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**Info?!**

**What more information could you be referring to? The whole purpose of the Guide to Auto-Pilot is to give you information. If there was anything significant it would be in the Guide. Not here! I have given you everything I have - well, at least everything verifiable and not legally actionable. So hitting the INFO button is a bit redundant ¿no? And don't go traipsing through my 3 storerooms either. . . I've got to get new locks. . .**

## What is Auto-Pilot?

Auto-Pilot is an undocumented and unsupported feature of WinCIM version 1.1 and later. It is a navigational tool which can automate common CompuServe tasks and therefore save connect-time charges.

Advantages to using Auto-Pilot:

- It doesn't cost a cent.
- Although limited in features compared to other navigators, it is easy to set up and use.
- Because it is part of WinCIM, it closely integrates itself with the precise way you use WinCIM.
- There are no script commands and procedures to learn.
- Allows multiple file downloads for users of the PCFF (File Finder) feature. This is a major convenience for power users.
- It is extremely cool to tell your friends that you are using an undocumented feature of CompuServe.




Disadvantages may be blissfully ignored or carefully considered in the Tips and Suggestions topic in the main contents window.

## It's easy!

So you insist in disregarding sober advice to stay away from Auto-Pilot! . . . Well, you will have no one to blame except yourself then.

- With a text editor such as Notepad, open WINCIM.INI, in the CSERVEWINCIM directory.
- Add a single line at the end of the [General Preferences] section:  
**Auto-Pilot=On**  
Note the hyphen. WinCIM is kind of sensitive about that.
- After you restart WinCIM, a new "Auto-Pilot" choice has automagically materialized from the entrails of program code. Click on the "Special" menu to access your new tool. The window that you will encounter is explained in the next topic.

## **Auto-Pilot Main Window**

Click where cursor changes to  for more information.

## Task sets

The jobs that Auto-Pilot will do for you are organized into task sets. Here you see 5 task sets defined. You may run one or more at the same time. The default task set is called [Interactively Marked](#).

### Interactively marked

This task set is active automatically any time you are in a forum or using the file finder. This tool is surprisingly powerful in the way it operates as will be shown later in this Guide.



### Objects to retrieve box

This box will list the forum sections that you have set the task set to download for you, as well as list any threads or files you may have marked while browsing in a previous session.

In this example, 2 message sections and 2 library files were marked while the user was in the Help forum. Notice that the highlighted file is described more fully in the status bar below this box.

## Help

This is the last time you will receive anything helpful by clicking here. CompuServe does not provide help for Auto-Pilot, will not provide help in the future and did not want you to see this window in the first place.

### Disconnect when done

Works fine for interactively marked item downloads. Not reliable for normal task sets. For regular task set runs, use the disconnect option provided when the download dialog box opens.

## Begin

Sets a task set on its way! The task set will connect to the indicated forum and begin its download. A download status box will appear. Auto-Pilot will automatically download message sections to the proper folder. There is no need to create this folder ahead of time if this is the first time for a task set. Notice that Auto-Pilot bypasses all the CompuServe advertisements and useless announcements.

OK

Programmers like to put these buttons in to reassure the user.

## Setup

Click here to access window to set up a new task set. See "Setting up new task sets" in the Contents page.

## Remove

This option is used to remove individual tasks from a task set. If a task set is set up to do several functions, you may want to remove one or two for a particular Auto-Pilot launch. Also while browsing an area where extra connect-time charges are in effect, this button makes it easy to mark many files while leaving the option to make a final decision while off-line. Auto-Pilot keeps track of everything you mark automatically because of the reliable "interactively marked" mode. After deciding while off-line and at your own convenience, which files to finally download, you can then prevent the unwanted files from being included in the download. Just highlight the item in the "Objects to retrieve" box and click on this button.

## PCFF (File Finder) Enhancement

Auto-Pilot is not the most powerful of navigators - but it can do something that no other navigator can do. It eliminates one of the most aggravating features of PCFF (formerly IBMFF), CompuServe's search and retrieve feature. This is the supposed lack of ability to download several files at once after marking.

