



## West Mountain Radio RIGtalk USB Interface

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After forgetting to change the frequency in my software log to match the frequency of the radio for the umpteenth time, I realized that I needed to connect my software logging program to my rig. The job was actually much easier than I thought!

I decided to use an automated rig interface to put the radio's frequency and mode automatically into the log. I also wanted this system to work in both directions so that the logging software could also change the frequency of the radio. To do this, I determined that I needed a rig-control interface between my software, *Logic8*, and my radio, an ICOM IC-746PRO. One solution is the standard ICOM CI-V interface that connects between the PC serial port and the IC-746's "remote jack," a 1/8-inch mini jack on the back of the transceiver. The CI-V converts the TTL data from the IC-746 to RS-232 levels required by the computer.

The problem, however, is that the ICOM CI-V interface uses a serial connection to the PC. My computer's only serial port was already in use with my PSK31 interface. That left me with only the USB port. It was obvious that I couldn't use the CI-V. Instead, I needed a compatible interface that would plug into my USB port. Yes, I could have solved the problem with a serial-to-USB converter, but that didn't seem to be a very elegant solution since I would need to get both devices working correctly and have two additional gadgets hanging off the computer. After some research, I opted for West Mountain Radio's RIGtalk USB rig control interface, an all-in-one USB to radio adapter. Each RIGtalk includes a pre-wired and tested cable for a variety of ICOM, Ten-Tec and Yaesu transceivers, including my '746.

### What is the RIGtalk?

The RIGtalk is a little smaller than a USB flash drive. It fits neatly into the USB port in the front of my computer. For those of us who like to see the guts of the operation, it has a transparent shrink tube cover so that you can see the PC

board and components inside. It also has a bright green LED that lights up when you plug in the RIGtalk. The connecting cable to the radio plugs right into the jack in the front of the RIGtalk.

### Installation and Use

With my new RIGtalk in hand, it was finally time to get things up and running. Based on my experience connecting USB devices, I know that USB installations need to be done in the correct order, so I followed the installation instructions by first installing the drivers that came on the supplied CD before plugging in the RIGtalk. The drivers installed fine although, as noted in West Mountain Radio's directions, I had to click "Continue Anyway" a couple of times during the installation process because of *Windows XP's* security concerns.

Once I installed the drivers, I plugged the RIGtalk into the USB port. I then heard the familiar *duh dong* sound and up popped the dialogue box telling me that *Windows* had found new hardware. The *Windows* installer then stepped me through the rest of the installation, with a few more security warnings, and the RIGtalk was ready to go. I then connected the cable between the '746PRO and the RIGtalk. There are different types of 1/8-inch plugs at each end of the connecting cable, but I was able to connect the cable correctly the first time because the

cable is color coded, a nice touch on the part of West Mountain Radio. As recommended in the installation instructions, I used *XP's* Device Manager to determine that RIGtalk had configured itself as Virtual Serial Port COM4 on my computer.

Next, I set up the connection in *Logic8*. This was easy since *Logic*, like most modern logging software, has a built-in form to set up the radio-to-rig interface. Once I selected "Icom" in the form's menu, most of the other interface parameters were automatically entered by *Logic*. I did have to tell *Logic* that the interface device was on COM4. I also needed to enter the unique hex address for the '746PRO. I found this number, 66h for the '746PRO, in the ICOM manual and entered it into the form.

I then turned on the radio and, *voila*, a new rig control-form appeared in *Logic* that now showed the frequency of the '746PRO. The form also displays band changes, operating mode, VFO frequency, VFO selection and split frequency operation right on my PC screen. It worked fine in both directions. If I changed frequency on the radio, the log changed frequency. If I changed frequency on the log, the radio changed frequency.

I used the interface for the ARRL CW Sweepstakes contest with my *CT10* contest software. Despite the change of software, I had little difficulty getting *CT10* to "talk" to the transceiver through the RIGtalk. I only had to make a couple of simple menu choices such as the type of radio I was using and the COM port number, during *CT's* contest setup menu. This eliminated my problem of occasionally logging the wrong band during a contest.

I'm quite pleased with the RIGtalk. It hasn't given me a moment of trouble since I've installed it. Your logging software probably has a rig-control feature built in, so get a RIGtalk and try it!

Manufacturer: West Mountain Radio, 18 Sheehan Ave, Norwalk, CT 06854; tel 203-853-8080; [www.westmountainradio.com/](http://www.westmountainradio.com/). RIGtalk for ICOM and Ten-Tec transceivers: \$56.95; RIGtalk for Yaesu FT-100, 100D, 817, 857, 897, 736, 747, 767, 980, 990 and 1000: \$61.95.

