

PDBLOCK

Physical Drive write BLOCKer

Version 2.00
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Features

PDBLOCK (**Physical Drive Write BLOCKer**) is a utility to software write protect all the hard disks on a system. Once loaded PDBLOCK will block all write requests to specific hard drives installed in a system. Unlike other write blockers, PDBLOCK will prevent any writes to selected hard disks made via the new MS/IBM Interrupt 13 Extensions (not just the older Interrupt 13 calls). Also, unlike other write blockers, PDBLOCK is effective on hard drives larger than 8.4 Gb, effective when running under DOS versions 7.1 and greater, and will protect FAT32(x) partitions. PDBLOCK (V2.0 and later) provides the ability to selectively choose the physical drives for which writes will be blocked.

Usage

The following is a screen capture of the online help available from PDBLOCK:

Usage: "PDBLOCK {drives} {/nomsg} {/nobell} {/fail}" to (re)configure

Where:	drives:	NONE, ALL, or list of hard drives to protect (0-3) i.e. "PDBLOCK 0", "PDBLOCK 013", "PDBLOCK 123", etc (Default is ALL if not specified)
	/nomsg:	Do not display message when write is blocked
	/nobell:	Do not ring bell when write is blocked
	/fail:	Return write failure code to calling program (Default is to fake successful write to calling program)

"PDBLOCK" with no options (once loaded) will display help and current configuration

PDBLOCK is designed to be loaded from the AUTOEXEC.BAT file of a forensic boot floppy.
PDBLOCK may also be loaded manually from the DOS prompt.

If PDBLOCK is first loaded without any command line options, write protection will be automatically enabled for all hard drives on the system. The default configuration will also provide both audible and visual feedback when hard drive writes are intercepted and the calling program(s) will not be made aware that the writes were blocked.

If a configuration other than the default is desired, command line options may be specified during the initial execution of the program. Configuration of the program may also be changed at any time after the initial execution by simply running the program with the desired command line options. This is useful to change which drives are being blocked, alter the state of audible or visual feedback, or change the return status to the calling program.

Once PDBLOCK has been initially loaded, additional executions without any command line options will result in the current PDBLOCK status being displayed. This provides a method to determine what the current settings are in the event that the operator wishes to change any of the parameters.

The following command line options may be used to configure or alter the operating behavior of PDBLOCK:

- `{drives}` This parameter is used to specify a list of drives to be protected by PDBLOCK. The first physical hard drive in the system is considered drive "0". A list of physical drive numbers may be specified here (i.e. "012", "013", "12", "2", etc) or the parameters "NONE" or "ALL". (Quotes and/or brackets should not be provided as part of this parameter).
- `/NoMsg` Specify this parameter if you do not wish to have the "**** PDBlocked! ****" message displayed to the screen when writes are blocked.
- `/NoBell` Specify this parameter if you do not wish to have an audible beep issued when writes are blocked.
- `/Fail` Specify this parameter if you wish to have the calling program notified when writes are blocked. If this parameter is specified, a write protect failure code will be returned to the calling process to indicate that the write was blocked. If this parameter is not specified (the default), the calling program is supplied with a success code after the write is blocked (the calling program thinks the write succeeded). You may find that different programs behave better with different "/fail" settings.

Examples

PDBLOCK 123 /Fail

Writes will be blocked on Drives 1, 2, and 3 and the calling programs will be notified with a failure (write protect) error code.

PDBLOCK ALL /NoMsg /NoBell

Writes will be blocked to all drives. No visual or audible indication of the blocked writes will be provided. Calling programs will receive a success code after writes are blocked.

PDBLOCK NONE

Writes will not be blocked on any drives.

PDBLOCK

If PDBLOCK is already installed, the current PDBLOCK status will be displayed. If PDBLOCK has not yet been loaded, it will be installed with the default settings (All drives blocked, Audible and Visual messages, and success return code to calling program).

Notes

PDBLOCK will protect any drive accessed from your system via Interrupt 13 or the MS/IBM Interrupt 13 Extensions. System BIOS's typically provide this capability for all attached IDE or EIDE devices. In addition, most SCSI adapters offer the ability to support attached devices via Interrupt 13 as well.

PDBLOCK is NOT DESIGNED to provide write protection while the Windows GUI (Graphical User Interface) is loaded. The Windows GUI often communicates with the system hard drives directly via optimized device drivers. These device drivers may circumvent the system BIOS (Int13/Int13x) and communicate with the controllers using ATAPI (IDE) or ASPI (SCSI) command sets. PDBLOCK was not designed to intercept this type of communication.

Similarly, PDBLOCK WILL NOT provide write protection for individual programs that directly access the hard disk controllers (i.e. using ATAPI or ASPI command sets). It should be noted, however, that these programs are not frequently encountered and may include sophisticated backup/imaging programs or manufacturer's disk diagnostics.