

## **WinVN Help Index**

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Note: This help file is under construction. As of mid-July 1994, it is not yet in sync with the latest version of WinVN. Hang on, it's coming...

## **Types of Windows**

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## **Main Window**

The main window, initially in the upper left corner of the screen, displays a list of newsgroups. Double-clicking on a newsgroup name causes WinVN to display a list of subjects of available articles in that newsgroup in a group window.

Clicking on a newsgroup name "selects" that newsgroup and displays it in reverse video (light on dark). Selecting a newsgroup is useful only for subscribing to it; see Subscribing to Newsgroups. By default, subscribed groups appear in black; unsubscribed groups appear in blue. See

The first character of each newsgroup line in the main window gives information about that newsgroup:

space indicates either that WinVN has no information on the status of this group, or that no new articles have appeared in this group since your last WinVN session.

> indicates that this newsgroup has been selected as the result of the previous Find operation.

\* indicates that new articles have appeared in this newsgroup since your last WinVN session.

Network Menu Commands

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## **Network Menu Commands**

### **Connect to Server**

Starts a network connection between your workstation and your news server. Use this command if you have the Connect at Startup option disabled under the Config Menu.

### **Disconnect from Server**

Terminates the network connection to your news server without exiting WinVN.

### **Mail Logout**

Manually logs out of a network-based mail system (such as Microsoft Mail) without exiting WinVN. This can save both local and network resources if you are sure you won't be needing to send mail for a while. If you are logged out from your mail system and wish to forward an article via mail, WinVN will force another mail login if necessary.

### **Reset Server Protocol**

Resets WinVN's idea of the status of the session with the news server, aborting any outstanding requests. This command is used to work around problems with WinVN, your news server, or your network.

### **Quit without Saving**

Terminates WinVN without updating the NEWSRC file. When you use this option, WinVN's idea of which articles you have seen and to what groups you are subscribed will revert to the status at the beginning of the session. In other words, WinVN will forget the activity in this session.

### **Exit**

Terminates WinVN, and writes of record of which articles you have seen, and to which you have subscribed to the NEWSRC file.

## **Group Menu Commands**

### **Find...**

Searches the main window for a newsgroup name that contains a specified text string. Find brings up a dialog box into which you enter the string for which you want to search. Click on OK to start the search, or Cancel if you decide not to search after all.

If a newsgroup is found which contains the specified string, the main window will be scrolled so that the newsgroup name is visible. The selected newsgroup name will be marked with a ">". If no such newsgroup can be found, WinVN says so via a dialog box.

### **Find Next**

Continues the search started by the previous Find... or Find Next. The next newsgroup name containing the string, if any, is displayed.

### **Subscribe selected groups**

Subscribes to the currently-selected newsgroups. See Subscribing to Newsgroups.

### **Unsubscribe selected groups**

Unsubscribes from the currently-selected newsgroups. See Subscribing to Newsgroups.

### **Move selected groups to Top**

Subscribes to the currently-selected newsgroups if they are not already subscribed, and moves them to the very top of the newsgroup list. See Subscribing to Newsgroups.

### **Deselect all**

Clears all newsgroups in the main window, so that no newsgroups are currently selected.

## Utilities Menu Commands

### **New Article**

Creates a Posting Window, which you can use to begin creating a new article that is not a followup to an existing article.

### **Compose Mail**

Allows you to send Electronic mail directly from within WinVN. The type of mail system that WinVN will use will be determined by the setting of the Mail Transport option on the *Configure Communications menu*.

### **Batch**

Performs "close" or "send" operations on a group of open windows. See Batch Submenu Commands.

### **Decode a File**

Decode the contents of a binary file.

### **Encode a File**

Encode the contents of a binary file into a series of printable ASCII characters that can be transported over the network as a non-binary file. The file can then be decoded by the recipient using the *Decode a File* menu option. The popular *uuencode* encoding scheme is used, so the recipient need not be a WinVN user.

## **Batch Submenu Commands**

### **Close Articles**

Closes all open Article windows.

### **Close Groups**

Closes all open Group windows.

### **Close Status**

Closes all open Status windows.

### **Send Posts**

Sends all postings in open Posting windows.

### **Send Mails**

Sends all electronic mail messages in open Mail windows.



## **Config Menu Commands**

The main window's Config menu allows you to configure much of the information WinVN uses. There are several configuration menu commands:

Configure Comm...

Configure Personal Info...

Configure Miscellaneous...

Configure Logging...

Configure Signature File...

Configure Fonts

Configure Color

Save Configuration

Save Window Positions

## Configure Comm...

Brings up a dialog box allowing you to select communications/networking options.

WinVN is a WinSock based TCP/IP application. You must have networking software loaded on your PC and a WinSock compliant Dynamic Link Library (DLL) in your Windows or Windows System directory. WinVN makes all calls to WinSock thru a generic network interface DLL called GENSOCK.DLL. This interface has been developed to allow WinVN to also work with DLL's that predate the WinSock specification (such as the WSOCKETS.DLL used in Microsoft Lanmanager 2.1a and DEC Pathworks 4.1) and also to allow experimentation with other non-sockets based networking transports.

### **NNTP (News)**

Fill in the Internet address of a news server. Obtain this information from your system administrator.

### **TCP port**

Fill in the TCP port designation of the news server program. Typically this is "nntp". In the case of some misconfigured TCP/IP software, you may need to type in the value 119, which is almost always the port number used by news servers. Other values can be used only if your local news server is so configured.

### **SMTP (Mail) Server**

Fill in the Internet address of an SMTP mail server if you plan on using TCP/IP mail from within WinVN.

