



Adafruit's Raspberry Pi Lesson 5. Using a Console Cable

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<https://learn.adafruit.com/adafruits-raspberry-pi-lesson-5-using-a-console-cable>

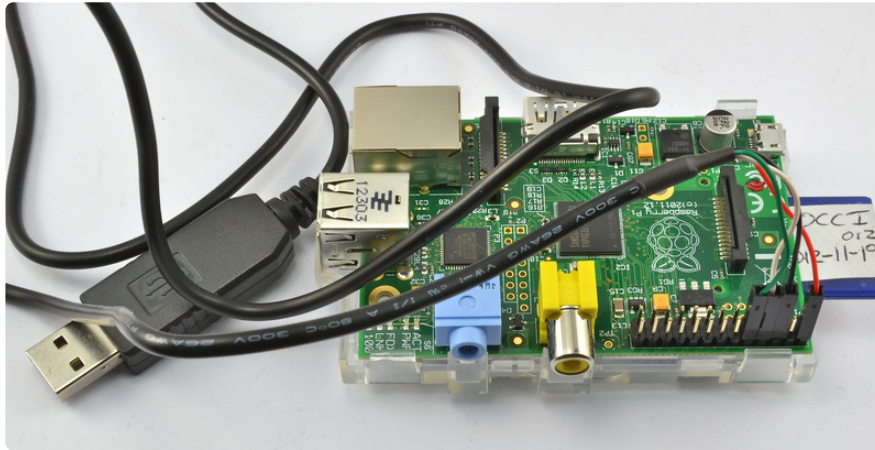
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Overview

In this lesson you will learn how to remote control your Raspberry Pi with a console cable.



The great advantage of connecting this way is that it can even supply the power for your Pi and you do not need keyboard, mouse or display attached to the Pi to log into it.

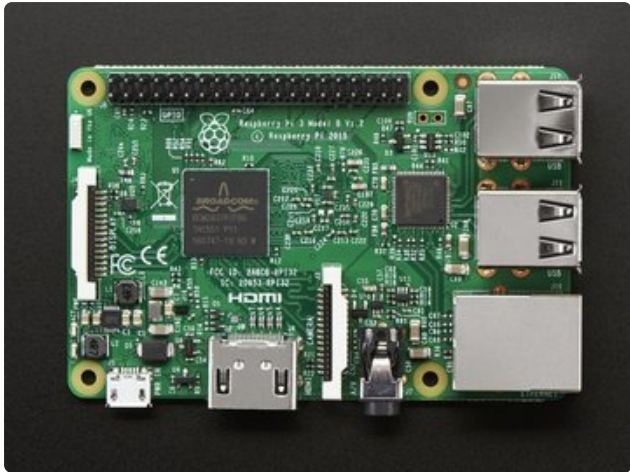
You will need to install terminal emulation software (Putty) if you are using Windows and also USB drivers for the Console Lead. The Mac Terminal comes with its own software.

The Raspberry Pi uses its built-in serial port to allow devices to connect to its console and issue commands just as if you were logged in.

In the next lesson, we will look at another way of doing much the same thing but over a local network using something called SSH.

You Will Need

To follow this lesson, you will need:



Raspberry Pi computer (any!) with headers



USB console cable. We have one that is known to work with Windows 8+ but some older/cheaper console cables do not.

Enabling Serial Console

As of Jessie Raspbian, you may need to enable the serial console.

