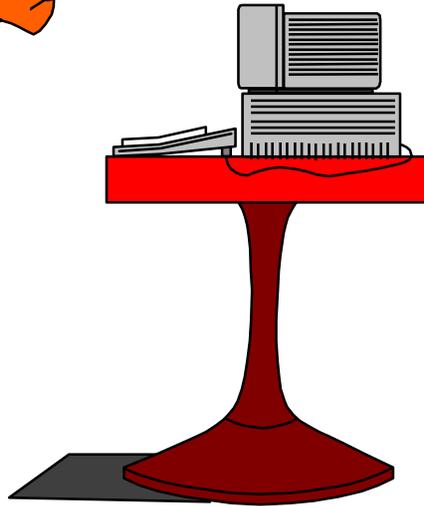


# POSTING FOR



# DUMMIES

by Zipper ©2000

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# Posting for Dummies

By

--- > **Zipper** < ---

The intent of this article is to provide step-by-step instructions as to the basic method to use for posting programs (binary files) to a newsgroup. This is only a guideline, but the information given is based on a summary of replies from experienced users, and over a year of downloading and cursing other poster for mistakes they've made.

The success of your post, on the receiving end (end user), is based on many factors of which you have little control. To beat the odds and provide the end user with a successful download, you need to provide the best upload that you can and in a consistent manner. Doing so should place your files out there in a format that should reach the maximum number of servers, provide an easy and reasonable download, reduce the number of fill requests, and almost eliminate the number of complaints you might receive.

Keep in mind that posting of binary files is not something an inexperienced user ("Newbie") should jump into. Posting requires a good understanding of the way news servers work, the general posting process itself, and the important key word, **"PRACTICE"**. Posting also requires a great amount of your time to do it properly, not to mention a good amount of free harddrive space. If you think it will take you a long time to read this guide, in it's entirety, just wait until you do a full CD post. Learn how to do your downloads first. Pay close attention to how other users post their files, and learn from their successes and/or mistakes. Once you feel ready to start posting your own files, begin small and follow the guidelines shown below. Start with a small program, or a batch of meaningless files, and go through the process of preparing the files for uploading. Then, post your first few attempts to a test newsgroup such as ALT.BI NARIES.TEST. After posting to the test group, look at the results carefully. Did they show up on your server as complete posts, with the proper sizes you anticipated? Check other servers too, if you have access to any. Do they show up as complete parts there also? If everything looks good, then download your own files, decode them, and test the resulting program to make sure it still works. When you can repeat the process a few times, and maintain consistent results, then you can give it the old try and really post something to an active newsgroup.

Just remember that you don't want to end up, as Yardbird once said, "Much egg on face to post 400 Megs of stuff that won't work".

There are a number of programs (tools) needed for preparing, testing, and posting binary files. The programs mentioned in this article are the ones that I personally use and are not the only ones available. You must find tools that you understand and like to use, since their use will determine your final outcome. Most of the programs mentioned are included in the "Newbie Started Kit", which is periodically posted in the ALT.BINARYES.GAMES.ADULT group, or can be individually found on the Internet by doing a search on their names. A quick summary of desired tools follows:

Forte Agent - a newsreader program - for uploading/downloading your files.

WinRar - a compression/decompression program - for preparing files to upload.

NFOgen - a "NFO" creator - for easy generation of NFO files.

Win-SFV32 or QuickSFV - a "SFV" creator - for creating CRC check files and testing for CRC errors.

Agent Post - a posting aide - for making life easier by generating the individual messages to be posted.

Nero Burning Rom, CDRWin, or EZCD Creator - CD burning programs - for creating, testing, and examining a CD.

Okay, enough words of wisdom now. Let's get down to the business of preparing for an actual posting of a full CD. This process will work equally well for smaller posts. The basic steps are all the same.

## 1) KNOW YOUR CD OR PROGRAM:

Before you post a CD, or program, to a newsgroup, make sure you know exactly what it is your posting.

