User Manual

for Software Version 0.20

This user manual describes the operating functions and features of the Sign Command software version 0.20 for your Stewart TekStar LED display. For additional support, please contact:

2201 Cantu Ct. Suite 115
Sarasota, FL 34232
1-855-841-4624

- or visit our TekStar Support website at -

www.stewartsigns.com/support/tekstar

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The Information boxes located within this manual contain additional important notes.	*Alert boxes contain instructions that must be followed to ensure proper performance of the software or display.*

What is Sign Command?

Sign Command is an advanced Windows®-based software application that controls the message on your LED display. With it, you can add text, images and video clips that can be scheduled on certain days of the month or times.

> *Due to the variety of matrix sizes and display colors that are compatible with Sign Command, the examples contained in this manual may not reflect the capabilities of your display.*

Terminology

The following terminology is used throughout this manual.

- *Display* – The portion of your outdoor sign that contains the LEDs and other electronic components. Displays come in a variety of sizes, and can be single or double-sided.
- *Display Item* - Text, images, video clips or other items that will be shown on the *display*.
- *Frame* – A single unit of a *script file* that can contain one or more *windows*. A frame can be scheduled to be shown on a certain date or at a certain time.
- *Script File* – A sequential list of *frames* that will be shown on your *display*. The script file also contains information on duration, scheduling, and any transition effects selected.
- *Preview* – Viewing the *frame* within the software to see how it will look on the *display*.
- *Transmit* – Sending the *script file* to the *display* for viewing by the public.
- *Window* – A portion of a *frame* that can contain one or more *display items*.

System Requirements

Sign Command can be run on any modern Windows®-based computer. The following are the minimum requirements for installation:

- Microsoft Windows® XP or above
- 512 MB RAM
- 24-bit graphic card
- 100 MB free drive space
- Network card (if using the network connection method)
- USB port (if using the USB connection method)

Installing the Software

> ⚠️ *If there is an existing version of Sign Command installed on your computer, it must be uninstalled before proceeding.*

Download the software from www.stewartsigns.com/support/tekstar. Double click on the **signcommand.exe** file or run it from your web browser to start the installation process.

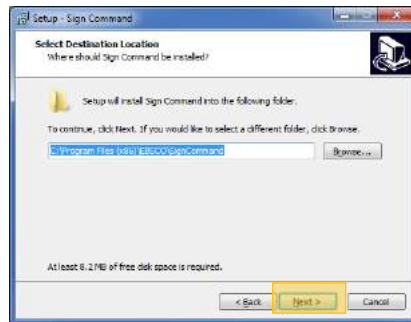1. If you use Windows® 7 or Windows® Vista, you may have to click **Yes** to the User Account Control window.
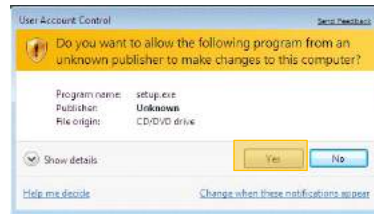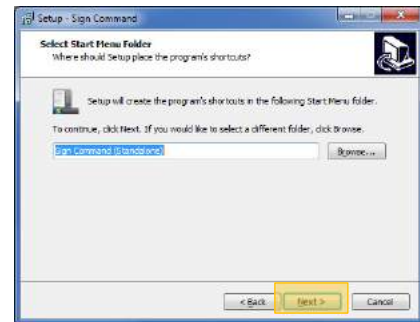
Windows® 7 and Windows® Vista only

2. Click the **Next** button to start the software installation.

3. Accept the default destination location by clicking the **Next** button.

4. Accept the default Start Menu Folder by clicking the **Next** button.

5. Confirm your selections by clicking the **Install** button.
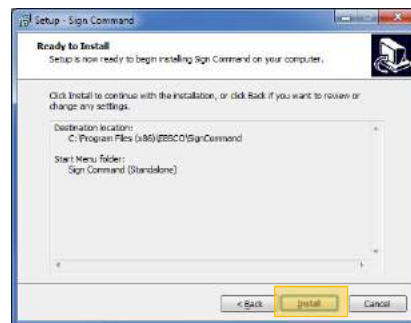
6. Complete the installation by clicking the **Finish** button.

Once installed, the Sign Command icon will be available on your desktop and within your Start menu. Click on the icon to start Sign Command.

Activating the Software

In order to prevent unauthorized use of the software, each installation of Sign Command requires a unique activation file provided by Stewart Customer Support. This security measure helps to ensure that your display cannot be changed by a third party.

When first opening an unregistered version of Sign Command, the software activation window will appear. Click **Copy to Clipboard** to place the eight digit PC code into your computer's clipboard.

