

RISC PC Hints and Tips

David Spencer presents a round-up of hints and tips for the new Risc PC.

IDENTIFYING A Risc PC

As with all previous Acorn operating systems, RISC OS 3.5, as fitted to the Risc PC, returns a unique version number through the function `INKEY(-256)`, and this can be used to determine the OS version. The values for various OSs are:

RISC OS 3.50 (Risc PC)	165
RISC OS 3.10 and 3.11	164
RISC OS 3.00	163
RISC OS 2.01	162
RISC OS 2.00	161
Arthur 1.20	160

For applications that can only run on the new operating system, it is best to include a check in the `!Run` file of the form:

```
RMEnsure UtilityModule 3.50 Error This is not
a Risc PC
which will stop with an error if the operating system
is too old.
```

USING A SERIAL MOUSE

The Risc PC can use any PC serial mouse in addition to the normal Acorn device. Having plugged the mouse into the serial port you need to configure it. To do this, run the `!Boot` application on the hard disc which brings up the configure menu. Double-click on `Mouse` and choose from either a Microsoft serial mouse or a Mouse Systems serial mouse. Your mouse documentation should tell you which type your mouse is, or failing that, trial and error will do no harm. (Some PC mice are switchable between the two types.) Obviously it helps to have a three-button mouse (again, some PC three-button mice can be switched to a two-button mode).

USING A DIFFERENT KEYBOARD

Similarly, the Risc PC can use any standard PC keyboard. PS/2 type units can be plugged straight in, while the more normal AT type needs a cable adaptor.

On the subject of keyboards, if you *Unplug the Keyboard module then only a Delete Power-on (which thankfully still works) or similar can recover control.

NO QUIET SPELLS

In common with the ARM250 machines, the internal speaker on the Risc PC cannot be muted using the `*Speaker` command, although the command is still accepted without error. If you really want to mute the sound then plug an empty stereo jack plug into the audio output.

Alternatively, `*AUDIO OFF` will disable the whole sound system, but this may interfere with the operation of some software.

A SOFT RESET?

You can now perform the equivalent of a hard reset from software by using the call:

```
SYS "OS_Reset"
```

Needless to say, the call doesn't return!

USING !Products

As supplied, the Risc PC hard disc includes an application called `!Products` which stores a wealth of information on product compatibility from most hardware and software developers. You can browse through the data using the tape recorder controls at the bottom of the window or search for a product or a company. Providing you have filled in the registration details when you first run the program, you can even automatically generate a letter to the supplier of an application asking for an update.

DUMMY MODULES

RISC OS 3.5 includes dummy versions of the modules:

```
NetUtils
IRQUtils
GameModes
WindowUtils
```

These all have version numbers higher than those of the real modules of the same names that were needed with older operating systems. This stops applications loading the older forms that are no longer needed. It also means that if you are including these modules in an application then it is vital that you `RMEnsure` them and not just blindly load them.

PROGRAM PATCHES

If you've got a commercial application that doesn't work, then it's worth looking in the `Patches` sub-

directory of the Utilities directory. This contains patches for a number of applications, including older versions of the PC Emulator.

INSTANT OS_BYTE 19

If you are using a monitor that is blanked using the new DPMS power-saving mode then OS_Byte 19, which waits for a vertical sync will return immediately, as there are no sync pulses to wait for. This means that this call should not be used for general timing, but only for synchronising screen updates.

DISC NAME MATCHING

There seems to be a bug in the algorithm that detects duplicate discs, in that if you are copying between two discs that have names that don't differ in the first eight characters then each time you open one the other will be closed.

INCOMPATIBLE APPLICATIONS

If you come across an application that doesn't work properly on RISC OS 3.5, especially if it experiences redraw problems, then try running it in a 16 or 256 colour screen mode. Several applications fail on the new colour modes but will work quite happily on the older modes.

FINDING THE DESKTOP FONT

If plotting text directly into a window, you should match the font that the Desktop is using. The call:

```
SYS "Wimp_ReadSysInfo",8 TO A%,B%
```

will return in A% the handle of the current Desktop font, and in B% the handle of the font that contains the Wimp symbols (tick, cross etc.). These handles can then be passed to the Font Manager plotting calls.

Alternatively, window redraw code can plot text in the Desktop font using the call:

```
SYS "Wimp_TextOp",2,text$, -1, -1,x,y
```

which plots the text in text\$ at the position (x,y). If &80000000 is added to the 2 then the text is right justified to the given position, and adding &40000000 will vertically justify it so that the baseline aligns with system font text.

The related call:

```
SYS "Wimp_TextOp",1,text$,n TO A%
```

will return in A% the width (in OS units) needed to plot the first n characters of the specified string.

UNDITHERED DRAGGING

By default, sprites dragged around the Desktop are dithered to make them transparent.

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Original Outline Fonts from RISC User

Each disc contains ten high quality outline fonts in a variety of different faces. Each disc also contains a number of applications for further processing and manipulation of outline fonts. The fonts and applications are supplied on a single disc with a comprehensive menu system making everything very easy to use.

FONTS DISC 1

Font disc 1 also includes Acorn's Outline Font Manager plus the following applications:

ShowFonts - displays or prints outline fonts
DrawFont - converts outline fonts for use in Draw
FontSwap - allows font substitution
FontCtrl - allows easy tuning of font configuration
FontRead - downloads font definitions to PostScript printers

FONTS DISC 2

FONTS DISC 3

Both Fonts Discs 2 and 3 contain the following additional applications:

FontSpace - allows change of character spacing
Kerner - allows you to kern text (RISC OS 3)
ShowFonts - displays or prints outline fonts for reference
Ligature - allows easy incorporation of ligatures, smart quotes and dashes in your text (RISC OS 3 only)

PFD1a Fonts Disc 1 10.17 ex. VAT

Atlantis
Austin
Blacklet

Chancellor
Classroom
Gangster

Italian
Mercury
MILITARY
Wessex

RISC USER FONTS DISC 1

Buick
~~EXTREME~~
Hudson
JOPPA

Marti
NewTown
OldTown

Salisbury
SLAB
Rob_Roy

RISC USER FONTS DISC 2

Citril
Crikey
Curtis
DYNAMIC

JamJar
JungleDrum
MILLIGAN

STCUTHBERT
Waverly
SELLERS