

What is an ASCII File?

Information is held on your computer in FILES. Most computer files contain text plus extra information, such as codes which tell the printer how to print the document (fonts to use, margins, etc.) or which tell the screen how to display the data in the file.

If you were to look at a file like this using a text editor such as Windows™ Notepad, you would see a mass of unreadable “control” characters: this is the extra information described above.

An ASCII file, on the other hand, is a file which contains text ONLY. So if you look at an ASCII file using Windows™ Notepad you will see that all the characters are completely readable.

For our purposes, the ASCII file contains payment details, arranged in lines. Each line is a single RECORD.

These records comprise details of:

- individuals or companies
- payments you want to make to them
- account details.

Each item of information (such as a Bank Account Number) is called a FIELD.

Why do we need a copy of your ASCII File?

We need a copy of the ASCII file created by your application software so that we can check it thoroughly. This will ensure that everything goes smoothly on installation day.

This also lets you find out how to produce the file, as you will need to go through the same process every time you want to make payments using BACSActive-IP.

What to do with the ASCII File

Please Note

If you are using more than one application software package, you MUST create an ASCII file from each of them, as even products from the same software supplier can produce different file formats.

When you have created the file(s):

1 One file for each type of transaction
i.e. Payroll/ Purchase Ledger/Expenses

2 Then send the sample files to us at:
BACSActive-IP Admin
customerservices@accountis.com
Minimum of 10 lines of data per file

If we find any problems with the file(s) you send us, we will tell you what the problem is and ask you to send us a new file. We will repeat this process until we (and you) are happy that you can produce a usable file.

Guidance Notes

1 Compulsory Fields

You MUST include these fields in your file. **They can be in any order** but they must have the lengths shown:

Field	Length
Bank SORT CODE	6 or 8

Bank ACCOUNT NUMBER	Exactly 8
Bank ACCOUNT NAME	Max. 18
AMOUNT	Max. 11
REFERENCE (*see below*)	Max. 18

*You MUST include the REFERENCE/Roll Number field if you are making payments to some **Building Society Accounts***.

If you are crediting older **Building Societies**, the Bank details refer to the *Building Society's* bank account. This field then contains the individual's Roll Number or Share Account number. Newer Building Society accounts operate in the same way as a Standard Bank Account, and do not require a Roll Number.

If you are not paying into a Building Society Account the REFERENCE field is optional, the recipient will see what is created in this field on their bank statement.

2 File Format

Each record in an ASCII file appears in a single line. There are essentially two ways in which the records can be formatted: **Fixed length**

This means that the fields in each record start at the same position in the line every time the file is created.

If a field is not completely filled in, spaces are inserted after the data to keep the position of the next field consistent.

The resulting file has the data arranged in columns. See the example on the next page.

We recommend this format as it is the easiest to create and maintain.

Comma separated or Comma delimited

This means that the fields in each record are separated by a special character, usually a comma. When you create the file you may be asked to specify the character to be used.

See the example below.

3 File Contents

Your ASCII file should consist of text lines containing the details of each payment you are going to make/collect - *nothing else*.

Examples of File Formats

In the examples below, the first field contains the **Sort Code**, the second the **Bank Account Number**, the third is the **Bank Account Name**, fourth is the **Amount**, and the fifth field is **Reference (Optional)**.

The second record is a payment to a *Building Society* account, so the **Reference** contains the individual's Roll Number.

These are **Fixed Length** records:

09-81-23	08765432	J W BLOGGS	238.02	WEEKLY PAY
02-44-55	15862413	A B SMITH	1056.84	SMI89542
07-99-30	04958671	C E BROWN LIMITED	2900.00	

Notice that the data is arranged in columns.

Here are some examples of **Comma Delimited** records:

09-81-23,08765432,J W BLOGGS,238.02,WEEKLY PAY
02-44-55,15862413,A B SMITH,1056.84,SMI89542
07-99-30,04958671,C E BROWN LIMITED,2900.00,

And Finally...

- If your application software can't produce a file like this, or if you are having difficulty producing one, please contact your Software Distributor or Technical Support department.

WARNING – IT IS THE CUSTOMERS RESPONSIBILITY TO ALWAYS CHECK THAT THE DATA BEING SENT TO BACS LTD IS CORRECT.