



Firebird 2 RC4 Quick Start Guide

IBPhoenix Editors

Firebird Project members

10 Aug 2006 – Document version 3.2

Table of Contents

About this guide	3
What is in the kit?	3
Classic or Superserver?	3
Default disk locations	5
Installing Firebird	7
Installing the Firebird server	7
Installing multiple servers	8
Testing your installation	8
Performing a client-only install	11
Server configuration and management	12
User management: gsec	12
Security	14
Windows Control Panel applets	15
Administration tools	17
Working with databases	17
Connection strings	17
Connecting to an existing database	19
Creating a database using isql	20
Firebird SQL	21
Preventing data loss	25
Backup	25
How to corrupt a database	26
How to get help	28
The Firebird Project	28
A. Document History	29
B. License notice	31
Alphabetical index	32

About this guide

The *Firebird Quick Start Guide* is an introduction for the complete newcomer to a few essentials for getting off to a quick start with a Firebird binary kit. The guide first saw the light as Chapter 1 of the *Using Firebird* manual, sold on CD by [IBPhoenix](#). Later it was published separately on the Internet. In June 2004, IBPhoenix donated it to the Firebird Project. Since then it is maintained, and regularly updated, by members of the Firebird documentation project.

Important

Before you read on, verify that this guide matches your Firebird version. This guide covers version 2. If you run Firebird 1.0 or 1.5, get the appropriate version of the Quick Start Guide at <http://www.firebirdsql.org/manual/> (HTML) or <http://www.firebirdsql.org/pdfmanual/> (PDF).

What is in the kit?

All of the kits contain all of the components needed to install the Firebird server:

- The Firebird server executable.
- One or more client libraries.
- The command-line tools.
- The standard user-defined function libraries.
- A sample database.
- The C header files (not needed by beginners).
- Release notes – ESSENTIAL READING!

Classic or Superserver?

Firebird comes in two flavours, called *architectures*: Classic Server and Superserver. Which one should you install? That depends on your situation. A short overview of the most important differences follows.

Table 1. Firebird 2 Classic Server vs. Superserver

	Classic Server	Superserver
<i>Processes</i>	Creates a separate process for every client connection, each with its own cache. Less resource use if the number of connections is low.	A single process serves all connections, using threads to handle requests. Shared cache space. More efficient if the number of simultaneous connections grows.
<i>Local connections</i>	Permits fast, direct I/O to database files for local connections on Linux. The client process must have filesystem-level access rights to the database for this to work.	On Linux, all local connections are made via the network layer, using <code>localhost</code> (often implicitly). Only the server process needs access rights to the database file.
	On Windows, both architectures now support safe and reliable local connections, with only the server process needing access rights to the database file.	
<i>Multiprocessor</i>	SMP (symmetrical multi-processor) support. Better performance in case of a small number of connections that do not influence each other.	No SMP support. On multi-processor Windows machines, performance can even drop dramatically as the OS switches the process between CPUs. To prevent this, set the <i>CpuAffinityMask</i> parameter in the configuration file <code>firebird.conf</code> .
<i>Guardian</i>	When run as a Windows <i>application</i> (as opposed to a service) you can't use the Firebird Guardian. Note that running Firebird as an application is the only option on Windows 9x-ME.	Can be used with the Guardian on Windows, whether run as an application or as a service.

As you can see, neither of the architectures is better in all respects. This is hardly surprising: we wouldn't maintain two architectures if one of them was an all-fronts loser.

If you're still not sure what to choose (maybe you find all this tech talk a little overwhelming), use this rule of thumb:

- On Windows, choose Superserver.
- On Linux, just pick one or the other. In most circumstances, chances are that you won't notice a performance difference.

Note that you can always switch to the other architecture later; your applications and databases will keep functioning like before.

For Linux, Superserver download packages start with `FirebirdSS`, Classic packages with `FirebirdCS`. For Windows, there is a combined installation package; you choose the architecture during the installation process.

Note

We've not been completely honest with you. Firebird has a third flavour: *Embedded Server*, but this is an entirely different beast and not intended for your typical client-server setups. Consult the Release Notes for details.

Default disk locations

The following table describes the default disk locations for the components on Windows and Linux.

Table 2. Components of the Firebird 2 installation

Platform	Component	File Name	Default Location
32-bit and 64-bit Windows (Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, 2000, XP, 2003, ...)	Installation directory (referred to hereafter as <InstallDir>)	—	C:\Program Files\Firebird\Firebird_2_0
	Release Notes and other documentation	Various files	<InstallDir>\doc
	Firebird server	fbserver.exe (SS) or fb_inet_server.exe (CS)	<InstallDir>\bin
	Command-line tools	gbak.exe, nbackup.exe, gsec.exe, gfix.exe, gstat.exe, etc.	<InstallDir>\bin
	Sample database	employee.fdb	<InstallDir>\examples\empbuild
	User-defined function (UDF) libraries	ib_udf.dll, fbudf.dll	<InstallDir>\UDF
	Firebird client	fbclient.dll (with an optional gds32.dll, to support legacy apps)	<InstallDir>\bin (with an optional copy in the Windows System dir – see note below table)

Platform	Component	File Name	Default Location
Linux and possibly other UNIX distros	Installation directory (referred to hereafter as <InstallDir>)	—	/opt/firebird
	Release Notes and other documentation	Various files	<InstallDir>/doc
	Firebird server	fbserver (SS) or fb_inet_server (CS)	<InstallDir>/bin
	Command-line tools	gbak, nbackup, gsec, gfix, gstat, etc.	<InstallDir>/bin
	Sample database	employee.fdb	<InstallDir>/examples/empbuild
	UDF libraries	ib_udf.so, fbudf.so	<InstallDir>/UDF
	Firebird client	libfbclient.so. 2.m.n (network client) libfbembed.so. 2.m.n (local client, Classic only) The usual symlinks (*.so.2, *.so) are created. Legacy libgds.* symlinks are also installed.	/usr/lib (actually, the real stuff is in <InstallDir>/lib, but you should use the links in /usr/lib)

Note

The exact path to the Windows System directory depends on your Windows version. Typical locations are:

- for Windows 95/98/ME: C:\Windows\System
- for Windows NT/2000: C:\WINNT\System32
- for Windows XP: C:\Windows\System32

Installing Firebird

Installing the Firebird server

Installation drives

Firebird server – and any databases you create or connect to – must reside on a hard drive that is physically connected to the host machine. You cannot locate components of the server, or any database, on a mapped drive, a filesystem share or a network filesystem.

Note

You can mount a read-only database on a CD-ROM drive but you cannot run Firebird server from one.

Installation script or program

Although it is possible to install Firebird by a filesystem copying method – such as “untarring” a snapshot build or decompressing a structured .zip archive – it is strongly recommended that you use the distributed release kit (.exe for Windows, .rpm for Linux), especially if this is the first time you install Firebird. The Windows installation executable, the Linux rpm program and the install.sh script in the official .tar.gz for various Posix platforms all perform some essential setup tasks. Provided you follow the installation instructions correctly, there should be nothing for you to do upon completion but log in and go!

Installing on Windows

The Firebird installer lets you choose between Superserver and Classic Server installation. Both are fully mature and stable and there is no reason to categorically prefer one to the other. Of course you may have your own specific considerations.