Go to www.stewartsigns.com/support/tekstar-activation and complete the required form for software activation. When prompted for your PC code, press **Ctrl+V** on your keyboard to paste it into the field.
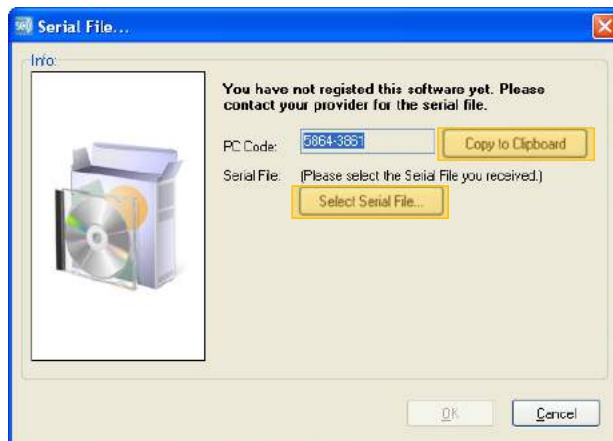
Software Activation Window

A Stewart support representative will process your request during regular business hours. Once complete, an email will be sent to you with a file attachment named **serial.inf**.

Save this file attachment anywhere on your computer. Click **Select Serial File** in the software activation window, and browse to where you saved the serial.inf file attachment.

Select it and click **Open**. If the file is valid, you will now be able to click **OK** in the software activation window and register your installation of Sign Command.
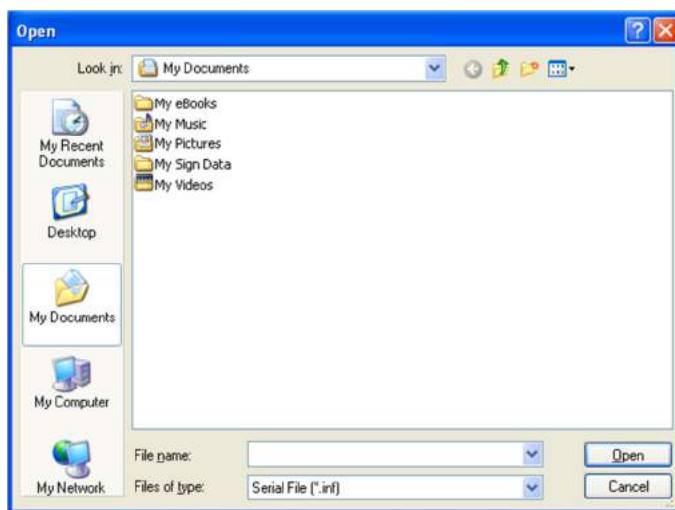

*Browse to the location where you saved the **serial.inf** file attachment*

A unique serial.inf file is required for each computer that will have Sign Command installed. Repeat this registration process for each computer if installing in multiple locations.

Configuring the Display

Before you can use Sign Command, you must first configure your display in the settings. Click **Tools > Device Configuration** in the top file bar.
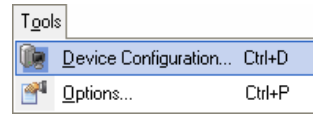
The Device Configuration window will appear with the **General** tab in front.

Enter the **Width** and the **Height** of your display matrix in pixels. The matrix size can be found in your order information or by counting the groupings of LEDs on the display, and will be one of the following: 80 by 16, 80 by 24, 112 by 16 or 112 by 24.

Device Configuration of display width and height in pixels

The software can communicate with your sign in two ways:

- A **USB drive** can be used to physically move information from your computer to the sign. All TekStar signs have an external USB plug for this purpose.

- A **network connection** can be used to communicate instantly with the sign. This connection can be achieved with a network cable, wireless network router or other equipment. This method is optional and was determined at the time the sign was purchased or installed.

Sign Command will automatically locate the sign if it is connected to the network.

*To establish a **network connection**, your computer and TekStar sign must be on the same computer network. Network configuration is the responsibility of the customer.*

