# Video transcript

**Video 1.1: Using a text-based user interface: Windows command line**

In this video we are going to look at text-based user interfaces. The idea here is to give you a feel for how a text-based user interface looks and how it is used. It may surprise you to know that Microsoft Windows includes a text-based user interface, which is called Command Prompt. If your account is not restricted, you can search for Command Prompt and open it.

And this is what you get, just a blank screen with a title at the top. It also tells you the current folder and disk that you are looking at: in this case the C: drive and the Users folder; subfolder: Alan. To do anything you need to type a command. But how do you know what commands you can use? You can actually type Help and a list of commands will be shown. We will look at how Help is used in a moment.

To give you an idea of how you use a text-based user interface we will look at how you do some simple file management tasks in Windows, and how you do the same tasks using the Command Prompt.

First of all, I’m going to look at the files in the particular folder called Example. In the Windows File Explorer I can just navigate to that folder and its contents are shown. There are several different ways I can display the folder contents in Windows using the features   
of the File Explorer.

In the Command Prompt I need to change the folder I am currently in, using a command called cd. This stands for change directory. In Command Prompt, folders are called directories. So I type cd example, and press enter. Notice how the folder list on the left   
of the window has changed.

Then, to see the current files in that folder I type DIR. This produces the list of files that you can see. The list the command produces is similar to the file list you can see in Windows   
File Explorer. It lists the date and time the file was last modified, its size in bytes and the   
file name. This is really the only option I have for listing files in the folder.

Let’s look at another command. To delete a file, the command Erase is used, followed by the name of the file. If you enter the name of a file that does not exist, you get an error message, as you can see.

Typing the correct file name deletes the file, but there is no confirmation of this. Note that the Erase command does not put files in the recycle bin, they are permanently deleted.

OK, let’s compare creating a new folder in Windows File Explorer and the Command Prompt.

To create a new folder, in the Windows File Explorer, I click on the New Folder icon. Then   
I give the new folder a name.

In the Command Prompt I use the command MD followed by the name of the folder I wish to create. MD is short for Make Directory.

As with the Erase command, there is no confirmation that I have been successful. If there   
is no error message, then you can assume the folder has been created. If I type DIR again,   
I can see the new folder, with DIR in front of it, indicating that it is a directory or folder.

The Windows Command Prompt might seem quite difficult to use as there are no icons or menus to give you a prompt as to the commands you can use. As mentioned before there   
is help, and if you know the command you want to use you can get specific help on that command.

Here I have typed Help DIR.

Most commands have a series of options which follow the command with a forward slash, and these are listed in the help text.

So, for example, you can use the /o option to display the files in a sorted order. You need to choose the order from the list provided so DIR /od displays the files sorted by date with the oldest first.

If we try that command, this is what we get.

You might think there is not much need to use the Command Prompt anymore, but IT technicians use it regularly as there are several useful test and diagnostic programs that   
run in the Command Prompt only. For example, IPCONFIG and PING are two programs commonly used to test a computer’s network connectivity.

It is worth remembering that before Apple Mac and Windows, this was the type of interface the computers had.

The key issue with text-based interfaces is that if you use them all the time, you soon learn the commands and it becomes quite quick and easy to carry out tasks. However, they are not easy for novice users to understand.

So in summary then, we have looked at the Command Prompt, and seen how to carry out some file management tasks using just text-based commands.

You might like to think about how you might use a text-based interface. Do you think you would be able to learn the commands? Can you think of what benefits a text-based user interface might have?

You also might want to find out what the IPCONFIG and PING programs actually do.