



**Note: This API call is for DOS and Win16 personality only. Use [Family API](#) for portability.**

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# Int 21H, AH=4BH

## Version

2 and higher

## Brief

“EXEC” - LOAD AND/OR EXECUTE PROGRAM

## Family API

## Input

```
AH = 4Bh
AL = type of load
    00h load and execute
    01h load but do not execute
    03h load overlay (see #01591)
    04h load and execute in background (European MS-DOS 4.0 only)
    "Exec & Go" (see also AH=80h)
DS:DX -> ASCIZ program name (must include extension)
ES:BX -> parameter block (see #01590,#01591,#01592)
CX = mode (subfunction 04h only)
    0000h child placed in zombie mode after termination
    0001h child's return code discarded on termination
```

## Return

```
CF clear if successful
    BX,DX destroyed
    if subfunction 01h, process ID set to new program's PSP; get with
    INT 21/AH=62h
CF set on error
```

AX = error code (01h,02h,05h,08h,0Ah,0Bh) (see #01680 at AH=59h)

## Notes

DOS 2.x destroys all registers, including SS:SP under ROM-based DOS, if no disk path characters (colons or slashes) are included in the program name, the name is searched for in the ROM module headers (see #01595) before searching on disk for functions 00h and 01h, the calling process must ensure that there is enough unallocated memory available; if necessary, by releasing memory with AH=49h or AH=4Ah for function 01h, the AX value to be passed to the child program is put on top of the child's stack for function 03h, DOS assumes that the overlay is being loaded into memory allocated by the caller function 01h was undocumented prior to the release of DOS 5.0 some versions (such as DR DOS 6.0) check the parameters and parameter block and return an error if an invalid value (such as an offset of FFFFh) is found background programs under European MS-DOS 4.0 must use the new executable format this function ignores the filename extension, instead checking the first two bytes of the file to determine whether there is a valid .EXE header (see #01594); if not, the file is assumed to be in .COM format. If present, the file may be in any of several formats which are extensions of the original .EXE format (see #01593) .COM-format executables begin running with the following register values:  
AL = 00h if first FCB has valid drive letter, FFh if not  
AH = 00h if second FCB has valid drive letter, FFh if not  
CS,DS,ES,SS = PSP segment  
SP = offset of last word available in first 64K segment  
(note: AX is always 0000h under DESQview)  
old-format executables begin running with the following register values:  
AL = 00h if first FCB has valid drive letter, FFh if not  
AH = 00h if second FCB has valid drive letter, FFh if not  
DS,ES = PSP segment  
SS:SP as defined in .EXE header  
(note: AX is always 0000h under DESQview)  
new executables begin running with the following register values  
AX = environment segment  
BX = offset of command tail in environment segment  
CX = size of automatic data segment (0000h = 64K)  
ES,BP = 0000h  
DS = automatic data segment  
SS:SP = initial stack  
the command tail corresponds to an old executable's PSP:0081h and following, except that the 0Dh is turned into a NUL (00h); new

format executables have no PSP  
 under the FlashTek X-32 DOS extender, only function 00h is supported  
 and the pointers are passed in DS:EDX and ES:EBX  
 DR DOS 6 always loads .EXE-format programs with no fixups and  
 .COM-format programs starting with 9Ch 55h (PUSHF/PUSH BP) above the  
 64K mark to avoid the EXEPACK bug, by extending the memory block  
 containing the program's environment; this code is disabled if the  
 name of the parent program as stored in the MCB is 'WIN'.  
 DR DOS 3.41 and 5.0 check for a valid filename before testing the  
 subfunction number, so the otherwise invalid subfunction 02h will  
 only return error code 01h if the given filename actually exists;  
 otherwise, errors 02h, 03h, or 05h are returned  
 BUGS: DOS 2.00 assumes that DS points at the current program's PSP  
 Load Overlay (subfunction 03h) loads up to 512 bytes too many if the  
 file contains additional data after the actual overlay  
 Load but Do Not Execute (subfunction 01h) is reported to corrupt the  
 top word of the caller's stack if the loaded module terminates with  
 INT 21/AH=4Ch in some versions of MS-DOS, including v5.00.

## See also

AX=4B05h, AH=4Ch, AH=4Dh, AH=64h/BX=0025h, AH=8Ah, INT 2E, INT 60/DI=0604h

## Note

Text based on [Ralf Brown Interrupt List Release 61](#)

