

Message Screen v4.0

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Providing the Appropriate Information

The topics highlighted below were designed to explain the information which may be provided to *Message Screen* and displayed via the information block. All of the information is optional and only information which is provided will be displayed..

Gone To

Message

Be Back In / Be Back At

Show Time You Left

Show Current Time

Randomize Position

Override Screen Saver

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Menu Operations

The menu bar consists of four items: Quicklist, Set List, Preferences, and Help. Quicklist can be used to activate previously defined (or default) information blocks quickly. Set List can be used to define the information displayed by Quicklist items. Preferences can be used to set application defaults. Any definitions and defaults you provide will be saved in your Windows directory in the file *msgscrn.ini*. The values in *msgscrn.ini* will override the programmed default values. **CAUTION:** Changing the *msgscrn.ini* file without using Message Screen may result in unpredictable (e.g., UAE or application error) results! Help is used to activate this file and the About box.

Quicklist

- Be back in
- Be back at
- Gone to lunch
- Custom

Set List

- Set Be back in...
- Set Be back at...
- Set Gone to lunch...
- Set Custom...

Preferences

- Check Boxes...
- Speed...
- Color and Font...
- Randomization Method
- Active Seek
- Load Last Screen Used
- Date / Time
- Password
- Toolbar

Help





- Contents
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Toolbar




The toolbar is designed to provide a quicker (than the menu) means of activating some of the common Message Screen functions. The functions are the same, it is only the method of activation that is different. The descriptions of the individual buttons provided below can also be seen at the bottom of the Message Screen main window when the mouse button is pressed while the mouse is on that button. If you don't want to activate that button; move the mouse off of the button before releasing the mouse. Also, the toolbar is now removable. While I personally like using the toolbar, I know some of you may not and some of you may but do not want to pay the load time and resource price. So, you now have a choice.

-  Activates the menu selection *Quicklist-Be back in*.
-  Activates the menu selection *Quicklist-Be back at*.
-  Activates the menu selection *Quicklist-Gone to lunch*.
-  Activates the menu selection *Quicklist-Custom-the first definition*.

-  Brings up the *Set Check Boxes* dialog box.
-  Brings up the *Set Speed* dialog box.
-  Brings up the *Set Color and Font* dialog box.
-  Brings up the *Select File* dialog box.

-  Sets the randomization method to *Random on Screen*.
-  Sets the randomization method to *Scroll Across Screen*.
-  Unchecks the file to actively seek from.
-  Checks the file to actively seek from.
-  Unchecks the *Load Last Screen Used* option.
-  Checks the *Load Last Screen Used* option.
-  Sets the date and time format to United States.
-  Sets the date and time format to European (pseudo).
-  Turns password protection on.
-  Turns password protection off.
-  New password.
-  Brings up the help file to the *Contents* section.

-  Remove Toolbar.

Note: The buttons to set the randomization method will replace each other (as will the buttons to check or uncheck the file to actively seek from, to check and uncheck the use last screen loaded option, to select the date and time display format, and to turn password protection on and off) on the toolbar depending on the current system settings.

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Program Overview

Message Screen was written in Visual Basic Professional Edition v2.0. Therefore, it requires, as a minimum, a PC running Windows 3.x, and the file *vbrun200.dll* (in addition to *msgscrn.exe* and *msgscrn.hlp*).

The purpose of this program is to provide a quick and easy mechanism for a PC user to let her/his co-workers know where she/he has gone, for how long, etc. (I wrote this program for use in the office, however, I suppose it could be used at home for leaving messages to family members). This is done by using the information provided and displaying it on the screen in screen saver fashion. *Message Screen* is **not** a true screen saver; it simply tries to behave like one.

This is the sixth release of *Message Screen* to the public. As currently written, it serves my purposes adequately. Any future releases will be based on comments and suggestions I receive from you (the users).

Message Screen is activated by using (of course) the *Activate* button. It is deactivated by pressing a mouse button or most of the keyboard keys (alphanumeric, Enter, etc.). It does however, ignore some keys and any mouse movement. You can also Alt-Tab to another application and return to *Message Screen* without it shutting down.