The workaround is quite simple - just rely on Auto-Pilot's default "Interactively Marked" task set. As you display each file that you wish to download in your search, [you will see an option that is not available for anyone except Auto-Pilot users](#). This is the "mark for retrieve later" checkbox. Mark this box for all files you want. Instead of retrieving immediately, leave the File Finder. Activate Auto-Pilot. The files you have marked will be awaiting your pleasure in the "Objects to Retrieve" box. Make your choices and send Auto-Pilot on its way. And there you have it --- multiple file downloads in the File Finder!

Remember this general principle: Auto-Pilot tracks your visits to forums and other areas in "real time". You mark - it marks. When in doubt, mark that box! You can always deselect any item from the "Objects to Retrieve" box later. Note however, that this technique does not work in areas where there are literally no objects to mark - such as the UseNet area. By the way, CSNav can't do any better in those areas. . . A pity.



## Tips and Suggestions from users

Despite warnings and [horror stories](#) spread by well-meaning sysops, many people use Auto-Pilot daily without encountering disaster. WinCIM itself is accused of being buggy and slow, but users look forward to its eventual perfection rather than elimination. The observations below are submitted in that spirit.

There were reports of problems when Auto-Pilot and another navigator are loaded into memory simultaneously. This is not a problem of Auto-Pilot. Even CSNav and WinCIM can and often do combine to scramble the filing cabinet. The filing cabinet, at the very center of an on-line user's activity, is prone to damage by any number of otherwise harmless actions. This is why the disaster recovery 'Rebuild Cabinet Indexes' is a regular menu item! It is the [Achilles' heel](#) of WinCIM and represents the single most important area of concern for WinCIM developers.

Sysops report another weakness of WinCIM which affects both Auto-Pilot and the official CompuServe navigator: the filing cabinet can be corrupted if a lot of messages in the filing cabinet are deleted. Therefore a good habit to get into is to rebuild cabinet indexes after a heavy deleting session. It is unfortunate that users have to learn about databases when all we really want to learn is how to use a communications program.

In WinCIM versions 1.2 and later, a task set will abort if it cannot literally comply with its directions. For example, if a task set is sent off to collect messages in 3 forums, it will abort if nothing is found in the first forum, regardless of messages that may be waiting in the last two. This problem does not exist for Auto-Pilot in WinCIM version 1.1. Auto-Pilot merely posts an error message and continues on its way. Here is a workaround submitted by John Cowart [76326,3174] which works for him and that you may want to try:

If I want to retrieve waiting messages only, I also select a section that normally has low traffic. Even if there are no messages in that section and no waiting messages, WinCIM will proceed normally. Example - I can retrieve Waiting Messages and the Network section in WinCIM Support, and there is no failure, even if there is nothing in either. Most forums have a "dud" section that few people use.

It is impossible to delete task sets until 3 or more exist. Modifying individual task sets can also lead to problems in rare [circumstances](#). In general, the best way to prevent problems is to avoid putting all the forums you want to visit into one task set. **Keep task sets simple**. Launch these task sets from Basic Services if you are not charged for time in this area. This way, if anything does not work correctly, you will know which area caused the problem

Sometimes a forum will change how it is organized. This will unhinge all navigator software. If you notice a Task Set which previously worked fine no longer functioning, this may be the explanation. Users of other navigators must painstakingly construct a new script. Auto-Pilot will save you this trouble. Simply delete the troublesome forum from the forum database (in the Special menu), then re-enter that forum. WinCIM will

update the database and the new information will automatically appear in the Service Choices drop-down box.

The "Disconnect when done" checkbox in the main window works well only for downloads of interactively marked items. For other task sets, use the disconnect checkbox in the information box which appears while the download is in progress.

If all else fails, you can restart with a clean slate by deleting the files which hold the task set data. These files are contained in the C:\SERVE\SUPPORT directory and take the form of W000000x.SES. Deleting will restore all defaults.

CimRater, the popular shareware program which tracks connect charges for you, now works with Auto-Pilot. You can obtain this valuable utility from the library of the WinCIM Support forum. And thank Fred Schetterer [73303,3532] for his good work!

If you use Auto-Pilot often, especially if you want quick access to it when downloading in tandem with the File Finder feature, you should consider adding Auto-Pilot to your button ribbon. This has an added advantage since when you are in an area where Auto-Pilot can automatically track your actions, this icon will fade. This gives direct visual confirmation that you are in the "interactively marked" mode.

