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Using USB to Serial Adaptors with the PCAP II, PCAP II *Plus*, and MCAP

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For newer PCs and laptops that do not have a built-in COM port, a third-party USB to Serial adaptor, with proper driver software for that device that supports the desired OS, will be required. These are widely available from several different manufacturers, and there are none that DAC has tested that cannot be made to work.

The biggest difference among the available units is that some are of this type:



Figure 1: USB to Serial Adaptor – Connects Directly to DAC Equipment

meaning that they can attach directly to the female RS232 port on the DAC hardware, while others are of this type:



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Figure 2: USB to Serial Adaptor – Requires Additional “COM” Cable Connection to DAC Equipment

meaning that you have to connect the DAC-supplied COM cable between the female jack on the DAC hardware and the male jack on the adaptor. Either method will work OK.

Please note that if you cannot get the driver for the USB to Serial adaptor to successfully install under your version of Windows, nothing else you may try to do with the DAC software and hardware is ever going to work. Most of the adaptors on the market utilize either the Prolific or the FTDI chipset; the correct driver for your operating system can probably be located at one of these two websites:

<http://www.prolific.com.tw/>

<http://www.ftdichip.com/>

Once successfully installed, the adaptor will typically map to a COM port on your computer, e.g. COM3, COM4, etc. Before running any of the DAC software, you will need to first determine which COM port the adaptor has mapped to; the best way to do this is to go into the Device Manager for your OS (for Windows 7, click Start, Control Panel, System and Security, Device Manager) and look under the drop-down for Ports (COM & LPT) to see which ones are available.

Finally, once all the DAC software and third-party driver software have been installed, and the equipment is all connected and powered ON, you will need to open up the DAC software on your Windows desktop to test everything.



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Most likely, the Master Control Panel software will fail to communicate with the DAC hardware the first time it is run, due to the incorrect COM port being selected. Once the failure message appears, simply click OK, then select the correct COM port (that you have already verified under the Device Manager as instructed previously) as follows:

PCAP II or PCAP II *Plus*: click Settings, Connect Settings, COM Port, then choose correct port. Then, click Settings, Connect to PCAP II (or PCAP II *Plus*) to actually connect.

MCAP: click Settings, Local Connect Settings, COM Port, then choose correct port. Then, click Settings, make sure that "Use Local MCAP" is checked, then click "Connect to MCAP" to actually connect.

Unit should connect and run now; if it still fails, and you are certain that the correct COM port has been selected, the one last thing to check is the Baud Rate setting (also under the Settings, Connect Settings menu). Correct Baud Rate setting for each product should be as follows:

PCAP II: 38400 baud

MCAP: 38400 baud

PCAP II *Plus*: 115200 baud

If you find the Baud Rate setting to be incorrect for your product, after choosing the correct setting please close the DAC software (to automatically save all the communications settings to the disk file), then power cycle the DAC hardware OFF and back ON, then finally re-open the DAC software.

Everything should be working at this point; if not, please go back through all the steps above and re-check.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. Biggest potential mistake is confusing the PCAP II with the PCAP II *Plus*, as the two hardware boxes look virtually identical but each requires different software to operate. Most reliable way to confirm which one you have is to look through the ventilation holes on the top cover of the hardware while the unit is powered ON; the PCAP II *Plus* will have 24 gold chips visible and a blinking RED LED on the inside, while the PCAP II will have 16 gold chips and no LED visible on the inside.

2. If ever you move the USB-serial adaptor to a different USB port, it will likely map to a different COM port when Windows automatically re-installs the driver. In this case you will need to re-determine your COM port using the Device Manager, and also change the



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COM Port selection in the Master Control Panel software, using the procedures detailed above.



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