

AdvDisplay.dll (Adventure Text Display module for Microsoft Flight Simulator

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Version 1.94 of AdvDisplay

Note: All my Windows based FS software is always available in the latest versions from <http://www.schiratti.com/dowson>

This package contains just the following parts:

AdvDisplay.dll	The module itself, for the FS2k Modules folder
AdvDisplay.doc	This document, in Word 97 format
AdvDisplay.pdf	This document, in Acrobat format
ShowText.zip	An application for displaying adventure text elsewhere

The ShowText package is by Rob van der Wiele and is provided bundled with AdvDisplay with his kind permission. Please read the documentation enclosed with that Zip for more details.

Introduction: What is AdvDisplay?

This is a small module which runs inside Microsoft Flight Simulator (98, 2000 or 2002) capturing text output from Adventures, and optionally ATIS, which normally appears in the outside view screen, at the top, and diverting it to its own window. This window can be positioned anywhere on the FS screen, or even outside it. It looks like a normal Window unless “docked”, which attaches it to a specific position inside the Flight Simulator window, normally some place useful such as on the cockpit panel.

WARNING: The Window provided by this module does *not* work properly in full screen mode with 3D-only video cards, nor on Voodoo cards when FS’s “PageFlip” is enabled.

A recent history

Version 1.94 makes the “hide when empty” option still hide the window when the docked panel isn’t showing, even if the window is displaying text.

Version 1.93 fixes a problem where the display window might still remain visible when FS is minimised.

Version 1.92 changes include a faster scroll for FS2002’s longer ATIS reports, with restarts on each repeat rather than appending and accumulating them. Also the text is not broken at word-endings now unless the display is multi-lined.

Version 1.91 and 1.90 both support the official FS2002 release, as well as FS98 and FS2000. There is little difference between 1.90 and 1.91 — just minor performance improvements.

Version 1.80 fixes a problem where occasionally a docked window opens with a vertical size too large (the same size as the undocked window with title bar). This was a timing-related problem introduced in version 1.70 and didn’t occur frequently if at all on many systems. Version 1.80 is also extended to work with FS98 and should also (hopefully) work correctly on the forthcoming FS2002

Installation and Use

Follow these steps:

1. Copy the Advdisplay.dll module into your Flight Simulator ‘modules’ folder.

NOTE: If you cannot *see* the DLL, please go to the Explorer’s View menu. Select “Folder Options” and then the “View” Tab. Then choose either the “Show all files” button or the “Do not show hidden files”—anything *but* the “Do not show hidden or system files” button! (Windows 98 now seems to regard all DLLs as system files and not the “application extensions” they usually are!).

2. Run Flight Simulator.
3. Go to the Modules menu and check the AdvDisplay entry. This enables the module so you can “dock” it and use it with the current panel.
4. You will see a new window, near top left, with a title bar exclaiming “Adventure text Window ...”. This will contain the diverted text output from Adventures. However, read on, as you’ll really want a tidier result than that!
5. Using the title bar, drag the window to a better place, size and position the message area (that is the bit below the title bar) to suit your cockpit or display, then right-click in the message area and choose “dock”. This will fix the message part of the window on that panel, losing the title bar.
6. The text defaults to red, the background to a dark gray. If you want different colours, select Text or Back colour when you right-click on the message window. You’ll get a standard colour choice dialogue. OR, for the background colour you can make this match your panel by selecting “Match background”. This chooses the colour immediately below the centre of the AdvDisplay window. If you want to pick a colour from elsewhere on the screen you’ll need to first undock the window, move it so that the required colour is immediately below the centre, then right click and select “Match background”. Then, of course, re-position and re-dock.

7. You can also select a different font and/or font size if you like, again by right-clicking with the mouse. For some applications a fixed pitch font might be more appropriate than the default.
8. When it looks good, right-click yet again and choose 'Save'. This saves the position, colours and font (if selected), for that panel.
9. Repeat steps 3 to 8 for each panel you load. The positions, colours and fonts are saved separately for each panel. If you do not select a new font for each panel, the same font set in the last panel will be used.
10. If at any time you lose the Window, or want to disable it in favour of the default Adventure text display system, look in the Modules menu which should appear at the right-hand end of the regular FS menu bar. In that menu, find "ADV Display". This is checked when the window is enabled (even if you can't see it) and unchecked otherwise. Simply click that entry in the menu to toggle it off or on. When you re-enable the window in this way it reverts to its default position and size (but will still retain the last colours set)

Displaying adventure text in a separate program

AdvDisplay also copies the text into an area which is accessible via FSUIPC. This is at offset 0x3380-0x33FF (i.e. a maximum of 127 characters and a zero terminator: longer messages are truncated). For this you would need an application program designed to read and display the text. Using WideFS this could be done on a separate PC.

If you have arranged for this to occur, you will want to hide the AdvDisplay window in FS. To do this, Dock the window as usual, then use the "Hide always" entry in the pop up menu.

To un-hide a window hidden in this way you will either have to disable and re-enable AdvDisplay in the Modules menu (in which case the window will come back undocked in its default position), or change to another aircraft/panel, and edit the previous PANEL.CFG file, deleting the "HideWindow=Yes" parameter (or changing it to "no").

Displaying ATIS messages through AdvDisplay

AdvDisplay can now capture and divert the ATIS messages which otherwise appear, optionally, and usually scrolling, across the top of the outside view screen. By default it doesn't capture these—enable such capturing via the pop up menu, when you right click on the AdvDisplay window.

In **FS2002** the ATIS text will *not* be displayed if you have turned off ATC text in the Options-Settings-ATC dialogue. This applies to normal scrolling ATIS messages as well as those seen in Advdisplay windows. Also, please note that AdvDisplay cannot capture and re-direct FS2002" ATC text. That is another subject!

Notes

If the message window is docked wholly over a main panel, it will only appear when that main panel is visible. It doesn't 'obscure' full screen or side window views. This may mean that you might miss Adventure messages in these cases. This won't matter for many adventure types, such as those produced by Radar Contact, as they use voice mainly, with the messages only for interactive information.

On the other hand, if it is docked anywhere else, it stays in that position and stays on top, always visible, even when FS views are changed. You can use this method, but then be sure to find a suitable position: perhaps near the top of the screen, or even over the title bar (if you run in maximised window mode, rather than full screen mode).

When the window is docked, its size, position, colour and optional font details are recorded in the current panel's PANEL.CFG file, in a new section called [AdvDisplay]. This is so that different positions can be set for each aircraft panel. The window is automatically adjusted when you load a new panel. If you load a panel that hasn't had a docked window before, the window will appear undocked in its default position ready for positioning and docking. Positions are based on screen resolution and window sizing, so they will have to be re-done if ever you change any of this.

Undocked window positions are NOT remembered. Loading a panel without a docked position disables the module and you need to re-enable it in the Modules menu.

In the right click menu for a docked window there is also a "close" option. This allows you to close the window so that Adventure text reverts to the normal method. As described above, the window can also be closed by clicking the "ADV Display" entry in the Modules menu. This menu entry is also used to re-open the window once it has been closed.

All Adventure message options are simulated, and these are normally on one line. However, if you prefer, you can make the window narrower and taller. Word wrapping is used for multiple line displays as and when enough text appears.