Is a serial number or registration key required for the program to run? If yes, make sure you include the number in the NFO file. If you don't have the number or don't want to give out your personal serial number, then provide a "keygen program" or program "crack", in the Support file. Please, do not post a program and expect the end user to go out and find a way to get it running.

Are there any special instructions that are needed to run the program? If yes, then make sure you document them and include the information within either the NFO file or as a separate file within the Support file.

Is the CD a true "data" CD or does it contain hidden "Audio Tracks"? The best way I've found to determine this is to use the "CD Info" option of your CD burner program. This option will tell you how many tracks are on the CD, as well as the type of tracks. Another way, which works quite well, is to use the standard Windows CD player program. Place the CD into its drive and start the player. If you get an error message, or don't hear any music or sounds playing, then it's fairly safe to assume you only have a data track on the CD. However, if music or sounds are heard, then the CD will have to be posted in a special format known as an "image" file. See the next step.

Does the CD have a volume label? If yes, make sure you list it, exactly as shown on the CD, in your NFO file. Many programs perform a CD check to see if the correct CD is in the drive before the program will run.

## 2) PREPARE THE IMAGE FILE, IF NEEDED:

An image file is one large file that contains the entire contents of a CD. This method should be used if you are going to post a CD to one of the "image" groups, such as ALT.BINARYES.CD.IMAGE. End users who go into image groups expect to find full CD image files and have the tools and equipment needed for working with them. The two most popular image file formats are BIN and ISO.

A BIN file MUST be created if the CD contains a combination of data and audio tracks, or some forms of copy protection schemes. BIN files can be created, with the CDRWin program, by using the "Extract Disk/Tracks /Sectors" option. The results will be two files, a <filename>.bin and a <filename>.cue. The .bin file is the main contents of the CD. The .cue file is a tiny text file that tells the burning program what to do to remake the CD.

**TIP:** After the files are created, use Notepad to edit your .cue file's first line to remove the full path in the .bin filename. The first line should read

```
FILE: "filename.bin" BINARY
and not
FILE: "J:\UPLOAD\filename.bin" BINARY
```

If you fail to edit this file, then the end user might go crazy trying to figure out why CDRWin cannot find the .bin file to make the new CD.

An ISO file is similar to a BIN file since it consists of a single large file containing the CD contents. However, an ISO file cannot automatically copy both data and audio tracks. You would have to manually construct the individual tracks before writing out the image file. This is a rather complicated process, not recommended for combination data and audio CDs, and is beyond the scope of this article. ISO files can be created, with the CDRWin program, by using the "File Backup and Tools" option, and selecting the "Build an ISO9660 Image file". They can also be created, with the EZCD Creator program, by building your file listings and selecting "Create CD Image" in the "File" menu item.

Some posters like to create a "SFV" file (see Step 8) at this stage, as an added check on the integrity of their image files. This is purely optional at this point in the process.

### [3\) VERIFY YOUR WINRAR DEFAULT SETTINGS: \(NEEDS TO BE DONE ONCE\)](#)

Start by opening WinRAR, click "Options" in menu line, and select "Settings". Click the "Compression" tab and set the options as follows. You only need to do this once as these are the default settings.

```
Archive Format - RAR
Compression Method - Best
```

Dictionary Size - 1024

Create Solid Archives - Leave the default setting blank.

Put Authenticity Verification - Select if desired.

A word of caution - WinRAR uses the registered user name for this Authentication function. If you registered your program, with your real name, and use this function, then you will be broadcasting your name with your post.

Put Recover Record - Select this option.

This option slightly increases the size of your sections, but gives the end user the best odds at recovering from a possible error in downloading.

Always Put Recovery Record - Select this option.

Independent Solid Volumes - Select this option.

Select each of the other tabs and customize to your personal preferences.