Message Screen is FREEWARE.

As a standard disclaimer:

There is no warranty or claim of fitness or reliability. The program is distributed AS IS, and as such the author shall not be held liable for any loss of data, down time, loss of revenue or any other direct or indirect damage or claims caused by this program.

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My thanks to those of you who have provided comments and suggestions. Message Screen has changed (and grown) quite a bit based on those comments and suggestions. I enjoy getting them because it lets me know that people are using the program. Please keep them coming (even if, or especially if, it is just to say you have found Message Screen useful). I hope you will see this latest version of Message Screen as an improvement over the previous versions and will be able to put it to good use.

Jerry

Release Information

Version 4.0 includes the following changes:

1. Ability to add / remove the toolbar as desired.
2. Use of Ctrl-K vice Ctrl-C to activate the first custom message.
3. Fix of a program error when exiting password help in the *New Password* dialog box.
4. Reordering of the *Be back in / Be back at* and *Message* sections.

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Note: I made previous version information shadow-boxed to save space, however, if you do not view this page with full screen, you may not see all of the information (e.g., Version 2.4 information).

If you have any questions or suggestions,
please send e-mail to: **gpetet@dgsc.dla.mil**

or

send snail mail to: **Jerry Petet
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Colonial Heights, VA
23834-2236**

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Gone To

The *Gone to* text box is used to inform observers where you have gone.

This box is limited to 50 characters which will be displayed in addition to the *Gone to* text.

If no text is provided, then this line is not displayed in the information block.

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Be Back In / Be Back At

The *Be back in / Be back at* radio buttons are used to select whether you want to specify a time you will be gone for or a time you will return, respectively. The hour and minute combo boxes are then used to specify the appropriate information. That is, you will be back **in** 2 hours and 30 minutes, or you will be back **at** 2:30.

If the *Be back at:* radio button is selected, then the AM / PM buttons become active. You can then specify whether you will be back at 2:30 AM or 2:30 PM.

The hours combo box lists 1 through 12 hours in one hour intervals, however, you may enter a different number if you need to. The minutes combo box lists 5 through 55 minutes in five minute intervals, however, you may enter a different number if you need to. NOTE: I did not bother adding code here to check for input errors. You can, if you make a mistake or really want to, specify that you will be back in B hours or that you will be back at 77:03a PM!

Be Back in / Be Back At share the same line of the information block, therefore, you can use either **In** or **At** but not both simultaneously. If no time is specified (that is, zero hours and zero minutes), then this line is not displayed in the information block.

Note: When European time is selected, hours are from 1 to 23 and there is no AM or PM option.

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Message

The *Message:* text box is used to provide additional information not covered by *Gone to* or *Be back in / Be back at:*

This box is limited to 200 characters. This is an increase in the number of characters allowed from the previous version, because with the scroll-across-the-screen *Randomization Method* menu option, a large message may be displayed.

If no text is provided, then this line is not displayed in the information block.

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Show Time You Left

The *Show time you left:* check box is checked by default. When checked, a *Left at:* line will be added to your information block showing the time you started the *Message Screen* application based on your PCs internal time. If unchecked, the *Left at:* line will not be displayed.

Message Screen v4.0

Show Current Time

The *Show current time:* checkbox is checked by default. When checked, a *CurrentTime:* line will be added to your information block showing the current time based on your PC's internal time. If unchecked, the *Current Time:* line will not be displayed.

Message Screen v4.0

Randomize Position

The *Randomize position*: check box is checked by default. When checked, the information block will either be moved to various locations on the monitor randomly (at the default interval of 10 seconds) or will scroll across the screen (at the default slow rate) depending on the selections made in the *Preferences - Randomization Method* and the *Preferences - Set Speed* menus. If unchecked, the information block will be displayed in the upper left hand corner of the screen and will not move.

