

Z-Start

The Launch utility for Microsoft Windows 95 ®

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Introduction

Z-Start is the utility for everyone who has ever wondered if there is any way to have programs start up automatically in a specific order when Windows boots up and for those who need more control over the way their apps are launched.

The Windows 95's Startup folder is a very convenient and easy to use way to have programs launched automatically whenever you boot up your system. Unfortunately, it provides no control over the way those programs are launched. Programs and shortcuts placed into the "StartUp" folder are executed in alphabetical order and they are all launched one after the other, which can result in a slow startup when multiple applications compete for system resources or even get in conflict among themselves.

Z-Start addresses these issues. With **Z-Start** you can:

- Specify which program, shortcut or document you want launched.
- Specify and change the order in which the programs are launched.
- Launch a program and immediately go ahead with the next on the list.
- Launch a program and wait until the launched program terminates before launching the next one (great for one-time initialization programs).
- Launch a program and wait for a fixed period of time before launching the next program, thus giving the program the proper time to start, initialize and run before depending programs are launched.
- Have a program launched only on certain days of the week.
- Specify that a program is to be launched only once per day - no matter how often you start your system.
- Set up multiple launch configurations that can be selected by pressing a single key.
- Display a status window showing which task is currently being processed.

Z-Start is designed to be as compact an application as possible. All functions are implemented as pure VB code using numerous API calls. **Z-Start** is a 32 bit-application and will run only under Windows 95. Please note that no testing has been done under Windows NT, though it may work in NT 4.0 and higher.

Requirements

To use **Z-Start**, you need a system running Windows 95. In addition to the files provided in this distribution package, you will need the usual VB4-32 support files.

The following files should be installed on your system:

VB40032.DLL
MSVCRT20.DLL

MSVCRT40.DLL

You can obtain copies of these runtime files on most BBS's. These files must all be located in your \Windows\System directory.

Installation

An installation/deinstallation program is supplied in this package. After unzipping the archive to a working directory, open Explorer, browse to the directory and start the program "Setup.exe" by double-clicking it.

After Setup has initialized, click the OK button to proceed. By default, Z-Start will be installed in a separate directory, named "Z-Start", under your "Program Files" directory. You can change this to a different directory by clicking the "Change Directory" button. When you have set the desired directory, click on the „Z“ button to start the installation process. The Setup program will install the program files and add a shortcut to your Program menu. You can later move this shortcut to a different program folder by right-clicking the Start-button and selecting "Explore".

This shortcut is intended to start Z-Start in its interactive, or „editing“ mode. Do not move this shortcut into your Startup folder. A special shortcut for auto-starting Z-Start will be set up during the installation routine (see below).

After the Setup program is finished, you can delete the unzipped files from your working directory. You may want to keep a backup copy of your ZIP file, in case you ever need to reinstall this program.

Setting it up

After the installation is complete, you are ready to set the program up for your system. Setting up Z-Start involves working with the current entries of your Start Menu / Programs / Startup folder, so you may want to have a current backup of at least the C:\Windows\Start Menu directories available.

The launch mechanism of Windows 95 searches the contents of one special programs folder, the Startup folder, when Windows 95 is starting. Anything found in this folder is executed. Z-Start works by taking these entries out of the startup folder, moving them to its own program directory and adding them to its own launch list (which you can edit later). It then places a shortcut to itself into the Startup folder. The next time Windows starts, it will find only this shortcut in its Startup folder and hence only launch Z-Start, which then takes over and begins launching applications.

Automatic Setup

Z-Start includes an install routine that makes the initial setup virtually a one-click operation. Start Z-Start from the Program menu. Click the button labeled "Install". A warning message will appear; this is intended to catch accidental use of this routine. If you click "No" on this message box, the installation routine will quit without doing anything. Clicking "Yes" will start the installation routine; this will do the following:

- Move all existing entries from Windows 95's StartUp folder to the program folder where Z-Start is installed.
- Install these entries in Z-Start's launch list, using default values.
- Create a shortcut to auto-start Z-Start itself in Windows' StartUp folder.

Be aware that this installation routine is intended for an initial setup only; as soon as it is complete, a registry key is set that will cause the Install button to disappear from the program window. For cases where you need to do a new installation when this key is already present in your registry, a command line parameter, „/reinstall“ is provided to remove it (see the section „Command line parameters“ below).

