

Microsoft Agent Technical FAQ and Troubleshooting



Last updated: November 1997

Microsoft Corporation

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When I retry loading a character that failed to load, the call fails with a "Character already loaded" error.

General FAQ

With the release of Microsoft Agent, will my pages built with previous beta releases still work?

The final commercial release of Microsoft Agent is not compatible with any previous beta releases. You should uninstall any beta releases and update to the final release. Any pages or applications authored for a beta release should also be updated to the final release.

When updating to the final release of Microsoft Agent, the following methods will ensure a clean, reliable installation:

Uninstall any previous beta release **before** installing the commercial release.

Do **not** install the beta releases over the commercial release. This will create an unreliable installation.

Can I define my own character?

Yes. You can use any animation rendering package, provided that you can produce your images in a 2-bit (monochrome), 4-bit, or 8-bit color Windows® bitmap format. Then you can use the Microsoft Agent Character Editor, available for download at this site, to assemble and compile your animations.

Will Microsoft Agent be available for platforms other than Windows 95 and Windows NT®?

We are still investigating the feasibility of and demand for this technology on other platforms.

Will Microsoft Agent be available in other languages?

Microsoft Agent will be available in the following languages in addition to English (US): French, German, Italian, Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. These versions of Microsoft Agent will include only the core services, not the speech input or output components. However, because Microsoft Agent supports the Microsoft SAPI interface, you may be able to use other speech engines. Contact your speech vendor to determine whether they are compatible with the SAPI interfaces required by Microsoft Agent. Availability of Microsoft Agent in other languages has not yet been determined.

Licensing FAQ

Can I redistribute Microsoft Agent and its characters?

Microsoft Agent can be downloaded directly from the Microsoft site by including the Microsoft Agent control's CLSID in an HTML <OBJECT> tag on your Web page, which will automatically offer to download and install the control when a user loads the page. Details on licensing and use are included in the Microsoft Agent End User License agreement that displays when Microsoft Agent is installed. This license does not include provisions for redistribution. Application developers who wish to include Microsoft Agent and any of its components as part of their application must obtain a redistribution license. For more information about redistribution licenses, see the Licensing and Redistribution document at <http://www.microsoft.com/workshop/prog/agent/licensing.htm>.

Can I redistribute the speech engines that are supplied with Microsoft Agent with my own applications?

The Microsoft Agent license agreement includes a license to use the Microsoft Command and Control speech recognition engine and the special version of the Lernout & Hauspie TruVoice Text-To-Speech Engine, subject to the same provisions and restrictions as Microsoft Agent, and only when used with Microsoft Agent. For redistribution of these engines, contact the Microsoft Agent Product Group at msagent@microsoft.com. For redistribution of the speech engines only, contact the speech engine vendors directly.

Can I redistribute the Microsoft Agent Character Editor and Microsoft Linguistic Information Sound Editing Tool?

Redistribution of these tools is limited to downloading them from the Microsoft Web site or dispensing them as part of any software development kit Microsoft may provide. For other forms of redistribution, contact the Microsoft Agent Product Group at msagent@microsoft.com.

Programming/Scripting Troubleshooting Information

When I use Microsoft Visual Basic® (or other development tools) for scripting Microsoft Agent, I do not see all the properties and events used in your samples. How do I access them?

Most of the events, methods, and properties supported by the Microsoft Agent control are exposed only at run time. Consult *Programming the Microsoft Agent Control* for further information.

When I try to host the Microsoft Agent control on the same page as a Java applet, it doesn't seem to work.

This is a problem in the Internet Explorer Java™ VM that has been addressed in the Microsoft Java 2.0 SDK, which can be downloaded at <http://microsoft.com/java/pre-sdk/default.htm>. This version of the Java VM is expected to be included in a release of the Internet Explorer later this year.

The Map tag (or some other tag) doesn't seem to work.

Some tags include quoted strings. For some programming languages, such as Visual Basic® Scripting Edition (VBScript) and Visual Basic®, you may have to use two quote marks to designate the tag's parameter or concatenate a double-quote character as part of the string. The latter is shown in this Visual Basic example:

```
Agent1.Characters("Genie").Speak "This is \map=" + chr(34) + "Spoken text" _  
+ chr(34) + "=" + chr(34) + "Balloon text" + chr(34) + "\"."
```

For C, C++, and Java™ programming, precede backslashes and double quotes with a backslash. For example:

```
BSTR bszSpeak = SysAllocString(L"This is \\map=\"Spoken text\"=\"Balloon  
text\\\"\\");  
  
pCharacter->Speak(bszSpeak, .....);
```

Note that Microsoft Agent does not support all the tags specified in the Microsoft Speech API. In addition, support for some parameters may depend on the text-to-speech engine installed. For further information, see Speech Output Tags.