## Horrors!

The author of this file was told "don't come crying to CompuServe if Auto-Pilot scrambles your filing cabinet." One story of a 'CMOS meltdown' was leaked for innocent souls. When challenged on the facts, CompuServe backed off from its lurid claims. The possibility that Auto-Pilot makes buying and learning the intricacies and foibles of CSNav unnecessary for the average user is probably not related to the spread of such tales.

Yes, you're right. Lousy metaphor.... WinCIM is no Achilles. The number of innocent actions which will corrupt your filing cabinet and make it useless is astounding. For instance, the WinCIM Support forum can be successfully reached by using any of at least 3 different GO words. But use only one and use it every time or you will soon have a population of dizzy folders on your hands as well as a corrupted forums database.

Troubled users of CSNav have seen a variation of this **actual message** from the sysop team many times: " I'm sorry you are having a difficult time right now, but I think it is coincidental that you are having all this trouble now. Index corruption is nothing new to CSNav. Generally, the fewer messages in your Cabinet, the fewer Cabinet problems, although it is fairly random."

An intelligent, objective reader will conclude that CServe's pious pronouncements protecting us from Auto-Pilot are intellectually dishonest. But this unintelligent, subjective author will conclude: Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire!


Certain circumstances, which because of CompuServe's reluctance in allowing Auto-Pilot users to share experiences in their forums, cannot at this time be sufficiently defined for inclusion in this guide. One method to discourage discussion is to shunt all messages mentioning this topic to a hidden file. Some sysops do this avidly; some sysops have more important things to do.

Another subtle method is to exclude this author from entry into the WinCIM Support forum and send threats to deal similarly with any user who mentions my name or address in that forum.

## Making a new task set

Let's set up a task set to go to a forum and download some message sections. Once this task set is made, Auto-Pilot remembers it and you will be able to perform this task in the future with a few mouseclicks - with Auto-Pilot handling all the rest far faster than you could. We will use the [WinCIM Support](#) forum for practice.

- Click on the setup button in the main Auto-Pilot window.
- Type in "WinCIM support" in the New Set of Marked Objects box.
- Now click on the arrow at the [Service Choices](#) box. Select WinCIM Support from the resulting dropdown box. A complete list of forum sections will now appear.
- Mark the sections you would wish to download on a regular basis. Remember that you can always remove any particular section or subtask on an ad hoc basis using the Remove button as explained in the main window. In the example below, Auto-Pilot has been told to download 5 sections as well as any waiting messages.

Click where cursor turns to  for more information.

### Task set dropdown box

Gives full list of task sets already defined.

## New

An alternative way to access the New Set of Marked Objects box to name a new task set.



## Rename

The fact that we can rename a task set is poor compensation for the many things that our little navigator will **not** do for us.

## Delete

This button will not become active until after there are 3 task sets defined. This ability is called a "bug".

### Send forum messages

Do **not** check this box **except** when you actually have forum messages to send. Auto-Pilot is a very literal beast and will become extremely confused if told to do something it can not actually do.

### Services Choices dropdown box

This list is automatically updated from the forum database. It not only tracks every forum you have visited, it also keeps a list of every section in these forums! It is a dramatic example of the close integration of Auto-Pilot with WinCIM. It is the *only* example, dramatic or otherwise, of close integration with WinCIM.

## Section list box

Box which lists. . . uhhh, sections.

### Date radio buttons

"Since last access" tells Auto-Pilot to pick up only those messages that have been posted in the forum since you last accessed it. "Since date" doesn't tell Auto-Pilot anything since it just plain doesn't work. Since only one option works, you don't have to bother with this setting. This is another way our navigator makes our lives a little bit easier.

OK

Confirms completion of new task set.

### WinCIM Support forum

A good choice since it is free of connect charges and if anything goes wrong with your very first task set, you can then conveniently return to complain of "intolerable bugs in WinCIM".



### Task list box

Visual verification of subtasks making up this task set.

## Last Word

A CompuServe employee hotly referred to the author of this guide as "either a beta tester violating his Non-Disclosure Agreement or a good detective." The compliment is now graciously acknowledged. One of the pleasures of my volunteer efforts has been feedback from Auto-Pilot users. Here are responses to 3 of the most frequently asked questions.