| DOS API              |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Process manager      | INT 20H, <b>INT 21H</b> : 00H, 25H, 26H, 31H, 34H, 35H, 4BH, 4CH, 4DH, 50H, 51H, 52H, 55H, 62H, INT 22H, INT 27H, INT 28H  |
| File manager         | INT 25H, INT 26H, <b>INT 21H</b> : 0DH, 0EH, 0FH, 10H, 11H, 12H, 13H, 14H, 15H, 16H, 17H, 19H, 1AH, 1BH, 1CH, 21H, 22H, 23H, 24H, 27H, 28H, 29H, 2EH, 2FH, 32H, 3305H, 36H, 39H, 3AH, 3BH, 3CH, 3DH, 3EH, 3FH, 40H, 41H, 42H, 4300H, 4301H, 45H, 45H, 46H, 4EH, 4FH, 54H, 56H, 5700H, 5701H, 5AH, 5BH, 5c00H, 5c01H, 60H, 67H, 68H, 6900H, 6901H, 6AH, 6CH |
| Character Device I/O | INT 29H, <b>INT 21H</b> : 01H, 02H, 03H, 04H, 05H, 06H, 07H, 08H, 09H, 0AH, 0BH, 0AH, 0CH, 5D07H, 5D08H, 5D09H, 5D0AH  |
| Signals              | INT 23H, INT 24H, <b>INT 21H</b> : 3300H, 3301H, 3302H   |
| Memory manager       | <b>INT 21H</b> : 48H, 49H, 4AH, 5800H, 5801H, 5802H, 5803H   |
| Date and Time        | <b>INT 21H</b> : 2AH, 2BH, 2CH, 2DH  |
| Misc                 | <b>INT 21H</b> : 30H, 3306H, 3700H, 3701H, 3702H, 3703H, 59H   |
| NLS                  | <b>INT 21H</b> : 3303H, 3304H, 3800H, 3801H, 6300H, 6301H, 6301H, 6500H, 6501H, 6502H, 6503H, 6504H, 6505H, 6506H, 6507H, 6520H, 6521H, 6522H, 6523H, 65A0H, 65A1H, 65A2H, 6601H, 6602H  |
| Devices              | <b>INT 21H</b> : 4400H, 4401H, 4402H, 4403H, 4404H, 4405H, 4406H, 4407H, 4408H, 4409H, 440AH, 440BH, 440CH, 440DH, 440EH, 440FH, 4410H, 4411H, 53H   |

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>DOS API</b>              |  |
| Network                     | <b>INT 21H:</b> 5E00H, 5E01H, 5E02H, 5E03H, 5E04H, 5E05H, 5F00H, 5F01H, 5F02H, 5F03H, 5F04H, 5F05H, 5F07H, 5F08H   |
| <b>osFree Macro Library</b> |  |
| Video I/O                   | @SetMode @SetCurSz @SetCurPos @GetCur @SetPage @ScrollUp @ScrollDn @Scroll @GetChAtr @PutChAtr @PutCh @SetPalet @SetColor @SetDot @GetDot @WrtTTY @VideoState @GetMode @GetDisplay @GetVideoState @GetEGAInfo @Cls |
| Hardware info               | @Equipment @MemSize  |
| Serial I/O                  | @AuxInit @AuxSendChar @AuxRecieveChar @AuxStatus   |
| Tape I/O                    | @TapeOn @TapeOff @TapeRead @TapeWrite  |
| Keyboard I/O                | @KbdStatus @CharIn @CharPeek   |
| Printer I/O                 | @PrnPrint @PrnInit @PrnStatus  |
| Disk I/O                    | @DskReset @DskStatus @DskRead @DskWrite @DskVerify @DskFormat  |
| Date and Time               | @SetTime @GetTime  |
| Mouse                       | @MouInit @MouShowPointer @MouStatus @MouSetPos @MouSetMickey @MouRegion  |
| Memory manager              | @ModBlok SET_BLOCK   |

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|                   |   |  |
|-------------------|---|--|
| <b>Family API</b> |   |  |
| DOS               | Process Manager   | DosBeep DosExit DosSleep DosExecPgm  |
|                   | File Manager  | DosChDir DosChgFilePtr DosClose DosDelete DosDupHandle DosMkDir DosMove DosQCurDir DosQCurDisk DosSetFileMode DosOpen DosQFileInfo DosRead DosQFileMode DosQFSInfo DosQVerify DosRmdir DosSelectDisk DosFindClose DosFindFirst DosFindNext DosSetFileInfo DosSetVerify DosWrite DosFileLocks DosSetFHandState DosNewSize DosBufReset DosQFHandState DosSetFSinfo DosShutdown |
|                   | Memory Manager  | DosFreeSeg DosSubAlloc DosSubFree DosSubSet DosAllocHuge DosAllocSeg DosReallocHuge DosReallocSeg DosGetHugeShift DosCreateCSAlias   |
|                   | NLS   | DosCaseMap DosGetCtryInfo DosGetDBCSEv DosSetCtryCode DosGetCollate DosGetMessage DosInsMessage DosPutMessage  |
|                   | Date and Time   | DosSetDateTime DosGetDateTime  |
|                   | Devices   | DosDevConfig DosDevIOCtl DosDevIOCtl2  |
|                   | Signals   | DosHoldSignal DosSetSigHandler   |
|                   | Misc  | BadDynLink DosGetEnv DosGetMachineMode DosGetVersion DosError DosErrClass DosSetVec  |
| KBD               | KbdCharIn KbdFlushBuffer KbdGetStatus KbdSetStatus KbdStringIn KbdPeek  |  |
| VIO               | VioGetBuf VioGetConfig VioGetCurPos VioGetCurType VioGetPhysBuf VioReadCellStr VioReadCharStr VioScrollUp VioScrollDn VioScrollLf VioScrollRt VioScrUnLock VioSetCurPos VioSetCurType VioSetMode VioGetMode VioShowBuf VioWrtCellStr VioWrtCharStr VioWrtCharStrAtt VioWrtNAttr VioWrtNCell VioWrtNChar VioWrtTTY VioScrLock VioPopUp |  |
| Tools             | BIND  |  |
| Modules           | DOSCALLS.DLL VIOCALLS.DLL KBDCALLS.DLL MSG.DLL  |  |
| Libraries         | API.LIB OS2386.LIB FAPI.LIB DOSCALLS.LIB SUBCALLS.LIB   |  |

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