RS-232 INTERFACE

Introduction:

The RS-232 interface is the Electronic Industries Association (EIA) standard for the interchange of serial binary data between two devices. It was initially developed by the EIA to standardize the connection of computers with telephone line modems. The standard allows as many as 20 signals to be defined, but gives complete freedom to the user. Three wires are sufficient: send data, receive data, and signal ground. The remaining lines can be hardwired on or off permanently. The signal transmission is bipolar, requiring two voltages, from 5 to 25 volts, of opposite polarity.

Communication Standards:

The industry custom is to use an asynchronous word consisting of: a start bit, seven or eight data bits, an optional parity bit and one or two stop bits. The baud rate at which the word sent is device-dependent. The baud rate is usually 150 times an integer power of 2, ranging from 0 to 7 (150, 300, 600 ,...., 19,200). Below 150 baud, many system-unique rates are used. The standard RS-232-C connector has 25 pins, 21 pins which are used in the complete standard. Many of the modem signals are not needed when a computer terminal is connected directly to a computer, and Figure 1 illustrates how some of the "spare" pins should be linked if not needed. Figure 1 also illustrates the pin numbering used in the original DB-25 connector and that now commonly used with a DB-9 connector normally used in modern computers

Specifying compliance to RS-232 only establishes that the signal levels in two devices will be compatible and that if both devices use the suggested connector, they may be able to be connected. Compliance to RS-232 does not imply that the devices will be able to communicate or even acknowledge each other's presence.

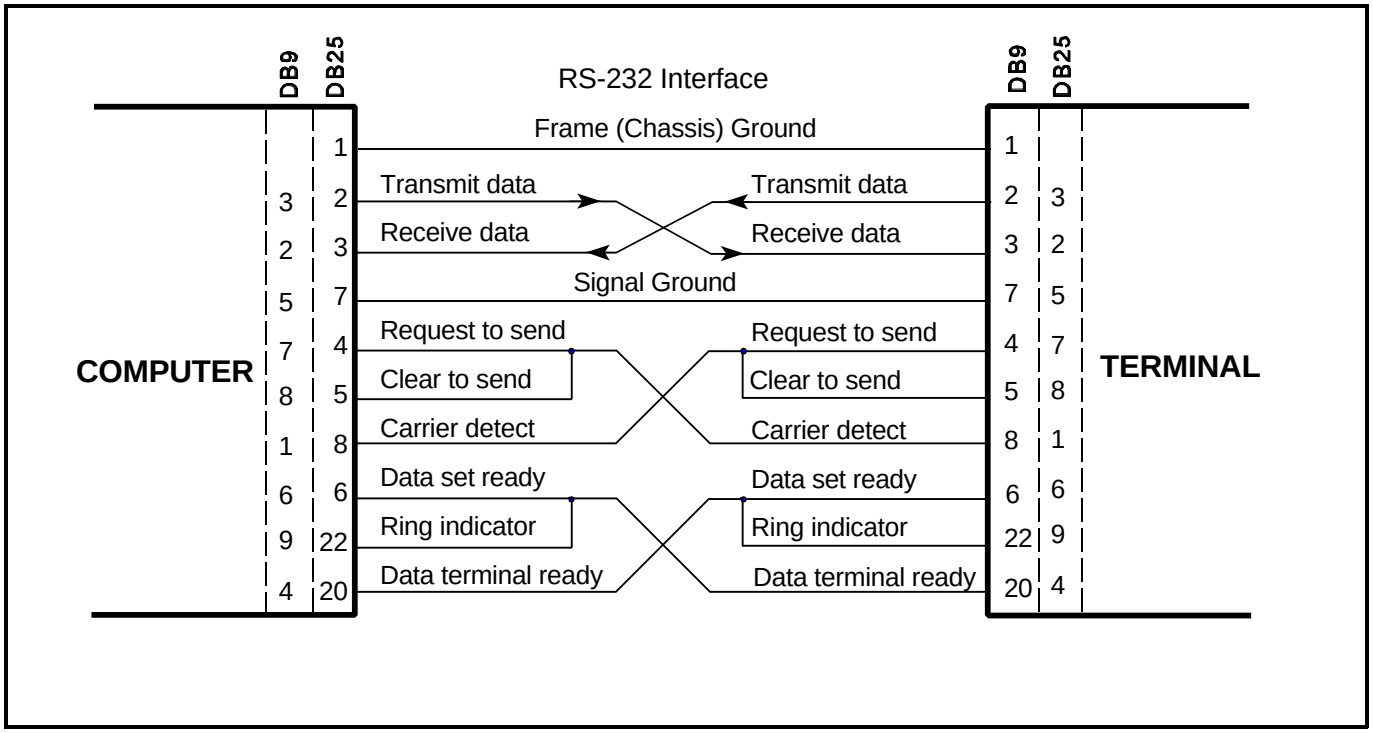

Figure 1. Direct-to-computer RS-232 Interface

Table 1 shows the signal names, and functions of the RS-232 serial port pinout. Table 2 shows a complete pin description

Table 1. RS-232 Serial Port Pinout

Name	Pin	Signal Name	Function
AA	1	PG Protective Ground	This line is connected to the chassis ground of the GPIB-232CV. Since the GPIB-232CV chassis ground is not connected to earth ground, pin 1 should be connected on both serial devices.
BA	2	TxD Transmit Data	This line carries serial data from the GPIB-232CV to the serial host.
BB	3	RxD Receive Data	This line carries serial data from the serial host to the GPIB-232CV.
CA	4	RTS Request to Send	This signal line is driven by the GPIB-232CV and when asserted indicates that the GPIB-232CV is ready to accept serial data. The GPIB-232CV unasserts RTS when it is no longer ready to accept serial data because of a buffer full condition.
CB	5	CTS Clear to Send	This signal line is asserted by the serial host and sensed by the GPIB-232CV. When asserted, it indicates that the serial host is ready to accept serial data. When unasserted, it indicates that data transmission should be disabled.
AB	7	SG Signal Ground	This line establishes a reference point for all interface voltages.
CD	20	DTR Data Terminal Ready	This signal line is asserted by the GPIB-232CV to signal that it has been powered on, and is ready to operate.