Screen Overview

The main screen for Sign Command has the following sections with a window selected:
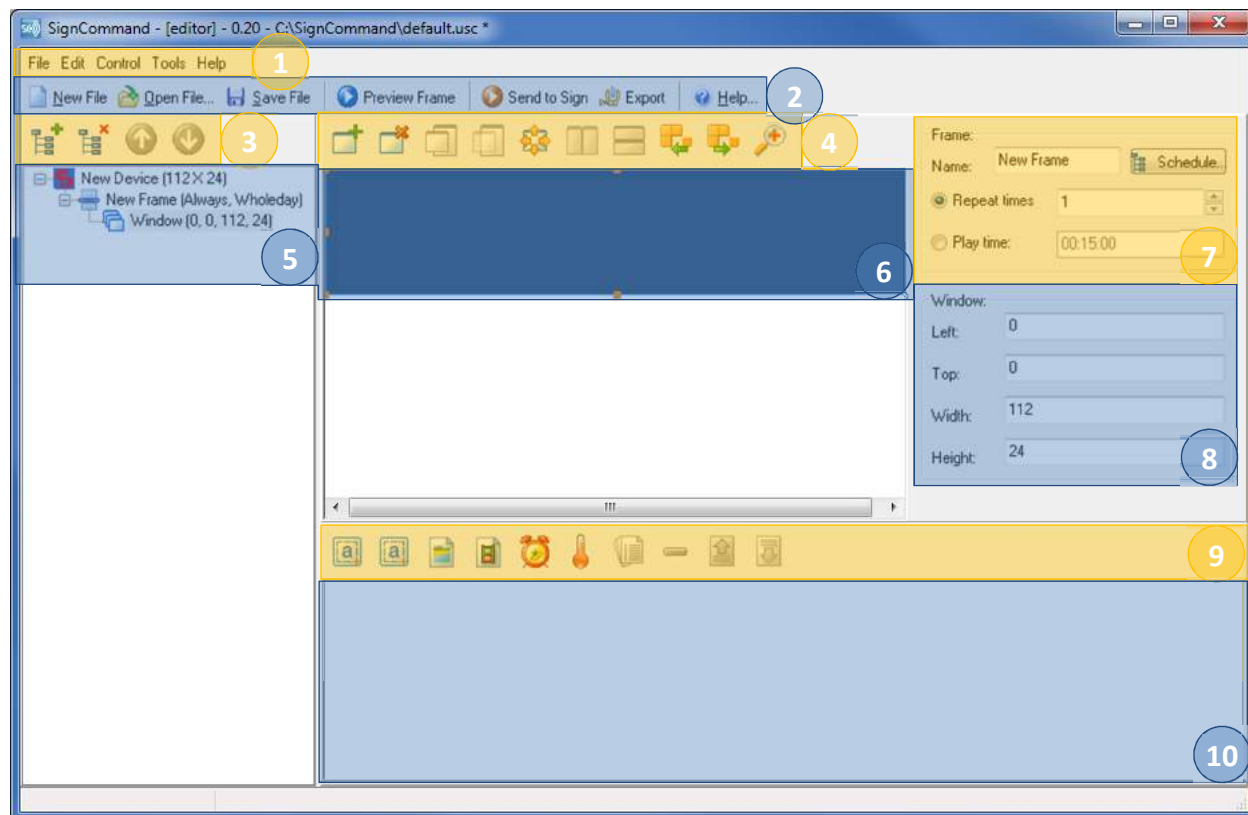
1. *File Bar* – All functions of the software such as previewing, saving and transmitting a script file are available from this bar.

2. *Toolbar* – Allows quick access to some of the more commonly used functions in the *file bar*.

3. *Frame Controls* – These controls allow you add, remove and order frames.

4. *Window Controls* – These controls allow you to add, remove and position windows within the frame. A zoom control also allows you to adjust the zoom level of the *frame editor*.

5. *Window & Frame Tree* – A list of all existing frames and windows in your script file. Clicking on a frame or window within the tree will select it for editing.

6. *Frame Editor* – This editor allows you to visually arrange windows within the frame.

7. *Frame Settings* – These controls allow you to schedule and have repeat or duration times set for the selected frame.

8. *Window Settings* – These controls allow you specify settings for the selected window.

9. *Display Item Controls* – These controls allow you to add, remove and order various display items such as text, images, video clips, time and temperature.

10. *Display Item List* – This list will show all display items that have been added to the selected window.

Working with Script Files

A script file is a list of text, images, and video clips that will be shown on your display. The script file also contains information on duration, scheduling, and any transition effects selected.

To create a **new** script file, click [icon] New File.
To **open** an existing script file, click [icon] Open File... Browse to where the file is located and click **Open**.
To **save** your open script file to your computer, click [icon] Save File.

When Sign Command is closed and later restarted, it will open the last script file that was saved.

> [i icon] *Sign Command script files use the .usc file extension. It is recommended that you save these files into the default folder (C:\Users\[username]\SignCommand). You may create as many script files as you would like.*

Understanding Frames, Windows & Display Items

A Sign Command script file contains several layers of information. This layering allows for more flexibility in designing what can be shown on the display. A script file must contain one or more *frames*.

A **frame** is the basic unit of the script file. The frame is always the same pixel size as the display (for example 112 pixels wide by 24 pixels high).

All scheduling, such as setting a message to display at a certain date and time, takes place at the frame level. To be displayed, a frame must contain one or more *windows*.

A **window** is a section of the frame dedicated for displaying one or more items. A window may be the entire size of the frame, or may only use a portion of the frame. If multiple windows are added to a frame, they are shown at the same time. To be displayed, window must contain one or more *display items*.


