

# Building and Installing GNU units on Microsoft Windows with the MKS Toolkit

---

Edition 2.21 for units Version 2.23

Jeff Conrad

---

This manual is for building and installing GNU **units** (version 2.23) on Microsoft Windows with the PTC MKS Toolkit.

Copyright © 2016–2024 Free Software Foundation, Inc.

# Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Building and Installing units</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Overview .....	1
Configuring <code>configure</code> .....	2
Customizing the Installation .....	2
Administrative Privilege .....	3
Environment Variables for Visual Studio .....	3
Initialization with the Korn Shell .....	3
Adjustment for Different Visual Studio Installations .....	3
“install” Programs .....	4
Running with Administrative Privilege .....	4
Providing a Manifest File .....	4
Embedding a Manifest in the install Program .....	5
<b>Fine Tuning Makefile</b> .....	<b>5</b>
MKS <code>make</code> and Suffix Rules .....	5
Install Program .....	5
<b>Icons and File Association</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>MKS units</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Currency Definitions Updater</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Installing Python .....	6
Python and <code>configure</code> .....	6
<b>Running the Currency Updater</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Updating from the Command Line .....	7
Automatic Updates .....	7

## Preface

This manual covers configuring, building, and installing GNU **units** from the MKS Korn shell on Microsoft Windows. The process runs much as it would on Unix-like systems, and much of what follows assumes that the installation will be in the same places as they would on Unix-like systems (e.g., `C:/usr/local/bin` for the executable). Most of the discussion implicitly assumes using Microsoft Visual Studio for compiling.

You can also build **units** from the Windows command prompt using `Makefile.Win`—see *UnitsWin* for details.

The system on which the build was done had `/bin` as a symbolic link to `C:/Program Files/MKS Toolkit/mksnt`; with this approach, there is no need to change the first lines of any scripts in the **units** distribution.

The most recent build was for **units** version 2.23, using the MKS Toolkit for Developers version 10.4 and Microsoft Visual Studio 2022 on Microsoft Windows Professional 10 on 17 February 2024.

— Jeff Conrad ([jeff\\_conrad@msn.com](mailto:jeff_conrad@msn.com)) 17 February 2024

## Building and Installing **units**

### Overview

On Unix-like systems, building and installing **units** is simple; just type

```
./configure; make; make install
```

On Windows—even if Unix-like utilities such as the MKS Toolkit are available—additional steps are usually needed. A more realistic procedure might be as follows:

1. Create a `config.site` file that specifies several parameters for `configure`. Alternatively, you can pass the parameters to `configure` at invocation.
2. Start an instance of the Korn shell with administrative privilege.
3. If you are using Microsoft Visual Studio, initialize the environment variables for Visual Studio with the `setvcvars` script:

```
. ./setvcvars
```

4. Prepare the files needed to build **units** by running the configuration script:

```
./configure
```

5. Manually adjust `Makefile` if necessary.
6. Build the executable and support files:

```
make
```

7. If the build is successful, install the package:

```
make install
```

Some of the issues involved are discussed below.

## Configuring `configure`

The `configure` script attempts to make the build process system independent. But on non-Unix-like systems, `configure` often needs some help. When using the MKS Toolkit on Windows, `configure` depends on the environment variables `ac_executable_extensions` and `PATH_SEPARATOR`. It is often easier to use the Microsoft Visual Studio C compiler `cl` directly rather than through the MKS wrapper `cc`; for this to happen, the variable `CC` must be set to `cl` or `cl.exe`.

The variables can be given to `configure` in several ways:

- The variables can be passed to `configure` at invocation as name-value pairs, i.e.,  
`./configure [name=value ...]`
- The variables can be set and marked for export, e.g.,  

```
export ac_executable_extensions=".exe .sh .ksh"
export PATH_SEPARATOR=";"
```
- The variables can be set in a site configuration script that is read by `configure` at invocation. Such a script might include  

```
ac_executable_extensions=".exe .sh .ksh"
PATH_SEPARATOR=";"
```

By default, the script is `/usr/local/share/config.site`. If you specify a location other than `/usr/local/` for the installation with the `--prefix` option to `configure`, the configuration script is expected to be `prefix/local/share/config.site`. If you wish to have a fixed location for the configuration script, you can do so with the `CONFIG_SITE` environment variable. For example, if you have a configuration script that you want read regardless of the `--prefix` option, you could give

```
CONFIG_SITE="C:/usr/local/share/config.site"
```

A more complete `config.site` might include

```
ac_executable_extensions=".exe .sh .ksh"
ac_ext=cpp
prefix=C:/usr/local
PATH_SEPARATOR=";"
INSTALL="C:/usr/local/bin/install.exe -c"
CC=cl.exe
CFLAGS="-O2 -W3 -D_CRT_SECURE_NO_WARNINGS -nologo"
CXX=cl.exe
CXXFLAGS="-O2 -W3 -D_CRT_SECURE_NO_WARNINGS -nologo"
```

(`ac_ext`, `CXX`, and `CXXFLAGS` are not needed for building `units`)

## Customizing the Installation

By default, ‘`make install`’ installs `units` in subdirectories of `/usr/local`; you can specify a different location using the `--prefix` option. For example, if you want to install `units` in `C:/Program Files/GNU`, you might invoke `configure` with

```
./configure --prefix=C:/Progra~1/GNU
```

The Windows “8.3” short name is used because the installation process does not like spaces or parentheses in pathnames. The short name for `C:/Program Files` is usually as shown,

but can vary from system to system. You can find the actual short name on your system with the `dosname` command, e.g.,

```
dosname "C:/Program Files"
```

If you don't specify a prefix, or you specify a prefix without a drive letter, the installation will be on the same drive as the MKS Toolkit.