I seem to get RequestStart and RequestComplete events in my scripts even though I don't set any requests.

This is a problem in Visual Basic® Scripting Edition (VBScript) 1.0. It has been addressed in VBScript 2.0, which can be downloaded at <http://microsoft.com/msdownload/scripting.htm>.

I don't seem to get RequestStart and RequestComplete events in my script (or program).

This could be caused by one of the following problems:

- Your programming language doesn't support ActiveX™ controls. Check your documentation to ensure that it supports the ActiveX interface and events for ActiveX objects.
- On a scripted Web page, another control has failed to install or load. Check to ensure that all other controls are installed and loading properly without Microsoft Agent.
- On a scripted Web page with frames, you have the <OBJECT> tag for the Microsoft Agent control on one page, and the events scripted on another page. Events are sent only to the page that hosts the control.

I am using the Microsoft Agent control with other ActiveX controls on my Web page, and I don't seem to get any events.

Check to see if the other controls are correctly installed. If another ActiveX control fails to correctly register itself, the Microsoft Agent control may receive its events.

What programming languages can I use to program the Microsoft Agent control?

Microsoft Agent should be supportable from any language that supports the ActiveX interface. It includes code samples for Microsoft Visual Basic®, VBScript, JavaScript™, C/C++, and Java.

Can I access the parameters returned from Microsoft Agent using JavaScript (JScript)?

Yes, but currently the only way to do this is using the <SCRIPT LANGUAGE="JScript" FOR="object" EVENT="event()"> syntax. Although this syntax is supported for Microsoft Internet Explorer, it is not supported by other browsers, so you may want to avoid using JavaScript/JScript for this part of your page's script.

Can Microsoft Agent be used with speech recognition or speech synthesis (text-to-speech, or TTS) engines other than those supplied by Microsoft?

Yes, provided that the engine supports the Microsoft Speech API (SAPI) interfaces required by Microsoft Agent. Check with the engine supplier. For complete details of the SAPI interfaces required by Microsoft Agent see the document Speech Engine Support Requirements.

My page includes HTML Object tags for Microsoft Agent, the Lernout & Hauspie TruVoice TTS engine, and the Microsoft Command and Control speech recognition engine, but not all the components install.

We are investigating why this failure occurs. Typically, the problem can be corrected by refreshing the page. As a general practice, it is best to specify the Microsoft Agent Control <OBJECT> tag first, then the Lernout & Hauspie TruVoice engine, then the Command and Control speech recognition engine.

When I attempt to access the Lernout & Hauspie TruVoice Text-To-Speech Engine modes from the Microsoft Speech SDK tools, I get a message indicating that a password is required.

The text-to-speech engine included with Microsoft Agent does not support direct SAPI access. You can access the engine only by using the interfaces supported by Microsoft Agent. If you want to program the Lernout & Hauspie TruVoice Engine with Microsoft SAPI, contact Lernout & Hauspie.

After calling the MoveTo method, my character seems to freeze even though I have Return animations assigned to Moving state animations.

When you play an animation, the animation services continue to display its last frame until another animation is called. Therefore, you should play another animation after calling **MoveTo**. If you defined a **Return** animation for the **Moving** state animation, the server will play it first.

When running under Internet Explorer 4.0 Preview 1 or 2, events don't fire after Microsoft Agent has been running, or the character leaves behind parts of its animation.

These problems are related to the IE 4.0 Preview 1 and 2. Install the official commercial release of IE 4.0.

I cannot load a character when the URL includes a tilde (~) character.

Microsoft Agent 1.5.0 does not accept tilde characters as part of a URL for an animation file. However, support has been added. Update to the latest release (November 1997).

When I retry loading a character that failed to load, the call fails with a "Character already loaded" error.

The Microsoft Agent control does not unload a character object (release the reference) when its associated character file fails to load. If you want to retry loading the character, you must explicitly call **Unload** before you call **Load** the second time. If you attempt this from a Web page script, you also need to precede the **Unload** call with an On Error Resume Next statement, or the **Unload** call will also fail. (Note that JavaScript has no On Error Resume Next statement.)

However, you may not need to include code to immediately retry loading a character when the file fails to load. Microsoft Internet Explorer and the Microsoft Agent server component automatically attempt to retry several times, so the chances that your retry will result in a successful load are remote. A better strategy is to wait (set a timer) a few seconds before you retry.