The layers of a script file.
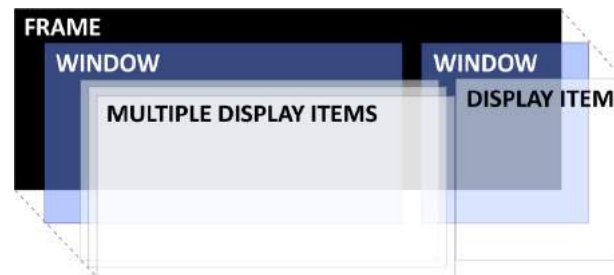
A frame containing two windows.
The left window contains three display items.
The right window contains one display item.

A **display item** is a piece of information to be shown on the display. Text, images and video clips are all display items. Display items always use the entire size of the window that they reside in. If multiple display items are added to a window, they are shown one at a time.


Working with Frames

A frame can be added to the script file by clicking the **New Frame** button. The new frame will be added to the end of the script file. New script files contain one frame by default.

The frames contained in your script file can be seen in the **Frame & Window Tree**. The frame that is selected within the tree can have its properties and contents edited.

Frames can also be reordered by clicking the

Move Frame Up or **Move Frame Down** buttons.

Frame & Window Tree with the first of two frames selected.
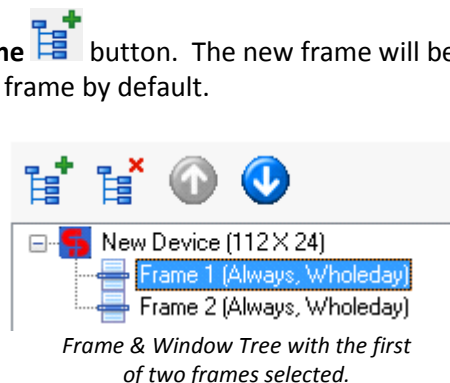
Frames can also be cut or copied, and then pasted elsewhere in the script file. Right-click on a frame and select **Cut** or **Copy**. Select a different frame within the script file, right-click it and select **Paste**.
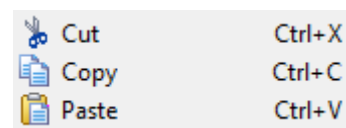
Frames can be deleted by clicking the **Delete Frame** button. This will also remove any windows and display items residing in the frame.

> Frames can be scheduled for display at certain dates and times. See the **Scheduling a Frame** section for more information.

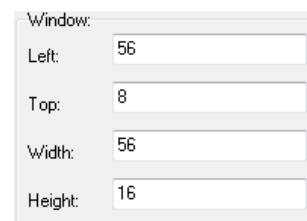# Working with Windows

With a frame selected, click the **New Window** button. This will add a new window inside the frame. By default, the window takes up the entire size of the frame.

Orange sizing boxes used to resize the window.

To size the window smaller, click and drag one of the orange sizing boxes surrounding it. You can also directly enter values into the **Window Settings** box to resize and position the window. The values are measured in pixels.

By adding multiple windows to a frame, you can display multiple items at the same time. For example, showing text next to an image, or the temperature next to the time.

Window settings box with values in pixels.

A frame with two windows, allowing two items to be displayed at the same time.

Other Window Controls

Delete Window - Removes the window and any display items inside the window.

Maximize Window - Resizes the window to fit the entire frame.

Move Window Up – Moves a window in front of another if they are overlapping. *Only available if there are multiple windows in the frame.*

Move Window Down – Moves a window behind another if they are overlapping. *Only available if there are multiple windows in the frame.*

Tile Window Horizontal - Sizes and positions windows so they are stacked horizontally. *Only available if there are multiple windows in the frame.*

Tile Window Vertical – Sizes and positions windows so they are stacked vertically. *Only available if there are multiple windows in the frame.*

Load Window Template – Loads the size and position of all windows from a file created by *Save Window Template.*

Save Window Template – Saves the size and position of all windows to a file that can be loaded into another frame.

Working with Display Items

A display item can be added selecting a window and clicking one of the **Add** buttons below. If more than one display item is added to a window, they will be shown one at a time for the length specified by each item. If multiple windows are placed within the frame, each will rotate through their display items independently of the other.

With a window selected, the following display item controls are available:

Add Pixel Text – Adds text in an LED font to the selected window.

Add Text – Adds text in any Windows® font to the selected window.

Add Image – Adds an image to the selected window.

Add Video Clip – Adds a video clip to the selected window.

Add Date/Time – Adds the current date or time to the selected window.

Add Temperature – Adds the current temperature to the selected window.

Modify Item – Edits the properties for the selected item.

Delete Item – Removes the selected item from the window.

Move Item Up – Moves the selected item to show sooner in the list.