Manual Setup

If you do not wish to use the automatic routine, you can also do the tasks listed above manually. You will have to:

- Move all existing entries from Windows 95's StartUp folder to a different folder, either under the Program menu or anywhere else on your system.
- Add the desired tasks to Z-Start's launch list.
- Create a shortcut to auto-start Z-Start itself in Windows 95's StartUp folder.

If you want to set up your own shortcuts, there is one important item: Z-Start has two modes in which it will run. Using a command line like

```
C:\Program Files\Z-Start\Z-Start.exe
```

executes Z-Start in its interactive mode, where you can define and change your launch list. Use this type of command for shortcuts with which you want to start the program for editing purposes.

In order to have Z-Start run and launch your programs automatically, in its "/run" mode, you must add a parameter, "/run". The complete line should look like:

```
C:\Program Files\Z-Start\Z-Start.exe /run
```

This extra parameter will tell Z-Start not to start in interactive mode but rather to just load, process its launch list and terminate. Z-Start will not stay active after it has launched all tasks. One exception: if the last program has a „Wait" option set specified, Z-Start will remain active until the wait condition is met.

Command line parameters

Certain parameters can be used to influence the runtime behavior of **Z-Start**. If you want to always use a parameter, right-click the Start-button, select Explore and browse to the folder where the shortcut is located. Right-click the shortcut, select Properties and go the Shortcut tab. The command line used to launch **Z-Start** is listed in the field labeled „Target“. Append the parameters you want to use to end of this line.

For testing purposes, you can manually launch **Z-Start** with certain parameters by clicking the Start button and selecting „Run“. Click the Browse button and locate the Z-Start.exe file in the directory you installed it in, then click OK. Now move the cursor to the end of the Run command line and type in the required parameter.

Command line parameters can be freely mixed; you can use them in any order and you can use upper- or lowercase characters or a combination of both.

/run

The parameter „/run“ instructs **Z-Start** not to start in its interactive mode, but rather load invisibly and begin to process its launch list. This parameter must be specified in the shortcut that is used to launch **Z-Start** from the Windows Startup folder.

/nodisp

While **Z-Start** processes the launch list, executes programs and pauses between launches, it displays a small status window in the center of the screen. You can check the progress of the startup process in this window. If you prefer not have this status window displayed, you can add another parameter, „/nodisp“, to the command line:

```
C:\Program Files\Z-Start\Z-Start.exe /run /nodisp
```

/skwait

This parameter is used for processing different launch configurations (see the section on launch configurations below). By default, **Z-Start** pauses for five seconds before starting to launch applications; during this time, you can press a startkey from „a“ to „z“ to select one of up to 26 different configurations. If no key is pressed, it will use a default configuration. To change this waiting period, you can include the parameter „/skwait=x“ in the command line, where „x“ is the number of seconds the window is to be displayed before **Z-Start** uses the default configuration:

```
C:\Program Files\Z-Start\Z-Start.exe /run /skwait=30
```

This will cause **Z-Start** to pause for up to 30 seconds before starting to process the default configuration, unless you press a key before this time elapses. The maximum delay time is 999 seconds. To suppress the window completely and have **Z-Start** always use the default configuration, you can set this parameter to zero:

```
C:\Program Files\Z-Start\Z-Start.exe /run /skwait=0
```

This effectively disables launch configurations; only the configuration set as the default in Z-Start's main window will be executed with no possibility to intervene at launch time.

/reinstall

As described in the section on automatic installation above, Z-Start takes note of a completed installation process by writing a key to the registry. In cases where you need to install the program fresh, for example after backing up a disk or upgrading your OS, this key will make it impossible to run the installation process again. To remove the key and thereby re-enabling the Install button, you can start Z-Start with the „reinstall“ parameter. Since this usually is a one-of-a-kind operation, this parameter is best used by starting Z-Start manually through the Run option of the Start menu (see top of this section).

De-Installation

If you decide at a later time to take Z-Start off your system, you should first restore the old entries in your Startup folder. Use Explorer to delete the shortcut „Z-Start Launcher.lnk“ from your Startup folder, then move the entries that the Installation routine moved from Startup to the program folder back into Startup.