You can enable/disable the serial console with either editing `/boot/config.txt` or `raspiconfig` (which will edit `/boot/config.txt` for you)

Option 1. Enabling in `/boot/config.txt`

You can pop your SD card into a computer and edit `config.txt` with a text editor like SimpleText, WordPad or whatnot. You can also edit on a pi with `sudo nano /boot/config.txt`

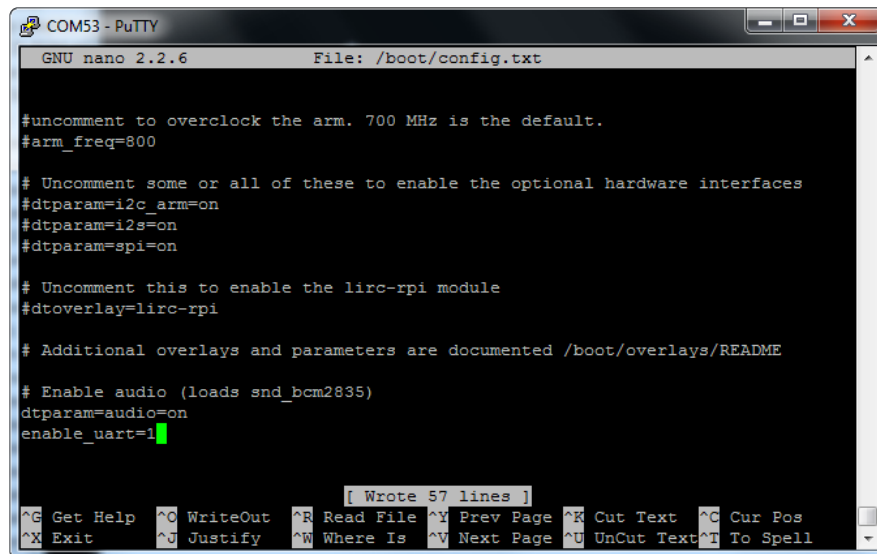
At the bottom, last line, add `enable_uart=1` on it's own line.

Pi OS Bookworm and the Pi 5 have minor changes from earlier Pi OS software and hardware. You will edit the file:

```
sudo nano /boot/firmware/config.txt
```

add these two lines to the end of the config.txt.

```
dtparam=uart0  
dtparam=uart0_console
```

