to match topics against your input. From that you can deduce what patterns would match and what topics might be invoked.

If you give no arguments to prepare, it just turns on a prepare trace for all future inputs which disables actually responding. Not usually what you want.

When I test my bots (assuming they pass verification), I chat with them until I get an answer I don't like. I then ask it why it generated the answer it did.

## **:why**

This specifies the rules that generated the actual output and what topics they came from. I can often see, looking at the rule, why I wouldn't want it to match and go fix that rule. That doesn't address why some rule I want to match failed, so for that I'll need typically need tracing.

## **:trace all**

## **:trace none**

The ultimate debugging command dumps a trace of everything that happens during execution onto screen and into the log file. After entering this, you type in your chat and watch what happens (which also gets dumped into the current log file). Problem is, it's potentially a large trace. You really want to be more focused in your endeavor.

**:trace ~education** - this enables tracing for this topic and all the topics it calls. Call it again to restore to normal. This is probably what you need usually to see what went wrong. You know the code you expected to execute, so monitor the topic it is in.

**:trace ^myfunction** – this enables tracing for the function. Call it again to restore to normal.

**:trace !~education** - this disables current tracing for this topic and all the topics it calls when **:trace all** is running. Call it again to restore to normal.

**:trace ~education.school** – this traces all top-level rules in ~education that you named *school* (and its rejoinders and anything it calls. Call it again to turn off the trace.

You can insert a trace command in the data of a table declaration, to trace a table being built (the log file will be from the build in progress). E.g.,

```
table: ~capital (^base ^city)
  _9 = join(^city , _ ^base)
  ^createfact(_9 member ~capital)
DATA:
:trace all
Utah Salt_lake_city
:trace none
```

You can insert a trace in the list of files to process for a build. From files1.txt

```
RAWDATA/simplecontrol.top      # conversational control
:trace all
RAWDATA/simpletopic.top        # things we can chat about
:trace none
```

And you can insert a trace in the list of commands of a topic file:

```
topic: foo [...]
```

.....  
*:trace all*

Tracing is also good in conjunction with some other commands that give you a restricted view.

You can name tracing options by subtraction. E.g.,  
*:trace all – infer – pattern*

When I'm doing a thorough trace, I usually do *:trace all – query* because I want to see fact searches but only need the answers and not all the processing the query did.

Note, if you want tracing to start at startup, when you don't have control, login with a botname of trace. E.g, at the login type:

john:trace  
This will turn on all tracing.

*:trace* also has individual collections and items it can trace. If you just say *:trace* you get a listing of things.

**:retry**  
**:retry This is my new input**

*:retry* tells the system to rerun the most recent input on the state of the system a moment ago, and retry it. It should do exactly what it did before, but this time if you have turned on tracing it will trace it. It performs this magic in stand-alone mode by copying the user's topic file into the TMP directory before each volley, so it can back up one time if needed. Because it operates from that tmp copy you can, if your log file is currently messy, merely erase all the contents of the USER folder before executing the revert and the log trace will only be from this input.

You can also put in different input using *:retry*. This is a fast way to try alternatives in a context and see what the system would do.

*:retry* is expected to be used on a stand-alone system. First off, NORMAL servers only allow users in the authorizedip.txt file to use debug commands. Second, the system only keeps a single retry file, so you'd have to be the only user on the server. Third, the system by default doesn't even keep this file, so you have to "*:retry*" once earlier, just to activate the system for a later *:retry* ability. If *retry* has been server enabled, thereafter each volley is tracked, so if concurrent access takes place, even though you are the only user authorized to use the *:retry* command, the value of the topic state you get depends entirely on who last volleyed into the system.

**:do stream** – execute the stream specified as though a rule has matched input and has this stream as its output section. E.g.,  
*:do pos(noun word plural)* will output “words”.

`:do $token |= #STRICT_CASING` will augment the user variable.

Sometimes you need the system to set up a situation (typically pronoun resolution).

`:do hello world`

will tell the system to generate hello world as its output.

In all cases the system will literally pretend a dummy user input of “:do”, incrementing the input count, and running the preprocess. Then, instead of running the main control topic, it merely executes the stream you gave it as though that were from some rule matched during main processing. The output generated is handled per normal and the system then runs the postprocess. The results are saved in the user's topic file.

### **:topics This is my sample input**

This will display the topics whose keywords match the input, the score the topic gets, and the specific words that matched.

### **:say this is bot output**

This will output whatever you wrote as though the chatbot said it. Useful for testing post-processing code.

### **:silent**

This toggles whether or not output is sent to the user. Useful when running regression tests.

### **:diff file1 file2 optional-separator**

Reports on lines that are different between the two files. Useful when running regression tests. Often used with `:silent` and `:log` as well. The system normally compares the lines of the two files, bypassing leading and trailing whitespace. If you provide an optional separator character, it will only compare the lines up to but not including that character, though it will display the full lines when they fail to match. Aside from the usual echoing into the user's log file, the differences are also written to LOGS/diff.txt .