If you install Firebird under Windows 95/98/ME, **un**check the option to install the Control Panel applet. It doesn't work on these platforms. We'll give you a link to a usable applet later on in this guide. (Note: the option to install the applet is only available for Superserver.)

On Windows server platforms – NT, 2000, 2003 and XP – Firebird will run as a system service by default, but during the installation you can also choose to let it run as an application. Non-server Windows systems – 95, 98 and ME – don't support services; running as an application is the only option there.

Use the Guardian?

The Firebird Guardian is a utility that monitors the server process and tries to restart it if it terminates abnormally. The Guardian does not work with Firebird Classic Server on Windows if run as an application. This is due to a known bug, which will be fixed later. Currently the Firebird 2 installer doesn't give you the option to include the Guardian *at all* with a Classic Server, even if you install it as a service.

The Guardian works correctly with Superserver, whether run as an application or as a service.

If you run Firebird *as a service* on Windows 2000, 2003 or XP, the Guardian is a convenience rather than a necessity, since these operating systems have the facility to watch and restart services. It is recommended that you keep the Guardian option on (if possible) in all other situations.

Installing on Linux and other Unix-like platforms

In all cases, read the release notes that pertain to the version of Firebird that you are going to install. There may be significant variations from release to release of any Posix operating system, especially the open source ones. Where possible, the build engineers for each Firebird version have attempted to document any known issues.

If you have a Linux distribution that supports rpm installs, consult the appropriate platform documentation for instructions about using RPM Package Manager. In most distributions you will have the choice of performing the install from a command shell or through a GUI interface.

For Linux distributions that cannot process rpm programs, and for Unix flavours for which no .rpm kit is provided, use the .tar.gz kit. You will find detailed instructions in the Release Notes.

Shell scripts have been provided. In some cases, the Release Notes may instruct you to edit the scripts and make some manual adjustments.

Installing multiple servers

Firebird 2 allows the operation of multiple servers on a single machine. It can also run concurrently with Firebird 1.x or InterBase servers. Setting this up is not a beginner's task though. If you need to run multiple servers, consult the *Installation Notes* chapter of the Release Notes, and have the Firebird 1.5 Release Notes handy too – you will be directed to them at a certain point during your reading of the Installation Notes.

Testing your installation

If everything works as designed, the Firebird server process will be running on your server machine upon completion of the installation. It will also start up automatically whenever you restart your computer.

Before testing the Firebird server itself, it is advisable to verify if the server machine is reachable from the client at all. At this point, it is assumed that you will use the recommended TCP/IP network protocol for your Firebird client/server connections.

Notes

- If you have installed a Classic Server on Linux/Unix or any Firebird server on Windows, it is possible to connect directly to the local server, without using a network layer. If you intend to use Firebird for this type of connection **only**, you can skip the “Pinging the server” section below.
- For information about using the NetBEUI protocol in an all-Windows environment, refer to the *Network Configuration* chapter in the *Using Firebird* manual sold by IBPhoenix, or consult the InterBase 6 Operations Guide (<http://www.ibphoenix.com/downloads/60OpGuide.zip>).
- IPX/SPX networks are not supported by Firebird.

Pinging the server

The **ping** command – available on most systems – is a quick and easy way to see if you can connect to a server machine via the network. For example, if your server's IP address in the domain that is visible to your client is 192.13.14.1, go to a command shell on the client machine and type the command

ping 192.13.14.1

substituting this example IP address with the IP address that your server is broadcasting. If you are on a managed network and you don't know the server's IP address, ask your system administrator. Of course you can also ping the server by name, if you know it:

ping vercingetorix

If you are connecting to the server from a local client – that is, a client running on the same machine as the server – you can ping the virtual TCP/IP loopback server:

ping localhost –or– **ping 127.0.0.1**

If you have a simple network of two machines linked by a crossover cable, you can set up your server with any IP address you like except 127.0.0.1 (which is reserved for a local loopback server) and, of course, the IP address which you are using for your client machine. If you know the “native” IP addresses of your network cards, and they are different, you can simply use those.

Once you have verified that the server machine is reachable from the client, you can go on to the next step.

Checking that the Firebird server is running

After installation, Firebird server should be running:

On Linux or other Unix-like systems:

As a service.

On Windows server systems (NT, 2000, 2003, XP):

As a service or as an application. Service is default and highly recommended.

On Windows non-server systems (95, 98, ME):

As an application.

The following sections show you how to test the server in each of these situations.

Server check: Linux and other Unices

Use the **top** command in a command shell to inspect the running processes interactively. If a Firebird Superserver is running, you should see a process named `fbguard`. This is the Guardian process. Further, there will be one main and zero or more child processes named `fbserver`.

For Classic Server versions, the process name is `fb_inet_server`. There will be one instance of this process running for each network connection. Note that if there are no active connections, or if there are only direct local connections, you won't find `fb_inet_server` in the process list.

The following screen shows the output of `top`, restricted by `grep` to show only lines containing the

characters fb:

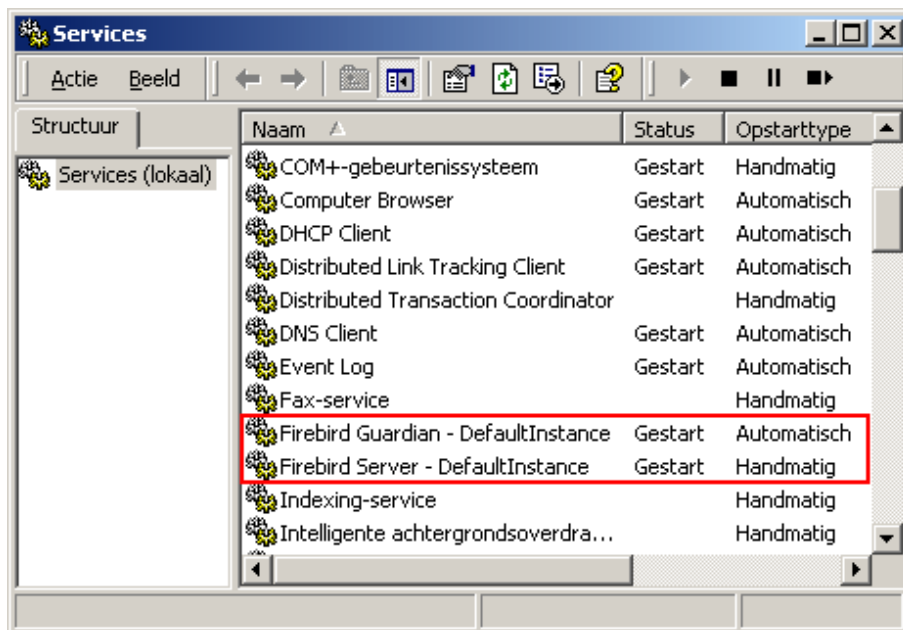
```
frodo:/inkomend/firebird # top -b -n1 | grep fb
2587 firebird 24 0 1232 1232 1028 S 0.0 0.3 0:00.00 fbguard
2588 firebird 15 0 4124 4120 2092 S 0.0 0.9 0:00.04 fbserver
2589 firebird 15 0 4124 4120 2092 S 0.0 0.9 0:00.00 fbserver
2604 firebird 15 0 4124 4120 2092 S 0.0 0.9 0:00.00 fbserver
2605 firebird 15 0 4124 4120 2092 S 0.0 0.9 0:00.02 fbserver
2606 firebird 15 0 4124 4120 2092 S 0.0 0.9 0:00.00 fbserver
2607 firebird 15 0 4124 4120 2092 S 0.0 0.9 0:00.00 fbserver
```

As an alternative to top, you can use **ps -ax** or **ps -aux** and pipe the output to grep.