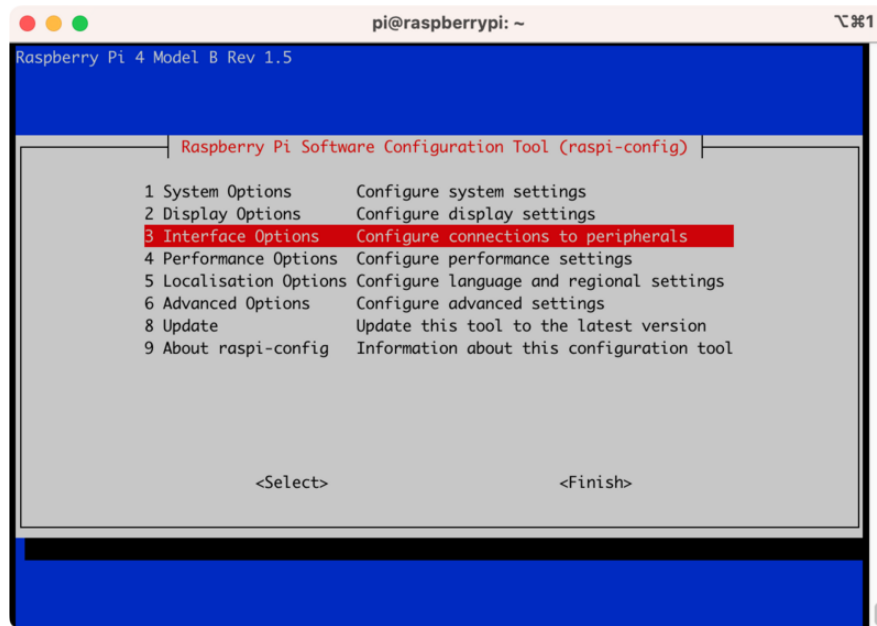


Option 2. Enabling via Raspi-Config

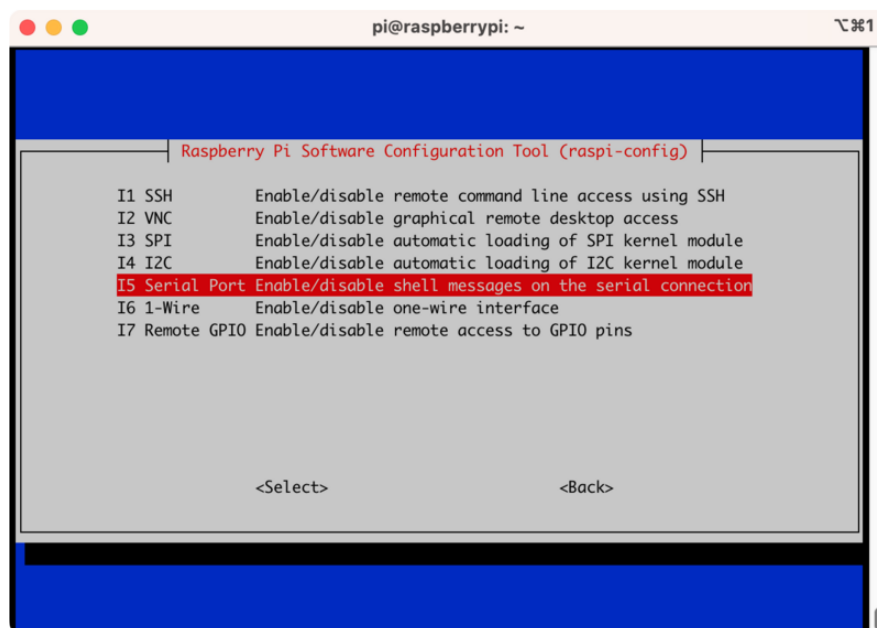
Using a monitor and keyboard, log into the shell and run

```
sudo raspi-config
```

