GET GOING GUIDE

HFConverse **Modem Mailbox**

Leave and collect messages in your PTC modem

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Your PTC modem has a small mailbox built in. Stations that connect to you can leave messages in it while you're away, and you can leave messages there for them to collect.

> **Golden rule:** the PTC-IIusb and PTC-IIIusb lose all their mail when switched off. Keep **Back up automatically** ticked.

Before you start

- **Which modems:** the SCS PTC family (PTC-II/IIpro, IIe, IIex, IIusb, IIIusb). The **P4 Dragon and DR-9400 have no mailbox**, so HFConverse runs one for them: see the *Dragon Mailbox* guide.
- **Where: Mail ▸ Modem Mailbox…**
- **When:** only while the modem is idle. Not during a call or a link, not while scanning, and not on the AMTOR, RTTY or PSK31 screens. Use it from the Terminal or the PACTOR screen.
- **Power off:** the PTC-IIusb and IIIusb **lose all mail when switched off**. The IIex and IIpro keep it. See *Backing up and restoring*, below.
- **The modem's clock** dates each message. HFC sets it every time it connects, so the dates are right.

The Modem Mailbox window

Everything is in one window: the list of messages at the top, the message you're reading below it, and the buttons along the bottom.

Part	What it does
NEW	Nobody has read this message yet.
To	Who it's for: your callsign for mail to you, other callsigns for mail you're holding for them.
From / **Date** / **Bytes** / **Title**	As the modem stored them. Newest at the top.
New message…	Leave a message in your mailbox for another station.
Refresh	Read the list from the modem again.
Read	Show the selected message again (Enter does the same).
Delete	Delete the selected message. It asks first, and it can't be undone.
Reply…	Answer the message you're reading: a new message to its sender, titled *Re: …*, with the original quoted under your answer. The original stays as it is.
Edit…	Change a message you wrote (or double-click it). Then press **Save**. Another station's message can't be changed - use **Reply…**.
Save to file…	Save the message you're reading as a text file. Right-click the message for **Copy**.
Back up to PC… / **Restore from PC…**	Keep a copy of the whole mailbox on your PC, or put one back.

Who may leave mail, and what callers are told, is set in **Settings ▸ Modem Mailbox** (see *Letting others use your mailbox*).

Reading your mail

HFC tells you when there's mail, and one click shows it.

How you know there's mail. After HFC connects to the modem, and a few seconds after every link ends, it checks quietly. New mail for you gets a line in the Terminal and on the PACTOR screen:

```
*** Modem mailbox: 1 new message for GW0XYZ (from DL2KLM) - Mail ▸ Modem Mailbox… ***
```

To read it:

1. Open **Mail ▸ Modem Mailbox…**.
2. Click a message (or move to it with the arrow keys). It appears in the lower pane, and the **NEW** mark goes.
3. Want to keep it? Press **Save to file…**.
4. Finished with it? Press **Delete** and confirm.

The messages stay in the modem. HFC keeps no copy unless you save one.

Leaving a message for another station

You can leave a message in **your own** modem for a station that will connect to you later. They read it when they connect, as their own mail.

1. In the Modem Mailbox window, press **New message…**.
2. **To:** their callsign (capitals are filled in for you).
3. **Title:** optional.
4. Type the message.
5. Press **Store in mailbox**. HFC hands it to the modem, waits for it to confirm, and it appears in the list with their callsign under **To**.

If the modem doesn't take it, the window stays open and says why.

Make sure they find out. Tick **Tell callers when there is mail waiting for them** in **Settings ▸ Modem Mailbox** (it's on by default). When that station connects, the modem tells them there's mail.

What they do to read it (after connecting to you): `//List` shows their mail, and `//Read 1` reads message 1, each followed by an over - see Using another station's mailbox below.

Letting others use your mailbox

Whether callers can leave mail is switched in the Terminal; the finer points are in Settings.

Switching it on or off: the **Mailbox on / Mailbox off** button in the Terminal's **Quick Commands**. Green means on. HFC remembers your choice and sets it every time it connects.