Message Screen v4.0

Override Screen Saver

The *Override Screen Saver* check box is shadowed by default. This is because the *Randomize Position* check box is checked by default and the application assumes that if you are using Message Screen as a screen saver, you will not want to override it with your Windows screen saver. If the Randomize Position check box is unchecked, you can check the Override Screen Saver check box and your systems screen saver will not become active. Otherwise, your screen saver will behave normally.

When checked, *Message Screen* will send a pseudo key press to the system in order to override your systems screen saver and keep the information block displayed. This pseudo key press is deactivated when you Alt-Tab out of Message Screen so that the pseudo-key-press will not affect the application which has the focus.


I know that this is not an elegant method of deactivating the screen saver. A more efficient procedure would be to turn the screen saver off via an API call, however, not all screen savers are true Windows screen savers; some are simply executable programs (such as this one) and would be unaffected by an API call.

Message Screen v4.0

Quicklist - Be back in

All of the Quicklist menu options are designed to activate *Message Screen* with a previously defined information block. The *Be back in* menu option uses a previously defined number of hours and minutes to fill in the *Will be back in* line of the information block. There is no *Gone to* or *Message* text when this option is used. All of the default check box values will be used when this option is activated. The default value for *Be back in* is zero hours and fifteen minutes.

Shortcut Key Combination: *Ctrl-I*.


Toolbar Button: 

Message Screen v4.0

Quicklist - Be back at

All of the Quicklist menu options are designed to activate *Message Screen* with a previously defined information block. The *Be back at* menu option uses a previously defined clock time to fill in the *Will be back at* line of the information block. There is no *Gone to* or *Message* text when this option is used. All of the default check box values will be used when this option is activated. The default value for *Be back at* is 12:00PM.

Shortcut Key Combination: *Ctrl-A*.


Toolbar Button: 

Message Screen v4.0

Quicklist - Gone to lunch

All of the Quicklist menu options are designed to activate *Message Screen* with a previously defined information block. The *Gone to lunch* menu option, by default, fills in the *Gone to* line of the information block with the word *lunch* and the *Will be back in* line of the information block with thirty minutes. There is no *Message* text when this option is used. All of the default check box values will be used when this option is activated.

Shortcut Key Combination: *Ctrl-L*.

Toolbar Button: 


Message Screen v4.0

Quicklist - Custom

All of the Quicklist menu options are designed to activate *Message Screen* with a previously defined information block. The *Custom* menu option has no default information provided. It allows you to select from one of five totally customized versions of *Message Screen*. All of the default check box values will be used when this option is activated.

For the first custom message...

Shortcut Key Combination: *Ctrl-K*.

Toolbar Button: 

Message Screen v4.0

Set List - Set Be back in

The *Set - Be back in* option is used to define the number of hours and minutes displayed when the *Quicklist - Be back in information block* is activated. When you provide this information and select the **Save** button, *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscrn.ini* in your Windows directory.

Message Screen v4.0

Set List - Set Be back at

The *Set - Be back at* option is used to define the clock time displayed when the *Quicklist - Be back at information block* is activated. When you provide this information and select the **Save** button, *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscrn.ini* in your Windows directory.

Message Screen v4.0

Set List - Set Gone to lunch

The Set - *Gone to lunch* option is used to define where you are going to lunch (or just the word lunch, by default) and the number of hours and minutes displayed when the *Quicklist - Gone to lunch information block* is activated. When you provide this information and select the **Save** button, *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscrn.ini* in your Windows directory.

Message Screen v4.0


Set List - Set Custom

The *Set - Custom* option is used to define any one of the five custom information blocks. These custom messages can be named by filling in the *Name:* text box with an expression of 30 characters or less. This name (e.g. **First Name**) will then be used to identify the custom message in the appropriate menu options (e.g., *Set-Custom-First Name*). The *Gone to* text, *Be back in / Be back at:* hours and minutes (*AM/PM*), and the *Message* text information for the corresponding custom information block (i.e., set custom block 3; activate custom block 3) will be displayed when the *Quicklist - Custom* menu option is activated. When you provide this information and select the **Save** button, *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscrn.ini* in your Windows directory.