## Other Debug Commands

### **:show**

The :show choices are all toggles. Each call flips its state.

**:show all** toggles a system mode where it will not stop after it first finds an output. It will find everything that matches and shows all the outputs. It just doesn't proceed to do gambits. Since it is showing everything, it erases nothing. There is a system variable %all you can query to see if the all mode is turned on if you want some of your script to be unreactive when running all.

**:show input** displays the things you send back into the system using the ^input function.

**:show mark** is not something you are likely to use but it displays in the log the propagation of marked items in your sentence. If you do :echo that stuff will also display on your screen.

**:show number** displays the current input number at the front of the bot's output. It is always shown in the log, but this shows it on-screen. I use this before running a large regression test like :source REGRESS/bigregress.txt so I will know how far it has gotten while it's running.

**:show pos** displays summary on the POS-tagging. Not useful for a user, but useful to me in debugging the engine itself.

**:show topic** displays the current topic the bot is in, prefixed to its output.

**:show topics** displays all the topics whose keywords matched the input.

**:show why** this turns on :why for each volley so you always see the rule causing output before seeing the output.

**:log xxxx** put the message you write directly into the log file. Useful for testers to send comments back to scriptors in the moment of some issue arising.

**:noreact** toggles whether the system tries to respond to input.

### **:testtopic ~topic sentence**

This will execute responder mode of the named topic on the sentence given, to see what would happen. It forces focus on that topic, so no other topic could intervene. In addition to showing you the output it generates, it shows you the values of all user variables it changes.

### **:testpattern (.....) sentence**

The system inputs the sentence and tests the pattern you provide against it. It tells you whether it matched or failed.

*:testpattern ( it died ) Do you know if it died?*

Some patterns require variables to be set up certain ways. You can perform assignments prior to the sentence.

*:testpattern (\$gender=male hit) \$gender = male hit me*

Typically you might use :testpattern to see if a subset of your pattern that fails works, trying to identify what has gone wrong. The corresponding thing for testing output is :do.

You can also name an existing rule, rather than supply a pattern.

*:testpattern ~aliens.ufo do you believe in aliens?*

**:topicstats** – walks all topics and computes how many rules of various kinds you have (e.g., how big is your system). You can also just name a topic or use a wildcard like ~do\* to see all topics starting with ~do.

### **:skip n**

The system will disable the next n gambits of the current topic, and tell you where you will end up next. Thereafter your next simple input like “ok” will execute that gambit, and the n previous will already have been used up.

## **Data Display Commands**

The system is filled with data, some of which you might want to see from time to time.

### **:interesting**

Show the interesting topics list.

### **:commands**

Displays available commands and a brief statement of purpose.

### **:concepts word**

Lists all concepts that are affiliated with this word.

### **:conceptlist {argument}**

List all concepts defined in the system or with an argument like ~w\*, show all concepts starting with ~w

### **:definition ^xxxx**

Shows the code of the user-defined macro named.

**:findwords** word – given a word pattern, find all words in the dictionary that match that pattern. The pattern starts with a normal word character, after which you can intermix the wildcard \* with other normal characters. For example, slo\* finds slothful, slower, sloshed. s\*p\*y finds supposedly, spendy, and surprisingly.

### **:functions**

Show all ^functions defined by the system.

### **:macros**

Show all ^macros defined by the user.

### **:memstats**

Show memory use- number of words, number of facts, amount of text space used, number of buffers allocated.

### **:queries**

Show all defined queries.

### **:variables {kind}**

Rarely will the issue be that some variable of yours isn't correct. But you can show the values of all user \$variables and all system %variables and all match variables. If you provide an argument, “system” restricts it to system variables and “user” restricts it to user variables, and “match” restricts it to all match variables.

### **:who**

Show name of current user and current bot.

**:nonset** type set – find what words of the given part of speech are not encompassed by the named concept. This is a command to determine if some words are not covered by an ontology tree, and not used by normal scripters. E.g., :nonset NOUN ~nounlist .

### **:word apple**



Given a word, this displays the dictionary entry for it as well some data up it's hierarchy. The word is case sensitive and if you want to check out a composite word, you need to use underscores instead of blanks. So :word TV\_star .

### **:userfacts**

This prints out the current facts stored with the user.

### **:allfacts**

This dumps a list of all the facts (including system facts) into the file TMP/facts.txt .

### **:facts meaning        :facts @n**

This displays all facts for the given word or meaning. If you give a meaning (e.g., sky~1) then only facts involving that specific meaning are displayed. You can also give a fact like (subject verb object) and all facts containing that fact will be shown, but the fact can not contain any facts itself, it must be all simple fields.

If you use :facts @2 then it will display all facts in that fact set. Bear in mind that normally factsets are NOT stored across volleys, so displaying a factset will likely show nothing unless you've executed ^save to protect it.