- **On:** a station that connects to you can leave a message with `//SEND` and your callsign, then the text, then an over.
- **Off:** callers can't leave mail, or use any other `//` command (sysop bell, remote reset and so on).

Settings ▸ Modem Mailbox, then **Save**. HFC keeps these and sends them to the modem every time it connects, and straight after Save (or as soon as the modem is free). The first time it connects, it reads the welcome text from the modem, so a text you set with another program is kept.

Setting	Ticked means
Only accept mail addressed to me	Mail for other callsigns is refused (no third-party traffic).
Let callers type mailbox commands without //	Callers get a `next?` prompt and type commands straight in. Leave it off: it can get in the way of an ordinary QSO.
Send the welcome text when a station connects	Every station that connects gets your welcome text.
Tell callers when there is mail waiting for them	A caller is told if your mailbox holds mail for them. On by default.
Welcome text	Up to 249 characters; `%` becomes your callsign.

Using another station's mailbox over the air

If another PTC owner leaves their mailbox switched on, you can call their station and collect or leave mail with nobody at the other end. Once you're connected, you type short commands **to their modem**, not to the operator, and their modem answers.

> **Not yet confirmed on air with HFC.** These steps follow the SCS manual.

What you need

- Their callsign, and a frequency they listen on (agreed beforehand, or from On the Air).
- Their mailbox switched **on**. Ask them; it's their Mailbox on / off button.
- The **PACTOR** screen open.

Step 1: Call them

1. Set the frequency.
2. Put their callsign in **Working**.
3. Press **Connect** and wait for `*** CONNECTED TO <their call>`.
4. Their modem may send a welcome line first, and tell you if there's mail for you. **Wait until it stops.** The status strip then says **Transmitting (our over)**, which means it's your turn.

Step 2: Tick BBS / Mailbox

Tick the **BBS / Mailbox** box on the action row. When their mailbox answers, HFC spots it and suggests this on the PACTOR screen.

Ticking **BBS / Mailbox** also starts a **Capture**: everything from their mailbox is saved to a text file as it arrives, so you keep the listing and the messages you read. It stops when you untick BBS / Mailbox or the link ends. **Log ▸ Open captures folder…** finds the file.

Why: normally HFC adds `btu G4QRS de GW0XYZ>` to the end of every over. Their mailbox would try to run that as a command. With **BBS / Mailbox** ticked, only what you type goes out.

Step 3: Send a command

1. In **Compose**, type the command exactly, for example `//List`. That's two forward slashes, no space.
2. Press **Ctrl+Enter**. That sends it and hands the link to their modem. With **BBS / Mailbox** ticked, **Enter** does the same for a line starting with `//`.
3. **Wait.** Their modem's reply appears in the top pane. When it's finished, the link comes back to you (**Transmitting (our over)** again).
4. Send the next command the same way. One command per over.

Step 4: Read your mail

1. `//List` + Ctrl+Enter. You get the messages waiting for you, each with a number.
2. `//Read 1` + Ctrl+Enter reads message 1. Use the number from the list.
3. Read it, then (optional) `//DELete 1` + Ctrl+Enter to remove it from their mailbox.

When you connect, their mailbox looks in **your** callsign's folder, so `//List` on its own shows your mail.

Step 5: Leave a message for someone

1. `//Write G4QRS Hello John` + Ctrl+Enter. That's who it's for, then a title.
2. Their mailbox replies, telling you to type the text **and how to end it**. Read that line carefully.
3. Type your message, end it the way it said, and press **Ctrl+Enter**.
4. G4QRS will find it the next time he reads that mailbox.

Step 6: Finish

1. Untick **BBS / Mailbox**.
2. Press **End QSO (QRT)**.

Commands you can use

To do this	Type, then Ctrl+Enter
See the commands their mailbox knows	`//Help`
List the mail waiting for you	`//List`
List every folder in their mailbox	`//Dir`
Read message 2	`//Read 2`
Delete message 2	`//DELete 2`
Leave a message for G4QRS	`//Write G4QRS My title`
Ring the owner's bell	`//BEll`

Nothing happens? Check you typed the `//`, ticked **BBS / Mailbox**, and that it's your turn when you send. If their modem never answers a command, their mailbox is probably switched off.