#### 4) COMPRESS AND DIVIDE YOUR CD FILES:

This step will compress the files you plan to upload and divide them into smaller parts, which you will post.

Open WinRAR and navigate to your CD Rom drive or to the directory where you placed the image file (if one was created). The CD contents, or image file, should be displayed in WinRAR's window.

If you are going to post a ".bin" image file, then highlight BOTH the .bin and the .cue files, plus the optional SFV file if created, and click the "ADD" icon.

If you are going to post a ".iso" image file, then highlight this file only, plus the optional SFV file if created, and click the "ADD" icon.

If you are going to post the entire CD, without the need of an image file, then make sure you are in the root directory and highlight ALL of the folders and files that you want included in your post. Then click the "ADD" icon.

NOTE: This is the easiest way to get your CD ready for uploading and should be the method used when you intend to post your program to a non-image group, such as ALT.BINARIES.GAMES.ADULT. By using this copy

file method, end users can simply extract the program in a directory, if they have enough free space, and run or install the program from there without needing to make a CD.

After you've clicked the "ADD" icon, you should be looking at a new window where you need to make a few settings. The settings you make here will have a major impact on the files you post, as well as the end user's downloading success.

- a) Select a directory where the resulting rar files are to be placed and assign a filename for your posting.
- b) Volume Size, bytes: Recommended - 1,457,500.

NOTE: The size you select here has a lot of bearing on the resulting posted messages you will create. The larger you make your individual parts, the more "sections" that will result in the final post. Keep in mind that if only one section of a part is missing, at the end user side, that whole part is useless to them. Also, if your server quits on you, midway through a part, you have to repost the entire part again. There is a similar setting, when actually posting, which also affects the posting size, but it all begins right here.

- c) Archiving Options - Create SFX Archive: Optional. This setting produces a "Self Extracting Archive". Some end users get very nervous when they see an ".exe" file to download.
- d) Archiving Options - Create Solid Archive: If you are posting a .bin or .iso image file, then select this option. If you are posting a simple directory copy of a CD, then leave this option blank.

The theory behind this setting is that an image file is one solid file to begin with so creating a solid archive won't matter. Unless the end user has all the parts, the image file is useless to them. However, directory copies are multiple files. If they are left as individual files, when compressed, the end user can selectively extract what they want and can possibly salvage a program if some pieces are missing.

Finally, click the "OK" button to begin the compression and dividing process. The resulting files will take on the form of one ".rar or .exe" file and a number of ".r00 through .xxx" files. A typical full CD might go up to 400 parts or beyond. That's a lot of parts to post, but your newsreader won't know the difference. Posting 400 MB will take the same amount of time regardless of the size of the parts. It's the end users who will thank you, in the long run, for using smaller uploaded parts. Now, you will probably get some "Flaming" (complaints), from some users, for posting so many small parts. Just ignore them. Those complaints will always come from impatient users, who have high speed internet connections, and have forgotten the many sleepless nights they use to spend praying that the messages would not drop off their servers before their slow modems can download them.

#### 5) PREPARE A "SUPPORT" FILE, IF NEEDED:

A Support file is nothing more than a compressed collection of miscellaneous files and information, that you would like to include with your post, which normally is not found in a standardized NFO file. This can be things like original CD and jacket scans, special program installation or running instructions, a personal review of the program, a scanned program manual, a program "KeyGen or Crack", maybe some screen shots for an advance peek, or anything else that you can't find a better place for.

Put your collection of misc. items into a separate folder and then use WinRar to compress them into either a rar file called SUPPORT.RAR or a zip file called SUPPORT.ZIP.

Place the resulting compressed Support file in the same directory as your compressed rar files.

#### 6) TEST YOUR FILES AND PROGRAM:

Now that you have finished with the creation of your rar and support files, it's time to verify that you have a good working set before posting them to the newsgroup. Yes, this is a time consuming process, but it's the only way for you to know if everything was correctly assembled and if your CD based program will actually work once the CD is created. Just think of this step as if you just discovered this great program on the newsgroup and you want to have it. The

advantage is that you don't have to download the files since you already have them.