### **:up word**

Shows the dictionary and concept hierarchy of things above the given word or concept.

### **:down word n**

Shows the dictionary hierarchy below a word or, if the word is name of a concept, the members of the concept. Since displaying down can subsume a lot of entries, you can specify how many levels down to display (n). The default is 1.

### **:findwords pattern**

This uses the pattern of characters and \* to name words and phrases in the dictionary matching it. E.g.

```
:findwords *_executive
```

```
chief_executive
```

```
railroad_executive
```

```
:findwords *f_exe*
```

```
chief_executive
```

```
chief_executive_officer
```

```
Dancing_and_singing_are_my_idea_of_exercise.
```

### **:overlap set1 set2**

This tests atomic members of set1 to see if they are also in set2, printing out the ones that are in both.

## System Control Commands

### **:build**

This compiles script into ready-to-use data in the TOPICS folder. You name a file to build. If the file name has a 0 at the end of it, it will build as level 0. Any other file name will build as level 1. You can build levels in any order or just update a single level.

A build file is named filesxxx.txt where the xxx part is what you specify to the build command. So `:build angela0` will use filesAngela0.txt to build level 0. A build file has as its content a list of file paths to read as the script source data. It may also have comment lines starting with `#`. These paths are usually relative to the top level directory. E.g,

```
# ontology data
RAWDATA/ONTOLOGY/adverbhierarchy.top
RAWDATA/ONTOLOGY/adjectivehierarchy.top
RAWDATA/ONTOLOGY/prepositionhierarchy.top
```

Depending on what you put into it, a build file may build a single bot or lots of bots or a common set of data or whatever.

### **:bot sue**

Change focus to conversing with the named bot (presuming you have such a bot).

### **:reset**

Flush the current user's total history (erases the USER/ topic file), starting conversation from the beginning.

### **:user username**

Change your login id. It will then prompt you for new input as that user and proceed from there, not starting a new conversation but merely continuing a prior one.

### **:source REGRESS/bigregress.txt**

Switch the system to reading input from the named file. Good for regression testing. The system normally prints out just the output, while the log file contains both the input and the output. You can say `:source filename echo` to have input echoed to the console. If you say `:source filename internal` the system will echo the input, then echo the

tokenized sentences it handled. An input sentence that is merely *:quit* will stop source reading before the file ends, and return to normal source input.

### **:pos**

This is a subset of *:prepare* that just runs the POS-tagger parser on the input you supply. I use it to debug the system. It either is given a sentence or toggles a mode if not (just like *:prepare*). It also displays pronoun data gathered from the input.

### **:testpos**

This switches input to the named file (if not named defaults to REGRESS/posttest.txt) and running regression POS testing. If the result of processing an input deviates from that listed in the test file, the system presents this as an error.

### **:verifysubstitutes**

This tests each substitution in the LIVEDATA/substitutes file to see if it does the expected thing.

### **:verifyspell**

This tests each spelling in the LIVEDATA/spellfix file to see if it does the expected thing.

### **:verifypos**

This tests pos regression data in REGRESS to see if it does the expected thing.

### **:restart**

This will force the system to reload all its data files from disk (dictionary, topic data, live data) and then ask for your login. It's like starting the system from scratch, but it never stops execution. Good for revising a live server.

### **:autoreply xxx**

This command causes the system to talk to itself. As the user it always says whatever you put in xxx.

### **Debugging Function ^debug()**

As a last ditch, you can add this function call into a pattern or the output and it will call DebugCode in functionExecute.cpp so you know exactly where you are and can use a debugger to follow code thereafter if you can debug c code.

## **Logging Function ^Log(...)**

This allows you to print something directly to the users log file. You can actually append to any file by putting at the front of your output the word FILE in capital letters followed by the name of the file. E.g.,

```
^log(FILE TMP/mylog.txt This is my log output.)
```

Logging appends to the file. If you want to clear it first, issue a log command like this:

```
^log(FILE TMP/mylog.txt NEW This is my log output)
```

The “new” tells it to initialize the file to empty.

Additionally you can optimize log file behavior. If you expect to write to a file a lot during a volley (eg during :document mode), you can leave the file open by using

```
^log(OPEN TMP/mylog.txt This is my log output.)
```

which caches the file ptr. After which you can write with OPEN or FILE equivalently. To close the file use

```
^log(CLOSE TMP/mylog.txt)
```

## **Login after crash**

If you want to repeat a crash and not go thru all the trouble to recreate the situation you can do the login differently. The old status of the system is still in the user's folder.

Normally when you login, it picks that up, but begins a new conversation. To resume the old conversation as though you had never left, login with `loginname:&` . If before you were user bruce, login as `bruce:&` . Now if you say what you said before, it should crash just the same. Not that that will do most of you any good, but it's handy if you can debug src code.

## **When all else fails**

Usually you can email me for advice and solutions.