Move Item Down – Moves the selected item to show later in the list

Adding Pixel Text

Pixel text uses special fonts designed for maximum readability and optimal message length on your LED display. It is recommended to use pixel text in most situations.
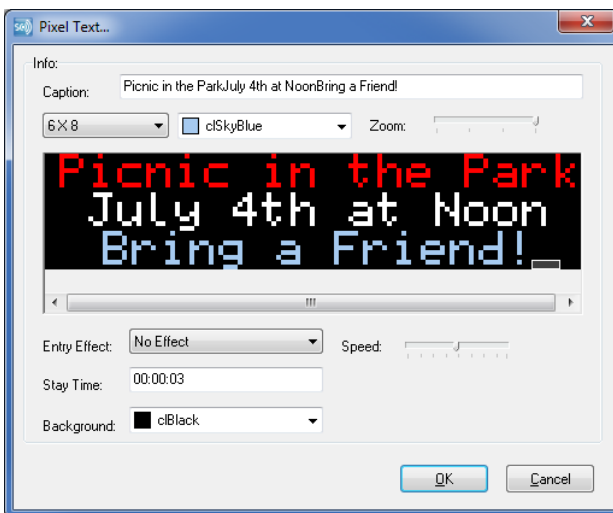
With a window selected, click **Add Pixel Text** in the Display Items toolbar.

Type the message into the black box at the center of the window. The **Font Size** and **Color** can be selected independently for each line.

Select an **Entry Effect** if you would like the text to transition on and off of the display. The speed of the effect can be controlled with the slider.

The **Stay Time** is the duration that the text will stay on the sign. Stay times are always listed as `hours:minutes:seconds`, and does not include the time used by the Entry Effect.

A **Background** color can also be selected for the text. The default color is black.

Add Pixel Text Window

> *The amount of text you can place on the display depends on the matrix size. Displays 16 pixels high can fit up to two lines of text; 24 pixels high can fit up to three lines of text.*

Adding Text

The Text display item allows you to use any font installed on your Windows™ operating system. For TekStar signs, it is recommended that this feature is only used for a single line of text.

With a window selected, click **Add Text** in the Display Items toolbar.

Type the message into the black box at the center of the Text window. The vertical white line represents the right edge of the display.

Font, **Size** and **Color** can be selected independently for each character.

As with Pixel Text, the **Entry Effect**, **Stay Time** and **Background** color can also be specified.
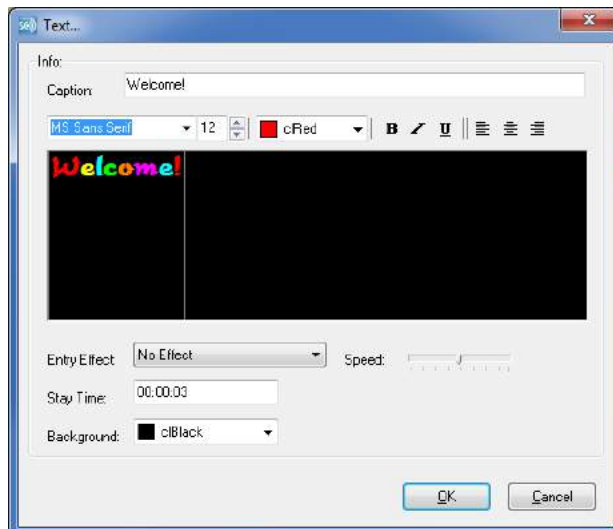
*Add Text Window*

Scrolling Text

A line of text can be scrolled from right to left across the display in a continuous motion.

After typing a line of text and selecting the font, size and color, change the **Entry Effect** to Scroll Text.

Adjust the **Speed** to a low setting. It is recommended to use the lowest speed setting.

Adjust the **Stay Time** to 00:00:00. This will prevent the text from pausing during playback.

Scrolling text should be used sparingly, as it is inefficient at communicating large amounts of information.
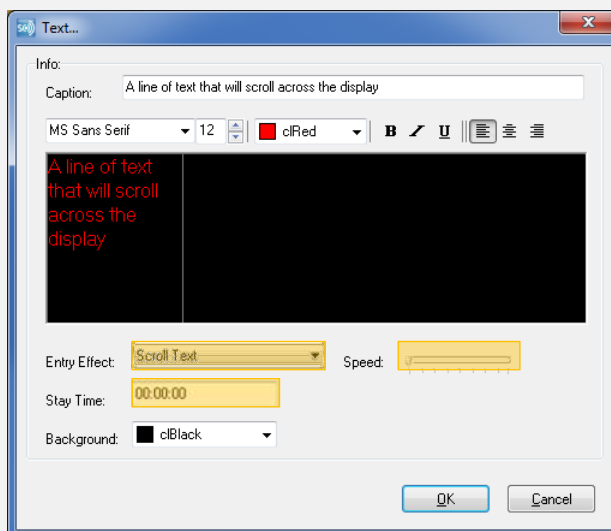
Scrolling Text Settings

Adding Images

Images can be added to your TekStar display. The following image file formats are compatible with Sign Command: .BMP, .JPG, .JPEG, .PNG, .TIF and .TIFF.

With a window selected, click **Add Image** in the Display Items toolbar.

Click the **folder icon** and browse to where the image file is located on your computer. Select it and click **Open**.