Message Screen v4.0

Preferences - Check boxes


This option may be used to define the default state (checked or unchecked) of the four check boxes in Message Screen which are used to control: (1) Show time you left, (2) Show current time, (3) Randomize position, and (4) Override Current Screen Saver. By default the first three are checked; the fourth is shadowed. When you provide this information and select the **Save** button, *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscrn.ini* in your Windows directory.

Toolbar Button: 

Message Screen v4.0

Preferences - Speed

This option may be used to define three speeds. The first two control how fast the information block is moved around the screen when the *Randomize position* check box is checked. If the *Preferences-Randomization Method-Random on Screen* menu option is selected, set the *Number of seconds between information block moves* to the desired value. The default value is 10 seconds. If the *Preferences-Randomization Method-Scroll across screen* menu option is selected, set the Information block scroll rate to the desired value. The default value is *Slow*. The third speed controls how often Message Screen will read the information seek file for updated information. It is the Information file seek rate. The default value is *Slow*. When you provide this information and select the **Save** button, *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscrn.ini* in your Windows directory.

Toolbar Button: 


Message Screen v4.0

Preferences - Color and Font

This option may be used to define the color and font information of the information block text and the background color. The standard (16) colors are available. The default is light yellow text on a black background without bold or italic checked. When you provide this information and select the **Save** button, *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscrn.ini* in your Windows directory.

Be aware that you can set the font size so large that you will not be able to see the entire information block (especially if you have not chosen *the Preferences-Randomization Method-Scroll across screen* menu option).

Shortcut Key Combination: *Ctrl-F*.

Toolbar Button: 

Message Screen v4.0

Preferences - Randomization Method

This option may be used to define how the information block is moved around the screen when the *Randomize Position* check box is checked. If *Random on Screen* is chosen, then the information block will move randomly from one position to another on the screen at the time interval specified in the *Preferences-Set Speed* dialog box. If *Scroll across screen* is chose, the information block will scroll across the screen at the rate specified in the *Preferences-Set Speed* dialog box. Additionally, the information block will change vertical position randomly. The default value (checked menu option) is *Random on Screen*. When you make your selection, it then becomes the checked option and *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscm.ini* in your Windows directory.

Toolbar Buttons: 



Message Screen v4.0

Preferences - Active Seek

This option may be used to specify that you want to actively seek information from the file specified in *Seek info from*. When *Seek info from - filename* is checked, Message screen will read this file (filename - which you can change remotely) for new information block information at the rate specified in *Preferences - Set Speed*. If there is no file specified (default), you may specify a file using the Select file option. This brings up a dialog box which allows you to choose your file (by default, the program looks for *msgscrn.txt*). When you provide the filename and select the **Save** button, *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscrn.ini* in your Windows directory and checks the menu option *Seek info from - filename* so that if you activate Message Screen at this point, it will be actively seeking information from the specified file..

NOTE: Upon activation, if the *Seek info from* option is checked, Message Screen will write the current information block information to the file. Therefore, when Message Screen reads the file for changes, if you havent made any, the original information is preserved.

This option was provided based on user request to be able to change the contents of the information block remotely.

Click [here](#) to see the structure of the Message Screen information file.

Toolbar Buttons: 



Message Screen v4.0

Preferences - Load Last Screen Used

This option may be used to specify that you want to (or do not want to) have Message Screen load the information saved in *msgscrn.ini* (from the last time Message Screen was activated with this option checked) the next time Message Screen is activated.

Toolbar Buttons: 



Message Screen v4.0

Preferences - Date / Time

This option may be used to specify that you want to (or do not want to) have Message Screen display dates and times in United States or European format. US time is in the form **h:mm:ss AM/PM**. US date is in the form **mm/dd/yy**. European time is in the form **h:mm:ss**. European date is in the form **dd/mm/yy**. My apologies for making the gross category *European*. I wanted to use the international settings in the *WIN.INI* file, however, I was not sure where that information was being kept in Microsoft NT 3.5 or Windows 95. Currently, Message runs under NT 3.5 and a beta version of Windows 95 and I did not want to risk losing that feature. Maybe when I get my 32 bit Visual Basic package(I hope they create it soon!), I will add the international feature to date and time. When you make your selection, it then becomes the checked option and *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscrn.ini* in your Windows directory.