Server check: Windows, running as service

Open Control Panel -> Services (NT) or Control Panel -> Administrative Tools -> Services (2000, XP).

This illustration shows the Services applet display on Windows 2000. The appearance may vary from one Windows server edition to another. Also, service names may vary with the Firebird version.



You should at least find the Firebird server in the services listing. The Guardian may or may not be running, depending on the choices you made during installation.

Server check: Windows, running as application

If Firebird is up and running as an application, it is represented by an icon in the system tray:

- A green and grey server symbol if controlled by the Guardian;
- A round yellow and black graphic if running standalone.

A flashing icon indicates that the server is in the process of starting up (or at least trying to do so). A red icon, or an icon with an overlying red stop sign, indicates that startup has failed.

One way to make 100% sure if the server is running or not is to press Ctrl-Alt-Del and look for the fbserver or fb_inet_server process (and possibly fbguard) in the task list.

On some occasions, you may need to start the Guardian or server once explicitly via the Start menu even if you opted for “Start Firebird now” at the end of the installation process. Sometimes a reboot is necessary.

If you're desperately trying to start Firebird and nothing seems to work, ask yourself if you've installed Firebird 2 Classic server with the Guardian option enabled (the installation program doesn't offer this possibility anymore, but there are other ways). As said before, the combination Classic + Guardian currently doesn't work if Firebird runs as an application. Uninstall Firebird if necessary and reinstall Classic *without* Guardian, or Superserver with or without Guardian.

You can shut the server down via the menu that appears if you right-click on the tray icon. Notice that this also makes the icon disappear; you can restart Firebird via the Start menu.

Note

Windows Classic Server launches a new process for every connection, so the number of `fb_inet_server` processes will always equal the number of client connections plus one. Shut-down via the tray icon menu only terminates the first process (the *listener*). Other processes, if present, will continue to function normally, each terminating when the client disconnects from the database. Of course, once the listener has been shut down, new connections can't be made.

In the case of Superserver you can also use a Control Panel applet to check and alter the Firebird server status. Some available applets will be presented a little later in this guide.

Performing a client-only install

Each remote client machine needs to have the client library – `libfbclient.so` on Posix clients, `fbclient.dll` on Windows clients – that matches the release version of the Firebird server.

Firebird versions from 1.5 onward can install symlinks or copies named after the 1.0 libs (with the “old” InterBase names), to maintain compatibility with third-party products which need these files.

Some extra pieces are also needed for the client-only install.

Windows

At present, no separate installation program is available to install only the client pieces on a Windows machine. If you are in the common situation of running Windows clients to a Linux or other Unix-like Firebird server (or another Windows machine), you need to download the full Windows installation kit that corresponds to the version of Firebird server you install on your server machine.

Fortunately, once you have the kit, the Windows client-only install is easy to do. Start up the installation program just as though you were going to install the server, but select one of the client-only options from the installation menu.

Linux and some other Posix clients

A small-footprint client install program for Linux clients is not available either. Additionally, some Posix flavours – even within the Linux constellation – have somewhat idiosyncratic requirements for filesystem locations. For these reasons, not all *x distributions for Firebird even contain a client-only install option.

For most Linux flavours, the following procedure is suggested for a Firebird client-only install. Log in as `root` for this.

1. Look for `libfbclient.so.2.m.n` (*m.n* being the minor plus patch version number) in `/opt/firebird/lib` on the server where Firebird server is installed. Copy it to `/usr/lib` on the client.
2. Create chained symlinks using the following commands:

```
ln -s /usr/lib/libfbclient.so.2.m.n /usr/lib/libfbclient.so.2
```

```
ln -s /usr/lib/libfbclient.so.2 /usr/lib/libfbclient.so
```

...replacing *2.m.n* with your version number, e.g. `2.0.0` or `2.1.0`

If you're running applications that expect the legacy libraries to be present, also create the following symlinks:

```
ln -s /usr/lib/libfbclient.so /usr/lib/libgds.so.0
```

```
ln -s /usr/lib/libfbclient.so /usr/lib/libgds.so
```

3. Copy the `firebird.msg` file to `/opt/firebird`
4. In the system-wide default shell profile, or using `setenv()` from a shell, create the `FIREBIRD` environment variable and point it to `/opt/firebird`, to enable the API routines to locate the messages.

Server configuration and management

There are several things you should be aware of – and take care of – before you start using your freshly installed Firebird server. This part of the manual introduces you to some useful tools and shows you how to protect your server and databases.

User management: gsec

Firebird comes with a command-line user management tool called *gsec*. Although its functions can also be performed by a number of third-party GUI utilities, you should at least have a basic knowledge of *gsec*, since this is the official tool and it's present in every Firebird server installation. In the next sections you will use *gsec* to execute two tasks: changing the SYSDBA password and adding a Firebird user. First though, some points of attention:

Permission to run gsec

With some Firebird installations, you can only run *gsec* if you are logged into the operating system as Superuser (`root` on Linux) or as the user the Firebird server process runs under. On Windows server platforms, you typically need to be in the Power User group or higher to run *gsec* successfully.

Trouble running gsec

If you have enough privileges but invoking *gsec* results in a message like “cannot attach to password database - unable to open database”:

- You may be running Firebird on Windows and for some reason the local protocol isn't working. You can circumvent this problem by “tricking” gsec into using TCP/IP. Add the following parameter to the command line, adjusting the path if necessary:

-database "localhost:C:\Program Files\Firebird\Firebird_2_0\security2.fdb"

The file `security2.fdb` is the *security database*, where Firebird keeps its user account details. It is located in your Firebird installation directory.

- Maybe your security database is a renamed `security.fdb` from Firebird 1.5. Of course this can't be the case immediately after installation. Someone (you?) must have put it there, in order to keep the existing accounts available. Consult the Release Notes for instructions on how to upgrade old security databases.

If the error message starts with “Cannot attach to services manager”, the server may not be running at all. In that case, go back to [Testing your installation](#) and fix the problem.

Calling gsec on Linux

On ***nix* systems, if you call gsec from its own directory, you should type `./gsec` instead of just `gsec`. The current directory is usually not part of the search path, so plain `gsec` may either fail or launch a “wrong” gsec.

Changing the SYSDBA password

One Firebird account is created automatically as part of the installation process: SYSDBA. This account has all the privileges on the server and cannot be deleted. Depending on version, OS, and architecture, the installation program will either

- install the SYSDBA user with the password `masterkey` (actually, `masterke`: characters after the eighth are ignored), or
- ask you to enter a password during installation, or
- generate a random password and store that in the file `SYSDBA.password` within your Firebird installation directory.