`configure` provides many other options for customizing the installation; typing

```
./configure --help
```

gives a summary of these options. Running `configure` is discussed in detail under the section "Running `configure` Scripts" in the GNU documentation for `autoconf`, available at <http://www.gnu.org/software/autoconf/>.

## Administrative Privilege

If you plan to install `units` in a location where you lack write permission, you'll need administrative permission for the installation and perhaps for the configuration and build (see ["install" Programs], page 4). The easiest way to do this is to start the shell by right-clicking on the shell icon (or a shortcut) from Explorer and using the Run as administrator option from the context menu.

## Environment Variables for Visual Studio

Microsoft Visual Studio requires that several environment variables (e.g., `PATH`) be set to include numerous directories for a build from the command line. Visual Studio provides an option on the Windows Start Menu to run an instance of the Windows command interpreter with these variables initialized.

## Initialization with the Korn Shell

The `setvcvars` script included in the `units` distribution will set these variables for the shell by running the batch file used for the Visual Studio command prompt, writing the variable values to the standard output, and reading them into the shell. For the values to persist, the script must of course be run in the current environment, e.g., '`source ./setvcvars`' or '`./setvcvars`'. These variables must be set for any command-line build with Visual Studio, so it may be helpful to copy the script to a directory that's in `PATH` (e.g., `/usr/local/bin`).

The default compilation is 64 bit; to compile a 32-bit version, set the environment by passing the script an argument of '`x86`', e.g., '`source ./setvcvars x86`' or '`./setvcvars x86`'.

## Adjustment for Different Visual Studio Installations

The name and location of the batch file and the values of the environment variables are installation specific; the `setvcvars` script assumes a standard installation of Visual Studio 2022 Community. For a nonstandard installation or for a different version, the value of `vsbatfile` in the script may need to be modified.

On Windows 10, find Visual Studio 2yyy on the Start Menu, click to open the menu, right click on x64 Native Tools Command Prompt for VS 2yyy, find More, right click, and select Open file location. In the instance of File Explorer that opens, find the

x64 Native Tools Command Prompt for VS 2yyy shortcut, right click, and select `Properties`; the `Target` on the `Shortcut` tab should contain the proper path for the batch file.

If you prefer to compile a 32-bit version, use the procedure above but choose x86 Native Tools Command Prompt for VS 2yyy to find the proper batch file.

The exact names of the menu choices may vary with the version of Visual Studio that is installed.

Earlier versions of Windows may require slightly different steps, but the objective is the same: find the name and location of the batch file that is opened by the appropriate Visual Studio command prompt and assign it to `vsbatfile` in the `setvcvars` script.

## “install” Programs

If you have an executable `install` program, you may get an error message to the effect of

```
cannot execute: The requested operation requires elevation
```

while running `configure` without elevated privileges on Windows Vista or later with User Account Control (UAC) enabled. If UAC is enabled, the system thinks executable programs whose names contain “install”, “patch”, “update”, and similar always require elevated privilege, and will refuse to run them without this privilege.

If this happens, `configure` will simply use the `install-sh` script included with the `units` distribution. But if for some reason you wish to use your version of `install`, there are several ways to do so.

## Running with Administrative Privilege

The easiest solution is to do the `configure` with a shell with administrative privilege, as discussed in [Administrative Privilege], page 3. After installation, testing should be done using a shell without elevated privilege.

## Providing a Manifest File

An alternative is to tell UAC that elevated privilege is not required. To do this, create a manifest file containing

```
<assembly xmlns="urn:schemas-microsoft-com:asm.v1" manifestVersion="1.0">
  <trustInfo xmlns="urn:schemas-microsoft-com:asm.v3">
    <security>
      <requestedPrivileges>
        <!-- Tell UAC that administrative privilege is not needed -->
        <requestedExecutionLevel level="asInvoker" uiAccess="false"/>
      </requestedPrivileges>
    </security>
  </trustInfo>
</assembly>
```

name it `install.exe.manifest`, and place it in the same directory as `install.exe`. Sometimes this has no effect; if this happens, adjust the modification times of the manifest and executable so they match.

The procedure is discussed at <https://github.com/bmatzelle/gow/issues/156>, and a similar discussion for GNU patch is given at [http://math.nist.gov/oommf/software-patchsets/patch\\_on\\_Windows7.html](http://math.nist.gov/oommf/software-patchsets/patch_on_Windows7.html).

