

# Writing a UserShell

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One of the features of Release 2.0 is that the OS allows the user to change the system default shell, or the *UserShell*. Any time the user opens a shell with *NewShell*, executes a script, RUNs a command, or indirectly calls `System()` with `SYS_UserShell`, the OS will call the UserShell instead of the BootShell (by default the system sets up the BootShell as the UserShell).

Creating UserShells is not easy, and requires doing a fairly large number of things for no apparent reason (the reasons are there, they're just not obvious to the outsider). This article will attempt to give you the information you need in order to create a usable, system-friendly UserShell.

## Initialization

The entity that starts the shell calls the shell code in C style (RTS to exit). This entity also sends a startup packet to your process port. You must retrieve this packet before doing any DOS I/O (much like `WBMessages`). You can use `WaitPkt()` for this. The entity will take care of attaching a `CommandLineInterface` structure to your process, which will be freed on exit from the UserShell by the system.

In your process structure, check the `SegArray` pointed to by `pr_Seglist` (note that it's a `BPTR`). If `SegArray[4]` is `NULL`, you must move the value from `SegArray[3]` to `SegArray[4]`, and `NULL` out `SegArray[3]`. This is because `SegArray[3]` will be used to store the seglist pointer for each program you run.

The startup packet contains some information that tells the UserShell what kind of shell to be. At present, the two sets of sources can launch the UserShell:

- The Run command, `Execute()`, or `System()`
- The *NewShell* or *NewCLI* resident commands

The size of the stack that the system gives the UserShell depends on how the user started the shell. If it was started from `Execute()` or `System()`, the stack is 3200 bytes. If the UserShell was started from *Run*, *NewShell*, or *NewCLI*, the stack is 4000.

The type of shell required is specified by the combination of the packet's `dp_Res1` and `dp_Res2` fields. Here's a piece of code for turning them into a value from 0 to 3:

```
init_type = (parm_pkt->dp_Res1 == 0 ? 0:2)|(parm_pkt->dp_Res2 == 0 ? 0:1);
```

Currently, only types 0 and 2 are implemented. For 1 and 3 you should exit with an error (returning the packet). Type 0 is for `Run`, `Execute()` and `System()`, type 2 is for *NewShell* and *NewCLI*. After setting up your `SegArray` as above, for type 0 call `CliInitRun(pkt)`, and for type 2 call `CliInitNewcli(pkt)`.

These both return a value we'll call "fn". Keep fn around, it has useful state information that you'll need later. Note that these `CliInitXxxx` functions don't follow the normal DOS convention of `Dn` for arguments (they use `A0` for `pkt`!).

The `CliInitXxxx` functions do many magic things to get all the streams and structures properly set up, etc. You shouldn't need to know anything about this or what the values in the packet are, other than `dp_Res1` and `dp_Res2` (see the Appendix for more information on these functions).

Definitions for the values of fn:

- Bit 31 Set to indicate flags are valid
- Bit 3 Set to indicate an asynchronous `System()` call
- Bit 2 Set if this is a `System()` call
- Bit 1 Set if user provided input stream
- Bit 0 Set if `RUN` provided output stream

If fn bit 31 is 0 (`fn >= 0`), then you must check `IoErr()` to find out what to do. If `IoErr()` is a pointer to your process, there has been an error in the initialization of the CLI structure and processing the packet. In this case you should clean up and exit. You don't have to return the packet because the `CliInitXxxx` functions take care of this for you if there is an error. If `IoErr()` isn't a pointer to your process, then if this is a *NewCLI* or *NewShell* command (`init_type` of 2), reply the packet immediately.

If the `init_type` is 0, you have to look at fn to determine when to send back the startup packet. If the shell was called from an asynchronous `System()` function (`((fn & 0x8000000C) == 0x8000000C)`), return the packet immediately. If this is a synchronous `System()` call (`((fn & 0x8000000C) == 0x80000004)` or the fn flags are valid but this is not a `System()` call (`((fn & 0x8000000C) == 0x80000000)` (`Execute()` does this), you return the packet just before exiting from your shell (see the Cleanup section below). If the fn flags are invalid (bit 31 == 0), but there is something other than your task pointer in `IoErr()`, then this shell was called by the *Run* command. Here you can either return the packet immediately, or return it after having loaded the first command (or failed to find/load it). This delay in reply helps avoid the disk thrashing caused by two commands loading at the same instant.