Note: When US format is selected, available hours are from 1 to 12 and the AM and PM radio buttons are enabled. When European format is selected, available hours are from 1 to 23 and the AM and PM radio buttons are disabled.

Toolbar Buttons: 



Message Screen v4.0

Preferences - Password

This option may be used to specify that you want to (or do not want to) have Message Screen password protected. By default, there is no password and Message Screen is **not** password protected. If you turn password protection on, any attempt to transfer the focus from Message Screen will bring up a system modal password dialog box. To my knowledge, you can not switch to any other window without knowing the password. Of course, there is no such thing as a secure PC; and this system, along with all other password protection on a PC, can be circumvented if the PC is physically accessible! In order to activate password protection, you must first provide a password (first time). This is done by selecting the *Password-New Password* menu option. When you make your selection, it then becomes the checked option and *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscrn.ini* in your Windows directory. This option may also be used to change your password whenever you desire. *Message Screen* also saves the password (encrypted) to *msgscrn.ini*.


Toolbar Buttons: 



Message Screen v4.0

Preferences - Toolbar

This option may be used to specify that you want to (or do not want to) use the Message Screen Toolbar. By default, the toolbar is inactive. If you activate the toolbar, Message Screen will require approximately 10% more system resources than it does without the toolbar. Also, Message Screen will load more slowly (more noticeable on a slower PC). When you make your selection, it then becomes the checked option and *Message Screen* saves this information to the file *msgscrn.ini* in your Windows directory.

Toolbar Button: 

Message Screen v4.0

Message Screen Information file

Below is the structure of the Message Screen information file. Please note that the basic structure of this file can not be changed. That is, the expression *Message Screen* must be on line 1, and the expression *Gone to (cant exceed 50 char)*: must be on line 16.

Note: The last line is used to record information about when the Message Screen file was created, activated, or deactivated.

Message Screen

To modify this file for use by Message Screen, you must change information to the right of the colons only! Do not change anything to the left of the colons, these instructions, or the first line "Message Screen". If you do, Message Screen may not recognize this file as valid, may display erroneous information, or may stop executing.

Be careful of things like "Word wrap" in Notepad.

"Gone to" should be on line 16.

Information (if provided) begins immediately after the colon.

Gone to (can't exceed 50 char): *Add gone to text here (up to 50 characters).*

Be back ("in" or "at"): *Use the word in or at only.*

Hours: *Specify hours here.*

Minutes: *Specify minutes here.*

AM or PM ("AM" or "PM"): *Use the expression AM or PM only.*


Message (can't exceed 50 char): *Add message text here (up to 200 characters).*

This line is used to display creation date, last activated date, or last deactivated date.

My definition of **FREEWARE** is that there is absolutely **no charge** for this software.
It may be **freely distributed** (in its entirety and without change).

The information you provide (e.g., Gone to, Be back in / Be back at:, AM / PM; Message, Show time you left, etc.) is presented as lines of text on the screen. These lines are treated as a group (and are moved around the screen as a group) and are what I refer to as the **information block**.

This menu option activates the Windows help engine using the file *msgscrn.hlp*.
Message Screen also employs context sensitive help (press the F1 key when you are on a object you want help on).

Toolbar button: 

The option activates the applications *About* dialog box showing the current version (4.0), the author (Jerry Petet), the amount of free memory, and the amount of free system resources..

When the AM / PM radio buttons are activated, the current system time will determine which button is selected. If it is between midnight and noon, then the AM radio button will be selected; if it is between noon and midnight, then the PM radio button will be selected.

The value specified for the *Information block scroll rate* can be Slow (0), Medium (1), or Fast (2). This value is used as a multiplying factor for the number of pixels the information block will move. The smaller the number of pixels the information block moves, the slower it appears to scroll across the screen.

The value specified for the Message Screen information file seek rate can be Slow (1800), Medium (900), or Fast (300). This value represents the number of seconds Message Screen will wait before reading the information file for new information.

