



## COLUMNISTS

### ChessBase Cafe

Steve Lopez



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## Installing UCI Engines in Fritz

There was a time when chess-playing engines and their interfaces were inextricably welded together. When you purchased a chess-playing program, you couldn't take the engine (the "guts") of the program and use it within the "wrapper" of another program's interface. If you bought a copy of *Chess Mongrel* and wanted to use its chess-playing "brain" while viewing the board, menu commands, etc. of *Attila Chess*, you were just plain out of luck.

This was also a bit of a pain for programmers (especially amateurs), whose sole interest might be in writing the chess-playing engine, but who didn't much care about creating a user interface. But back then (primarily in the old DOS days), an engine and its interface were pretty much wedded, and one didn't do you any good without the other. If a programmer wanted his engine to be used by players, he had to create an interface.

Things began to change in the mid-1990s when "modular" chess-playing engines began to appear. By 1996-97 there were a number of chess engines that could run in the proprietary ChessBase format within the Fritz interface. As the Internet grew in popularity, amateur programmers began to see the online environment as an outlet for distributing their engines. By the late 1990s there were a number of (mutually incompatible) chess engine formats in wide use.

As a step toward some form of standardization two programmers, Rudolf Huber and Stefan Meyer-Kahlen, created the Universal Chess Interface (UCI), essentially a set of programming rules geared toward creating an unified engine standard. In much the same way that PGN (Portable Game Notation) has become a standard for chess game notation, UCI was intended to be an engine format standard. It's currently one of the two most widely engine formats among amateur chess engine programmers.

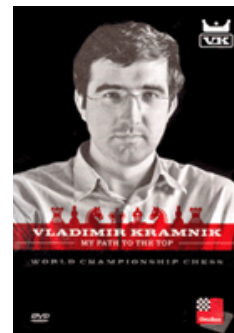
Beginning with Fritz7, the Fritz "family" of playing programs has featured the ability to import and use chess engines that adhere to the UCI standard. It's a means of using multiple chess-playing opponents/analysts without having to learn a new interface (each with its own menu items and set of commands) for every individual engine.

Numerous UCI engines are available for download on the Internet. To be able to use these in Fritz11, you should possess the following:

- A means of unzipping the chess engine files (since most will be in the compressed .zip archive format); note that most recent versions of Windows will allow you to unzip an archive file just by double-clicking on it.
- An anti-virus program, as UCI-compatible chess engines are .exe [executable] files, and should be virus-scanned before using them.
- A small bit of Windows knowledge; just enough to be able to locate and create folders.
- The Fritz11 program.
- These instructions.

Once you've located a UCI-compatible chess engine to download (just search the Internet for "UCI" and "chess"), be sure you know what hard

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 bestselling titles from  
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[My Path to the Top \(DVD\)](#)  
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[How to Play the  
 Queen's Gambit \(DVD\)](#)  
 by Garry Kasparov



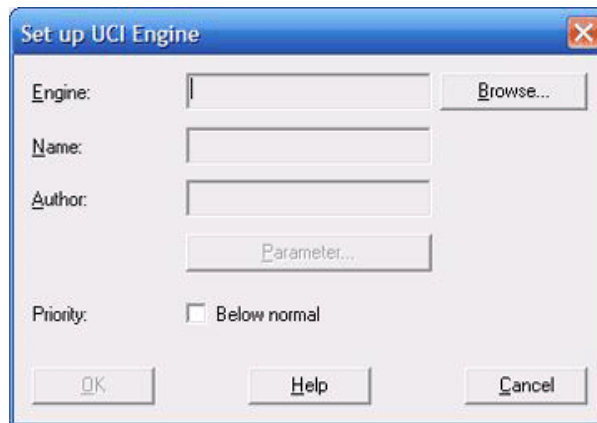
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disk folder you're downloading it into. (I have a folder usually named "Work" or "Download" just for this purpose.) Use your anti-virus program to scan the file to make sure it's virus-free.

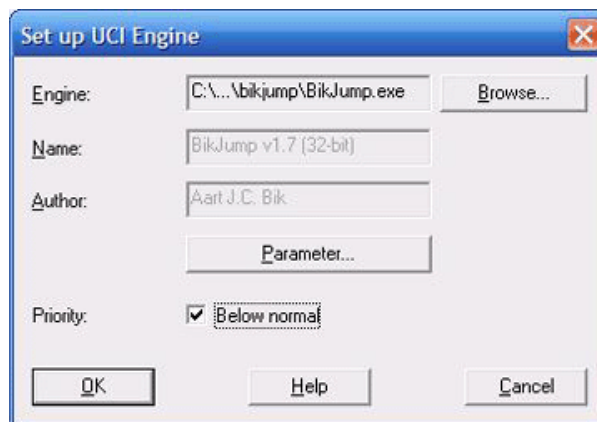
On your hard drive, you should already have a folder named "Engines.UCI." You can locate it by following this path: [drive letter]:\Program Files\ChessBase\Engines.UCI. If you don't have such a folder, create it. Then create a subfolder inside the "Engines.UCI" folder, and name this subfolder after the UCI engine you wish to install. For example, I've downloaded an engine called "bikjump," so I would create a subfolder using that name. We create this subfolder so that if, over time, we download multiple versions of a particular engine, we can keep them in separate folders, and not accidentally overwrite or replace any important files that might have the same name.

Using the uncompression utility of your choice (WinZip, etc.), unzip the contents of the .zip file directly into the engine subfolder you created. For example, I would double-click on "bikjump.zip" and unzip the contents into my \Engines.UCI\bikjump folder.

After you've uncompressed the files, start your Fritz11 program and click "Play Fritz" in the splash screen. Go to the Engine menu and select "Create UCI engine." You'll see the following dialogue appear:



Use the "Browse" button to bring up a dialogue that allows you to navigate to any folder on any drive. Go to the folder into which you unzipped the engine's .exe file, and then select that file, after which your dialogue should look something like this:



If the engine's programmer has strictly followed the UCI protocol, you should see the engine name and version number, plus the programmer's name, appear in the appropriate fields.

It's generally a good idea to check the "Below normal" box beside "Priority." This will ensure that the user interface will be able to display information such as engine calculations/variations while still giving the

chess engine itself the processor time it needs to operate at maximum potential.

After you've selected the engine (and checked "Below normal" at your discretion), click "OK" to complete the process of installing the UCI engine. After a few moments, the dialogue will disappear. The Fritz software has created a "link" file (named for the UCI engine and ending in the extension .uci) that will allow the UCI engine to operate within the Fritz11 interface.

After the "Create UCI Engine" dialogue disappears, you'll be able to press the F3 key to see the new engine in your list of available chess engines:



You can now use the new UCI engine for play and for analysis just by selecting it from this dialogue.

Until next month, have fun!

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All the software described in this column, as well as many more programs, are available in the [USCFSales Online Catalog](#).

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**ChessBase Cafe** welcomes readers' questions. Send one along and perhaps it will be answered in an upcoming column. Please include your name and country of residence.

*[Yes, I have a question for Steve!](#)*

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