### [Why doesn't CompuServe support Auto-Pilot?](#)

This decision was not made at the technical, programmer level. There are important technical problems with WinCIM and CSNav, but an executive-level management decision was made to deal with them - and both programs were unleashed upon us with unresolved quirks to make our on-line time more interesting. By the same executive process, support was removed from Auto-Pilot.

It was felt that releasing a navigator feature open to all WinCIM users would overtax the ability of CompuServe to provide support. Navigators are generally tools of the more sophisticated user. CompuServe currently gains 80,000 new subscribers each month and many of these people are new to the on-line world, new to the Windows environment and new to computers. Visit the official navigator forum (GO CSNAVSUP) and you will get an idea of the logistical headache support can be even for CSNav users, most of whom have previous on-line experience.

As some people have speculated, this decision to remove *support* from Auto-Pilot may not have been made at CompuServe at all. CompuServe's bottom line is carefully scrutinized by their owners, HR Block, the financial giant best known for assisting clients in reducing their *support* to the U.S government.

### [Auto-Pilot functionality was reduced after the release of WinCIM 1.1. Will Auto-Pilot soon be eliminated entirely?](#)

Every attempt will be made to eradicate this useful feature unloved by HR Block. But certain features are embedded deeply into the code, so this will not be a trivial task. To give an example: users of the new CompuServe CD will notice that the file finder feature included on the CD is wonderfully easy to use and capable of multiple marking and downloading. It is almost as if the CD file finder program accesses the hidden Auto-Pilot code. Well,..... it does. CompuServe has recently assigned (contracted out, actually) a team to structure a new CD file finder which will avoid using Auto-Pilot. Don't look for that effort to bear fruit any time soon however.

The priority programming challenge for the WinCIM developers is the openly acknowledged need to reorganize the functions carried out, and botched, by the fragile File Cabinet. Sysops, usually the last to be informed and thus have our sympathy, still sometimes claim that Auto-Pilot will be released in the future "as soon as the kinks are worked out." In fact, beta testing of the feature was killed some time ago. It should be noted that by some professional standards, the testing was not seriously pursued. Beta testers were not given documentation - or even a Help file to guide them!

Are there even more undocumented features available?

Yes, there are.

## More!

Yes, there are many more undocumented features of CompuServe - and I would gladly share them with you if I knew them!! But here are items that you may find of value. Click on the appropriate icon to unlock even more on the topic.

You can create an option that will allow you to keep an automatic and exact record of all your actions while on-line. This log is especially useful for investigating problems when they occur and provides you with something wonderfully technical to send the helpful sysops when they ask "Could you please provide more detailed information?" Edit your WINCIM.INI file (you're getting good at this by now) by adding a new section with a one line content:

[Debug]  
[Commport-Logging-File=c:\cserve\wincim\hmi.log](#)

Restart WinCIM. Now you will find not one, but **two** additions to the Special menu. In order to create a complete log of your session (HMI.LOG) all that must be done is select the "Debug Mode" option before logging on. Selecting this should automatically select "Session Logging". If not, just manually select it. As indicated, the session log will be found in the c:\cserve\wincim subdirectory. Note that this item actually is documented - in a restricted access area closed to the public. A sysop won't tell you about this tool until you are already in deep trouble and probably in no mood to calmly edit any .ini file. Be prepared!



Now here's something that you can use every time you download a file. Ever curious about what is going on while the download is in progress? Sometimes it seems to go fast and sometimes not? Add this line to the [General Preferences] section:

[Show-Efficiency=On](#)

This undocumented addition will add a line to the download status box which gives a running report on the efficiency of the transfer. Try it. Go to the WinCIM Support forum, access the library and download a moderately large file - you should be studying these files anyway.



And for users of the Executive News Service, here is a way to save hefty surcharges in that area: Did you know that you do not have to download the texts of the results of news searches while the ENS clock is running? Yes, that is the standard method, but there is an elegant and cheaper alternative. Select the items you want by article number -- then send them e-mail to your own user ID! This shortcircuits the billing process. Having the results of news searches sent to e-mailboxes is undocumented, unsupported and unloved by HR Block. Just wanted to warn you.