If the password is `masterkey` and your server is exposed to the Internet *at all* – or even to a local network, unless you trust every user with the SYSDBA password – you should change it immediately using the gsec command-line utility. Go to a command shell, `cd` to the Firebird `bin` subdirectory and issue the following command to change the password to (as an example) `icurry4me`:

gsec -user sysdba -pass masterkey -mo sysdba -pw icurry4me

Notice that you specify “sysdba” twice in the command:

- With the `-user` parameter you identify yourself as SYSDBA. You also provide SYSDBA's current password in the `-pass` parameter.
- The `-mo[diffy]` parameter tells gsec that you want to modify an account – which happens to be SYSDBA again. Lastly, `-pw` specifies the type of modification: the password.

If all has gone well, the new password `icurry4me` is now encrypted and stored, and `masterkey` is no longer valid. Please be aware that unlike Firebird user names, passwords are case-sensitive.

Adding Firebird user accounts

Firebird allows the creation of many different user accounts, each of which can own databases and also have various types of access to databases it doesn't own.

Using `gsec`, you can add a user account as follows from the command line in the Firebird `bin` subdirectory:

```
gsec -user sysdba -pass masterkey -add billyboy -pw sekret66
```

Provided that you've supplied the correct password for SYSDBA, a user account called `billyboy` will now have been created with password `sekrit66`. Remember that passwords are case-sensitive.

Note

Since Firebird 2, users can change their own passwords. Previous versions required SYSDBA to do this.

Security

Firebird 2 offers a number of security options, designed to make unauthorised access as difficult as possible. Be warned however that some configurable security features default to the old, “insecure” behaviour inherited from InterBase and Firebird 1.0, in order not to break existing applications.

It pays to familiarise yourself with Firebird's security-related configuration parameters. You can significantly enhance your system's security if you raise the protection level wherever possible. This is not only a matter of setting parameters, by the way: other measures involve tuning filesystem access permissions, an intelligent user accounts policy, etc.

Below are some guidelines for protecting your Firebird server and databases.

Run Firebird as non-system user

On Unix-like systems, Firebird already runs as user `firebird` by default, not as `root`. On Windows server platforms, you can also run the Firebird service under a designated user account (e.g. `Firebird`). The default practice – running the service as the `LocalSystem` user – poses a security risk if your system is connected to the Internet. Consult `README.instsvc` in the `doc` sub-dir to learn more about this.

Change SYSDBA's password

As discussed before, if your Firebird server is reachable from the network and the system password is `masterkey`, change it.

Don't create user databases as SYSDBA

SYSDBA is a very powerful account, with full (destructive) access rights to all your Firebird databases. Its password should be known to a few trusted database administrators only. Therefore, you shouldn't use this super-account to create and populate regular databases. Instead, generate normal user accounts, and provide their account names and passwords to your users as needed. You can do this with `gsec` as shown above, or with any third-party Firebird administration tool.

Protect databases on the filesystem level

Anybody who has filesystem-level read access to a database file can copy it, install it on a system under his or her own control, and extract all data from it – including possibly sensitive informa-

tion. Anybody who has filesystem-level write access to a database file can corrupt it or totally destroy it.

As a rule, only the Firebird server process should have access to the database files. Users don't need, and should not have, access to the files – not even read-only. They query databases via the server, which makes sure that users only get the allowed type of access (if at all) to any objects within the database.

An exception to this rule is the so-called local or embedded access mode of Firebird Classic Server on Linux. This mode *requires* that users have proper access rights to the database file itself. (Another exception is the Windows Embedded Server, but that one is outside the scope of this manual.)

Use database aliases

Database aliases shield the client from physical database locations. Using aliases, a client can e.g. connect to “frodo:zappa” without having to know that the real location is `frodo:/var/firebird/music/underground/mothers_of_invention.fdb`. Aliases also allow you to relocate databases while the clients keep using their existing connection strings.

Aliases are listed in the file `aliases.conf`, in this format on Windows machines:

```
poker = E:\Games\Data\PokerBase.fdb
blackjack.fdb = C:\Firebird\Databases\cardgames\blkjk_2.fdb
```

And on Linux:

```
books = /home/bookworm/database/books.fdb
zappa = /var/firebird/music/underground/mothers_of_invention.fdb
```

Giving the alias an `.fdb` (or any other) extension is fully optional. Of course if you do include it, you must also specify it when you use the alias to connect to the database.

Restrict database access

The `DatabaseAccess` parameter in `firebird.conf` can be set to `Restrict` to limit access to explicitly listed filesystem trees, or even to `None` to allow access to aliased databases only. Default is `All`, i.e. no restrictions.

Note that this is not the same thing as the filesystem-level access protection discussed earlier: when `DatabaseAccess` is anything other than `All`, the server will refuse to open any databases outside the defined scope even if it has sufficient rights on the database files.

There are more security parameters, but the ones not mentioned here are already set to an adequate protection level by default. You can read about them in the Release Notes (1.5 and 2.0; both are included with Firebird 2) and in the comments in `firebird.conf` itself.

Windows Control Panel applets

Several control panel applets are available for use with Firebird. Whilst such applets are not essential, they do provide a convenient way to start and stop the server and check its current status.

Firebird Server Manager

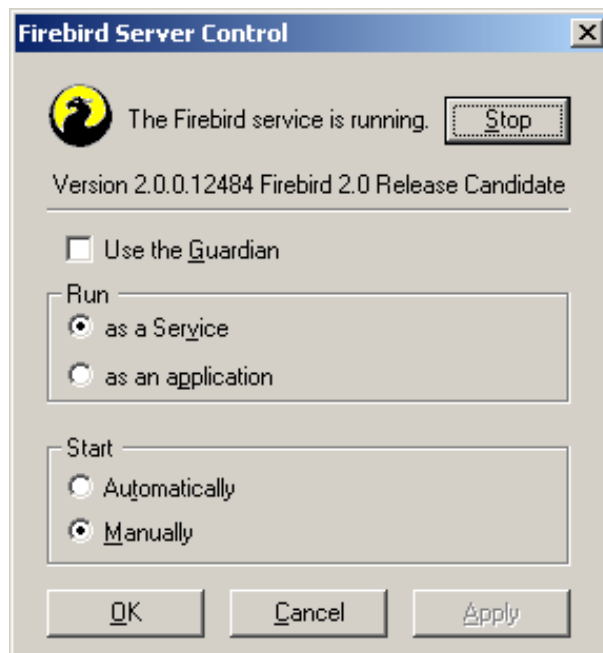
The Firebird Server Manager applet is included in the Firebird distribution. The option to install this applet is only available for Superserver.

Note

The applet is also usable for Classic server, provided that it (the server, that is) runs as a service, not as an application. Since the installation dialog won't give you the option to include the applet with a Classic server, you must, if you really want it:

- Install Superserver first;
- Copy the applet `Firebird2Control.cpl` from the Windows system folder to a safe place;
- Uninstall Superserver;
- Install Classic;
- Copy the applet back to the system directory.

This is a screenshot of the activated applet. Notice that the title bar says “Firebird Server Control”, although it is listed in the Control Panel as *Firebird 2.0 Server Manager*.



Unfortunately, the bundled applet only works on Windows NT, 2000/2003 and XP.

Firebird Control Center

If you want an applet that also works on Windows 9x or ME, visit this webpage:

<http://www.achim-kalwa.de/fbcc.phtml>

...and download the Firebird Control Center [fbcc-0.2.7.exe](#). Please note that, unlike the applet included with Firebird, the Firebird Control Center will *not* work with Classic servers at all.