### **Username & Password**

Some NNTP news servers require you to provide an authorizing username and password before they will allow you full access to some or all newsgroups. If you plan on connecting with such a server, you should fill in the appropriate username and password for the server you have selected. WinVN stores your password in encrypted form in winvn.ini. However, be aware that the NNTP AUTHINFO protocol used to authenticate you to the server is quite insecure, so your use of this option may be hazardous.

### **Mail Transport**

Select one of 4 options used to determine how WinVN will send mail. The options are:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Disable     | Do not allow outbound mail.  |
| Use MAPI    | Send mail via Microsoft's Mail Applications Protocol Interface (MAPI). Use this option if you are using Microsoft Mail at your site. |
| Use SMTP    | Send mail via the Internet Simple Mail Transport Protocol (SMTP) interface. WinVN provides a simple SMTP mailer.                     |
| Auto Select | WinVN will attempt to locate MAPI and use it if available, If MAPI is not available, it will default to SMTP.                        |

### **Demand Logon**

If you have the Demand Login option selected, WinVN will force a MAPI login "upon demand" (when mail is sent) instead of requiring a login instantly when WinVN is started.

See Saving Configuration Information and Authorizing Yourself to the News Server.

## **Configure Personal Info...**

Brings up a dialog box allowing you to specify personal information: your name, electronic mail address, and organization name. The organization name is typically the name of your employer or educational institution. This information is used to construct headers for articles and electronic mail messages that you write.

See [Saving Configuration Information](#).

## Configure Miscellaneous

Brings up a dialog box allowing you to specify miscellaneous preferences regarding the operation of WinVN. Click on the appropriate portion of the figure below to bring up help on that option:

**Configure Miscellaneous Options**

**Check for new groups on connect**  
 Yes    No    Ask

**Article Fetch Limit**  
Ask if more than  articles

Connect at startup  
 New window for each group  
 New window for each article  
 Confirm batch operations  
 Always confirm save on exit  
 Confirm use of Reply-To

Append saved articles  
 Full-name 'from' in group window  
 Show unsubscribed groups  
 Compute threads  
 Show full subject in threads  
 Multi-Select in Group Window

OK                      Cancel

See [Saving Configuration Information](#).

If *New window for each group* is checked, WinVN will attempt to create a new group window for each newsgroup selected from the main window. If this option is not checked, WinVN will reuse an existing group window to display newly-requested newsgroups.

If *New window for each article* is checked, WinVN will attempt to create a new article window for each article selected from the main window. If this option is not checked, WinVN will reuse an existing article window to display newly-requested articles.

Checking *Append saved articles* affects what WinVN does when you attempt to save the contents of an article to an existing file. If this box is checked, WinVN will append the article to the file. Otherwise, it will ask you what to do. See File Menu Commands.

The *Check for new groups on startup* option determines whether WinVN queries the news server for newly-created newsgroups. Checking for new newsgroups also allows WinVN to determine which groups have received new articles since the last WinVN session. The Yes and No options are self-explanatory; Ask means that WinVN will ask the user whether to check for new groups every time it starts up. The Yes option is recommended for Ethernet-attached PCs. Checking for new groups can take a very long time on serially-attached PCs, though.

See Saving Configuration Information.

## **Check for new groups on startup**

When WinVN connects to the news server, it can ask the server for a status list of all the news groups. This operation can be time-consuming if you have a slow connection. However, it's useful to know how many new articles and groups there are.

You control whether WinVN requests this information from the server by choosing Yes, No, or Ask. If you choose Ask, WinVN will always prompt you whenever it connects to the server.

## **New window for each group**

If **New window for each group** is checked, WinVN will attempt to create a new group window for each newsgroup selected from the main window. If this option is not checked, WinVN will reuse an existing group window to display newly-requested newsgroups.

**Connect at startup**

If this box is checked, WinVN will try to connect to the news server whenever WinVN is launched. There is rarely a reason to not check this option.



## **Confirm batch operations**

If **Confirm batch operations** is checked, WinVN will prompt for confirmation before executing batch operations, such as breaking up a large binary file into multiple posts, encoding each one and posting them as separate articles.

## **Always confirm save on exit**

If **Always confirm save on exit** is checked, WinVN will prompt the user to save the **winvn.ini** and **newsrsc** files upon exit. If this options is disabled, WinVN will automatically save these files.

## **Confirm use of Reply-To**

If **Confirm Use of Reply-To** is checked, WinVN will prompt you for confirmation anytime you reply to a post that has a From: address different than a Reply-To: address. A number of large sites on the internet allow their people to send mail directly from computers inside their facility but don't allow responses to come back thru the same route. Those sites typically will use the Reply-To field of a mail message to identify a proper return address. However, other sites have broken mail software and checking this option will allow you to verify addresses. You usually won't know what is a proper address so the typical procedure is to use the Reply-To field (if it exists), and if the email bounces, try the From: field.

## **Append saved articles**

Checking **Append saved articles** affects what WinVN does when you attempt to save the contents of an article to an existing file. If this box is checked, WinVN will append the article to the file. Otherwise, it will ask you what to do. See [File Menu Commands](#).

## **Full-name 'from' in group window**

If **Full-name 'from' in group window** is checked, WinVN will display the name of the person that posted an article instead of his/her E-mail address. If WinVN can't find a persons "Full Name", it will use their E-mail address out of the news article's "From" field.

## **Show unsubscribed groups**

If the **Show unsubscribed groups** option is checked, WinVN will display all groups on your News Server, even ones that are not currently subscribed.

## **Multi-Select in Group Window**

The option **Multi-Select in Group Window** changes the behavior of the mouse when used to select multiple groups. The default behavior of the mouse allows you to click on groups individually and that group will stay selected. With Multi-Select enabled, a Mouse Left click on any group highlights that group and turns off all others. After the first click, a Shift Mouse Left Click will highlight ALL intervening groups between the 1st click and your current mouse location.