**The author of this guide is a union member working in Miami, Florida. He wishes to thank Auto-Pilot users in North America, the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Spain for their invaluable aid in this project. If you find this guide of value, please distribute it intact. Feedback is always appreciated and the author can be reached at CompuServe 74344,1350. Messages left in the WinCIM Support forum do not count against your monthly mail**

allotment. . . That's a hint.



Thanks for visiting me in my secret corner of CompuServe! I must remain here so please find your own way out. Polite persons will not open doors that go off into areas that do not concern them.

**Brett Merkey**



## Storeroom No.2

Please keep all lights on in this storeroom. It is very necessary because of the problem with all the bugs that WinCIM has brought it. Thank you.

The Mgt.

Have you noticed (of course you have!) that in the [Custom-Ribbon] section of wincim.ini that each activity that may be represented on your Ribbon has a code number associated with it? For instance, if you changed the fifth icon on the ribbon to access Auto-Pilot, you should see this line:

**Button-Activity-5=89**

If one meticulously investigates to find the code number for each possible activity, one will find interesting gaps in the number series. Like the number 96. Set one of the icons to this code # and you will be accessing InfoPlex readings. InfoPlex is the CompuServe in-house communication system. You see, the upper level CompuServe "associates" do not use the CompuServe system to communicate among themselves. Pause to absorb the pregnancy of meaning in that fact..... And yes, you can add yet another undocumented item to your Special menu by editing an .ini file, this time the CIS.INI file in the CSERVE subdirectory. Just add a new section:

**[InfoPlex]  
Enabled=ON**

Note that you will need a friend in high places to use this setting since more passwords are required.

You have just upgraded your modem or changed your access number or moved to another node (remember when everyone lived in cities, countries, and other geopolitical entities?). You want to make certain that you are connected at the rate you want. You ask one of those really helpful CompuServe employees for advice and you get this (invariable) paste:

"You can view your current connection speed in the GO PER area. After entering that area, you can type TER RATE at the ! prompt. Your connection speed will then be displayed. Please be aware that that area is an extended service area."

If thrift is still valued in your node and/or geopolitical entity, you may prefer a method which avoids the extended charges: **GO ASCII**. At the ! prompt, type **EXIT**. Then **TER RATE**. After getting your connect rate, type **EXIT**. Then **GO HMI**.

Since the introduction of WinCIM, many people have asked if it was possible to change the icon-buttons in the big and colorful Browse menu - or if the GO words attached to these buttons could be changed. In effect, many people would like a customized Browse menu. CompuServe's response to ordinary users, you and me, is that customizing is not possible. Their response to large corporations is obviously different since dozens of customized versions of WinCIM exist for that category of user.

**The truth is, your graphical menu is completely customizable!** You can use any bitmap, any icon you choose and you can attach any legitimate GO word to these icon-buttons. You can even add or delete items in the Services drop-down box. Customizing requires no programming skills but the process is detailed and tedious. So, in order not to increase their support burden, CompuServe simply denies that customizing is possible. A conceptually clear yet morally turgid strategy.

Specific directions cannot be included in this Guide because the cost of transmission would increase considerably - and would be no fun to read anyway. But, at the request of many readers, I have put together a kit which will allow the average non-corporate entity certain corporate luxuries. CompuServe collects \$2000 for customizing. My Custom Kit is distributed for \$4. Don't look at the difference in price as a commentary on corporate greed. They just must have more mouths to feed than I.

If you are interested, e-mail me. I will send you a self-extracting file called CUSTOM.EXE which will contain all directions and everything you need to have a Browse menu the equal of any

**multinational corporation. Better!**

**All you have to do is send \$4 and promise not to open any of my other storerooms.**

**This is an option to try once to see how it works then set aside until you need it. Hmi.log can be viewed with any text editor but the contents appear a bit jumbled (somewhat analogous to what WinCIM does to our filing cabinets) until you view it with a hexeditor, that minimal programmer's tool.**

**Users have found that selecting this session logging mode will measurably slow your on-line session. The file created in such a session will also occupy considerable space on your hard drive - so delete it if you don't need it. Now you know why CompuServe hides the documentation on this!**



The only danger in using an undocumented gauge is that you can never be too sure what it actually measures! You will see from your own experiences that this rating takes into account many real factors like line conditions and service load as it tracks the number of data packets which must be resent when transmission errors are detected.