Select a **Layout** for the image. **Scale to Window** will resize the image proportionally, while **Fit to Window** will stretch the image to fill the entire window.

Add Image Window

An **Entry Effect** and **Stay Time** can also be specified.
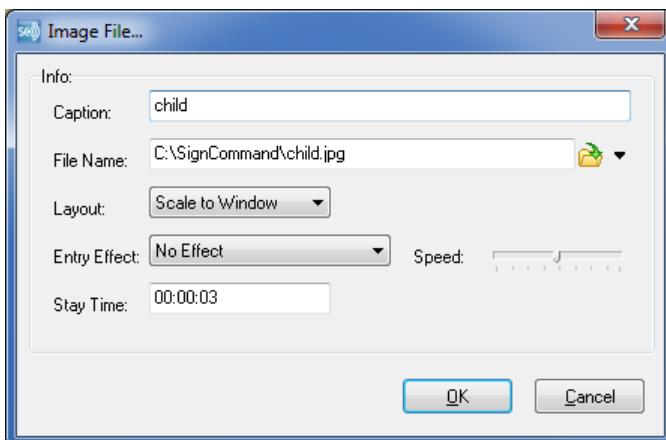
The amount of detail that can be shown on your display is dependent on the matrix size. Images that contain a large amount of detail may not show well on your LED display.

Adding Video Clips

Video clips can be added to your TekStar display. The following video file formats are compatible with Sign Command: .ASF, .AVI, .GIF, .MOV, .MP4, .MPEG, .MPG, .RMVB, .VOB and .WMV.

With a window selected, click **Add Video Clip** in the Display Items toolbar.

Click the **folder icon** and browse to where the video file is located on your computer. Select it and click **Open**.

Select a **Layout** for the image. **Scale to Window** will resize the video file proportionally, while **Fit to Window** will stretch the video file to fill the entire window.

Video clips will play in their entirety, and do not have a Stay Time value.

Add Video Clip Window

The amount of detail that can be shown on your display is dependent on the matrix size. Video clips that contain a large amount of detail may not show well on your LED display.

Special Instructions for Monochrome Displays

If your display is only capable of showing shades of red, special consideration must be made in selecting image and video clip files.

Because a monochrome display cannot show multiple colors, different colors of similar brightness will all show as red on the display.

It is best to use a grayscale image or video clip that only uses black, white and shades of gray. Other high-contrast color combinations are also acceptable.

If you are using a full-color image or video clip on a monochrome display, it is recommended to test it on the display or convert it into grayscale using photo editing software.
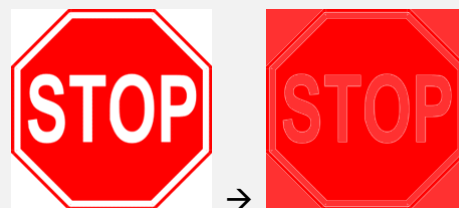
Because a monochrome display cannot show white, this image is displayed as entirely red.
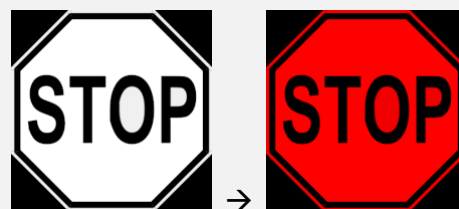

A high contrast image in grayscale works well for a monochrome display.

Adding Date & Time

Sign Command allows you to include the current date and time within a window. The date and time are derived from an internal clock within the display, which is updated from the computer running Sign Command.

With a window selected, click **Add Date/Time** in the Display Item toolbar.

Select your desired options. *It may be necessary to reduce the font size to fit the text within the window.*
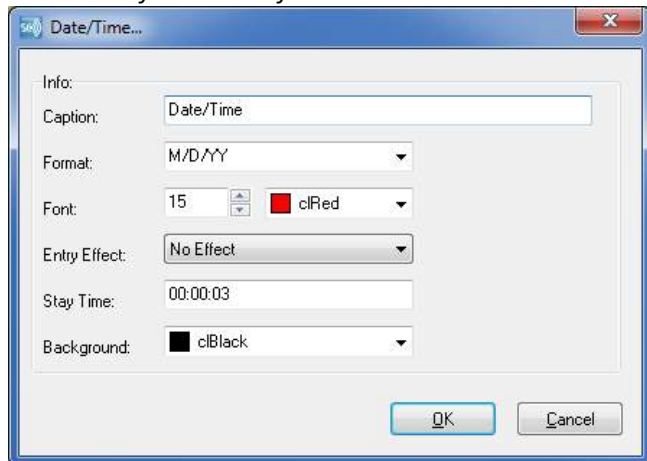
Add Date/Time Window

The following formats are available for date and time. The examples use the date and time of Wednesday, July 4th, 2012 at 9:30 PM.