## **Show full subject in threads**

If the **Show full subject in threads** is checked, WinVN will display the actual subject string of all articles in the thread. Typically this is not meaningful since most articles in a particular thread all have the same subject. However, sometimes someone changes the subject in the middle of a thread and selecting this option allows you to see these changes.



## **Compute threads**

If the **Compute Threads** options is checked, WinVN will request additional "references" data for each article in the displayed group. You can then sort articles by threads.

## **Article Fetch Limit**

WinVN fetches header information on articles when you view a newsgroup. **Article Fetch Limit** determines how many article headers you are willing to have WinVN automatically fetch from the server. If the number of articles in a group exceeds this number, WinVN will prompt you with a dialog box before proceeding.

This number defaults to 300, which is fine for a local area network connection but it may be too high for a lower speed serial SLIP connection.



## **Configure Logging...**

Brings up a dialog box allowing you to specify whether all outgoing posts or mail messages should be logged to a local text file. If you enable these options, you must also specify the file names to which postings or electronic mail messages should be written.

## **Configure Signature File...**

Brings up a dialog box allowing you to turn on an option to automatically append a signature to outgoing postings. If you select this option, you must specify the name of the DOS text file containing the signature.

## **Configure Fonts**

Activates a submenu which allows you to select the fonts used for the various window types.

## **Configure Color**

Activates a submenu which allows you to customize the foreground and background colors used by WinVN in each of its windows.

## **Save Configuration**

Immediately saves your WinVN configuration information to the WINVN.INI file. Normally, saving of WINVN.INI is done only upon exit from the program.



## **Save Window Positions**

Records the position of your different window types. The next time WinVN runs, it will position newly-created windows of the same type in the same place on your screen.

## **Saving Configuration Information**

When you exit WinVN via the main window's Network/Exit menu command, you are given the option of saving the configuration options you have set during the session. (The information is saved to WINVN.INI.) If you haven't changed any configuration options during the session, it doesn't do any harm to save them anyway.

If you change configuration options and want to save them immediately to guard against the computer crashing (yes, this has happened with WinVN!), use the Save Configuration menu command of the main window.

## **Help Menu Commands**

### **Index**

Starts the Help system with WinVN's main Help index.

### **About...**

Displays a dialog box containing WinVN credits.

### **Show Version**

Displays a dialog box containing WinVN version information. Press Enter to dismiss this dialog box.

## Group Window

Group windows contain a list of subjects of articles in a given newsgroup. Double-clicking on the subject of an article causes that article to be retrieved into an article window. See Using the Mouse in the Group Window.

Group windows initially appear in the upper right area of the screen. It is possible to have up to 4 group windows open at any one time. See Config Menu Commands.

The first character of each subject line in a group window gives information about that article:

- space indicates either that WinVN has no information on the status of this article, or that this article was available in a previous WinVN session and you chose not to view it.
- > indicates that this article has been selected as the result of the previous **Find** operation.
- s indicates that you have already seen this article.
- n indicates that this article has appeared since your last WinVN session.

The other fields in the window are:

*Article Number:* A number used to help a user locate a particular article. Never refer to this number when responding to an article since the number will most likely differ from server to server.

*Article Date:* The date the article was posted to the server.

*Author's Name:* The network E-Mail address or name of person posting the article.

*Article Size:* The number of lines in the article.

*Article Title:* The title of the article.

Articles Menu Commands

Sort Menu Commands

Search Menu Commands

## **Articles Menu Commands**

### **New Article**

Creates a Posting window for the purpose of composing a new article for this newsgroup.

### **Compose Mail**

Creates a Mail window for the purpose of sending Electronic Mail.

### **Update**

Update the article display with any new articles that have arrived at the server. Currently, this does not save any previous headers that may have been fetched but that will be fixed in a future release.

### **Save Selected Articles**

Save all articles marked via the Left Mouse Click or menu options to a disk file.

### **Decode Selected Articles**

Binary decode all articles marked via the Left Mouse click or menu options and store their contents in a file.

### **Select all Articles**

Mark all articles in the newsgroup as selected.

### **Deselect all Articles**

Mark all articles in the newsgroup as not selected.

### **Select Articles Containing...**

Selectively mark articles in the newsgroup based on whether its title contains a certain string of characters.

### **Exit**

Closes this Group Window.

## **Sort Menu Commands**

### **Sort by Date**

Sorts all article headers by date

### **Sort by Subject**

Sorts all article headers by Subject. The letters RE: in front of subjects are ignored so that responses will be sorted near the original subject.

### **Sort by Lines**

Use this to find out who writes the longest or shortest articles in a given newsgroup.

### **Sort by Threads**

Organize articles so they are displayed as a base article followed by each response articles. Each response is indented in such a way as to show which article a person was reading when the response was made. This option is only available if Threading has been enabled from the Config menu.

### **Sort by Article Number**

Sort articles based on their article number. This is the order the articles were received by the local server.

### **Sort by Author**

Sort articles based on the E-mail address or name of the article author.

## **Search Menu Commands**

### **Find...**

Searches the article subjects in this Group Window for an article whose subject line contains a specified text string. Find brings up a dialog box into which you enter the string for which you want to search. Click on OK to start the search, or Cancel if you decide not to search after all.

If an article is found whose subject contains the specified string, the window will be scrolled so that the subject line is visible. The selected article subject will be marked with a ">". If no such article can be found, WinVN says so via a message box.

### **Find Next**

Continues the search started by the previous Find... or Find Next. The next article containing the previously-set subject string is displayed if it can be found.





## **Article Window**

An article window displays the text of an article. The article is initially positioned in the scrollable window to the beginning of the article text, with the article header scrolled out of sight. (If you scroll the window manually during the short time that the article is being retrieved from the news server, the article is not repositioned.)

