



# INTERFACE DESIGN MANUAL

Ultra HAL Assistant 5 & 6

*Created by Sean Elias*



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## INTRODUCTION

This manual is created for people that like to design their own **Ultra HAL Assistant** Interface skin. It will explain in a few simple steps how the interface works and how you can start creating your own skin. The tools you could use and how to save and use the interface or even distribute it to the Zabaware website for others to download?

Before you continue you need to know that all these steps should work for all the latest versions of Ultra HAL Assistant, version 5 and 6 aswell as the Free versions. So no matter what version you use, you can always use this manual to create your own interface. This manual does however assume that you do have some basic knowledge in graphics design and know how to do simple editing tasks!



MANUAL



STOP



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## CONTACT ME

This manual was created in PowerPoint Pro 2003 by **Sean Elias**

If you have any questions regarding this manual or about creating interfaces for Ultra HAL Assistant, or have a personal design request, feel free to contact me. More of my own designs can be found at the official [Zabaware.com](http://Zabaware.com) website Plug-ins page, where I also offer my own interfaces for free download ...

Thank you for using this manual,

[sean@icomsec.com](mailto:sean@icomsec.com)





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## DISTRIBUTION

So your interface is finally ready and working and you feel like others would like to use it too. Now how do you distribute the interface and offer it for download? First make sure that you gather all the files of your interface and use a Zip or Rar program to pack it as one .zip or .rar file! Don't forget to include a little installation readme file so others know exactly where to unpack and put all the files.

To submit your 'packed' interface to Zabaware, please fill out the form on their page from the link below. It will then be reviewed, approved and published by them within 72 hours. If you need Zabaware to host your file, please upload it as an attachment on their [file sharing forum](#) first and when you have done that, use that forum URL as the file location for your 'zipped' interface.

<http://www.ultrahal.com/files/submit.asp>





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## SKIN TUTORIAL 1/2

So you have a working Ultra HAL Assistant and would like to create your own interface skin. Let us first take a look at some basics of what you need to know about Ultra HAL Assistant skins.

A skin consist out of **1 UHP file** (text) that has all the settings and coordinates of the interface and buttons. And a main interface screen image with 4 buttons. These buttons are for the “**Close**”, “**Minimize**”, “**Mic**” and “**Menu**” actions in the interface, during a chat with the bot. Than there are the input and output fields. Although recommended for usability these buttons are all optional as you can make the interface look all the way you like.

These are the main files you need to create to have a basic working interface. The UHP file goes into the main “**Ultra HAL Assistant**” directory and all the images go in the “**Ultra HAL Assistant/Skins**” directory.



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## THE TOOLS

To create your own interface you need a few tools, of which some are free and others are commercial applications. I leave it up to you which graphics editing program you prefer or have, as they all will work. But for this manual you should know that I use [Paintshop Pro 9](#) myself!

Here is a list of the 4 main tools you will need or could use:

Windows free **NotePad.exe** for editing and creating the UHP files. And to write your own little installation readme file for if you want to distribute your interface to Zabaware. Any graphical editing program you have or can get, but preferably something like, **Paintshop Pro** or **Photoshop**. With these programs you create the buttons aswell as the main interface and agent logo.

[MakeTran.exe](#) a free utility to make parts of your skin transparent! And last but not least **WinZip** or **WinRar** to pack your interface files, for distribution only!





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## SKIN TUTORIAL 2/2

Now create an empty directory, somewhere on your hard drive, and in there create a new text file, called “**Skin\_Name.UHP**”. For easy work, put all the new interface files in this new directory! Next create another new text file called, “**installation.txt**”. In this text file you can write a little info about the interface and the steps to unpack and copy all the files to the proper directories, as described before. Make it clear and simple. With this manual I have included an empty test.UHP you could copy that UHP file to the new directory, rename and use that one for your own by altering the text inside! More on this later ...

If you also want to add a Character or MS Agent logo image, include this in the final packed distribution file. This image should be placed in the “**/Ultra HAL Assistant/Chars/**” directory. A good size is **160x160** and you point to it from the UHP file! When people select your Character they will see this logo. Note that when they select your Skin, the program will automatically show a thumbed version of your interface so you don't need to create a logo for that!







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## THE INTERFACE 1/2

Now on to the best part. The creation of the interface and all images. First decide the size of the entire interface. Although any size should work, yes even full screen, it is recommended to keep the overall size **under 640x480**. This to keep the interface running smooth and fast enough as larger sizes could slow down the program tremendously. Now you have a size decide if you want to work with a light or darker skin and according set the background of your new (**jpg**) image to either white or black, or for the more advanced users even try the transparent background.

Now you know that you need 1 main screen image and 4 buttons. Think about a good layout and don't worry about the buttons yet! When you have created a new blanco image with the size of your interface, save this file in the new directory as "**interface.jpg**" or any proper name that works for you. What you have now is the template!