Format	Example
M/D/YYYY	7/4/2012
M/D/YY	7/4/12
MMM DD YYYY	Jul 04 2012
MMMM DD	July 04
WWWW	Wednesday
YYYY-MM-DD	2012-07-04
DD-MMM-YY	04-Jul-12
h:mm AP	9:30 PM
HH:mm	21:30

> *If the clock is incorrect on your computer, the time or date may show incorrectly on the display. It is recommended to use a time-syncing service on your computer to keep this information accurate.*

Adding Temperature

Sign Command allows you to include the current temperature within a window. The temperature is derived from a temperature probe attached to the sign.

With a window selected, click **Add Temperature** in the Display Item toolbar.

Select a **Scale** of either **Fahrenheit** or **Celsius**.

Select your desired options. *It may be necessary to reduce the font size to fit the text within the window.*
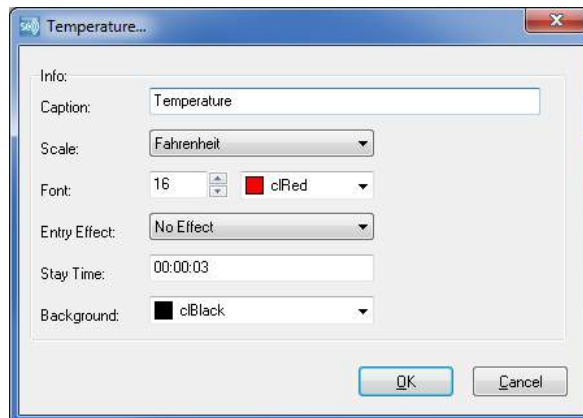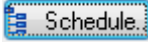

Add Temperature Window

Scheduling a Frame

Individual frames can be scheduled to be displayed on certain days of the month or at certain times. These frames will begin showing at their scheduled start time, and end at the stop time.

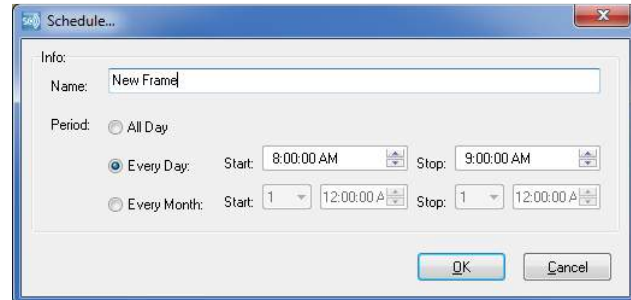Click ![Schedule] with the frame selected that you wish to schedule.

Select **Every Day** and a **Start** and **Stop** time to display a frame during the same time period every day.

Select **Every Month** and a **Start** date/time and a **Stop** date/time to display a frame during the same period every month.

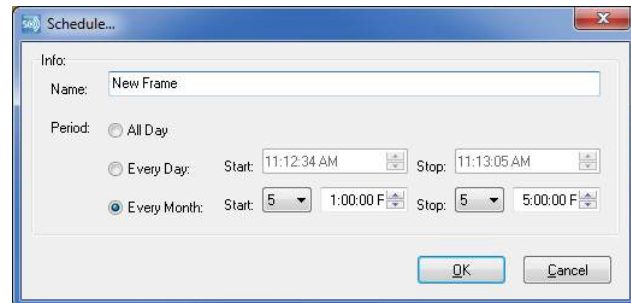*A frame scheduled to be displayed every day between 8:00 AM and 9:00 AM.*

Select **All Day** for the frame that you wish to be displayed when no other frames are scheduled. This frame will loop continuously until another scheduled frame is started.

There must be one frame in the script file that has the "All Day" setting. This ensures that there is always something showing on the display. Only one frame can be set to "All Day".
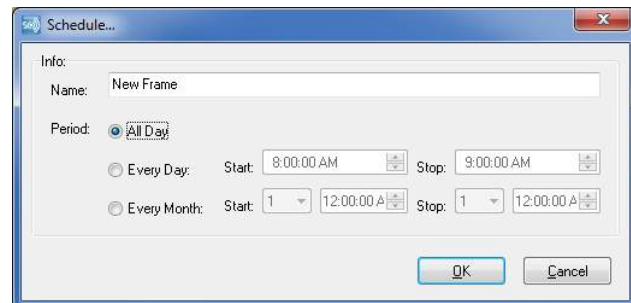

A frame scheduled to be displayed on the 5th day of every month between 1:00 PM and 5:00 PM.

If more than one frame is scheduled at the same time, the frame that is listed last in the Window & Frame tree is displayed.

A frame scheduled as "All Day" will be displayed continuously unless another frame is scheduled for that time.

Previewing a Frame

Once the windows and display items are added and configured, click ![Preview Frame] to view how the frame will appear on the display. Once you are done previewing the frame, click the **X** in the top right of the Preview window to close it.