- a) Using WinRar, extract the files, which are within your Support file, into a new folder. Make sure each extracted file is viewable and functions as expected. If errors are found, you will have to fix them, create a new support file, and then test it again. If everything is okay, then you can delete this new test folder and proceed to the next step.
- b) Using WinRar, extract all of your rar files into a new folder.
- c) Test the extracted files. If it's an image file, and you're lucky enough to own a rewriter CD burner, then make a new CD using a CDRW blank. Use that new CD to install the program and run it to make sure it works. If you have the program already installed on your machine, then back it up and uninstall it before installing your test version. If you extracted a 'directory copy', then you can install the program directly from that folder to test it, or make a new CDRW and test it that way. Either way, you should perform this step to insure your files are functional. After all, if you don't trust your own files, how can you expect the end users to trust them.

## 7) PREPARE AN "NFO" FILE:

An NFO file is nothing more than a plain ASCII text file that contains important information about the program you want to download. The term "NFO" came from the word "I\_nfo\_rmation". NFO was used because Microsoft had already dedicated INF as part of the install programs. With the release of Windows 98, Microsoft has also stolen the NFO extension for use with its System Information program. You can view an NFO file by using NotePad or any text viewer. A nice trick is to re-associate the NFO extension, in Windows Explorer, to NotePad. This will allow you to simply double click the NFO filename and it will open.

The NFOgen program is an easy to use program for creating these files. Simply open this program and fill out the blanks. Fill in all of the blanks as possible. The more information you can provide to the end user, the less questions and complaints you will get.

The NFO preparation was left until this step since one of the questions asked is if the files were "Burn Tested". Also, the SFV file preparation was left until the next step, so that the NFO file could be included and it's also better to post the SFV file separately and not use the "Include validate info" option in NFOgen.

Place this NFO file in the same directory as your compressed rar files.

#### 8) PREPARE AN "SFV" FILE:

An SFV file is a ASCII text file that contains calculated validation information, known as CRC data, for the files you will be posting. Once the end user has a copy of this file, they can check their downloaded files for accuracy even though they do not have all of the parts.

Using either Win-SFV32 or QuickSFV, simply select the folder containing the rar files, support file, and nfo file, and run the program to generate the SFV file.

Place this SFV file in the same directory as your compressed rar files. This directly will now become your "Upload" directory.

#### 9) TEST THE SFV FILE:

The end users are going to depend on this file to check the files that they have downloaded. Therefore, it's worth your time to make sure it does what it's suppose to do and also it gives you a final check of the accuracy of your rar files.

If you use WIN-SFV32, you can safely use the original SFV file for the test. Just start Win-SFV32, select the verify option, and go for it.

If you use QuickSFV, make a copy of your original SFV file first and use the copy to run your test. QuickSFV modifies the SFV file being used, during testing, to keep track of the parts it has previously checked. This is a nice feature, when you are testing files that you downloaded and don't have all the parts initially. But during this testing phase, the changes made by the program can really confuse an inexperienced end user if you upload the modified file.

## 10) NOTIFY THE GROUP OF YOUR INTENTIONS TO POST:

You now have everything ready to begin posting your CD, but don't jump into the process just yet. Be considerate of the group users. Post a simple message to notify them that you intend to post your CD to their group. Use a simple subject line similar to the following:

Intent to post: Pandora's Box - Bin/Cue

Within the body of your message, include general information about the program such as type of program, image or directory format, approximate size of post, your posting schedule, and whatever else you think might help the users. Then sit back and wait a day or two for replies to be made. Listen to the users. If they want the program, they will tell you. If they say it doesn't belong in that group, they will tell you where it should be posted. They will tell you if it's already been posted and you missed it.

