



Changing COM Port Numbers in Windows

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With the advent of hardware detection in Windows®, it has been relatively easy to install new hardware such as serial cards, network cards, USB devices etc. When it comes to serial devices, it is typically just a matter of installing the device drivers, and serial ports are installed on your computer with Windows® automatically assigning COM port numbers. Easy as it sounds, this can become very problematic!

Typically when you install serial devices, the COM ports are numbered from COM4 on up. We rarely see more than 4 ports installed on a typical survey PC, though some customers will use an Ethernet-to-serial hub that may have 8 to 16 COM ports available.

In addition, many users may have other things that may be installed, like Bluetooth devices and some USB devices, which may actually mimic a COM port and use up COM port numbers! Before you know it, you look in the Windows® Device Manager and you have COM ports with numbers like COM30, COM31, etc.

This can be problematic in HYPACK®, because even though HYPACK® HARDWARE can handle up to COM 50, HYSWEEP® HARDWARE can only handle up to COM 16. There are also other non-HYPACK® programs, like some used to change equipment settings (GPS, MRU, etc.) that cannot handle the larger COM port numbers. While most users haven't installed enough devices into their PC to reach that COM 50 limit, they might have surpassed COM 16.

Most users do not realize that you can actually change a COM port number in the Windows® Device Manager. You can even “force” it to a lower COM port number even if Windows® states the COM port is “in use.” This is how you do it:

1. **Go to the Windows® Control Panel – System settings window and click on Device Manager.**
2. **Click “Ports (COM & LPT)”** and you will see the COM ports available on your PC. In Figure 1, I have COMs 11, 12, 30 and 31. I want to change COMs 30 and 31 to lower numbers.

FIGURE 1. *Viewing Your COM Ports*

3. **Double-click on the COM port you want to change.** The Properties dialog will appear.
4. **Go to the Port Settings tab and click on the Advanced button.** You will see the COM port assigned to that device.
5. **Scroll to a lower COM port value you want to use.**

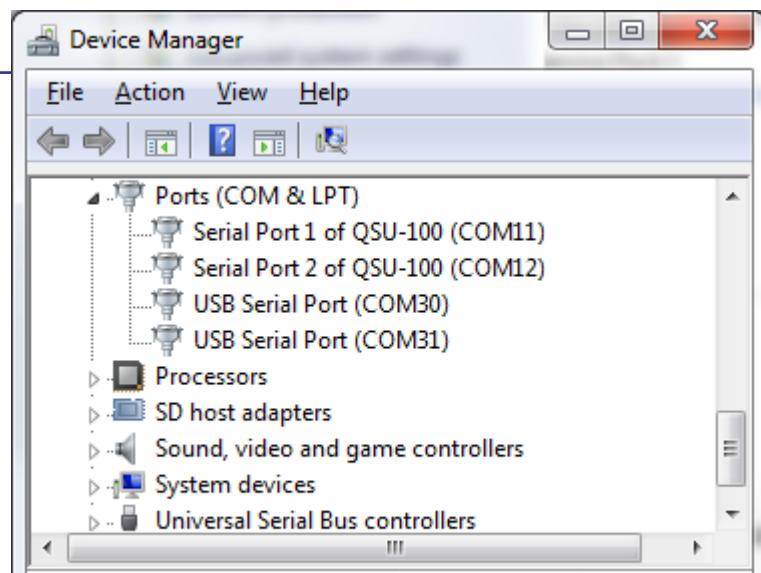
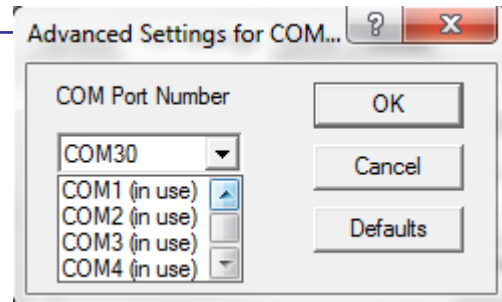


FIGURE 2. COMs 1-4 are “in use”

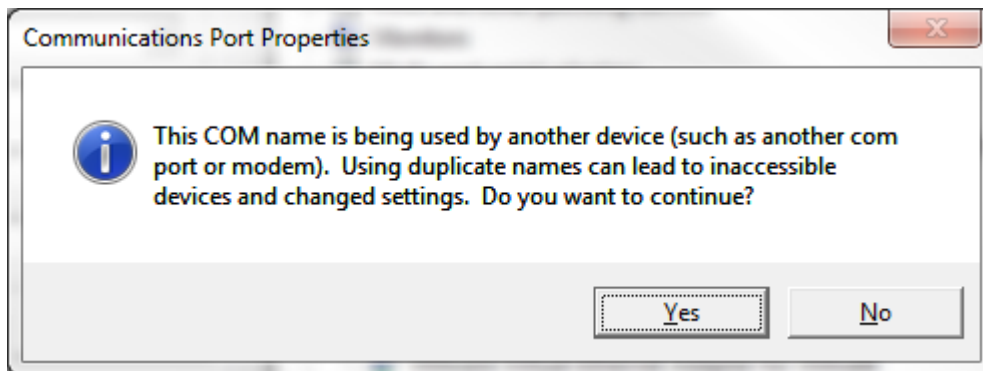
I like to keep my COM port numbers really low and, since I don't have any physical COM ports or modems on my laptop, I want to assign my 4 port card with COM ports 1 to 4. But notice, in Figure 2, that those ports are “in use.”

In this example I am going to “force” the use of COM 1.



6. **Choose COM 1 and click [OK].** You'll get a warning that looks like this:

FIGURE 3. COM Port “In Use” Warning



So long as you do not have a physical COM port occupying that port. it is perfectly safe to click [YES]. In Figure 4, I reassigned COM ports 30 and 31 to COM ports 1 and 2 without causing any ill effects on my laptop.

FIGURE 4. Reassigning COM Ports 30 and 31 to 1 and 2