Now, just click the Start button, go to Settings and open Control Panel. Double-click on "Add/Remove Programs" and look up "Z-Start" in the list of installed programs, then click the Add/Remove button.

Caution: This will attempt to remove the complete program directory - please make sure that you move all shortcuts and other files you may have placed into this directory to a different location before de-installing the program. If any files not installed during Setup are found, the directory cannot be removed automatically.

Working with the Launch List

Run Z-Start by clicking its program menu item. The program window will appear on your desktop, showing you the existing launch list and the various tool buttons. The launch list will display the sequence number, a description of the task and the specified wait options. If you have followed the setup procedure above, the list box should now show the items that you had previously defined as startup tasks. You will also see a field for the default launch configuration; please refer to the chapter on launch configurations for more information about this.

To add a task to the launch list, click the "Add" button and the New Task window will appear. On this window, you will find text fields for "Description" and "Command" as well as framed areas with various options. When all details have been entered, click the OK button to add the

task to the launch list. New tasks will initially be added to the bottom of the list; you can then put them into their proper sequence spot.

Description

This field is only used to identify the task in the launch list and in the status window during execution; type any name you wish (up to 30 characters). A description must be entered for every task. The default description used during the installation process is the name of the program or shortcut; when adding tasks later on, you must provide a description yourself.

Command

This field is the actual command line that Z-Start will execute to launch your task. You can use any valid command, calls to programs or batch files as well as calls to documents with associated programs. Calls to programs can also contain parameters, such as a file name. A few examples:

```
C:\Windows\notepad.exe  
Starts "Notepad".
```

```
C:\Windows\notepad.exe c:\windows\readme.txt  
Starts "Notepad" with the Windows Readme file open for editing.
```

```
C:\Windows\readme.txt  
Same as above, provided .txt files are associated with Notepad.
```

Please note that, while Z-Start may find the program along Windows' search path, it is usually a good idea to type in the complete path to your program, as shown in these examples.

You can also use existing shortcuts to programs; the file extension for shortcuts is ".lnk" (for "link"). Suppose you have a shortcut to your favorite program on your desktop. You can have Z-Start launch this shortcut by specifying the command line

```
C:\Windows\Desktop\MyShortcut.lnk
```

You will note that Z-Start does not have any options for running programs minimized or maximized or for specifying start directories; these options can be specified in shortcuts, so the functionality has not been duplicated here. If, for example, you need to launch a program in a minimized state, you can first create a shortcut specifying this option, then launch the shortcut.

For easier entry of the command line, a "Browse" button is supplied that will pop up a standard file browse dialog. This dialog allows you to browse for all program files (file extensions .exe and .com for executables, .bat for DOS batch files, .pif for DOS program information files and .lnk for Windows shortcuts) or for all file types to select documents.

Please note that Z-Start does not check the validity of the entered command line; neither will it issue any error messages when it later tries to execute them. It will try to execute all command lines, but will not take any action if the execution fails. It *will* still process any fixed time wait

commands, though. (See „Wait options" below) You can use this features to provide a combination of wait options: if, for example, you specify one task as „wait until finished", then a task with an invalid command line (like „Z:\abc.xyz") with a fixed wait period of, say, 20 seconds, and then other tasks, Z-Start will launch the first task, than wait 20 seconds after you terminated it before continuing to launch programs.

Note on long file names

While program commands with long file names, containing spaces or other punctuation, will usually execute okay, command parameters may not. For example, the command

```
C:\Program Files\Accessories\Wordpad.exe
```

will work fine and launch Wordpad. However, if you add a parameter

```
C:\Program Files\Accessories\Wordpad.exe C:\Program Files\Plus!\Info.txt
```

Wordpad will start, but display an error message that the document "C:\Program" could not be found. To avoid this problem, enclose the parameter in double quotes like this:

```
C:\Program Files\Accessories\Wordpad.exe "C:\Program Files\Plus!\Info.txt"
```

This command line will execute correctly.

Wait options

One of Z-Start's strong points is its ability to launch programs and then wait before launching the next one. With the provided buttons, you can specify the following options:

Don't Wait

Z-Start will launch this program and then immediately continue with the next on its launch list. This is similar to what Windows 95 does with items in its Startup folder.

