

Chapter 30

Getting Help

The Home Control Assistant can be a complex program. As you use HCA, you may find that you have questions about how to do some things, or you may find an area where HCA doesn't behave as you expect.

Outlined below are some procedures and resources available to help resolve problems if you find yourself in a situation where you think you need help.

Before you look too far for answers, make sure that you don't already have the information you are looking for. Check the User Guide carefully for the feature with which you are having problems. Make sure that you are following the directions completely and carefully.

Our web site

If you are still having problems, the next place to look is the HCA Technical Support web site that contains extensive resources for HCA. The web site is located at:

<http://www.HomeControlAssistantTech.com>

Some of the information available on the web site includes:

- Technical Notes on specific hardware.
- Troubleshooting guide for help resolving common problems.

If none of the Internet resources help you fully resolve your problem, the HCA technical support staff will work closely with you to solve any problems related to our software.

Other considerations

While our support personnel do their best to help you with your software related problems, we know that on occasion a problem can be traced to hardware or to another software application. We will supply as much help as we can, but we can't provide support for products manufactured or published by another company. If you are having problems with your video display or printer, please make sure that you have the most current drivers for them. These can usually be found by contacting your computer manufacturer directly.

Finally, this product is designed to be used on PCs configured with the current versions of Microsoft Windows. This means that we tested for those configurations, and not every operating environment that you might encounter. Any non-standard hardware or software you have may be at the root of your problem. If possible, please disable all such devices to be sure that they are not causing your problem.

Technical support

Unlike other companies you may have worked with, HCA provides technical support that is available using e-mail. You might find that e-mail is a more satisfying way to get technical support. You won't be put on hold, and the technician will have time to fully consider your problems and formulate an answer.

Technical support can be reached either from the bug reporting form on the support web site, or directly by sending e-mail to: **Support@HomeControlAssistant.com**

To receive the fastest response to your technical questions, please include the responses to ALL of the following items in your e-mail.:

- What is the exact sequence of events that created the problem? Make sure that you can reproduce the problem by following the same series of steps.
- What is the version number of HCA? To get the version number from the Help menu, choose About HCA.
- What is the type of computer you are using and the version of Windows in use? The operating system version number can be found using the control panel *System* applet.
- Provide the exact wording of any error messages.

Software is very complex and a program like HCA is a very complex program. While the programmers try extra hard to get it right, sometime problems happen. If you find a problem please report it in a way that helps us find it and fix it.

Reporting a bug is an art that everyone should learn regardless of what software you are working with. It is vital that you provide all the information you can. The absolutely most important thing you can do is to tell us how to reproduce the bug. Sometimes this is easy. "Open my design file, select the program called *Bath Motion* select the display tab and HCA dies". Or "The empty speech queue option in the Visual Programmer *Speak* element doesn't work".

Now sometimes you can't reproduce the problem. So give us suggestions. For example, if you have a problem where occasionally HCA crashes try and determine what might have been happening at that time. Were you working with the user interface? Was HCA just sitting there? Do you think that it died when some program or schedule got triggered off? Guess. Theorize. Be a detective. Try and reproduce the problem yourself. Give us all the information you have: "HCA dies sometimes at night. I think it has to do with my bathroom motion sensor program. Attached is my HCA file. Send a M1 on the powerline to get my motion sensor program to start. It usually seems to die only around sunrise".

The more information you provide the quicker the problem can be identified and fixed.

Hardworking programmers everywhere thank **good** bug reporters.