Backing up and restoring

A PTC-IIusb or IIIusb forgets all its mail when switched off, so keep a copy on your PC. The easy way is to let HFC do it.

Automatic (recommended): tick **Back up automatically, and offer to restore an empty mailbox** (on by default for the IIusb and IIIusb).

- When you **close HFC**, it backs up the mailbox if anything changed. **Skip** closes at once and keeps the last backup.
- When HFC **connects** and finds the mailbox empty, it offers to restore the latest backup that has mail in it. It never restores without asking.
- The newest 5 backups are kept (Help ▸ Open data folder… ▸ mailbox-backups).

By hand:

1. **Back up to PC…** collects the mailbox and asks where to save it (`mailbox-yyyy-mm-dd-hhmm.ptcbak`). An empty mailbox takes a few seconds; a full 2 MB one a few minutes.
2. **Restore from PC…** asks for a `.ptcbak` file, warns that it **replaces everything** in the modem, then loads it. Don't switch the modem off while it runs.

If a backup says *The modem didn't send a backup*, wait a few seconds (just after a link it can be busy) and try again.

Dragon modems

A P4 Dragon (DR-7400 / DR-7800) or DR-9400 has no mailbox, so HFConverse runs one that works like a PTC's. It has its own guide: **HFConverse Dragon Mailbox**.

Quick reference

I want to…	Do this
Read my mail	Mail ▸ Modem Mailbox…, click the message
Keep a message	Save to file…
Get rid of a message	Delete (asks first, can't be undone)
Leave mail for a station that will call me	New message… ▸ To, Title, text ▸ Store in mailbox
Stop people leaving mail	Terminal ▸ Quick Commands ▸ Mailbox off
Only take mail for me	Settings ▸ Modem Mailbox ▸ Only accept mail addressed to me
Not lose mail at power-off	Tick Back up automatically…
Read mail in someone else's box	Connect, tick BBS / Mailbox, `//List`, `//Read n`, each with Ctrl+Enter
Keep what their mailbox sent	Ticking BBS / Mailbox captures it; Log ▸ Open captures folder…

When things go wrong

What you see	Try this
No Modem Mailbox in the menu, or it won't open	HFC isn't connected to the modem. With a Dragon or DR-9400, see the *Dragon Mailbox* guide.
The window says it can't read the mailbox	A link, call or scan is running, or you're on the AMTOR, RTTY or PSK31 screen. Go to the Terminal or PACTOR screen.
Mailbox button greyed out	Hover over it for the reason (usually a link or scan in progress).
All my mail has gone	The IIusb / IIIusb was switched off. Restore from a backup (HFC offers this when it connects).
Backup: *The modem didn't send a backup*	Wait a few seconds after a link and try again.
Remote `//` commands do nothing	Their mailbox is off, or you forgot the `//`, or the over.

Issue history

Issue	Date	Changes
7	November 2026	New: **Reply…**. **Edit…** is now for your own messages only (DM5TU).
6	November 2026	HFC suggests BBS when the mailbox you called answers; with BBS ticked, Enter on a `//` command hands the link over (DM5TU, VK2NA). New: **Edit…**, and Copy on the message (DM5TU). The BBS tick box is now called **BBS / Mailbox** (Dave G4AON).
5	November 2026	HFConverse's mailbox for Dragon modems has moved to its own guide, *Dragon Mailbox*.
4	November 2026	The Modem Mailbox window is now in the Mail menu: **Mail ▸ Modem Mailbox…**. New: HFConverse's own mailbox for Dragon modems (Dave G4AON, DM5TU).
3	November 2026	The mailbox settings are now in Settings ▸ Modem Mailbox.
2	October 2026	Ticking BBS captures the session to a file.
1	October 2026	First issue.

More detail on every screen and setting is in the HFConverse User Manual. mw0gbq.hamserve.uk · HFConverse is not affiliated with SCS.