When you do a `ReplyPkt()`, use `ReplyPkt(pkt, pkt->dp_Res1, pkt->dp_Res2)` to avoid losing error codes set up by `CliInitXxxx`.

Initialize `pr_HomeDir` to `NULL`, set up any local shell variables, etc.

We're all set up now, so you can now enter your main loop and start taking commands.

## A Word About the Shell's I/O Handles

There are three pairs of I/O handles in a shell process. The shell's Process structure contains the pr\_CIS (current input stream) and pr\_COS (current output stream) file handles. That Process's CommandLineInterface structure contains the other two pairs of I/O handles: cli\_StandardInput/cli\_StandardOutput and cli\_CurrentInput/cli\_CurrentOutput. Each has different uses within a normal shell.

Routines that operate on Input() or Output(), such as ReadArgs() or ReadItem(), use the pr\_CIS and pr\_COS I/O handles (which they acquire by calling the *dos.library* routines Input() and Output(), not by directly looking at the Process structure). Shell-launched application programs the run on the shell's process also use these I/O handles as their normal input and output channels. This is where functions like scanf() and printf() get and send their input and output. The shell changes these file handles (using SelectInput()/SelectOutput()) according to the shell defaults and according to any I/O redirection.

The cli\_StandardInput and cli\_StandardOutput I/O handles are the default input and output channels for the shell. They usually refer to the user's console window and will not change while the shell is running. The shell should use these values as the default values for pr\_CIS and pr\_COS (via SelectInput() and SelectOutput()) when it runs a command from a command line.

The cli\_CurrentInput handle is the current source of command lines. This normally is the same as cli\_StandardInput. The cli\_CurrentInput handle will differ from cli\_StandardInput when the shell is executing a script or when handling an Execute() or System() call. In these cases, it points to a file handle from which the shell is reading commands. This handle refers to one of three files: the script file you called with the execute command, a temporary file created by the *execute* command, or a pseudo file created by Execute() or System().

When a shell runs the *execute* command, If cli\_CurrentInput differs from cli\_StandardInput, The *execute* command will close cli\_CurrentInput and replace it with a new one, so don't cache the value of cli\_CurrentInput as it will be invalid. In this case, cli\_CurrentInput must *not* be the same as pr\_CIS when you call RunCommand() if the executable could possible be the *execute* commands (or anything else that tries to close cli\_CurrentInput).

The cli\_CurrentOutput file handle is currently unused by the system. It's initialized to the same as cli\_StandardOutput.

## The Main Shell Loop

Note: some things in this section assume your UserShell will act similarly to the Boot Shell in 2.0. If not, modify to see fit, but pay close attention to things external programs will notice (such as the setup

of the process and CLI structures). In particular, the article assumes that you handle scripts by redirecting `cli_CurrentInput` to a file with the script in it, as the *execute* command does. Note that the *execute* command will attempt to do this if you run it--be careful.

Before reading a command line, you need to `SelectInput()` on the I/O handle in the current `cli_CurrentInput`, and `SelectOutput()` on `cli_StandardOutput`. This makes sure the shell is reading from its command line source and writing to the the default output handle.

If this shell is executing a script, you should check if the user hit the break key for scripts (Ctrl-D is what the BootShell uses). If you do detect a script break, you can print an error message to the current output stream by calling `PrintFault(304, "<your shell name>")`. 304 is the error number (`ERROR_BREAK`) and the string gets prepended to the error message (which is currently " :\*\*\*Break"). This allows the OS to print the error message using the standard error message which can be internationalized in future versions of the OS.