File Menu Commands

View Menu Commands

Respond Menu Commands

## File Menu Commands

### Save

Saves the article in this Article Window to a file. The filename from the most recent **Save As...** is used. If no **Save As...** has been done in this session, **Save** acts just like **Save As...**

### Save As...

Brings up a dialog box asking the user for a file name to which the current article should be saved. The dialog box also contains a check box labelled **Append to this file**. If this box is checked, WinVN will write the article to the end of the specified file. Otherwise, WinVN will overwrite the file with the article.

Press **OK** to actually save the article; press **Cancel** if you have changed your mind about saving the article.

### Exit

Closes this window.

## **View Menu Commands**

### **Next Article**

Causes WinVN to fetch and display the next article in this newsgroup. If there is no next article, WinVN says so.

### **Next with same Subject**

Causes WinVN to search the subsequent articles in this newsgroup for an article with the same subject as the current article. (Leading "Re:" notations are ignored.) If a matching article is found, it is retrieved and displayed in the current Article Window. Otherwise, WinVN informs you that there are no more articles with that subject.

## **Respond Menu Commands**

### **Followup Article**

Creates a Posting Window with the appropriate header and text to compose an article that responds to the article in the current Article Window. See Posting an Article.

### **via Mail**

Creates a Mail Window with the appropriate header and text to compose an electronic mail message to the author of the current article. See Mailing a Message.



## **Posting Window**

The posting window allows you to compose and then post an article to the network. See Posting an Article.

Posting Menu Commands

Edit Menu Commands

## **Posting Menu Commands**

### **Post completed article**

Sends your completed article in this Posting Window to the news server for propagation throughout the network.

### **Cancel**

Closes this window. If you haven't already posted this article, its contents are lost.

## **Edit Menu Commands**

### **Undo**

Reverses the effects of the most recent change to this window.

### **Cut**

Deletes the selected text and saves it in the clipboard.

### **Copy**

Copies the selected text into the clipboard.

### **Paste**

Retrieves the text most recently copied or cut to the clipboard into the current window. The text is inserted at the current cursor position.

### **Clear**

Deselects all text in the current window.

### **Select All**

Selects all text in the current window. Generally used just prior to a Copy operation to save the contents of the window to the clipboard.



## **Mail Window**

The mail window allows to you compose and then send an electronic mail message. See Mailing a Message.

Mail Menu Commands

Edit Menu Commands

## **Mail Menu Commands**

### **Mail completed message**

Sends your completed electronic mail message to its recipient(s).

### **Cancel**

Closes this Mail Window. If you have not already sent the message you were composing, it is lost.



## Posting an Article

You can post an article either as a followup to a previous article, or as a "brand new" article. Note that often it is preferable to respond to an article via an electronic mail message rather than by another article; see Usenet Etiquette and Mailing a Message.

An article contains a header followed by the text of the article. Each article is directed to one or more newsgroups by a "Newsgroups:" line in the header. If you want to send an article to more than one newsgroup, type the names of the newsgroups on the "Newsgroups:" line, separated by commas. The text of an article is separated from the header by a blank line.

### Followup Articles

A followup article has the same "Subject:" line as the article which inspired it. (The notation "Re:" is added.) This makes it easier for other Usenet News users browsing the newsgroup to follow the discussion. Also, a followup article typically selectively quotes the earlier article, again to make the discussion easier to follow.

You start composing a followup article by selecting the Followup Article option of an article window's Respond menu. (See Respond Menu Commands.) WinVN creates a posting window. The header of the article in this window is filled in with information taken from WinVN configuration options and from the header of the referenced article. (See Configuring WinVN.) The full text of the referenced article is also included in the posting window, with each line preceded by a ">" to indicate that another article is being quoted.

Fill in the text of your response. You should delete irrelevant quoted lines in your followup article.

### New Articles

You start composing a "brand new" article by selecting the New posting option from the Articles menu of a group window. (See Articles Menu Commands.) WinVN creates a posting window for your new article. The "Newsgroup:" line contains the name of the newsgroup of the group window; you can edit this if necessary. Other information is based on the way you configured WinVN.

You must fill in an appropriate subject for the new article.

### Sending the Article

When you have completed composing your article, you can send it to the network or cancel it. See Posting Menu Commands. After you have posted the article, you can close the posting window.

## **Mailing a Message**

You can use WinVN to send an electronic mail message either as a personal reply to the author of an article, or as an independent message.

A message contains a header followed by the text of the message. A message is directed to one or more recipients by a "To:" line in the header. If you want to send a message to more than one person, type the electronic mail addresses of the recipients on the "To:" line, separated by commas. The text of a message is separated from the header by a blank line.

### **Reply Messages**

A reply message has the same "Subject:" line as the article which inspired it. (The notation "Re:" is added.) Also, a reply message typically selectively quotes the article which inspired it, to give some context to the recipient.

You start composing a reply message by selecting the via Mail option of an article window's Respond menu. See Respond Menu Commands. WinVN creates a mail window. The header of the message in this window is filled in with information taken from WinVN configuration options and from the header of the referenced article. (See Configuring WinVN.) The full text of the referenced article is also included in this window, with each line preceded by a ">" to indicate that an article is being quoted.

Fill in the text of your message. You should delete irrelevant quoted lines.

### **New Messages**

You start composing a "brand new" message--one that does not reference an article--by selecting the Compose mail message option from the Options menu of the main window. (See Config Menu Commands.) WinVN creates a mail window for your new article. Your name and organization are filled in based on the way you configured WinVN.

You must fill in an appropriate subject for the new article on the "Subject:" line, and a recipient on the "To:" line.