Transmitting to the Display

> ⚠️ *The following feature is only available for displays with a network connection. If your sign is not network connected, use the **Exporting to USB** method to transmit your script file.*

Click Send to Sign to open the Play window. If you have not yet saved your script file to the computer, you will be prompted to save it.

Click **Send** to transmit the file. The log will post each step of the transmission.

Once complete, click **Close**. The script file will now be playing on the display.
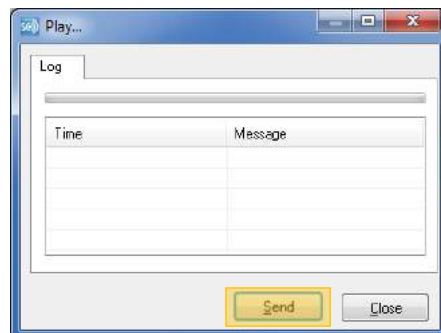
Play Window

> ℹ️ *Once the file transfer is complete, it is not required to leave the Sign Command program running or your computer on.*

Exporting to USB

> ⚠️ *The USB drive that you use must not contain other data, and must have enough storage space for all video clips and images used in the script file.*

Plug in your USB drive into an open USB port on your computer. When the computer recognizes the USB drive, make note of the drive letter.

Click Export to USB in the top toolbar.

Click the **folder icon** next to the Export To box. Select your USB drive from the folder list. Click **OK** in the Browse for Folder window, and then click **Apply** to export the file.

You will be alerted if the export was successful. **Close** the Export window and **remove** your USB drive from the computer.
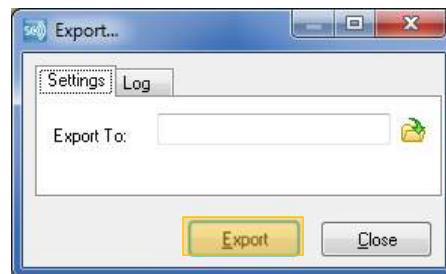
Export Window

Plug in the USB drive into the USB port on the sign. The transfer of data will be automatic, and the file will begin playing momentarily.

> ℹ️ *Once the new file begins playing, the file transfer is complete. It is not required to leave the USB drive in the sign.*

Setting Password Protection

Two levels of password protection can be set within Sign Command:

- A **User** password prevents unauthorized use of the Sign Command software by requiring the password at startup. This is the most common type of password protection.

- An **Administrator** password prevents unauthorized changes to device settings, such as matrix size, and/or application settings, such as changing passwords.

Select **Tools > Options** from the file bar, and click the **Account** tab.
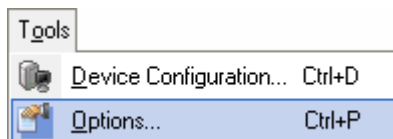
To set a User password, click **Set Password** in the User box. Type your desired password and click **OK**. Put a check mark in **Ask for password on application startup**.

To an Administrator password, click **Set Password** in the Administrator box. Type your desired password and click **OK**. Put a check mark in one or both of the **device info** and **application options** boxes.

If you are setting both the User and Administrator passwords, it is recommended that they are different from each other.

Options Window

> ⚠ *When specifying a password, be sure to type your password correctly and keep a written copy of it in a secure location.*

Changing the Time

The date and time shown on your TekStar sign is derived from an internal clock. This clock may occasionally become out of sync with the actual time due to variations in environmental conditions within the display, or due to time changes as with Daylight Savings Time.

When a new message is transmitted using **Send to Sign**, the current date and time information from your computer is sent to the display. If you use a network connection to communicate to the sign, simply resend your most recent script file to change the internal clock.

If you place messages on your sign only using **Export to USB**, the current date and time cannot be transferred using a USB drive. Follow the steps below to transmit a script file using **Send to Sign** in order to set the internal clock.
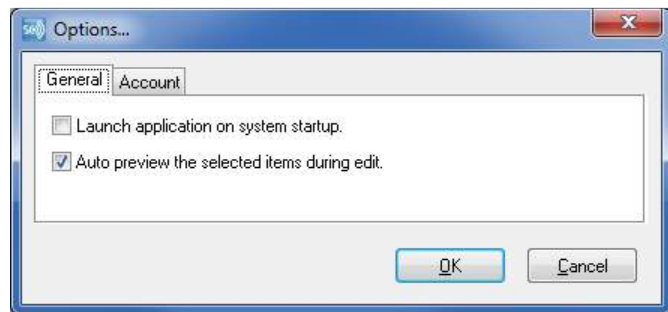
- Plug an **Ethernet cable** into the side of the sign. The Ethernet port is located next to the USB port.
- Plug the other end into a **laptop** or other computer with Sign Command installed.
- Transmit your script file using **Send to Sign**.

Setting Other Options

In the **General** tab of the Options window, Sign Command can be set to launch automatically when your computer is started.

The auto preview of display items in the frame editor can also be disabled.

Options Window