Table 2. RS-232C Interface Signals.

Pin	Description	Pin	Description	Pin	Description
1	Protective Ground	10	(Reserved for Data Set Testing)	19	Secondary Request to Send
2	Transmitted Data	11	Unassigned	20	Data Terminal Ready
3	Received Data	12	Sec. Rec'd. Line Sig. Detector	21	Signal Quality Detector
4	Request to Send	13	Sec. Clear to Send	22	Ring Indicator
5	Clear to Send	14	Secondary Transmitted Data	23	Data Signal Rate Selector (DTE/DCE Source)
6	Data Set Ready	15	Transmission Signal Element Timing (DCE Source)	24	Transmit Signal Element Timing (DTE Source)
7	Signal Ground (Common Return)	16	Secondary Received Data	25	Unassigned
8	Received Line Signal Detector	17	Receiver Signal Element Timing (DCE Source)		
9	(Reserved for Data Set Testing)	18	Unassigned		

Electrical Characteristics: The RS-232-C specifies the signaling rate between the DTE and DCE, and a digital signal is used on all interchange circuits. The RS-232 standard specifies that logic "1" is to be sent as a voltage in the range -15 to -5 V and that logic "0" is to sent as a voltage in the range +5 to +15 V. The standard specifies that voltages of at least 3 V in amplitude will always be recognized correctly at the receiver according to their polarity, so that appreciable attenuation along the line can be tolerated. The transfer rate is rated > 20 kbps and a distance of < 15m. Greater distance and data rates are possible with good design, but it is reasonable to assume that these limits apply in practice as well as in theory. The load impedance of the terminator side of the interface must be between 3000 and 7000 ohms, and not more than 2500pF.

Table 3, summarizes the functional specifications of the most important circuits.

Table 3. RS-232-C Circuit Definitions

Name	Direction to:	Function
Data Signals		
Transmitted Data (BA)	DCE	Data generated by DTE
Received Data (BB)	DTE	Data Received by DTE
Timing signals		
Transmitter Signal Element Timing (DA)	DCE	Clocking signal, transitions to ON and OFF occur at center of each signal element
Transmitter Signal Element Timing (DB)	DTE	Clocking signal, as above; both leads relate to signals on BA
Receiver Signal Element Timing (DD)	DTE	Clocking signal, as above, for circuit BB
Control Signals		
Request to Send (CA)	DCE	DTE wishes to transmit
Clear to Send (CB)	DTE	DCE is ready to transmit; response to request to send
Data Set Ready (CC)	DTE	DCE is ready to operate
Data Terminal Ready (CD)	DCE	DTE is ready to operate
Ring Indicator (CE)	DTE	Indicates that DCE is receiving a ringing signal on the communication channel
Carrier Detect (CF)	DTE	Indicates that DCE is receiving a carrier signal
Signal Quality Detector (CG)	DTE	Asserted when there is reason to believe there is an error in the received data
Data Signal Rate Selector (CH)	DCE	Asserted to select the higher of two possible data rates
Data Signal Rate Selector (CI)	DTE	Asserted to select the higher of two possible data rates
Ground		
Protective Ground (AA)	NA	Attached to machine frame and possibly external grounds
Signal Ground (AB)	NA	Establishes common ground reference for all circuits

Range: The RS-232-C standard specifies that the maximum length of cable between the transmitter and receiver should not exceed 100 feet, Although in practice many systems are used in which the distance between transmitter and receiver exceeds this rather low figure. The limited range of the RS-232C standard is one of its major shortcomings compared with other standards which offer greater ranges within their specifications. One reason why the range of the RS-232C standard is limited is the need to charge and discharge the capacitance of the cable connecting the transmitter and receiver.

Mechanical Characteristics: The connector for the RS-232-C is a 25 pin connector with a specific arrangement of wires. In theory, a 25 wire cable could be used to connect the Data Terminal Equipment (DTE) to the Data Communication Equipment (DCE). The DTE is a device that is acting as a data source , data sink, or both, e.g. a terminal, peripheral or computer. The DCE is a device that provides the functions required to establish, maintain,and terminate a data-transmission connecting, as well as the signal conversion, and coding required for communication between data terminal equipment and data circuit; e.g. a modem. Table 4, shows the complete summary of the RS-232-C, e.g., descriptor, sponsor, data format, etc.

Table 4. Summary of the RS-232-C	
Data Format	5- to 8- bit serial
Transfer Type	Asynchronous
Error Handling	Optional Parity Bit
Connector	25-pin female connector on DCE; 25-pin male connector on DTE
Length	20 meters
Speed	20 kb/s
Remarks	RS-232 is used in the microcomputer world for communications between two DTEs. The null-modem is included into one or both connecting devices, and/or cable and is seldom documented. As a result, establishing an RS-232 connection between two DTEs is frequently a difficult task.