The Control Center doesn't look anything like the Firebird applet shown in the screenshot, but offers the same functionality, and then some. Attention: if you run Firebird *as a service* and *without the Guardian*, the Start/Stop button will be labeled “Start” all the time, even when the server is already running. It functions as it should though. In all other configurations the button will say “Start” or “Stop” according to the situation.

Administration tools

The Firebird kit does not come with a GUI admin tool. It does have a set of command-line tools – executable programs which are located in the `bin` subdirectory of your Firebird installation. One of them, `gsec`, has already been introduced to you.

The range of excellent GUI tools available for use with a Windows client machine is too numerous to describe here. A few GUI tools written in Borland Kylix, for use on Linux client machines, are also in various stages of completion.

Inspect the [Downloads > Contributed > Administration Tools page](http://www.ibphoenix.com) at <http://www.ibphoenix.com> for all of the options.

Note

Remember: you can use a Windows client to access a Linux server and vice-versa.

Working with databases

In this part of the manual we'll show you:

- how to connect to an existing database;
- how to create a database;
- plus some things you should know about Firebird SQL.

In as much as remote connections are involved, we will use the recommended TCP/IP protocol.

Connection strings

If you want to connect to a database or create one, you have to supply (amongst other things) a *connection string* to the server.

Local connection strings

An explicit local connection string consists of the path + filename specification in the native format of the filesystem used on the server machine, for example

- on a Linux or other Unix-like server:

```
/opt/firebird/examples/empbuild/employee.fdb
```

- on a Windows server:

```
C:\Biology\Data\Primates\Apes\populations.fdb
```

Many clients also allow relative path strings (e.g. “`..\examples\empbuild\employee.fdb`”) but you should use them with caution, as it's not always obvious how they will be expanded. Getting

an error message is annoying enough, but applying changes to another database than you thought you were connected to may be disastrous.

Instead of a file path, the local connection string may also be a *database alias* that is defined in `aliases.conf`, as mentioned earlier. The format of the alias depends only on how it's defined in the aliases file, not on the server filesystem. Examples are:

- `zappa`
- `blackjack.fdb`
- `poker`

Tip

If your local connections fail, it may be because the local protocol isn't working properly on your machine. Finding out what causes this is beyond the scope of this starters' guide, but you can always work around it by putting `"localhost:"` before your database paths or aliases, thus turning them into TCP/IP connection strings (see below).

TCP/IP connection strings

A TCP/IP connection string consists of:

1. a server name or IP address
2. a colon (":")
3. either the absolute path + filename on the server machine, or an alias defined on the server machine.

Examples:

- On Linux/Unix:

```
pongo:/opt/firebird/examples/empbuild/employee.fdb
bongo:fury
112.179.0.1:/var/Firebird/databases/butterflies.fdb
localhost:blackjack.fdb
```

- On Windows:

```
siamang:C:\Biology\Data\Primates\Apes\populations.fdb
sofa:D:\Misc\Friends\Rich\Lenders.fdb
127.0.0.1:Borrowers
```

Notice how the aliased connection strings don't give any clue about the server OS. And they don't have to, either: you talk to a Linux Firebird server just like you talk to a Windows Firebird server. In fact, specifying an explicit database path is one of the rare occasions where you have to be aware of the difference.

Connecting to an existing database

A sample database named `employee.fdb` is located in the `examples/empbuild` subdirectory of your Firebird installation. You can use this database to “try your wings”.

If you move or copy the sample database, be sure to place it on a hard disk that is physically attached to your server machine. Shares, mapped drives or (on Unix) mounted SMB (Samba) filesystems will not work. The same rule applies to any databases that you create or use.

Connecting to a Firebird database requires the user to authenticate with a user name and a valid password. In order to work with objects inside the database – like tables, views, etc. – you also need explicit permissions on those objects, unless you own them (you own an object if you have created it) or if you're connected as `SYSDBA`. In the example database, sufficient permissions have been granted to `PUBLIC` (i.e. anybody who cares to connect) to enable you to view and modify data to your heart's content.

For simplicity here, we will look at authenticating as `SYSDBA` using the password `masterkey`. Also, in order to keep the connection strings short, we will only work with local databases in the examples. Of course everything you'll learn in these sections can also be applied to remote databases, simply by prepending the host name plus “:” to the connection string.

Connecting with isql

Firebird ships with a text-mode client named *isql* (Interactive SQL utility). You can use it in several ways to connect to a database. One of them, shown below, is to start it in its interactive mode. Go to the `bin` subdirectory of your Firebird installation and type **isql** (Windows) or **./isql** (Linux) at the command prompt.

[In the following examples, # means “hit **Enter**”]

```
C:\Program Files\Firebird\Firebird_2_0\bin>isql#
Use CONNECT or CREATE DATABASE to specify a database
SQL>CONNECT "C:\Program Files\Firebird\Firebird_2_0\examples\
        empbuild\employee.fdb"#           // on one line!
CON>user 'SYSDBA' password 'masterkey';#
```

Important

- In *isql*, every SQL statement must end with a semicolon. If you hit **Enter** and the line doesn't end with a semicolon, *isql* assumes that the statement continues on the next line and the prompt will change from `SQL>` to `CON>`. This enables you to split long statements over multiple lines. If you hit **Enter** after your statement and you've forgotten the semicolon, just type it after the `CON>` prompt on the next line and press **Enter** again.
- If you run Classic Server on Linux, a fast, direct local connection is attempted if the database path does not start with a hostname. This may fail if your Linux login doesn't have sufficient access rights to the database file. In that case, connect to `localhost:<path>`. Then the server process (with Firebird 2 usually running as user `firebird`) will open the file. On the other hand, network-style connections may fail if a user created the database in Classic local mode and the server doesn't have enough access rights.

Note

Although single-quote symbols are the “norm” for delimiting strings in Firebird, double-quote symbols were used with the database path string in the above example. This is sometimes necessary with some of the command-line utilities where the path string contains spaces. Single quotes should work for paths that do not contain spaces.

The quotes around “SYSDBA” and “masterkey” are optional, by the way. Database paths without spaces also don't need quotes.

At this point, isql will inform you that you are connected:

```
DATABASE "C:\Program Files\Firebird\Firebird_2_0\examples\empbuild
\employee.fdb", User: sysdba
SQL>
```

You can now continue to play about with the `employee.fdb` database. With `isql` you can query data, get information about the metadata, create database objects, run data definition scripts and much more.

To get back to the command prompt, type:

```
SQL>QUIT;#
```

You can also type `EXIT` instead of `QUIT`, the difference being that `EXIT` will first commit any open transactions, making your modifications permanent.

Connecting with a GUI client

GUI client tools usually take charge of composing the `CONNECT` string for you, using server, path (or alias), user name and password information that you type into prompting fields. Use the elements as described in the preceding topic.

Notes

- It is quite common for such tools to expect the entire server + path/alias as a single connection string – just like `isql` does.
- Remember that file names and commands on Linux and other “Unix-ish” platforms are case-sensitive.

Creating a database using isql

There is more than one way to create a database with `isql`. Here, we will look at one simple way to create a database interactively – although, for your serious database definition work, you should create and maintain your metadata objects using data definition scripts.

