

## Determining if a COM port is working or not in Windows 95/98/NT/2000

Many AnswersThatWork users regularly ask us about the best way to test whether a COM port is working or not, in most cases because they are trying to install something that will work off that COM port and they cannot get it to work.

The quickest way we have found to determine whether a COM port is working or not is to plug a **serial mouse** in it, as shown below :

- Shut your PC down.
- Unplug your current mouse.
- Plug a **serial mouse** in the COM port in question. If the COM port is a 25-pin COM port you will need to use a working 9-pin-to-25-pin serial converter. Always use a mouse you know works, or use a brand new mouse.
- Boot your PC up.
- If Windows detects the mouse** and allows you to use it, then you know that the COM port is working.

If, however, the mouse does not get detected, then, for whatever reason, the COM port is not working. It may not necessarily mean that the COM port is faulty, it may be for instance that it was not enabled in the BIOS, or that you have background communications software which is "tying up" the COM port and not allowing anything else to use it. Whenever it is the latter, such software programs usually sit in the Tray - the "Tray" is that part of the Task Bar where the time is shown, as shown below :



Typical such programs are usually programs which enable you to synchronise your PC with a pocket organizer (we know for a fact that some of them *definitely* prevent

other software from using *any* COM ports while they are running), fax software, digital camera downloading software, etc... If you have such software applications running, right-click on their icons in the Tray and choose **Exit** or **Close**. Only once you have closed all such programs should you run your checks with the serial mouse.

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