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propellerforth

*Interactive ANS-subset
Forth for the Parallax
Propeller microcontroller*

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FrequentlyAskedQuestions

Quick answers to common questions.

Updated Jan 02, 2008 by [cbiffle](#)

General

Q. I want to learn Forth! Where should I start?

The canonical source is *Starting Forth* by Leo Brodie, which taught at least one of [PropellerForth](#)'s authors (and his dad). There's an [online copy](#) hosted on forth.com.

Starting Forth describes a slightly different dialect of Forth than what you'll find in [PropellerForth](#), but most of the tutorials should work unchanged.

Q. There are a bunch of download options! Which should I choose?

The options available will vary with each release, as we make experimental features available to folks who want them. Currently, you have two choices to make:

- Target board, and
- Features available.

For information about each supported target board, see [SupportedTargets](#). For information on the various feature releases, see the [ReleaseNotes](#) for the current version.

Q. I'm getting some cryptic exception code! What does it mean?

[PropellerForth](#) uses standard ANS Forth exception codes, but unfortunately doesn't translate them for you yet. For now, refer to [the official list in the ANS Exception standard](#).

Remember that the list is in decimal, but your terminal is in whatever base you've set (using words like `hex`), so you might need to convert.

Q. I've typed in some loops or IF/THEN statements and they're not working. Why?

[PropellerForth](#)'s flow control words (like `BEGIN`, `DO`, `IF`, and `kin`) only work in compiled words -- that is, between `:` and `;`. This is because they have to scan over and modify the code being compiled -- and in the interactive interpreter, there's no code being compiled.

This may change in the future, but for now, define a simple word to play with flow control. You can always `FORGET` it later.

Working with Code

Q. Pasting text into my terminal seems to mangle it! What gives?

Short answer: [PropellerForth](#) is off compiling what you've entered, and misses some characters.

- Try setting your terminal up to delay about 10ms between characters, and about 100ms between newlines.
- On 8.01 and later, try typing `USEBOOTASP` to enable new, faster, experimental serial I/O.

Long answer:

[PropellerForth](#)'s serial I/O is reasonably fast, but if the text you're pasting causes any computation to happen -- for example, if you're pasting source code to be compiled -- [PropellerForth](#) may miss some characters.

We agree that this is lame, and we're trying to fix it. As a short-term solution, if you're using 8.01, enter `USEBOOTASP` to switch the console driver to the experimental Boot Asynchronous Serial Port. This will cost you one Cog, but provides full-duplex buffered serial I/O. BootASP may be enabled by default on a future release.


If your terminal supports it, try adding a character delay of a 10ms and a newline delay of about 100ms. (HyperTerminal on Windows, ironically, has better support for this than minicom on Unix.) 100ms will cover *most* compilation pauses, but if you paste in something really expensive it might still glitch.

The *real* solution is to implement handshaking, which would give the Propeller a way of indicating that it's busy so your terminal will stop sending data. While the USB-to-Serial chip used by most Propeller board has hardware handshaking capability, the boards don't actually route these lines to the Prop! A future version of the ASP driver may provide in-band XON/XOFF handshaking (aka Software Flow Control), but we're still testing it.

Q. I've entered a bunch of source code. How do I save it?

If part of the source code you've entered includes the optional EEPROM word set, you can save it to EEPROM by typing `savemem`. (If you're on the HYDRA, you can carefully hot-swap the memory card before doing this if you want to keep a backup copy of your old EEPROM.)

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