### **Sending the Message**

When you have completed composing your message, you can send it or cancel it. See Mail Menu Commands. After you have sent the message, you can close the mail window.

## Subscribing to Newsgroups

### What is "Subscribing"?

"Subscribing" to a newsgroup means telling a news reader that you are interested in tracking, selecting, and viewing articles in that group. Most news readers support the concept of "subscribing" to newsgroups as a means of simplifying the way that you interact with the news reader. There are probably over 3000 newsgroups in which you are not interested; if you are not subscribed to these newsgroups, a news reader need not bother prompting you with information on these groups.

WinVN also supports the concept of subscribing to a newsgroup, but primarily as a means of providing compatibility with other news readers. WinVN's windowed, point-and-click interface makes it less necessary for it to resort to the somewhat artificial distinction between newsgroups in which you are interested and newsgroups in which you are not interested. You can always access any newsgroup simply by scrolling to its name and clicking on it.

### Subscribing to New Newsgroups

When WinVN starts up, it can check the news server to see if any new groups have been created since your last session. (See Configuring WinVN.) If WinVN checks and finds that new newsgroups do exist, it displays their names in a scrollable list in a dialog box. You select the groups to which you want to subscribe by clicking on their names. When you have finished making your selections, click on the OK button. Alternatively, you can click on the Cancel button and WinVN will ignore the new newsgroups altogether.

### Subscribing to Existing Newsgroups

Newsgroups to which you are subscribed are displayed in black at the top of the main window. Following these groups are all of the unsubscribed group names, in red and sorted alphabetically.

You subscribe and unsubscribe to newsgroups by selecting them in the main window and using Group Menu Commands. Select groups by clicking on their names. A selected group appears in reverse video (black background). The Subscribe selected groups, Unsubscribe selected groups, and Move selected groups to Top menu options operate on all currently selected newsgroups.

Subscribing to a newsgroup moves its name to the bottom of the list of subscribed groups in the top portion of the main window. Unsubscribing to a newsgroup causes it to be moved to its proper alphabetical place in the unsubscribed portion of the main window.

## **Marking Articles as Read**

Normally, WinVN keeps track of which articles you have read. (See [Group Window](#).) Sometimes, you may want WinVN to think that you have read articles when you have not. You may have read the articles with another newsreader or with a different copy of WinVN, or you may have been on vacation and want to ignore the articles that accumulated in a [newsgroup](#) while you were away.

You can manually mark articles in a group as having been read by double-clicking the right mouse button on an article in the Group Window. This marks all articles from the beginning of the newsgroup to the cursor as having been read.

To toggle the "read" status of a single article in a group, point the mouse cursor at the article subject and click on the middle mouse button. You can also hold the shift key down and use the left mouse button.

## **Authorizing Yourself to the News Server**

Some Usenet news servers require you to present a username and password in order to gain access to certain features. For instance, you may need a username and password to be able to post to any newsgroup, or to be able to read certain newsgroups. The process of providing a username and password, and the subsequent checking done by the server, is called "authorizing".

WinVN supports the AUTHINFO NNTP command for authorization. You can provide a username and password; see Configure Comm... under Config Menu Commands.

If you have saved a username as part of your WinVN configuration, when WinVN is launched, it attempts to authorize you with the news server. If you have saved a password as well, WinVN provides the username and password to the news server without prompting you. If you have saved a username but have left the password field empty, WinVN brings up the Configure Comm... dialog box to allow you to enter your password before completing authorization.

If you choose to save your news server password, WinVN encrypts it before recording it in the configuration file. However, given the availability of WinVN source code, a determined attacker with access to your configuration file could decrypt your password without too much effort. Therefore, for the best security, force WinVN to always prompt you for the password by never saving the password, as described above.

Note that because WinVN attempts to authorize you to the server only when WinVN is launched, you cannot be authorized the very first time you run WinVN. You must configure your username, click on "OK & Save", exit WinVN, and restart it.



## Getting a Copy of WinVN

WinVN is distributed via anonymous FTP from the hosts `titan.ksc.nasa.gov` and `ripem.msu.edu`. The definitive version is always on `titan`. Copies of WinVN can often be found at other sites, but they are sometimes badly out-of-date. (The `ripem` site tends to lag behind `titan` by a day or so.)

Both source code and binaries for various platforms are distributed. Sam Rushing's implementation of a generalized Winsock DLL has reduced the previous need to have a number of different versions of WinVN, one for each vendor's networking product. However, WinVN can still be compiled for several different targets, including Windows NT on Intel and Alpha AXP machines. Distributions are in the form of `.ZIP` files; be sure to use binary mode FTP to do the transfer.

As of this writing, WinVN source code distributions have file names starting with `WINVNSRC`, binary distributions for Winsock (a Windows networking API supported by a number of TCP/IP vendors) have names starting with `WINVN`, and binary distributions for DEC Pathworks have names starting with `WINVNPWK`. See the FTP sites for other files.