Check to see if another post is currently under way in the group. If one is in progress, please wait until it's almost complete before posting your Intent message. There is nothing more frustrating than being stuck with a slow modem and see two or more good posts you want being posted at the same time.

Once you've received the "Go ahead", and the group is somewhat quiet, then continue with these steps and post your files.

## 11) SET YOUR NEWSREADER DEFAULT POST SIZE:

All newsreaders have a setting that determines how large files will be split into sections when being posted. A survey of experienced regular users has yielded an average setting of 7,500 lines per section. This setting works in conjunction with the part size setting in WinRAR to produce the final size of your posted program. Depending on the program you use, set your newsreader to 7,500 lines, 472,500 bytes, or 455 KB.

You will find this setting, in Forte Agent, by following this sequence: click on Group, then Default Properties, then the Send Files tab. At the bottom, make sure there is a check mark in the "Send large messages as multiple messages" box and enter your desired value.

While you are in this section, check the other settings for posting messages to the Usenet:

- a) Make sure Usenet Messages is checked.
- b) Select UUencoded for the Format.
- c) Select Attachment for the Attachment placement.
- d) Select Include filename in Subject.

The settings above will yield 5 sections per each 1.4 MB part that you will be uploading to the newsgroup.

## 12) LOAD FILES INTO NEWSREADER:

This process should be done while your newsreader is offline so that your messages are not posted until you've had a chance to check them.

Your program parts will be posted to the newsgroup by means of messages with attachments. The proper way of doing this is to create one single message for each part that you're going to post. This can be done manually, but if you're going to be posting some 400 or more parts, that's a lot of messages to create by hand. A major mistake many new posters make is to create one message and attach a bunch of parts to it. This will work, but it's extremely confusing to the end user and will definitely brand you as a "Newbie", not to mention the number of Flames you'll get.

The best way to create your messages is by using a posting aide, such as Agent Post, or a special program such as PowerPost. These programs will automatically create the messages for you, based on your criteria, and load them into Forte Agent (as Agent Post does) or actually post them (as PowerPost does). Whichever method you choose to use, you should always follow these guidelines:

- a) Keep your subject line simple, informative, and SHORT! An example would be something like this:

Post: Pandora's Box - Bin - Day 1 of 4 - File 1 of 40 - pbox.rar

## TIPS:

If your post is an image file, make sure you specify the type in the subject line.

If your program has a version number, add that to the subject line so the end user knows exactly what they are downloading.

Do not add the filename at the end of the subject line. Your newsreader will do that automatically if set correctly.

- b) Only load approximately 40 parts of your program, per day, into your newsreader. If you do the simple math, 40 times 1.424 MB per part equals 56.96 MB of rar files which, when UUencoded, translates into 78.56 MB of data that you have to upload and the end user has to download. For a high-speed poster, 78.56 MB is a drop in the bucket. But for a 56K modem poster, who will get maybe 33K upload at best, and the end user, you will fall asleep at the keyboard before the process is done.
- c) Always load the NFO file, the SFV file, the Support file (if any), and the .rar or .exe file as part of your first day 40 parts. These four files are important to the end user as they help them to keep track of their daily status in the downloading process. The importance of posting the .rar or .exe file first is that there are many new users out there who do not have a CRC checking program, or even know what that is, and rely solely on WinRar to test the files. If you don't post that .rar file, until after .r99 is posted, then they have to wait an average of 3 or 4 days before a successful test can be done.
- d) It is also a recommended practice to repost the NFO file and the SFV file with each day posting of parts. This will help end users who may get a late start or forget to download these important files.

### 13) POST FILES TO NEWSGROUP:

Now that all of your first day messages have been loaded into your newsreader, you are ready to begin posting.

Try to avoid posting your files between the hours of 4 PM and 8 PM (1600-2000 hours). During those hours, there are many people using the Internet and you stand a good chance of having some of your messages getting lost, or fragmented, during transit.

