

How To Send A FAX With HomeVision

HomeVision can perform many different actions if it's connected to a running computer. One useful function is sending a FAX when an important event occurs. HomeVision can use your PC's FAX software to do this.

How To Send A FAX

HomeVision version 2.4 has several types of commands that help in sending a FAX:

- Run program "program.exe" (runs the specified program)
- Activate window "window name" (activates the specified program window)
- Send keys "keystrokes" (sends keystrokes to the active window)

HomeVision can use these commands to perform just about any action you can with the keyboard. There isn't enough room in this article to describe these in great detail; refer to the HomeVision documentation for a complete explanation. There are two different ways to use these commands to send a FAX:

- 1) Use these commands to send all the required keystrokes directly to the FAX program.
- 2) Use a software "macro" or "batch file" program. These programs can be configured to perform a sequence of actions. Common capabilities include running programs, activating windows, sending keystrokes and mouse movements, waiting for an action to complete, and much more. Many of these programs are available as shareware or even freeware (popular ones include AutoMate, PowerScript, and EtCetera). You can use one of these to configure a "macro" to send the desired FAX. Then, have HomeVision send a single command to run the macro.

This article shows how HomeVision can send the commands directly. Using a "macro" program is very similar, except that you need to learn its command structure to control your software. No matter which approach you choose, however, you will need to determine the correct sequence of commands required to send the FAX. The commands (or keystrokes) will vary greatly depending on your FAX software and how your computer is configured. The best way to determine them is by sending a text FAX with your software and making a record of all the keystrokes required. Here are some tips:

- It usually works best to keep your FAX software running all the time. This way HomeVision does not need to start and end it. This simplifies timing of the commands, as there's no need wait for the program to start before sending the next commands. You should put the FAX software in your Windows startup folder so it starts itself automatically.
- In your HomeVision schedule, put all the commands in a macro. Then you can easily test the macro by having it run when HomeVision receives a certain X-10 or infrared signal.
- Test the commands under all possible conditions to determine if some do not work properly. Test it with the FAX program closed or minimized, with other applications running, with the phone line busy, etc.

What To FAX

There are two different ways to send information via FAX:

- 1) FAX a file. With this method, you have a file containing the desired information already prepared on the computer. HomeVision then tells the FAX software to FAX this file. How do you create this file? One approach is to create a variety of files in advance, each with a different message. Another method is to use HomeVision's capability to create text files and write text to them. In this way, the file could contain variable information, such as "The indoor temperature has dropped to 30 degrees !". You could even have HomeVision log all serial messages to a file, then FAX the complete log file. Refer to the HomeVision documentation for details on creating text files.

- 2) Enter the information directly enter into the cover sheet. Many FAX programs allow you to include text messages on the cover sheet. You can use HomeVision's "send keys" command to enter a message here.

QuickLink Example

In this example, the HomeVision commands shown below FAX a file using the QuickLink software supplied with many U.S. Robotics modems. The controller sends commands to QuickLink to FAX a file named "Alarm.txt", which already exists on the computer. The notes at the end of each line explain what the commands do.

```
Run program "C:\QL\QLMCW.exe"           (starts QuickLink program)
Activate window "QuickLink"             (activates QuickLink main window)
Send keys "%+S"                         (Alt-Shift-S selects "New FAX" from menu)
Send keys "c:\Alarm.txt{ENTER}"         (file name to FAX)
Send keys "{ENTER}5551234"              (number to send FAX to)
Send keys "{TAB}John Doe"               (name of FAX recipient)
Send keys "%S"                          (Alt-S sends FAX now)
```

Note several things about this:

- The first command starts QuickLink. This isn't necessary if you leave your FAX software running all the time, as we recommend.
- The "activate window" command brings it to the front so that subsequent keystrokes are sent to it.
- The characters "%", "+", "{TAB}", etc. indicate special keystrokes like "Alt", "Shift", and "TAB". Refer to the HomeVision documentation for complete details
- You could put all these keystrokes in a single "send keys" command. However, spreading them out as done here makes it easier to understand what's happening.
- We never exit the QuickLink program. It will take some time to send the FAX, especially if the phone is busy. If you do want to exit it, you should use a "Wait" statement to wait several minutes before quitting.

FaxTalk Example

This example shows how to send a FAX using the FaxTalk For Windows software. The controller sends commands to FaxTalk to FAX a preset coversheet which includes a comment field where new text is added.

```
Run program "C:\Fax\FaxTalk.exe"       (starts FaxTalk program)
Activate window "FaxTalk"               (activates FaxTalk main window)
Send keys "%FW"                         (Alt-FW selects "New FAX" from menu)
Send keys "%N"                           (Alt-N moves to "Phonebook Names" field)
Send keys "{UP}"                          (selects first entry as recipient)
Send keys "%A"                           (Alt-A selects "Add to recipient list")
Send keys "%E"                           (Alt-E opens "Edit Cover Sheet" window)
Send keys "{TAB}X"                       (selects cover sheet template file "X")
Send keys "{TAB 7}"                      (7 tabs to reach "Comment" field)
Send keys "The alarm is going off"       (enters comment)
Send keys "%O"                           (Alt-O selects "OK" and closes window)
Send keys "%S"                           (Alt-S sends FAX)
```

Note two things about this FaxTalk procedure:

- We don't enter the recipient's name or phone number here. Instead, we select the recipient from a "phonebook" using a list box. It's difficult to select a desired entry with only keystrokes, as typing the recipient's name does not work. Instead, we simply select the first name from the list. You should therefore set up the phonebook so the first entry is the correct destination. You should also choose a name for the entry that will always be first in the alphabetical list (perhaps by starting it with an

underscore character). Otherwise, you might later add a phonebook entry that appears at the top of the list, and he/she will receive your HomeVision FAXes!

- FaxTalk uses coversheet templates that contain information you would otherwise enter manually. This example selects template "X", which was preset with text indicating that HomeVision is the FAX sender. We then enter a specific message in the comment field.