Here is a sample FTP session. User-typed entries are in **bold**.

```
$ ftp titan.ksc.nasa.gov
ftp: connect to address 128.159.1.1: Host is unreachable
Trying 128.159.4.20...
Connected to titan.ksc.nasa.gov.
220 TITAN.KSC.NASA.GOV MultiNet FTP Server Process ...
Name (titan.ksc.nasa.gov:mrr): anonymous
331 anonymous user ok. Send real ident as password.
Password: fred
230-Guest User FRED logged into DISK$SHARE:[ANONYMOUS] at ...
230 Directory and access restrictions apply
ftp> binary
200 Type I ok.
ftp> cd [.pub.win3.winvn]
250 Connected to DISK$SHARE:[ANONYMOUS.PUB.WIN3.WINVN].
ftp> dir
200 Port 9.250 at Host ww.xx.yy.zz accepted.
150 List started.

DISK$SHARE:[ANONYMOUS.PUB.WIN3.WINVN]

WINVNPWK083_2.ZIP;2          170   8-DEC-1993 19:35 [NASA,DUMOULIN]
WINVNSRC083_2.ZIP;1         657   8-DEC-1993 15:14 [NASA,DUMOULIN]
WINVNSTD083_2.ZIP;1         167   8-DEC-1993 15:15 [NASA,DUMOULIN]
WINVN_DOC.ZIP;1             192  23-FEB-1993 11:33 [NASA,DUMOULIN]
...
ftp> get winvnstd083_2.zip
200 Port 10.196 at Host ww.xx.yy.zz accepted.
150 IMAGE retrieve of DISK$SHARE:[ANONYMOUS.PUB.WIN3.WINVN]WINVN...
226 Transfer completed. xxxx (8) bytes transferred.
...
ftp> quit
$
```



## Configuring WinVN

Before you use WinVN to read news, you must give it the information it needs to contact the news server, send electronic mail, and so on. In addition, you can configure WinVN with personal preferences, such as the colors and fonts it uses, how many article titles should be automatically fetched at once, and so on.

All configuration commands are accessible from the Config menu of the main window. See Config Menu Commands.

By default, configuration information is written to the file `WINVN.INI` in the current directory. The curious may wish to examine this file with a text editor. See Invoking WinVN.

## Invoking WinVN

WinVN is typically invoked by double-clicking on an icon in Program Manager; however, WinVN can be invoked via the **File/Run...** menu command or by any other mechanism that can be used to start a Windows program.

When WinVN starts, it looks for two files: WINVN.INI, which contains configuration and customization information, and NEWSRC. By default, WinVN looks in the current directory for these files. However, there are ways of specifying alternate locations for these files.

### WINVN Command Line

You can pass command line arguments to WinVN to tell it where to locate your WINVN.INI and NEWSRC files. The format of the command line is:

```
WINVN IniFile NewsrcFile
```

or

```
WINVN Path
```

In the first case, WinVN will take IniFile to be the filename--including path specification--of the initialization file. If IniFile is just a directory name, WinVN will look for the file named WINVN.INI in that directory. Similarly, WinVN takes the second argument, NewsrcFile, as a filename for the news history file. If NewsrcFile is just a directory name, WinVN will look for the file named NEWSRC in that directory.

If, as in the second case, WinVN is run with one argument, WinVN will use it as a directory name for both the WINVN.INI and NEWSRC files.

(Actually, this is a simplified description of how WinVN searches for these files. For a complete description, curious readers are referred to the source code file `ininews.c`.)

### WINVN Environment Variable

Alternatively, you can set an environment variable to tell WinVN where to look for these two files. Set the environment variable WINVN to the directory in which both the WINVN.INI and NEWSRC files can be found. For instance:

```
SET WINVN=F:\FRED
```

The WinVN environment variable must be set before windows starts up. Every DOS shell within Windows maintains its own separate copy of the environment. Windows only looks at the environment that existed at startup.

On a PC LAN, an administrator can add code in the login script to set the WINVN environment variable to the unique location of a user's WINVN.INI file (on a network drive). For those using multiple news servers, you can have multiple icons from within Windows and they have command line arguments set.

### Summary of WinVN's Search for WINVN.INI and NEWSRC

Winvn uses the following search mechanism to find the WINVN.INI file:

Command line (e.g., `n:\winvn\winvn.exe u:\winvn.ini u:\newsrc`)

WINVN Environment variable

Application startup directory

Windows Directory

Windows System Directory

DOS search path

## Using the Mouse in the Group Window

From the Newsgroup window, clicking the mouse anywhere on the window while a network operation is in progress will update the information on the screen with the current downloaded information. Once all the article header information has been downloaded and the Newsgroup window is fully populated, the mouse operations are:

<b>Mouse Left</b>	Mark/Unmark an article for further consideration
<b>Drag Mouse Left</b>	Mark/Unmark multiple articles
<b>Mouse Double-Click Left</b>	Select article for viewing
<b>Mouse Middle</b>	Toggle the read/unread state of an article
<b>Drag Mouse Middle</b>	Toggle read/unread state of multiple articles
<b>Shift Mouse Left</b>	Same as Mouse Middle
<b>Mouse Right</b>	Reserved for future popup article menu
<b>Mouse Double-Click Right</b>	Mark all articles above this one as "seen".

## **Usenet News**

The Usenet News, or Netnews, system is a kind of distributed bulletin board system run on thousands of computers world-wide. Users of Usenet News exchange views and information by writing articles, which are then transmitted automatically amongst the computers in the network. Once posted, an article can be read by others days, hours, or even minutes later, depending upon their computer's type of network link to Usenet.

Articles are organized by topic area into newsgroups, of which there are currently over 4500.

## Overview of WinVN

WinVN is a Microsoft Windows and Windows NT-based news reader. Like other news readers, it can be used to select, view, and write Usenet Newsarticles. WinVN can also be used to send (but not receive) electronic mail messages.

WinVN offers a more visual approach to Usenet News than most other news readers. WinVN allows you to easily navigate amongst newsgroups and articles via its point-and-click interface.

In normal operation, WinVN displays three types of windows: the main window, which displays a list of all newsgroups; one or more group windows, each of which displays a list of the articles in a newsgroup; and one or more article windows, which each displays an article. Double-clicking on a newsgroup or article name causes that item to be displayed in a separate window.

When you want to write an article, WinVN displays a posting window for that purpose. See Posting an Article. Similarly, when you want to write an electronic mail message, WinVN displays a mail window to accept your text. See Mailing a Message.

WinVN offers a number of configuration options; see Config Menu Commands.