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## THE INTERFACE 2/2

Now you have a blanco template with the overall size of your interface, it's time for the real work! Before you continue you need to decide if you want to use an Agent Character or not and where to place all the buttons. If you want to include an agent, the default starting size is **160x160** but any size could do. Keep this size in mind while creating the interface as you will have to place the agent fitting in the interface layout ofcourse!

Now create the entire interface as you would like it, including all the buttons and input and output fields, all just as **1 image!** We will worry about the loose buttons and UHP file coordinates later! So first spent your best on the design and make something that will be easy of use! As an extra tip: work a lot with layers as these can place items on top or around items and have extra effects. Make sure that the buttons on the interface look clear and are understandable in what they stand for. You could make this interface totally yours! There are also lots of online interface design tutorials for extra help and effects.





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## THE UHP FILE 1/3

So you have created a nice looking interface and saved it as “**interface.jpg**” or transparent “**skin.bmp**” but what’s next? You need to have loose images of the 4 buttons too. And you need to remember the coordinates as you need these in the UHP file. Complicated?

The simple main trick is to understand X and Y mouse positions of your graphics editing program. Open the (renamed) test.UHP text file and start by filling out the name and size and font size of your interface. Now open your interface image in your editing program and use the “rectangle” crop selection tool. Start with each button by selecting a good button-size selection around the button on the image. If you do this you can see the X and Y coordinates, what is important to note down is the Y position that should be the same for all the buttons to make them pair and fit on the same height, and the X position is where the button selection (image) starts.



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## THE UHP FILE 2/3

Now all you need to remember for each button are the X and Y positions and the width and height size of the entire crop selection. When you have made a selection, go to the UHP file and for each button fill in these values. After you filled the values for each button, just return to the editing program and activate the crop. Save the button images as “**close.jpg**”, “**min.jpg**”, “**mic.jpg**” and “**menu.jpg**”, or give any proper name. Point to their names in the UHP file.

For each button you shall have to reopen the interface image, but eventually you end up with 1 interface.jpg and those 4 button images. You have filled in the coordinates in the UHP file and and maybe even created a nice Agent Character logo. All files should be put in that new directory you created.

The images of the buttons are exactly like on the main interface image and could be placed as loose files, all fitting with the coordinates!



**MORE ...**



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## THE UHP FILE 3/3

As for the optional Agent Character and input and output fields, just work the same as with the buttons. Only for this you don't need a loose file, only the coordinates of the X and Y and width and height. With or without the character you now have all the files and are ready to test! Copy all the images and the UHP to the correct directories of your Ultra HAL Assistant. Mostly in **C:\Program Files\Zabaware\ ...**

Start Ultra HAL Assistant and from the menu go to "**General Options**" and from there select the Character and Skin tabs to choose your new skin. If all is correct your skin should now appear in the selection tabs and upon "apply" and "ok", you're ready to use the new interface!

If you see any errors or need to make corrections, just close the Ultra HAL Assistant console, but not the program. Make the alterations and save them again in the right directories. Now start the interface again and see if you are finished editing or not! Just follow the settings in the UHP file I included as they can help understanding the procedures more!





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## TRANSPARENCY 1/2

If you don't need or like to create an interface that has transparent parts, so your desktop shines through, you can just skip this part. Otherwise you need to continue reading and do the following steps.

First of all, make sure that you have, or otherwise download, the free Zabaware **MakeTran.exe** program from the Tools section in this manual. Just unzip it somewhere in any directory you prefer. There is no installation as it works as a stand-alone program.

This program is a Zabaware utility for retrieving the "Transparency" codes from the parts of your skin (BMP only!) that you want to make transparent. These entire codes need to be copied and pasted in your "**skin.UHP**" file, right after the "**Transparency=**" field. By default this is set to "**False**" So if you don't need Transparency, just keep the default setting. Now open your "skin.UHP" and find this field where you need to fill in the codes. Mostly all below ...



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## TRANSPARENCY 2/2

Now from this manual we have been using **jpg** images as they have the best colors. But actually any image file could work as an interface, **gif**, **bmp** and **png** to name a few. But for transparency in the interface you **MUST** save your interface image always as a **BMP** file. This is the only file format the MakeTran program accepts!

To make your skin with transparent parts, simply make the parts of your skin that you want to be transparent 'hot pink', or the color with **Red=255 Green=0 and Blue=255** or **#FF00FF** and save your skin image as a windows BMP file. Then just open the BMP file with the MakeTran.exe program and a file called "**mask.dat**" will be created and saved in the same directory where the BMP file is located. Then open the "mask.dat" file with NotePad and copy paste the results in your "skin.UHP" after the "Transparency=" field.

That's all it takes! I advice you to save a backup of both the created "mask.dat" and the corresponding "skin.bmp" in another directory, or it will be overwritten next time you use the MakeTran program.