Next, determine if you should print a prompt. The nasty statement below sets up the Interactive flag for you, by setting it if the following are true:

```
This shell is not a background shell
input has not been redirected to an Execute/script file
this is not a System() call
```

You don't have to handle it precisely this way, but this works (Note: `0x80000004` is a test for whether this is a `System()` call, see the "fn" bit definitions above).

```
#define SYSTEM          (((LONG)fn) & 0x80000004) == 0x80000004)
#define NOTSCRIPT      (clip->cli_CurrentInput == clip->cli_StandardInput)

clip->cli_Interactive = (!clip->cli_Background && NOTSCRIPT && !SYSTEM) ?
                      DOSTRUE : FALSE;
```

The BootShell prints a prompt if `cli_Interactive` is `DOSTRUE`.

Do all your mucking with the input line, alias and local variable expansion, etc.

## Finding a Program

There are several possible places a shell can look for commands passed to it. The resident list is an important place to look as it contains many commands that the user finds important enough to keep loaded into memory at all times. Some shells have commands built directly into them. Of course, if the shell cannot find a command in the resident list or in its collection of internal commands, the shell has to scan the path looking for the command. If a shell supports the script bit, when it finds a command on disk with the script bit set, it should read commands from the script file.

Here's how you deal with commands on the resident list: After finding the command (under `Forbid()`!), if the Segment structure's `seg_UC` is  $\geq 0$ , increment it; if less than 0, don't modify it. If `seg_UC` is less than `CMD_DISABLED`, the corresponding resident command is currently disabled and you should not execute it. The same is true if `seg_UC` is equal to `CMD_SYSTEM`. After incrementing `seg_UC`, you can `Permit()`. After using a resident command, decrement the `seg_UC` count if it's greater than 0 (under `Forbid()` again).

When identifying scripts, I advise that you use something unique to identify your scripts, and pass all other scripts to the Boot Shell via `System()` for execution. A good method (which was worked out on BIX long ago) is to include within the first 256 characters or so, the string `"#!<your shell name, ala csh>!#"`. BootShells could, for example, start with `"; #!c:execute!#`. The idea is the string inside the `#!...!#` should be the interpreter to run on the script. If none is specified, give it to the BootShell. If you want, you could extend this to include handling of the sequence for all interpreters. The programs should be invoked as `"<interpreter> <filename> <args>"` as if the user had typed that.

Don't forget to set `pr_HomeDir` for programs loaded from disk. The Lock in `pr_HomeDir` should be a `DupLock()` of the directory the program was loaded from. For programs from the resident list, leave it `NULL`.

Please support multi-assigned C: directories. The important thing here is to not lock C:. Instead, prepend "C:" onto the filename you wish to `Lock()/LoadSeg()`. Also, if a command is loaded from C:, get its `pr_HomeDir` by `Lock()`ing the file (with C: prepended), and then using `ParentDir()` to get its home directory.

The Path is attached to `cli_CommandDir`. It is a BPTR to a `NULL` terminated, singly-linked list (connected via BPTRs) of directory Locks:

```
struct pathBPTRlistentry {
    BPTR    pathBPTRlistentry *next;
    struct Lock    directorylock
}
```

Please don't modify the list; use the *Path* command instead. This will make it far easier for us to improve this in the future.

Make sure you clear the `SIGBREAK_CTRL_X` signals before starting a program. In order to prevent the user from hitting a break key somewhere between where you check for the break and where you clear the signals (thus losing the break signal), you may wish check for a break and clear the signals at the same time. The safest way is to use:

```
oldsigs = SetSignal(0L, SIGBREAK_CTRL_C |
                    SIGBREAK_CTRL_D |
                    SIGBREAK_CTRL_E |
                    SIGBREAK_CTRL_F);
```

Then you can check `oldsigs` for any signals that you care about.

## Running a Program

To actually invoke a program on your process, use `RunCommand()`--it does special compatibility magic that keeps certain third-party applications working properly. If `RunCommand()` fails due to lack of memory, it returns -1 (normally success!). In this case, check `IoErr()`. If it is equal to `ERROR_NO_FREE_STORE`, then `RunCommand()` really ran out of memory. Note that `RunCommand()` stuffs a copy of your arguments into the buffer of the input handle for use by `ReadArgs()`, and un-stuffs them when the program exits. Also note that `RunCommand()` takes stack size in bytes, and `cli_DefaultStack` is the size of the stack in LONGs.