## History of WinVN

WinVN was originally written at home as an own-time project by me, Mark Riordan, a systems programmer at Michigan State University. The program and its source code have been placed in the public domain. WinVN is not a product of MSU or any other institution.

The name WinVN means "Windowed Visual Newsreader". The "VN" portion of the name was inspired by the now-obscure Unix newsreader, vn.

Serious development of WinVN began in September 1989. It continued in fits and starts until roughly Fall 1992, when Sam Rushing ([rushing@titan.ksc.nasa.gov](mailto:rushing@titan.ksc.nasa.gov)), Jim Dumoulin ([dumoulin@titan.ksc.nasa.gov](mailto:dumoulin@titan.ksc.nasa.gov)) took over development. Sam and Jim work at the NASA/Kennedy Space Center Information Systems Branch and selected WinVN as a good candidate for future development as part of the Payload Data Management System (PDMS-II) project. After contacting Mark Riordan, NASA agreed to make extensive enhancements to WinVN, coordinate a public domain Internet development effort to extend its features, and to serve as the overall integrator for future versions of WinVN. Sam Rushing reworked WinVN to support the emerging Windows TCP/IP Sockets standard (Winsock), revamped the user interface and added support for threading and XOVER (a faster extension to the news transport protocol). He also ported WinVN to Windows NT.

Since then, many people, in a truly international effort, have contributed their own time to the success of WinVN. Certainly by now most of the code in WinVN was written by persons other than I, though I still contribute occasionally. See [List of Contributors](#). Although the NASA contributors work partly on "company time", even their work is done in large part on their own time.

I developed a Macintosh version, but it is no longer in sync with the latest Windows version and is not being distributed (I think!). The release of a number of good Macintosh newsreaders convinced me long ago to cease development of the Mac version.

You can correspond with the authors of WinVN via the mailing list [winvn@titan.ksc.nasa.gov](mailto:winvn@titan.ksc.nasa.gov). It's best to send your remarks to this mailing list. However, I can be reached at [mrr@ripem.msu.edu](mailto:mrr@ripem.msu.edu) or [riordanmr@clvax1.cl.msu.edu](mailto:riordanmr@clvax1.cl.msu.edu).

Mark R. Lansing, Michigan July 1994



## List of Contributors

Here is a partial list of those who have contributed to the development of WinVN. (We are working on compiling a better list.)

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## Usenet Etiquette ("Netiquette")

The ease of posting Usenet News articles causes many inappropriate articles to be sent to the network. An article can be inappropriate if it:

- Is devoid of useful information or ideas.
- Is sent to inappropriate newsgroup(s).
- Is really intended for a particular individual, rather than the entire Usenet community.
- Contains rude or insulting remarks.

Please compose your articles thoughtfully. Consider sending an electronic mail message rather than posting an article, if appropriate.

Be aware of the fact that many sites must pay long-distance telephone charges to receive your article. Also be aware of the fact that some of the popular newsgroups have tens of thousands of readers. 10,000 people each reading your article for 20 seconds spend a total of 55 hours reading your article.

At the end of most articles there is usually a small blurb called a signature or sig. This usually comes from a file in the person's login directory and is appended automatically to the message by the news reader. Some people get carried away with their signature and place complex ASCII drawings or cute sayings at the bottom of their messages. These signatures bother most people and it is considered poor "netiquette" to have signatures larger than about 4 lines. You can create a signature file of your own using any Windows Editor and then attach it to WinVN using the option Config Signature File on the Config menu. Please remember to save your signature file as plain ASCII text, since vendor dependent binary files (such as Microsoft Word files) are not portable across the entire Internet community.

Many new users wish to test their ability to post before they actually say anything of any interest to anyone. Don't post test type messages to an active newsgroup. This will interrupt quite a number of people and is considered poor "netiquette". There are usually a number of "Test" newsgroups (they usually have the word "TEST" in their name) that can be used to verify that posting from your host will be successful. Some test newsgroups (like **ALT.TEST**) have automatic E-Mail responding software. A post to those groups will cause electronic mail from all over the world to be sent back to you as your post gets forwarded from site to site.

The "Newsgroups:" line in a news header isn't limited to just one group. If a note makes sense to more than one area you can cross-post it to other newsgroups by just separating the newsgroups with a comma on the Newsgroups line. It is considered poor "netiquette" to cross-post to more than three or four newsgroups.

When posting new articles to News, please remember that News runs on many different hosts and operating systems. In fact, since WinVN is one of the first usable News readers for Microsoft Windows, the majority of posts from the Usenet are viewed by people running non-DOS/Windows operating systems. Inserting graphics or non ASCII text (such as different fonts, underlining, color changes etc.) in an article will appear as unintelligible garbage to almost everyone else. You can use WinVN to send binary attachments along with your post but exercise judgment and don't flood the Usenet with massive binary attachments.

When responding to articles, use the Follow-up Article option instead of the New Post option. This will maintain a reference link between your message and the article you were reading at the time of your posting. People reading your message from other "thread based" news readers, like WinVN, will be able to understand how your message fits into the rest of the conversation. WinVN will automatically "quote" the text of the article you were

reading (including a unique Message ID that can be used to locate the original posting) and insert it at the beginning of your post. Intersperse your comments between the quoted text and delete any large quoted sections that do not pertain to your response. Someone can always find the original text by clicking on the unique Message ID. Also, use Message ID's when referring to other articles and never refer to another article by it's article number. Article Numbers are never the same from system to system so only people reading news on your own local system will know to which article you are referring.