Version 3.2 Fixed toolbar bugs.

Version 3.1 included the changes made in Version 3.0 which were tested by my co-workers:

Version 3.0 included the following changes:

1. Addition of a toolbar which will activate several of the common Message Screen functions.
2. File (to actively seek from) creation date, last activated, last deactivated information added.
3. Addition of version number, date, and time to main screen.
4. Option to load information used in previously activated Message Screen.
5. Option of displaying date and time in US or European time.
6. Password protection.
7. Revised *Color and Font* dialog box.

Version 2.4 included the following changes:

1. Fixing the *Set Font and Color* dialog boxes *Fontname:* listbox. Previously, if you scrolled down to the bottom of the list, an error would occur which would close the application.
2. Adding shortcut keys to some of the menu options.
3. Minor cleanup of dialog boxes and information block.

Version 2.3 included the following changes:

1. Fixing the *Set Font and Color* dialog boxes font size scroll bar. As originally written, the scrollbar indicator could be dragged to a value below the minimum allowed or above the maximum allowed. This resulted in an error which would close the application.
2. Fixing the *Information file seek rate* in the *Set Speed* dialog box. The values for **slow** and **fast** were reversed.
3. Adding a new entry in *msgscrn.inis Preferences* section which keeps track of your last choice to actively seek information from a file or not.
4. Fixing the *Select Information File* dialog box so that it will retain the default file name in the event of pressing the *Cancel* button after specifying an invalid file. Also, fixing this dialog box so that it will not close the application in the event that an unavailable drive is selected.
5. Cleaning up the dialog boxes so that they can not be resized or minimized and the names and menu options match.
6. Adding a new section to *msgscrn.ini* with an entry for the **X** and **Y** coordinates of the main Message Screen window. When activated, the Message Screen window will appear where it was when Message Screen was last activated, or in a default location if Message Screen was activated when its main window was off of the screen. Also, all dialog boxes will now follow the main window location.
7. Restoring Message Screen (when you double-click the icon) to its normal size when it is either minimized or in the background instead of just informing the user that it is already running.
8. Fixing a problem representing the AM / PM indicator and in dealing with minutes less than ten.
9. Removing blank lines (lines with no information specified: e.g., no *Gone to* text) from the information block.
10. Displaying the help *Contents* section vice the *Gone to* section when the *Help-Contents* menu option is selected.
11. An enhanced *About* box.

Version 2.2 was the third version released to the public and contained the changes tested in version 2.1.

Version 2.1 was released to my co-workers for testing of the following changes:

1. The addition of a color and font dialog box which allows the user to select font type, font size, bold text, italic text, foreground color, and background color.
2. The addition of a dialog box which allows the user to create / select a file from which updated Message Screen information may be read. The intent of this option is to allow the user to remotely change the information displayed in the information block (useful for those of you having remote access via network or workgroups).
3. The ability to choose the method of random movement (scroll or position change) of the information block.
4. The ability to specify the information block scroll rate and the Message Screen information file read rate. These options are available in the *Set Speed* dialog box.
5. The addition of four more Custom information block options (for a total of five).
6. The choice of specifying a clock time you will be back **at** in addition to the amount of time you will be back **in**.
7. A correction (for those of you who noticed that you can Alt-Tab out of Message Screen and return) that turns off the pseudo-keypress when Message Screen loses the focus. This prevents an erroneous capital "S" from appearing in text documents.

Version 2.0 was the second version released to the public and included the following changes:

1. The addition of a Quicklist of messages to choose from and the ability to define them.
2. The ability to control the random display speed and text color of the information block.

Version 1.2 incorporated the following changes::

1. Typographical corrections to the help file.
2. Addition of **Search for Help on...** capability to the help file.
3. Properly closing the application upon use of the **Close** option. Formerly, the application would remain active, though not visible if closed with **Close** vice the **Cancel** button.

Version 1.1 was the first version released to the public.

Version 1.0 was distributed to several of my co-workers for testing.

