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Installing Winboard Engines in Fritz

This month's ChessBase Café is an extension of last month's [column](#). You'll recall that in the previous column we discussed adding Universal Chess Interface (UCI) compatible engines to your Fritz software. UCI is one of the two most commonly used formats for downloadable chess engines. The other format is called "Winboard compatible." Winboard is an interface program that was originally designed to act as a "wrapper" for games played live via various Internet servers. A secondary function enabled users to add "plug-in" chess programs to Winboard, allowing the user to play chess against their computer. Over the last five years or so, the chess engine function has arguably become the primary use for the Winboard interface.

Since Winboard uses commands that differ from the UCI standard, the two formats are technically incompatible. In fact, if you're trying unsuccessfully to add a chess engine to Fritz using the instructions provided last month, this is possibly the reason: the engine you're trying to add is actually a Winboard engine, not a UCI one. However, there is a way to "trick" your Fritz program into thinking that a Winboard engine is actually a UCI.

This procedure will require three things (aside from your Fritz program):

- A Winboard-compatible chess engine; quite a few of these are available [here](#).
- The Winboard adapter software, available [here](#).
- Some small bit of technical expertise regarding the creation of folders and the editing of files.

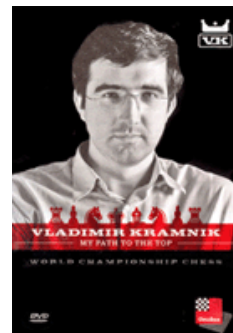
Before we proceed, there are a couple of disclaimers. First, the Winboard adapter is "third-party software," meaning it is neither created by nor officially endorsed by ChessBase GmbH or [ChessCafe.com](#); using said software is done at the user's own risk. (However, I'll also add that I've used the Winboard adapter successfully to run dozens of Winboard-compatible engines in Fritz with no problems.) Second, the creation of folders and the editing of files are skills required for the successful use of the Winboard adapter; however, these skills will not be described or taught in this column. There are myriad tutorials, both online and in print, which describe these procedures and are readily available with a minimal search. Please *do not* write to USCF technical support requesting a personalized step-by-step tutorial on these basic Windows skills.

The basic idea behind the Winboard adapter is as follows. Since the Fritz interface recognizes the UCI protocol and not the Winboard one, it can't pass commands back and forth with a Winboard-compatible chess engine. The adapter software acts as a "go-between," translating commands from one protocol to the other, much as a human interpreter does for two people speaking different languages. The adapter "tricks" the Fritz interface into thinking that the Winboard engine is actually a UCI engine.

For the purpose of this step-by-step tutorial, I'll be referring to a fictitious (as far as I know) Winboard-compatible chess engine that we'll call "Kublai."

1) Create a hard drive folder in which you'll house the adapter files. After

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you've downloaded the zipped Winboard adapter file from the website mentioned above, unzip the file's contents into this new folder. These will be your master copies of the files. You'll need to do this step just one time.

2) Open the main \ChessBase program folder on your hard drive (using My Computer or Windows Explorer). If you followed the defaults when you installed the software, the location will be C:\Program Files \ChessBase. If this folder doesn't already contain a subfolder called \Engines.UCI, please create one. This is another step that you'll need to perform just once.

3) Download the Winboard engine of your choice into a work folder somewhere on your hard drive. The exact location isn't important just so long as you remember it.

4) Create a subfolder within the \Engines.UCI folder and name it after the engine you just downloaded. For my example engine, I would create a subfolder called \Kublai.

5) If the Winboard engine you downloaded is contained within a .zip or .rar archive file (as will usually be the case), unzip the file's contents into the folder you just created. Thus, I would unzip the file Kublai.zip into the new \Kublai folder I just created.

6) Copy the Winboard adapter files from the folder you created in Step 1 to the folder you created in Step 4. There are *two* files you will need to copy: Wb2Uci.eng and Wb2Uci.exe

7) Edit the file Wb2Uci.eng and add the specific information for the Winboard engine you're adapting. The easy way to accomplish this is to open the file in Notepad and do the work there. When you first open the .eng file, it will look like this:

```
[ENGINE]
Name=Name of engine
Author=Name of engine author
Filename=Wb2Uci.exe
```

```
[OPTIONS]
Program=engine.exe
```

Change the value after the "equals" sign after "Name" to the name of the chess engine. Change the "Author" value to the name of the engine's programmer (if known). *Do not* edit the "Filename" line – *leave it alone!* However, you *will* need to type the name of the engine's executable (.exe) file after "Program=."

So, returning to my mythical Kublai engine, my Wb2Uci.eng file will look like this after editing:

```
[ENGINE]
Name=Kublai
Author=Joe Chessprogrammer
Filename=Wb2Uci.exe
```

```
[OPTIONS]
Program=Kublai.exe
```

Don't forget to use the "Save" command after you finish editing the file!

8) If you've also unzipped (or downloaded separately) a .bmp format logo file for the chess engine, make sure it's in the same folder as these other files and change the graphics file's name to Wb2Uci.bmp

9) Launch Fritz, select "Play Fritz," go to the Engine menu and select

“Create UCI engine.” Then use the “Browse” button to navigate to the engine’s folder (which you created in Step 4). Select the file Wb2Uci.exe engine, *not* the .exe file for the Winboard engine itself! (In other words, I’d select Wb2Uci.exe, *not* Kublai.exe).

10) You’ll see the engine name and programmer’s name exactly as you typed them when you edited the file in Step 7. Click “OK” and after a few moments the engine will be installed as a new engine in Fritz (just as we discussed in last month’s column). The engine can now be used like any other chess engine in the Fritz interface.

We must state here, however, that you will occasionally run across a chess engine that won’t work properly even if you’re using the Winboard adapter and have correctly edited the file. In such a case, you should seek assistance from the engine’s programmer. Many programmers maintain an FAQ page on their engine’s website and you can often find what you need there.

As I stated previously, I’ve used the adapter software to enable literally dozens of Winboard engines to run within the Fritz software. I’ve run across just a relative handful that don’t behave properly and which I couldn’t straighten out. The vast majority of Winboard engines should work fine with the adapter, and you can have great fun using them as alternative engines in the Fritz software.

Until next month, have fun!

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

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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