Last access: 16 May 2016

## Embedding a Manifest in the install Program

If you are using MS Visual Studio, an alternative to having the manifest file in the executable directory is to embed the manifest in the executable using the manifest tool `mt.exe`, obviating the need to worry about the time stamps of the files. This is discussed in NIST link above; if the command is run from the shell, the semicolon must be escaped:

```
mt -manifest install.exe.manifest -outputresource:install.exe\;1
```

Microsoft describe manifests at <https://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/bb756929.aspx>.

The Code Project also discusses UAC awareness: <http://www.codeproject.com/Articles/17968/Making-Your-Application-UAC-Aware>.

## Fine Tuning Makefile

### MKS make and Suffix Rules

The MKS version of `make` ignores suffix rules in `Makefile` unless the line

```
.POSIX:
```

appears in `Makefile` before any suffix rules. This target is also required for the currency updater `units_cur` to run properly from `Makefile`. The configure script attempts to detect the Toolkit by running `mksinfo`, and if this succeeds, the `.POSIX` target is added. If you have the MKS Toolkit and it somehow is not detected, you should add this line manually.

### Install Program

If the `PATH` at shell invocation uses the backslash as the path separator, and you have a BSD-compatible `install` program that is detected by `configure`, the backslashes may be removed, giving an incorrect `Makefile` entry something like

```
INSTALL = c:usrlocalbin/install.exe -c
```

Add the slashes to get

```
INSTALL = c:/usr/local/bin/install.exe -c
```

If you will always want to use the same installation program, you can specify it with the `INSTALL` variable—see [Configuring `configure`], page 2.

Giving a `PATH` with forward slashes in a file given by `ENV` will have no effect because `configure` unsets that variable, and the file will not be read.

## Icons and File Association

Two icons are provided: `unitsfile.ico` and `unitsprog.ico`. The former is made the default icon for `units` data files, and the latter is embedded in the executable file by the build process. The latter also may be useful if you wish to create a shortcut to the `units` program. Both icons are copied to the same directory as the `units` data files.

The installation process associates `units` data files with the MKS graphical `vi` editor `viw`; double-clicking on the file icon opens the file for editing. The encoding is set to UTF-8.



## MKS `units`

The MKS Toolkit includes a very old version of `units`; if the MKS executable directory is earlier in `PATH` than the installation directory for GNU `units`, a command-line invocation will run the MKS version. To ensure that you run GNU `units`, either change `PATH` so that GNU `units` is found first, or create an alias for GNU `units`.

## Currency Definitions Updater

The script `units_cur` is used to update currency definitions; it requires Python (available from <https://www.python.org/>).

### Installing Python

If you want to use the currency updater, install Python if it is not already installed; ensure that Python is installed *before* running `configure`. If you need to install Python, unless you have (or anticipate having) applications that depend on Python 2, the best choice is probably to install Python 3.

Python's location must be included in `PATH` so the shell can find it; the Python installer usually offers to do this.

When you first run `units_cur`, you may get a complaint about a missing module; for example,

```
ModuleNotFoundError: No module named 'requests'
```

If so, you will need to install the missing module. The easiest way to do this is with the `pip` command; for example,

```
pip install requests
```

If you have Python 2.7.9 or later or Python 3.4 or later, you should have `pip`, though you may need to upgrade to the latest version. If you do not have `pip`, you will need to install it manually; see the Python documentation or the Python website for instructions on how to do this.

### Python and `configure`

The complete pathname in `Makefile` may contain backslashes; for example,

```
PYTHON = C:\Program Files\Python\Python37\python.exe
```

or

```
PYTHON = C:\Progra~1\Python\Python37\python.exe
```

The build will fail unless the backslashes are changed to forward slashes; for example,

```
PYTHON = C:/Progra~1/Python/Python37/python.exe
```

The backslashes can be avoided by passing `PYTHON` to `configure` at invocation, or by specifying it in `config.site`, e.g.,

```
PYTHON=C:/Progra~1/Python/Python37/python.exe
```

A disadvantage is that if the installation directory changes with a future version of Python, `config.site` will need to be manually updated. A better approach is to give the normal Unix/Linux pathname:

```
PYTHON=/usr/bin/python
```

This file need not exist; it simply tells the shell to use Python. Do not include the volume specifier (e.g., `C:`) or the `.exe` extension; if you do, the shell will assume that the path *does* exist, and will complain that it cannot find it.

## Running the Currency Updater

### Updating from the Command Line

If the location of `units_cur` is on your `PATH`, you can update the currency definitions by entering '`units_cur`' from the command line; you will need elevated permission if you lack write permission on the file.

Reliable free sources of currency exchange rates have been annoyingly ephemeral, sometimes causing update attempts to fail. Accordingly, several different sources are now supported—see the `units` manual for details.

### Automatic Updates

The easiest way to keep definitions updated is to create an entry in the Windows Task Scheduler. The Task Scheduler is fussy about the format for the action, which must be an executable file; an entry might look something like

```
C:\Windows\py.exe "C:\usr\local\bin\units\units_cur"
```

if the Python launcher is in `C:\Windows` and the script is in `C:\usr\local\bin`.