After the program has completed, free the Lock in `pr_HomeDir` and set it to `NULL`. Re-setup your I/O handles with `SelectInput()` on `cli_CurrentInput` and `SelectOutput()` on `cli_StandardOutput`. It's a good idea to `NULL` `cli_Module` here as well, as it can make your exit/cleanup logic easier.

You must eat any unused buffered input. Here's some tricky code that does that (read the Autodocs to figure it out if you wish):

```
ch = UnGetC(Input(), -1) ? 0 : '\n';
while ((ch != '\n') && (ch != END_STREAM_CH)) ch = FGetC(Input());
```

Note: `ENDSTREAMCH` is EOF (-1). Newer include files #define this in `<dos/stdio.h>` and `<dos/stdio.i>`.

To finish the main input loop, use the code below or something like it. This keeps compatibility with certain hacks people had figured out about 1.3 (See `SYSTEM` and `NOTSCRIPT` #defines above).

```
/* for compatibility */
/* system exit special case - taken only if they have played */
/* around with the input stream */
if (SYSTEM && NOTSCRIPT) break;
} while (ch != ENDSTREAMCH);
```

*EndCLI* sets `fh_End = 0`, which causes `FGetC()` to call `replenish()`, which returns `ENDSTREAMCH` on `fh_End == 0`. *EndCLI* also sets `cli_Background!` This neatly avoids a prompt after *EndCLI*.

After you've gotten an EOF (falling out of the `while(ch != ENDSTREAMCH)` statement above), you need to check if the shell was executing a script file. For Execute-type scripts, if `(cli_CurrentInput != cli_StandardInput)` is true, the shell was executing a script. If this is the case, you'll need to `Close()` the `cli_CurrentInput`, and `DeleteFile()` the temporary file `cli_CommandFile`, if there is a file name there. Next, set `cli_CurrentInput` to `cli_StandardInput`, and restore the fail level. Then you go back to your normal input loop and accept commands again. Note: this is based on handling scripts in the same manner as the `BootShell`--you may handle them in different ways.

On EOF, you also need to check if this is a `System()` call. The check for a `System()` call is `((fn & 0x80000004) == 0x80000004)`. If you had been handling a `System()` call, or if the shell was not executing a script, you should go to your cleanup code to exit.

## Cleanup

If you're exiting, use `fn` to tell you what to close, etc. First check if `fn` contains valid flags (`((fn & 0x80000000) != 0)`). If it *does not* have valid flags, `Flush()` and `Close()` `cli_StandardOutput` (if non-`NULL`), and `Close()` `cli_StandardInput` (if non-`NULL`). If `fn` does contain valid flags, `Flush(Output())`, then check the other flags in `fn`. If `(fn&2 == 0)` (if the user *didn't* provide an input stream), `Close()` `cli_StandardInput`. If `(fn&1 == 1)` (if *Run* provided an output stream), `Close()` `cli_StandardOutput` (note, this is opposite the previous flag!) If `(fn&8 == 0)` (if this is *not* an asynchronous `System()` call), you still have to `ReplyPkt()` the initial packet. Before sending back the packet put `cli_ReturnCode` in the packet's `result1` and `cli_Result2` in the packet's `result2` (i.e. return the result of the last program run if this was a synchronous `System()` or `Execute()` call).

In cleanup, unlock `pr_CurrentDir` and set it to `NULL`, free up anything you allocated, and exit! The system will take care of your `CommandLineInterface` structure, and anything else it allocated.

## Installing the New User Shell

After you have compiled your creation, you need to put its seglist on the resident list under the name "shell". Adding it to the resident list is a simple:

```
Resident shell <shell-file> SYSTEM
```

Now anything that calls the user shell (like *NewShell*, `Execute()`, and `System()`) will call your shell. Note that under 2.04, the *Shell* icon actually runs `sys:System/CLI`, which calls the `BootShell` (the default `UserShell`) and not the current `UserShell`.

If you need to restore the `BootShell` as the `UserShell`, compile and run the program *RestoreShell.c* at the end of this article

## Credits

I thank greatly the input and bug reports I got from Bill Hawes during the development of the 2.0 DOS and it's shell interface. It's still extremely ungainly, but it is now usable.

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