But Alan Rudnick [71224,2234] did some investigating and found a real weakness in the measurement. Apparently an important factor in the denominator of the equation is the baud rate taken from your session setting, not the actual speed of the port. This means you can artificially lower apparent efficiency by entering a baud rate that is significantly higher than your modem speed - which is what many people actually do.

Joanna Weinberger [72144,3705] of the Investors Forum has kindly offered the following instructions and comments:

There is a 'mark for retrieval' option in ENS which is very convenient - and also very expensive since the download is billed at extended service rate plus a \$15/hour surcharge. Here is how to avoid some of the charge.

- 1) When ready to collect your news, GO ASCII.
- 2) When the terminal emulation window opens, GO ENS.
- 3) Select the folder, then pick choice 1 "Show Headlines".
- 4) To retrieve all your articles, type SEND 1-xx, where xx is the number of the last article. You can retrieve a specific article by typing SEND followed by the number of the article.
- 5) When prompted for recipient's address, just hit <enter>.
- 6) Next, DEL ALL to remove items from folder.
- 7) Exit ENS and GO HMI to return to the world of sound and color.

Joanna finishes - "The articles will be in your CompuServe mailbox several minutes after you leave ENS. I also recommend downloading the file ENS.DOC in the Help Forum library. It has detailed instructions for setting up folders."

### Storeroom No.3

Please keep lights on.

Thank you. ...Mgt

CompuServe users outside of the United States sometimes think they are really second-class citizens in this sprawling worldwide service. People outside the U.S. pay more for less service. While the blame for this cannot be laid completely at the doorstep of CompuServe headquarters in Columbus, Ohio - there persists the perception that more could be done if the will existed.

Guide readers may have an interest in the excerpted correspondence below. Canadian Guide reader, [Sébastien G. Messier](#), spent over a month trying to find the truth about the existence of a toll free CServe support line for Canada. It appears that the official support line is not toll free, while other people, privy to inside information, have a toll free number available. Sébastien has done customers a service by hounding Customer Service for the truth. Well, truth can appear a wispy thing indeed in a bureaucratic jungle but I'll let readers make up their own minds. I have merely colorized a few points for emphasis. Obviously, color and fancy fonts cannot be transmitted in normal e-mail - at least not until MicroSoft has their new network in place.

\*\*\*\*\*

To: Sebastien G. Messier

Re: 1-800-635-6225

Thank you for your patience! This is in regards to your message concerning contacting CompuServe's Customer Service from Canada using 1-800-635-6225.

This number was owned by ZiffNet. The calls to this number were routed to CompuServe's Customer Service, because they contracted our customer service department to handle their customer service. Because this was not our customer service number, we could not publish this number in any documentation for CompuServe's Customer Service. However, this is now our customer service number, and this number is given out to members who ask for an 800 number from Canada. When documentation is updated, this number will be included.

\*\*\*\*\*

To:CS Representative

Fr: Sebastien G. Messier

Thank you very much for taking time to look into this. I really appreciate your efforts into this matter. However, if you'll excuse me for being so blunt, I am more than slightly disappointed by CIS' behavior regarding the existence of this number. **As you have stated** in a previous message, this number has been hooked up to CIS' customer service since at least **February 1994**. Since then, many things could have/should have been updated. The help file that comes with WinCim (dated Sep. 94) includes the 614 number for Canadian tech support. (I will ignore the political meaning of not giving Canada its own entry but rather including it along with the U.S.).

What's more, last week, I posted a message in one of the help forums and asked for the tech support number. The answer I got was (614) 529-1340.

**All in all though, the fact that it took 2 weeks and 4 messages for CIS**

to actually come out and say: "Yes, this is our customer service number for Canada," is not very encouraging, in terms of commitment to service & openness. I do not know what the details of CIS' attitude in the matter of the 'secret' 800 number are, but somehow I don't get the feeling knowing them would make me very happy. I only hope this is an honest mistake, and not a sign of the way CIS treats its members.

Regards,

Sébastien G. Messier

\*\*\*\*\*