Wait until finished

With this option enabled, Z-Start will launch the program and then pause execution until the launched program has terminated completely. This option is useful if you have initialization programs that have to execute completely before any depending programs can be started. It can also be used when two or more programs will conflict with each other when run concurrently.

Wait for x seconds

Serving a similar purpose as "wait until finished", this option can be used for programs that do not terminate, but need a certain time in order to load and initialize before depending programs can be run. You will need to time your program once to get an idea on how much time has to be allocated to it. When specifying this option, you also have to specify the desired time delay in

seconds. The possible range is 1 .. 43,200 seconds (12 hours max.). When **Z-Start** is waiting for a set time, you can cancel this wait request and immediately continue with the launch list by pressing the Return key; note that for this to work, **Z-Start**'s status window must have the input focus. Pressing the Return key will not work during a „wait until finished“ operation“.

Please note that the wait option specified for the last item on the launch list, although no other tasks are following, will effect **Z-Start** itself. If the last task is set to "Wait until finished", **Z-Start** will remain active until this program is terminated. While this should present no problem, you should mark the last entry in the launch list with "Don't wait" to let **Z-Start** quit as soon as it is done.

Other Options

Once Only

The „Once only" option marks a task that is to be executed only once on any given day, even if your system is started / restarted more than once. **Z-Start** notes the execution date for these programs and skips them when it finds that they already have been executed on that day. Note that the execution date is cleared every time you edit the launch task; this enables you to test your launch setup repeatedly without having to manually reset any settings.

Weekdays

The row of check boxes for the days of the week let you specify exactly on which days a given task should be auto-started. Initially set to run every day, you can uncheck one or more of these boxes to disable the execution of the task on one or more days of the week.

Tip: **Z-Start** allows you to disable all days of the week. This enables you to temporarily disable a task completely without having to delete and later add it again.

Launch Configurations

Another great feature is the ability to specify up to 26 launch configurations. When **Z-Start** begins launching tasks, it will pause for a few seconds and wait for you to select a launch configuration. A launch configuration is activated by pressing a letter key from „a“ to „z“ while this window is displayed. The selected configuration will be shown in the status window while tasks are launched. By default, **Z-Start** waits for a keystroke for five seconds; after this, it resumes execution and uses the default configuration. You can have the default configuration launched immediately by pressing the Return key. Please refer to the section on Command Line Parameters (/skwait) to see how you can change the time period or disable this feature completely.

The entry in the field „Startkey“ determines in which configurations the task is included. You can enter the letters „a“ to „z“ and the asterisk character „*“. One or more letters denote configurations that this task is to be included in; the asterisk marks tasks that are to be launched in all configurations.

If you leave the field for the startkeys completely empty, that task will **only** be launched if no specific launch configuration has been set, neither by default nor by manual request.

The default configuration, used when no special startkey is pressed, is set by entering a letter from „a“ to „z“ into the default field on the main window. Leaving this field empty specifies that all tasks should be started by default, regardless of their individual startkey settings.

To start your system without launching any tasks at all, you can use the same method that works with Windows itself: while Windows starts up, press and hold the left Shift key. This will prevent any auto-start, from the Windows Startup folder, from the load= and run= lines in Win.ini or from the Run keys of the registry.

Changing the Launch List

If you want to change any of the items in your launch list, mark the relevant entry by clicking on it in the list box, then click the "Edit" button. This will display the same window that is used for adding tasks, with all currently set options displayed. You can change any option and click OK to store it back in the list. Double-clicking an entry will also bring up the Edit dialog.

To change the processing order of the tasks to be launched, you can mark an entry in the launch list and then click the two arrow buttons to move the item up or down in the list. The left column will always reflect the sequence number of each task.

Removing tasks from the list is done by marking their entry in the task list and then clicking the "Delete" button. To avoid accidental deletions, you must confirm the delete request by clicking "Yes" in the displayed message box. Clicking "No" in this box will back out without deleting the marked task.

The Edit, Add and Delete functions can also be accessed from a context menu by right-clicking on the launch list.

Note: Z-Start will accept a maximum of 999 entries in its launch list. Although it is very unlikely anybody will get anywhere near that number, Z-Start will warn you when you try to exceed 999 entries and will reject additional entries.

Testing the Launch List

After you have set up or changed your launch list, clicking the "Test" button will execute it. Z-Start will remain open and running, but otherwise all tasks will be processed in the same way they will later on when Z-Start is launched in "/run" mode out of the Windows Startup folder.