Starting isql

To create a database interactively using the `isql` command shell, get to a command prompt in Firebird's `bin` subdirectory and type **isql** (Windows) or **./isql** (Linux):

```
C:\Program Files\Firebird\Firebird_2_0\bin>isql#
Use CONNECT or CREATE DATABASE to specify a database
```

The CREATE DATABASE statement

Now you can create your new database interactively. Let's suppose that you want to create a database named `test.fdb` and store it in a directory named `data` on your D drive:

```
SQL>CREATE DATABASE 'D:\data\test.fdb' page_size 8192#
CON>user 'SYSDBA' password 'masterkey';#
```

Important

- In the `CREATE DATABASE` statement the quotes around path string, username, and password are *mandatory*. This is different from the `CONNECT` statement.
- If you run Classic Server on Linux and you don't start the database path with a hostname, creation of the database file is attempted with your Linux login as the owner. This may or may not be what you want (think of access rights if you want others to be able to connect). If you prepend `localhost:` to the path, the server process (with Firebird 2 usually running as user `firebird`) will create and own the file.

The database will be created and, after a few moments, the SQL prompt will reappear. You are now connected to the new database and can proceed to create some test objects in it.

But to verify that there really is a database there, let's first type in this query:

```
SQL>SELECT * FROM RDB$RELATIONS;#
```

Although you haven't created any tables yet, the screen will fill up with a large amount of data! This query selects all of the rows in the system table `RDB$RELATIONS`, where Firebird stores the metadata for tables. An “empty” database is not really empty: it contains a number of system tables and other objects. The system tables will grow as you add more user objects to your database.

To get back to the command prompt type `QUIT` or `EXIT`, as explained in the section on connecting.

Firebird SQL

Every database management system has its own idiosyncrasies in the ways it implements SQL. Firebird adheres to the SQL standard more rigorously than most other RDBMSes. Developers migrating from products that are less standards-compliant often wrongly suppose that Firebird is quirky, where-as many of its apparent quirks are not quirky at all.

Division of an integer by an integer

Firebird accords with the SQL standard by truncating the result (quotient) of an integer/integer calculation to the next lower integer. This can have bizarre results unless you are aware of it.

For example, this calculation is correct in SQL:

$$1 / 3 = 0$$

If you are upgrading from an RDBMS which resolves integer/integer division to a float quotient, you will need to alter any affected expressions to use a float or scaled numeric type for either dividend, divisor, or both.

For example, the calculation above could be modified thus in order to produce a non-zero result:

```
1.000 / 3 = 0.333
```

Things to know about strings

String delimiter symbol

Strings in Firebird are delimited by a pair of single quote (apostrophe) symbols: 'I am a string' (ASCII code 39, *not* 96). If you used earlier versions of Firebird's relative, InterBase®, you might recall that double and single quotes were interchangeable as string delimiters. Double quotes cannot be used as string delimiters in Firebird SQL statements.

Apostrophes in strings

If you need to use an apostrophe inside a Firebird string, you can “escape” the apostrophe character by preceding it with another apostrophe.

For example, this string will give an error:

```
'Joe's Emporium'
```

because the parser encounters the apostrophe and interprets the string as 'Joe' followed by some unknown keywords. To make it a legal string, double the apostrophe character:

```
'Joe''s Emporium'
```

Notice that this is TWO single quotes, not one double-quote.

Concatenation of strings

The concatenation symbol in SQL is two “pipe” symbols (ASCII 124, in a pair with no space between). In SQL, the “+” symbol is an arithmetic operator and it will cause an error if you attempt to use it for concatenating strings. The following expression prefixes a character column value with the string “Reported by: ”:

```
'Reported by: ' || LastName
```

Take care with concatenations. Be aware that Firebird will raise an error if your expression attempts to concatenate two or more char or varchar columns whose potential combined lengths would exceed the maximum length limit for a char or a varchar (32 Kb).

See also the note below, [Expressions involving NULL](#), about concatenating in expressions involving NULL.

Double-quoted identifiers

Before the SQL-92 standard, it was not legal to have object names (identifiers) in a database that duplicated keywords in the language, were case-sensitive or contained spaces. SQL-92 introduced a single new standard to make any of them legal, provided that the identifiers were defined within pairs of double-quote symbols (ASCII 34) and were always referred to using double-quote delimiters.

The purpose of this “gift” was to make it easier to migrate metadata from non-standard RDBMSes to standards-compliant ones. The down-side is that, if you choose to define an identifier in double quotes, its case-sensitivity and the enforced double-quoting will remain mandatory.

Firebird does permit a slight relaxation under a very limited set of conditions. If the identifier which was defined in double-quotes:

1. was defined as all upper-case,
2. is not a keyword, and
3. does not contain any spaces,

...then it can be used in SQL unquoted and case-insensitively. (But as soon as you put double-quotes around it, you must match the case again!)

Warning

Don't get too smart with this! For instance, if you have tables "TESTTABLE" and "TestTable", both defined within double-quotes, and you issue the command:

```
SQL>select * from TestTable;
```

...you will get the records from "TESTTABLE", not "TestTable"!

Unless you have a compelling reason to define quoted identifiers, it is usually recommended that you avoid them. Firebird happily accepts a mix of quoted and unquoted identifiers – so there is no problem including that keyword which you inherited from a legacy database, if you need to.

Warning

Some database admin tools enforce double-quoting of *all* identifiers by default. Try to choose a tool which makes double-quoting optional.

Expressions involving NULL

In SQL, NULL is not a value. It is a condition, or *state*, of a data item, in which its value is unknown. Because it is unknown, NULL cannot behave like a value. When you try to perform arithmetic on NULL, or involve it with values in other expressions, the result of the operation will almost always be NULL. It is not zero or blank or an “empty string” and it does not behave like any of these values.

Below are some examples of the types of surprises you will get if you try to perform calculations and comparisons with NULL.

The following expressions all return NULL:

- `1 + 2 + 3 + NULL`
- `not (NULL)`
- `'Home ' || 'sweet ' || NULL`

You might have expected 6 from the first expression and “Home sweet” from the third, but as we just said, NULL is not like the number 0 or an empty string – it's far more destructive!

The following expression:

- `FirstName || ' ' || LastName`

will return NULL if either `FirstName` or `LastName` is NULL. Otherwise it will nicely concatenate the two names with a space in between – even if any one of the variables is an empty string.

Tip

Think of NULL as UNKNOWN and all these strange results suddenly start to make sense! If the value of `Number` is unknown, the outcome of `'1 + 2 + 3 + Number'` is also unknown (and therefore NULL). If the content of `MyString` is unknown, then so is `'MyString || YourString'` (even if `YourString` is non-NULL). Etcetera.

Now let's examine some PSQL (Procedural SQL) examples with `if`-constructs:

- ```
if (a = b) then
 MyVariable = 'Equal';
else
 MyVariable = 'Not equal';
```

After executing this code, `MyVariable` will be `'Not equal'` if both `a` and `b` are NULL. The reason is that `'a = b'` yields NULL if at least one of them is NULL. If the test expression of an “if” statement is NULL, it behaves like false: the `'then'` block is skipped, and the `'else'` block executed.