Open Agent's Outbox window and check your list of messages one final time. If all looks okay, then click the send button. The messages should begin to upload and will continue until all messages have been posted. Periodically check your progress. If your server happens to time out, in the middle of a message, that message will have to be reposted. If you must repost a message, then edit the subject line before doing so. Change the "File number", such as File 9 of 40, to read File 9R of 40. This tiny change (the R after the number 9) will keep the subject line short, yet make it different from the original message.

After the final message has been posted, you still have some work to do. Log into your news server and check the quality of your post. Did all of the messages arrive, with all their proper sections? They should, since you had a direct connection to your service. If you have access to other servers, log into them as well and check your posts. It will take longer for the messages to arrive at other servers, but you should get a general idea of how well your server is sending out your post to the other servers. This should give you a good idea of how your remaining days of posting will be.

Once day one is completed, wait until the following day and repeat the loading (Step 12) and posting (Step 13) process again for the next 40 parts of your post. Continue doing this, on a day by day basis, until all of the messages have been processed.

**TIP:** Do not delete the files that you have successfully posted. You will still need them for the repost and/or the requested fills.

**NOTE:** You will most likely begin seeing requests for Fills (a repost of selected parts) as soon as you begin posting the program. This is a direct

result of new users not reading the group's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) or your NFO file. Just ignore these requests at this time. If you followed the suggestions and checked your server(s), then you already know which parts may have had problems and may have already reposted them. Besides, you just finished maybe 2 or 3 days worth of preparation time and 4 or 5 days of posting time, and you deserve a rest. Not to mention that you may have files of your own that you'd like to find time to download.

#### 14) PREPARE FOR REPOST AND FILLS:

It is customary, and expected by some users, that you will do a full repost of your complete program beginning seven (7) days after you posted the last part of your original post. If, for some reason, you do not want to do a repost or know in advance that you cannot do the repost, then it is strongly suggested that you make prior arrangements, with another group user (maybe with high-speed access) to help you with the re-posting task. This arrangement should be made prior to you beginning the original post.

The repost process is the same as the original post. The only difference is that you should modify the subject line by changing the first word POST to REPOST. The remainder of the subject line should stay the same.

Once you have completed your repost, take a day or two to recuperate, and then begin to honor the requests for fills as they are posted. How long you will continue to provide fills will be up to you. End users are relentless. They will keep requesting fills until it seems like you've posted the program a third time. Eventually you will have to quit posting fills and go on with your life. But if you're like most of the regulars in a group, you'll become addicted and will start searching for the next CD that you want to start posting. And if you don't have much to post, then use your learned talents by offering to do a repost for another poster or help by providing fills (at the appropriate time) for requestors.

Now that you've taken the time to read this article, you should have a good understanding of the real amount of work required to properly post a full CD or even a small program. These guidelines are by no means the only way to post files. But for new users, it's the best way to learn how it's done and will give you the information you need to get started. Once again, keep in mind that your road to success begins with PRACTICE. The more you practice, the better you get and before you know it, this procedure will become second nature for you.

When you become an expert at posting, you will most likely make adjustments, to the settings shown in this guide, to accommodate your posting habits, your Internet connection, and the particular group to which you are posting. As an example, if you have a high-speed connection and are posting a full CD image to a group such as ALT.BINARYES.CD.IMAGE.HIGHSPEED, then you will definitely want to create much larger rar files and use a larger section setting in Forte Agent. You would also be posting the entire CD in a one-day session, instead of several days. Feel free to experiment AFTER you know what you're doing. Once you're an expert, be kind to the new users who are just beginning. Remember that you were once a "Newbie" reading this guide and trying to figure out what this posting stuff was all about.

In closing, I would like to express my thanks to the many users who have helped me, in the past, to learn this procedure. And special thanks go out to (in alphabetical order) HBS, Plaguarist, Samwise, Upright Infinity, and Yardbird for responding to my query and offering their information and suggestions. Without users like you, this system would be in total shambles.