

Welcome to Autostart!

Autostart is a simple application designed to help developers who wish to create a CD-ROM installer for applications distributed on Windows CD-ROMs. Autostart acts as a customizable, flexible autostart application; it begins running automatically when a CD-ROM is inserted into a Windows computer with the Windows CD-ROM autorun feature enabled, and it presents a window asking the user if he wants to install the software or exit.

Autostart's real power is its flexibility and customizability. The basic version of Autostart presents a simple dialog window with an Install button and an Exit button, and some text prompting the user to install the software. You can, if you choose, customize the text, customize the size and appearance of the window, and customize the size and appearance of the buttons. You can even have the Autostart program play a sound when it starts, if you choose.

This PDF explains how to use and customize Autostart.

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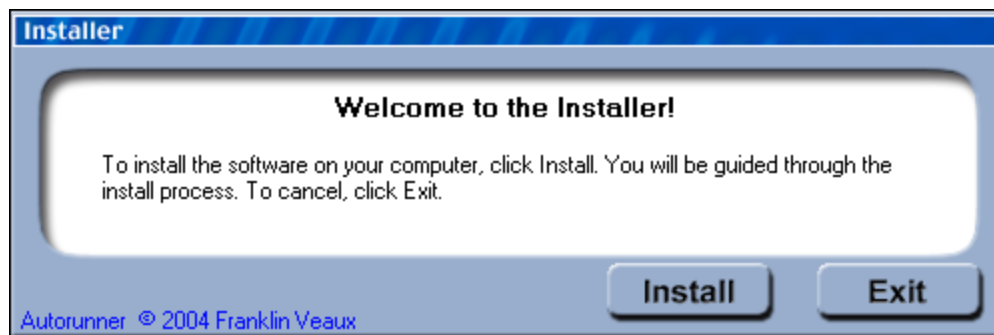
Shareware, freeware, and open-source developers may purchase a license to use Autostart for \$20. Commercial developers must purchase a commercial license. Commercial licenses may include custom design, custom branding, logos, custom buttons, and other features. Shareware, freeware, and open-source developers may not remove the copyright notice which appears on the install dialog; this notice is not present in commercially licensed versions. For more information on licensing Autostart, please visit:

<http://www.xeromag.com/fvshare.html>

Getting Started with Autostart

The purpose of Autostart is to provide an easy way for users to install a Windows program distributed on CD-ROM. To use Autostart in its most basic configuration, all you need to do is name your installer "setup.exe," and then copy it, Autostart.exe, and the files "autostart.ini" and "autorun.inf" to the top level of your CD.

Once you've done this, anyone who places the CD-ROM into their CD-ROM drive will see a dialog appear that looks like this:



Clicking the Install button will launch your "setup.exe" program. Clicking the Exit button will close the dialog.

This provides a simple, convenient way for you to create an automatic front-end for your installer, which your users can use easily.

The real appeal of Autostart, however, is the degree to which it can be customized, which is covered in the next section.

Customizing Autostart

The first and simplest way you can customize Autostart is by changing the text and headline which appears in the Autostart dialog. This can be done very simply, just by opening the file “autostart.ini” in a text editor such as Notepad.

“Autostart.ini” is a simple, plain-text file. The first line of the file is the headline, which will appear centered in bold in the Autostart dialog; the rest of the file will appear beneath it. By default, the Autostart.ini file looks like this:

```
Welcome to the Installer!  
To install the software on your computer, click  
Install. You will be guided through the install  
process. To cancel, click Exit.
```

You can change this text to represent your product. For example, if your product is a text editor called MicroEdit, you may want to change your Autostart.ini to look something like this:

```
Welcome to MicroEdit!  
This program will install MicroEdit version 3.2, from  
MicroSystems, on your computer. If you need further  
information, visit our Web site at www.microedit.com.
```

The text you put in the Autostart.ini file will be read from the CD and will appear in the dialog when Autostart runs.