**Warning**

Although the expression may *behave* like false in this case, it's still NULL. If you try to invert it using `not ( )`, what you get is another NULL – not “true”.

- ```
if (a <> b) then
  MyVariable = 'Not equal';
else
  MyVariable = 'Equal';
```

Here, `MyVariable` will be `'Equal'` if `a` is NULL and `b` isn't, or vice versa. The explanation is analogous to that of the previous example.

The DISTINCT keyword comes to the rescue!

Firebird 2 implements a new use of the `DISTINCT` keyword allowing you to perform (in)equality tests that take NULL into account. Its semantics are as follows:

- Two expressions are `DISTINCT` if they have different values, or if one is NULL and the other isn't;
- They are `NOT DISTINCT` if they have the same value, or if they are both NULL.

Notice that if neither operand is NULL, `DISTINCT` works exactly like the “<>” operator, and `NOT DISTINCT` like the “=” operator.

[NOT] `DISTINCT` always returns `true` or `false`, never NULL.

Using `DISTINCT`, you can rewrite the first PSQL example as follows:

- ```
if (a is not distinct from b) then
 MyVariable = 'Equal';
else
 MyVariable = 'Not equal';
```



And the second as:

```
if (a is distinct from b) then
 MyVariable = 'Not equal';
else
 MyVariable = 'Equal';
```

These versions will give you the results that a normal human being (untouched by SQL standards) would expect, whether there are NULLs involved or not.

### **More about NULLS**

A lot more information about NULL behaviour can be found in the *Firebird Null Guide*, at these locations:

<http://www.firebirdsql.org/manual/nullguide.html> (HTML)

<http://www.firebirdsql.org/pdfmanual/Firebird-Null-Guide.pdf> (PDF)

#### **Note**

At the time of this writing, the *Firebird Null Guide* is being extended and brought up to date with Firebird 2. The new version will probably be available in August or September 2006.

## **Preventing data loss**

### **Backup**

Firebird comes with two utilities for backing up and restoring your databases: *gbak* and *nbackup*. Both can be found in the `bin` subdirectory of your Firebird installation. Firebird databases can be backed up whilst users are connected to the system and going about their normal work. The backup will be taken from a snapshot of the database state at the time the backup began.

Regular backups and occasional restores should be a scheduled part of your database management activity.

#### **Warning**

Except in *nbackup* lock mode, do not use external proprietary backup utilities or file-copying tools such as WinZip, tar, copy, xcopy, etc., on a database which is running. Not only will the backup be unreliable, but the disk-level blocking used by these tools can corrupt a running database.

#### **Important**

Study the warnings in the next section about database activity during restores!

More information about *gbak* can be found in *The Firebird Book*, the *Using Firebird* guide (a not-so-recent version is available through IBPhoenix, an updated version will be published later on the Firebird site), or in the InterBase 6.0 manuals combined with the Firebird 1.5 and 2.0 Release Notes.

See the links to these resources in [How to get help](#).

The nbackup manual is here (HTML and PDF version, same content):

<http://www.firebirdsql.org/manual/nbackup.html>

<http://www.firebirdsql.org/pdfmanual/Firebird-nbackup.pdf>

## ***How to corrupt a database***

The following sections comprise a summary of things *not* to do if you want to keep your Firebird databases healthy.

### **Modifying metadata tables yourself**

Firebird stores and maintains all of the metadata for its own and your user-defined objects in special tables, called *system tables*, right in the database itself. The identifiers for these system tables, their columns and several other types of system objects begin with the characters RDB\$.

Because these are ordinary database objects, they can be queried and manipulated just like your user-defined objects. However, just because you can does not say you should. The Firebird engine implements a high-level subset of SQL (DDL) for the purpose of defining and operating on metadata objects, typically through CREATE, ALTER and DROP statements.

It cannot be recommended too strongly that you use DDL – not direct SQL operations on the system tables – whenever you need to alter or remove metadata. Defer the “hot fix” stuff until your skills in SQL and your knowledge of the Firebird engine become very advanced. A wrecked database is neither pretty to behold nor cheap to repair.

### **Disabling forced writes on Windows**

Firebird is installed with forced writes (synchronous writes) enabled by default. Changed and new data are written to disk immediately upon posting.

It is possible to configure a database to use asynchronous data writes – whereby modified or new data are held in the memory cache for periodic flushing to disk by the operating system's I/O subsystem. The common term for this configuration is *forced writes off* (or *disabled*). It is sometimes resorted to in order to improve performance during large batch operations.

The big warning here is: do *not* disable forced writes on a Windows server. It has been observed that the Windows server platforms do not flush the write cache until the Firebird service is shut down. Apart from power interruptions, there is just too much that can go wrong on a Windows server. If it should hang, the I/O system goes out of reach and your users' work will be lost in the process of re-booting.

#### **Note**

Windows 9x and ME do not support deferred data writes

### Disabling Forced Writes on a Linux server

Linux servers are safer for running an operation with forced writes disabled temporarily. Still, do not leave it disabled once your large batch task is completed, unless you have a very robust fall-back power system.

## Restoring a backup to a running database

One of the restore options in the gbak utility (`gbak -rep[lace_database]`) allows you to restore a gbak file over the top of an existing database. It is possible for this style of restore to proceed without warning while users are logged in to the database. Database corruption is almost certain to be the result.

### Note

Notice that the shortest form of this command is `gbak -rep`, not `gbak -r` as it used to be in previous Firebird versions. What happened to `gbak -r`? It is now short for `gbak -recreate_database` and it will throw an error if the specified database already exists (unless you've also added the `overwrite` keyword).

These changes have been made because many users thought that the `-r` switch meant *restore* instead of *replace* – and only found out when it was too late.

### Warning

Be aware that you will need to design your admin tools and procedures to prevent any possibility for any user (including SYSDBA) to restore to your active database if any users are logged in.

If is practicable to do so, it is recommended to restore to spare disk space using the `gbak -c[reate]` option and test the restored database using `isql` or your preferred admin tool. If the restored database is good, shut down the server. Make a filesystem copy of the old database and then copy the restored database file (or files) over their existing counterparts.

## Allowing users to log in during a restore

If you do not block access to users while performing a restore using `gbak -rep[lace_database]` then users may be able to log in and attempt to do operations on data. Corrupted structures will result.

## How to get help

The community of willing helpers around Firebird goes a long way back, to many years before the source code for its ancestor, InterBase® 6, was made open source. Collectively, the Firebird community does have all the answers! It even includes some people who have been involved with it since it was a design on a drawing board in a bathroom in Boston.

- Visit the official Firebird Project site at <http://www.firebirdsql.org> and join the user support lists, in particular `firebird-support`. Look at <http://www.firebirdsql.org/index.php?op=lists> for instructions.
- Visit the Firebird knowledge site at <http://www.ibphoenix.com> to look up a vast collection of information about developing with and using Firebird. IBPhoenix also sells a Developer CD with the Firebird binaries and lots of documentation.
- See the growing list of documentation that has been produced within the Firebird project itself at <http://www.firebirdsql.org/manual/>.
- Order the official Firebird Book at [http://www.ibphoenix.com/main.nfs?a=ibphoenix&s=1093098777:149734&page=ibp\\_firebird\\_book](http://www.ibphoenix.com/main.nfs?a=ibphoenix&s=1093098777:149734&page=ibp_firebird_book), for more than 1100 pages jam-packed with Firebird information.
- As a last resort – since our documentation is still incomplete – you can consult the InterBase 6.0 beta manuals (the files whose names start with 60 at <http://www.ibphoenix.com/downloads/>) in combination with the Firebird 1.5 and 2.0 Release Notes.