You may note that, while a program executes for which you have specified "Wait until finished", Z-Start's window will be inaccessible and may also not repaint correctly. This is perfectly normal behavior; the API calls used to accomplish this functionality completely suspend Z-Start's execution until the launched programs is terminated. As soon as the launched programs quits execution, Z-Start will resume.

The Test routine will always run the default launch configuration; if you need to check out specific launch configurations, temporarily change the default field.

Closing Z-Start

Clicking the "Exit" button will close the interactive Z-Start window. When Z-Start is used in its "/run" mode, it will terminate automatically when the launch list is processed.

Online Help

While working with Z-Start, you can access information about the various window elements by clicking the „What's this“ button (the button with the question mark on the title bar). This will turn the mouse pointer into an arrow with a question mark. Move the pointer over the item you need information for and click with the left button.

Distribution

Z-Start is a shareware program; you are welcome to distribute the file Z-START.ZIP containing the unregistered version freely. It may be copied individually or distributed through BBS's and similar system, provided that no files are changed, removed or added from or to the Zip archive. You may not pass on your registration password to others.

No charges beyond the cost of media and/or duplication may be raised for the distribution. Publishers of Shareware collections, CD's etc. should please contact the author for written consent.

This program is also available in a German language version (archive file Z-STARTD.ZIP).

Legal Section

This software is provided "as is". While it has been tested on several machines, the author cannot make any warrantee that it will run with your particular system and software. The Author cannot be held liable for any damages resulting from the use of this program, including loss of data, time or functionality.

The User may install this software on more than one machine and make backup copies of it. However, concurrent use on more than one machine, individual or networked, requires a separate registration for each machine.

Registration

Z-Start is distributed as shareware. The unregistered version is not limited in any way, but it will display reminders to register it every time you start or exit the program and sometimes when you use it. Registration will remove these reminders and also entitle you to use future upgrades without additional cost.

The registration fee for **Z-Start** is US-\$ 15.00.

In order to register **Z-Start**, you have to obtain your personal registration password. You can register either online through CompuServe or through the ShareIt! registration service on the web or by fax and mail. Once you have your registration password, click the button labeled with a question mark to display the „About“-box, then click the „Register" button and enter the provided information.

To register through CompuServe

Log onto CompuServe.
Go to the software registration area (GO SWREG).
Search for **Z-Start** under the ID-# 12128
Follow the onscreen instructions.

To register through ShareIt!

You can do the registration online on the Internet at

<http://www.shareit.com/programs/100804.htm>

Alternatively, you can go to <http://www.shareit.com> and enter the program number there:

100804

If you do not have access to the Internet, you can register via phone, fax or postal mail. Please print out the form at the end of this document and fax or mail it to:

Reimold & Schumann Internet Services
ShareIt!
Habsburgerring 3
50674 Koeln
Germany

Phone: +49-221-2407279
Fax: +49-221-2407278
E-Mail: register@shareit.com

State your return address and the name as you would like it to appear in the registration info.

With either way of registration, your personal user ID and password will be sent to you by Email or whichever way of communication you have specified during registration.

MVP & ClubWin Member Registration

Fellow MS-MVP's and members of ClubWin can obtain a registration password free of charge. ClubWin members must be listed in the current (March 1996) version of the database. Please contact me by E-Mail.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about, problems with or suggestions for Z-Start, feel free to contact me by Email at: gerd_ziran@msn.com

I hope Z-Start will serve you well.

My special thanks go to Joyce and Paul for their usual thorough testing and sage advice.

Gerhard K. Ziran
MS MVP-DTS (*Most Valuable Professional - Desktop Systems*)
Member of ClubWin

ShareIt! Registration form for Z-Start

Program No.: 100804

Last name: _____

First name: _____

Company: _____

Street and #: _____

City, State, postal code: _____

Country: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____

How would like to receive the registration key/full version?

e-mail - fax - postal mail

How would you like to pay the registration fee of \$15:

credit card - wire transfer - EuroCheque - cash

Credit card information (if applicable)

Credit card: Visa - Eurocard/Mastercard - American Express - Diners Club

Card holder: _____

Card No.: _____

Date of Expiration : _____

Date / Signature _____