You can, however, go much further in the way you customize Autostart, by changing the size and appearance of the dialog window, and changing the size and appearance of the buttons. The default Autostart appearance can be changed to be virtually anything you can imagine, just by using a graphics editor to create the elements you would like to appear.

Advanced Customization

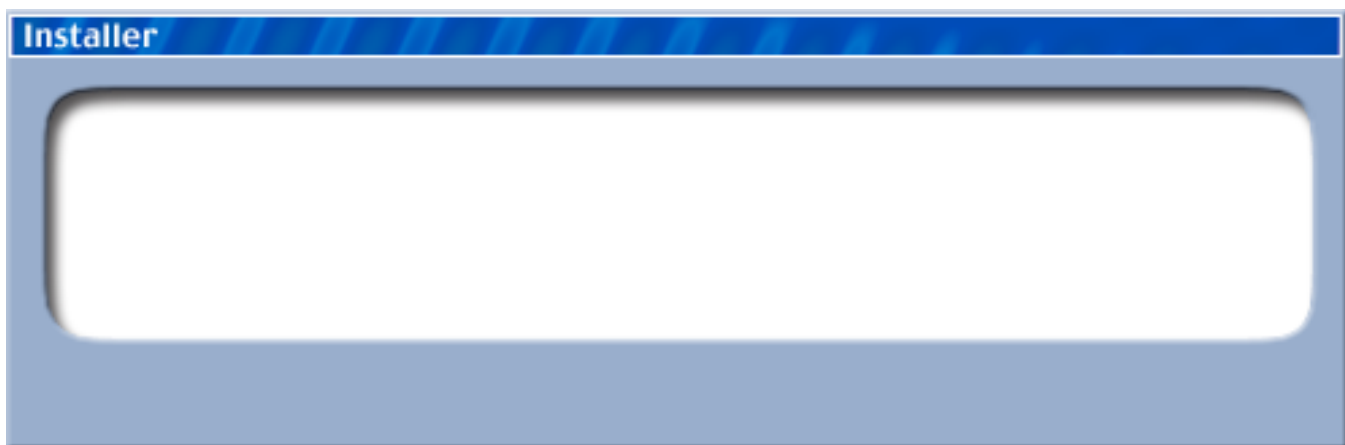
When Autostart is launched, it looks for certain graphics files. If it does not find these files, it uses the default appearance, and displays the text found in the Autostart.ini file. However, if it finds these files, it uses them as the background of the dialog window, changing the size of the dialog window appropriately.

The Autostart window is actually a plain, borderless window. The elements in the window, including the buttons and title bar, are simply graphical elements which Autostart draws. You can provide graphical images in bitmap (.BMP) format, and Autostart will use these elements instead.

The first file Autostart looks for is an image called “Autostart.bmp”. If it finds this image, Autostart uses it to draw the backdrop of the Autostart dialog window. The size of this image will determine the size of the Autostart dialog window; you can easily control how large this window is.

If it finds this file, Autostart will then search for four more files, called “exitbuttonoff.bmp,” “exitbuttonon.bmp,” “installbuttonoff.bmp,” and “installbuttonon.bmp.” These will be used to draw the exit and install buttons, in their “off” (inactive) and “on” (mouse-over) state. These buttons may be any size you like; Autostart will draw the buttons the same size as these graphics.

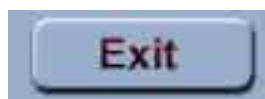
To help understand how these elements relate, let’s take a look at the default Autostart appearance. Autostart’s default appearance is the result of five .bmp files (built into Autostart) which look like this:



autostart.bmp



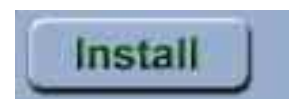
exitbuttonoff.bmp



exitbuttonon.bmp



installbuttonoff.bmp



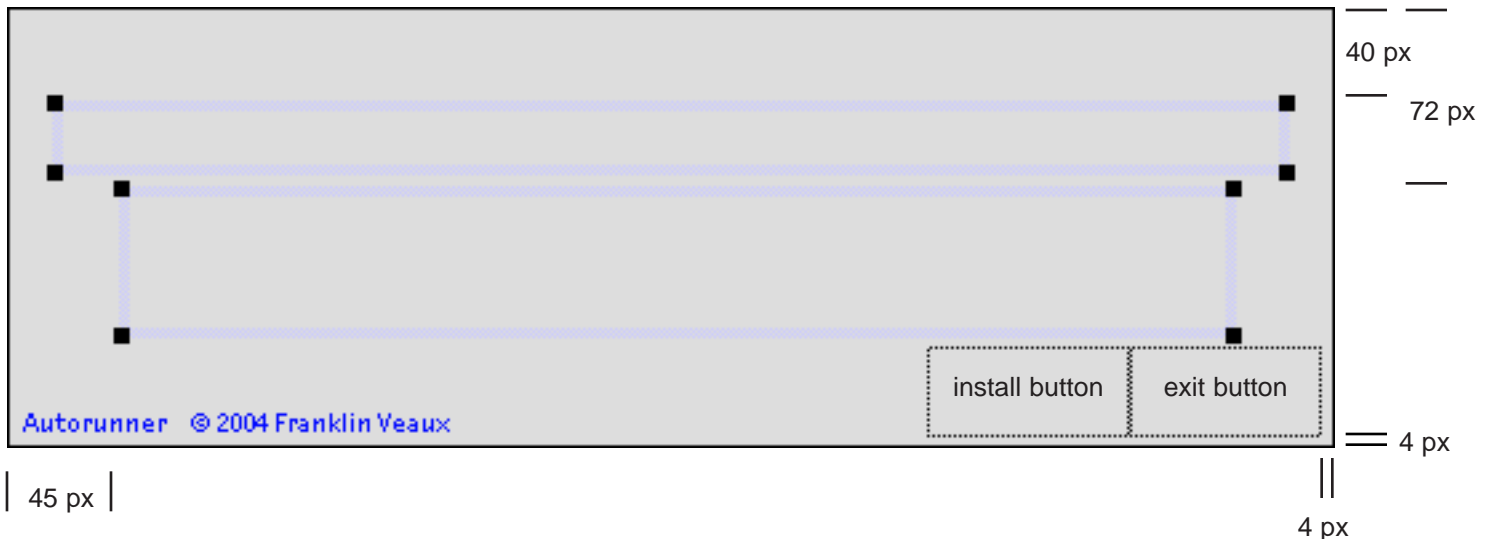
installbuttonon.bmp

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Autostart uses an internal template to draw these elements on the screen. First, the window is resized to match the size of the autostart.bmp image; then, the buttons are drawn in the lower right corner of the window. The buttons are always drawn four pixels from the bottom edge of the window, and four pixels from the right edge of the window. The headline is always drawn in a text area beginning 40 pixels from the top of the window, and the text appears beginning 72 pixels from the top of the window.

You can use this template for creating your own appearance for the Autostart dialog:

20 px



If your Autostart.bmp image is larger than the default window, then the area where the text appears will grow correspondingly larger as well. This enables you to increase the amount of text which appears in the Autostart dialog.

Advanced Customization con't.

If you choose, you can also have the Autostart application play a sound when the dialog window appears. You do this by creating a sound file in .mp3 format, and naming it "autostart.mp3". Autostart will load and play this sound, ending it when the sound ends or when either button is pressed.

NOTE: On Windows 95 systems, the sound will not play if Windows media Player is not installed.

TESTING YOUR CUSTOMIZATIONS

Once you have modified the Autostart.ini file to suit your needs and/or created graphical elements and the sound file, you can test them by placing them in a folder together with the Autostart.exe application on your hard drive. Run the Autostart.exe application; Autostart will load your customized elements and let you test that everything looks satisfactory. Once you're confident that everything looks as it should, copy the elements and the Autostart.exe program to the root (top) level of your CD-ROM, together with your Setup.exe installer, and you're ready to distribute your application with a customized autorunning installer!

SUPPORT

Should you have questions or comments about Autostart, please visit the Web site at

<http://www.xeromag.com/fvshare.html>