Try to keep your text in a generic format. Many (if not most) of the people reading Usenet do so from 80 column terminals or from workstations with 80 column terminal windows. Try to keep your lines of text to less than 80 characters for optimal readability. If people quote part of your article in a follow-up, each line gets indented a few characters and gets proceeded with a ">". Thus, standard lines of 75 characters or less are best for later readability. Also, WinVN allows you to change your viewing font to any font your workstation supports. Be careful when using proportional style fonts since they allow you to place more characters per line than fixed style fonts.

Most news readers on the Usenet are running on multi-user hosts with system administrators and operating systems that validate logons. Unfortunately, WinVN runs under MS-DOS which is a single user operating system that doesn't have any concept of a logon. (WinVN also runs under Windows/NT which does validate logon's.) Please take special care in configuring the *Configure Personal Info* option and insure that your name and mailing address are valid. Since most MS-DOS machines cannot receive Internet mail, don't specify your MS-DOS host as your mail address.

See [Posting an Article](#) and [Mailing a Message](#).

## The NEWSRC File

In order to keep track of your viewing history, WinVN records information about newsgroups in a file named NEWSRC. This file contains a list of all newsgroups. For each newsgroup, WinVN records whether it is subscribed and which articles have been seen.

Many Unix-based news readers record this information in a file named .newsrc. WinVN uses a similar file format to provide compatibility with these programs. One extension had to be made to the file format to provide features not found in ordinary Unix newsreaders. WinVN NEWSRC files contain in each line a field of the form

*sbiggest\_art\_number*

where *biggest\_art\_number* is the number of the most recent article to appear on the news server. WinVN uses this information at the beginning of a session to tell you which articles have appeared on the server since your last session. WinVN does not require this field to be present, so you can transport your Unix-style .newsrc file to your PC as the filename NEWSRC and WinVN should be able to use it without modification. Transporting a WinVN NEWSRC back to Unix would require a simple script to remove the "s" fields.

See Group Menu Commands and Invoking WinVN



**bulletin board system (BBS)**

An electronic system in which users participate in discussions by leaving public messages for each other. Most BBS's are run on personal computers and are accessible only by dialup modem. Many have additional features, such as online games and a file repository.

Usenet News is not a BBS in the usual sense of the word, but it provides the messaging features of a BBS on a much grander scale than found on any existing BBS.

**Usenet**

A loosely-organized network of over 200,000 computers worldwide. These computers are linked in a number of ways, including modem and TCP/IP. The best known service provided by Usenet is Usenet News.

**NNTP**

Network News Transport Protocol. This is the network protocol used by WinVN and most other newsreaders to carry Usenet News information. There is also a program named NNTP that implements the NNTP protocol and runs on many news servers. (The program NNTP has been replaced by the program INN at many sites.)



**article**

A message written by a Usenet News user and posted to the network. Articles are similar to electronic mail messages, but are not private. They are intended to be seen by potentially hundreds of thousands of people. Also called "postings".

## newsgroup

A collection of articles on a given topic. When you write an article, you specify to which group or groups it should be sent.

Each newsgroup has a hierarchical name which suggests the topic of that group. Names consist of several words separated by periods. The first word in the newsgroup name states the general category covered by that group, the second, a subcategory of that general category, and so on.

For instance, the newsgroups **sci.chem** and **sci.math** are scientifically-oriented groups which are dedicated to chemistry and mathematics, respectively. **soc.culture.indian** is sociologically-oriented group devoted to the culture of India, and so on.

**news reader**

A computer program through which you interact with the Usenet News system. News readers allow you to select and read articles written by others, and to write and post articles of your own.

A number of news readers have been written over the years, many of them for computers running the Unix operating system. The best-known news readers are probably `rn`, `nn`, `tin`, and `xrn`.

posting

The act of sending an article to the Usenet network, to be seen by potentially hundreds of thousands of individuals.

Also, a synonym for "article".

## header

A series of lines at the beginning of an article or electronic mail message that contain such information as the article's or message's author, its subject, its date and time of transmission, and so on. The header is separated from the actual text of the article or message by a blank line.

**electronic mail message**

A message sent privately to one or more explicitly-named individuals. Electronic mail is not provided by Usenet News per se; electronic mail messages are not the same as news articles. However, many news readers provide the capability of sending (but usually not receiving) electronic mail because it is often desirable to respond privately to an article.

**news server**

A computer that runs special software to exchange news articles with other computers in the Usenet network, and makes these articles available to local users. News readers require access to a news server, but they do not require you to have an account on a news server.

**definition**

A type of hypertext link in Microsoft Help. A definition is a (usually) brief description of a term. Definitions appear when you press and hold the mouse button on a term that appears in Help as green text marked with a dotted underline.

Some definitions contain hypertext links, because they are also available as cross-references. It is usually possible to reference a definition as a cross-reference via the Help Search button.



## Cross Reference

A type of hypertext link in Microsoft Help. A cross reference is a topic that appears in the Help window when you click on a term that appears in Help as green solid underlined text.

**subscribing (concept)**

"Subscribing" to a newsgroup is the act of marking that group as one in which you are interested and which you would like to track.

Many news readers sharply distinguish between subscribed and unsubscribed newsgroups to make their user interface more manageable. WinVN supports the concept of subscribing, but it really doesn't treat subscribed groups much differently than unsubscribed groups.

**signature**

A short piece of text appended to a posting or mail message typically describing the author and his/her interests and affiliation. It's considered bad form for the signature to be more than four lines. See Usenet Etiquette.

## **WINVN.INI**

WinVN saves its configuration information in a file named WINVN.INI. By default, WinVN searches for this file in the current directory when it is launched. However, its location can be specified in other ways.

## **followup**

An article that is posted to the network in response to another, earlier article. When you are creating a followup article, it's better to use WinVN's Followup menu command than to create a brand new article with the same title. The reason is that WinVN inserts a "References:" header line in the article which is used by some newsreaders to gather together related articles.