### Note

The IBPhoenix publications *Using Firebird* and *The Firebird Reference Guide*, though still on the Developer CD, are no longer actively maintained. However, most of the material contained in those documents will be brought up to date and added to the official project documentation.

## The Firebird Project

The developers, designers and testers who gave you Firebird and several of the drivers are members of the Firebird open source project at SourceForge, that amazing virtual community that is home to thousands of open source software teams. The Firebird project's address there is <http://sourceforge.net/projects/firebird>. At that site are the source code tree, the bug tracker and a number of technical files which can be downloaded for various purposes related to the development and testing of the codebases.

The Firebird Project developers and testers use an email list forum – `firebird-devel@lists.sourceforge.net` – as their “virtual laboratory” for communicating with one another about their work on enhancements, bug-fixing and producing new versions of Firebird.

Anyone who is interested in watching their progress can join this forum. However, user support questions are a distraction which they do not welcome. Please do not try to post your user support questions there! These belong in the `firebird-support` group.

Happy Firebirding!

## Document History

The exact file history is recorded in the manual module in our CVS tree; see [http://sourceforge.net/cvs/?group\\_id=9028](http://sourceforge.net/cvs/?group_id=9028)

### Revision History

|       |             |     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------|-------------|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0.0   | 2002        | IBP | Published as Chapter One of <i>Using Firebird</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1.0   | 2003        | IBP | Published separately as a free Quick Start Guide.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 1.x   | June 2004   | IBP | Donated to Firebird Project by IBPhoenix.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 2.0   | 27 Aug 2004 | PV  | Upgraded to Firebird 1.5<br>Added Classic vs. Superserver section.<br>Reorganised and corrected Disk Locations Table.<br>Added (new) screenshots.<br>Added section on security.<br>Updated and completed information on Control Panel applets.<br>Added more examples to “Expressions involving NULL”.<br>Various other corrections and additions.                                                                                           |
| 2.1   | 20 Feb 2005 | PV  | Enhanced GSEC section.<br>Added more info to CONNECT and CREATE DATABASE sections.<br>Added version number and document history.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 2.1.1 | 1 Mar 2005  | PV  | Changed <code>gbak r[estore]</code> to <code>r[eplace]</code> in two places.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 2.1.2 | 8 Apr 2005  | PV  | Reordered Firebird SQL subsections.<br>Added links to Firebird Null Guide.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 2.2   | 2 Dec 2005  | PV  | Removed "Using the books by IBPhoenix" as it doesn't make sense in the QSG.<br>Promoted "How to get help" to 1st-level section and removed "Where to next" shell.<br>Removed link to UFB and RefGuide; added a note instead explaining their current status.<br>Updated/corrected classic-super comparison table.<br>Moved a number of sections on installing, working with databases, and (un)safety into newly created top-level sections. |
| 2.2.1 | 22 Dec 2005 | PV  | Corrected statement on SS thread usage in Classic-vs-Superserver table.<br>Fixed broken link.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 3.0   | 21 May 2006 | PV  | Creation of 2.0 Quick Start Guide, still equal to previous revision except for some version numbers, XML ids etc.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 3.2   | 10 Aug 2006 | PV  | Updated references to website ( <code>firebird.sourceforge.net</code> -> <code>www.firebirdsql.org</code> ).<br>Removed “maturity” and “Service Manager” rows from                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

Classic-vs-Super table; these things are no longer different in Firebird 2. Also changed the row on local connections: CS and SS now both allow safe, reliable local connections on Windows. Added row on Guardian. Prepend a column with feature names.

Removed notes stating that Classic/Win connections will fail without a host name.

Updated location table and inserted rows for documentation.

Removed “if-you-do-not-find-the-release-notes” tip.

Corrected more version numbers, paths, and stuff.

Added a section on gsec.

Enhanced the *Security* section.

Added a section on connection strings.

Changed gbak -r syntax to -rep and added explanatory note.

Changed *Backup* section because we now also have nbackup.

Added the “IB6 plus rlsnotes” option to *How to get help*.

Changed the “an empty database is not empty” paragraph.

Added DISTINCT info to the section on NULLS.

...and much more, to be listed later...

## License notice

The contents of this Documentation are subject to the Public Documentation License Version 1.0 (the “License”); you may only use this Documentation if you comply with the terms of this License. Copies of the License are available at <http://www.firebirdsql.org/pdfmanual/pdl.pdf> (PDF) and <http://www.firebirdsql.org/manual/pdl.html> (HTML).

The Original Documentation is titled *Firebird Quick Start Guide*.

The Initial Writer of the Original Documentation is: IBPhoenix Editors.

Copyright (C) 2002-2004. All Rights Reserved. Initial Writer contact: hborrie at ibphoenix dot com.

Contributor: Paul Vinkenoog - see [document history](#).

Portions created by Paul Vinkenoog are Copyright (C) 2004-2006. All Rights Reserved. Contributor contact: paul at vinkenoog dot nl.

---

# Alphabetical index

## A

- Admin tools, 17
- Aliases, 15, 18, 18
- Apostrophes in strings, 22

## B

- Backup, 25
- Books
  - The Firebird Book, 28

## C

- Checking the server, 9
- Classic Server, 3
- Configuration, 12
- Connecting, 19
  - CONNECT statement, 19
  - connection strings, 17
- Control Panel applets, 15
- CREATE DATABASE statement, 21

## D

- Databases
  - aliases, 15, 18, 18
  - backup and restore, 25, 27, 27
  - connecting, 19
    - with a GUI client, 20
    - with isql, 19
  - corruption, 26
  - creating with isql, 20
  - example database, 19
  - metadata, 26
  - security, 14
  - system tables, 26
  - working with databases, 17
- Disk locations, 5
- Document history, 29
- Documentation, 28
- Double-quoted identifiers, 22

## E

- Example database, 19

## F

- Firebird Book, 28
- Firebird Guardian, 7
- Firebird project, 28
- Firebird SQL, 21
- Forced writes, 26

## G

- gsec, 12
- Guardian, 7, 9

## H

- Help, 28

## I

- Installation, 7
  - Classic or Superserver, 3
  - client-only, 11
  - drives, 7
  - kit contents, 3
  - script or program, 7
  - server, 7
- Integer division, 21
- isql
  - connecting to a database, 19
  - creating a database, 20

## L

- License notice, 31

## M

- Management, 12

## N

- NULL, 23

## P

- Passwords
  - changing, 13
- Ping, 9
- Project, 28

## R

- Restore, 25
  - to a running database, 27
  - user logins during restore, 27

## S

- Sample database, 19
- Security, 14
- Server name and path, 18
- Services (Windows), 10
- SQL, 21
  - CONNECT statement, 19
  - CREATE DATABASE statement, 21
- Strings, 22
  - apostrophes in strings, 22
  - concatenation, 22
  - delimiter symbol, 22
- Superserver, 3
- SYSDBA, 13, 14, 14



System tables, 26

## **T**

TCP/IP, 18

Testing, 8

top command (Linux), 9