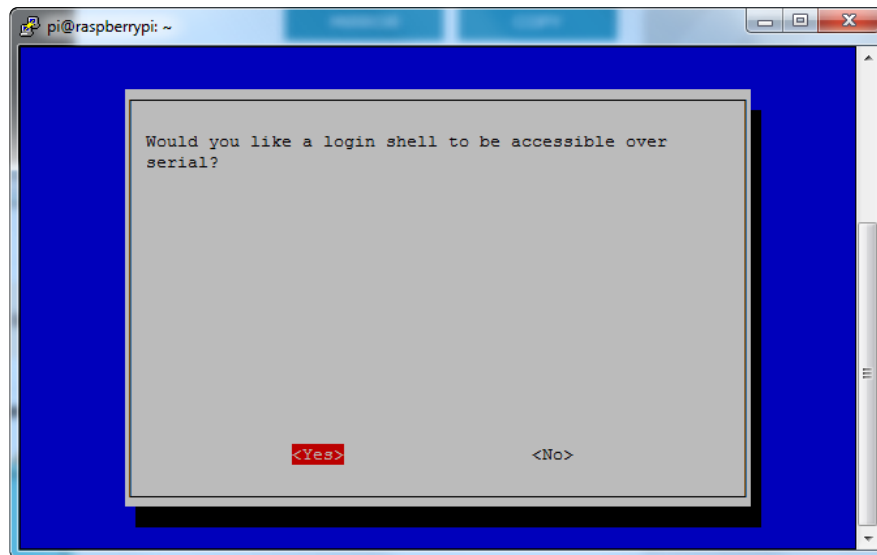
go down to **Interface Options**



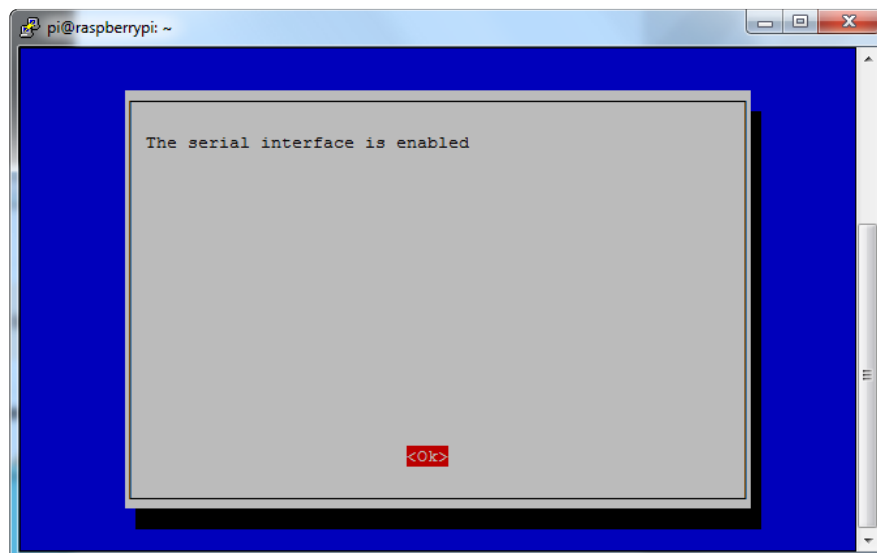
Hit enter and then go down to **Serial Port**



Select **Yes**

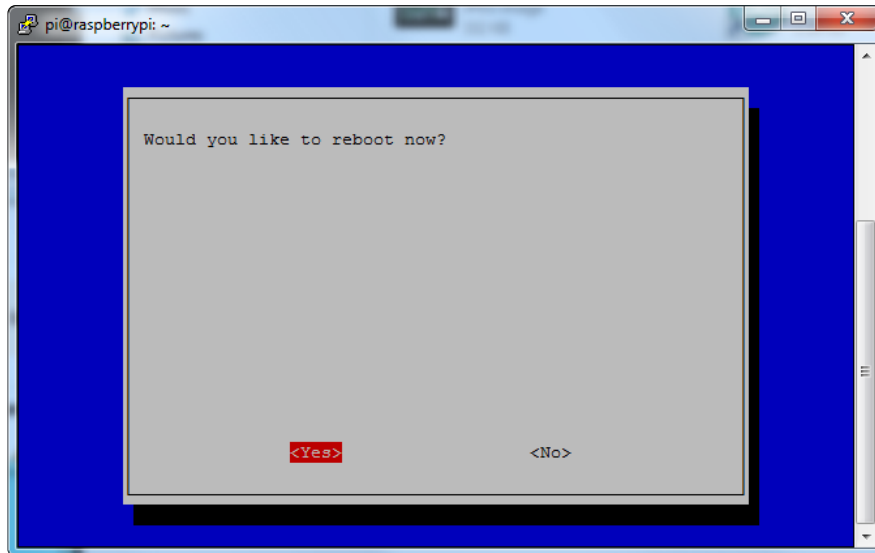


It should now be enabled



Hit return then select **Finish**

If it asks you to reboot, go to **Yes** and hit return



OK the serial console is now enabled!

Software Installation (Mac)

OSX includes terminal emulation software that you can use from the command line, so we only need to install the USB drivers for the cable.

Install Drivers

Next, install the latest drivers for the cable chipset.

There's two possible chipsets. The older cables use Prolific brand, the newer cables (as of 2017) use SiLabs brand. **If you're not sure which you have, just install both drivers! There's no risk and the cable will work no matter what**

Prolific Chipset

For the "Prolific Chipset" cable, grab the drivers from here

**You can grab the latest drivers from
Prolific!**

<https://adafru.it/rID>

Here is a mirror of
PL2303_Mac_OSX_Drv_V1_6_2_201
in case Prolific is down

<https://adafru.it/FRV>

And if you're using an [older version of Mac OS X \(10.8-10.6\)](#) then try this Prolific driver [version 1.5.1](#) (<https://adafru.it/tem>).

SiLabs CP210X Drivers

If you are running [Mac OS X](#), please use the [SiLabs drivers](#) (<https://adafru.it/yfA>) here

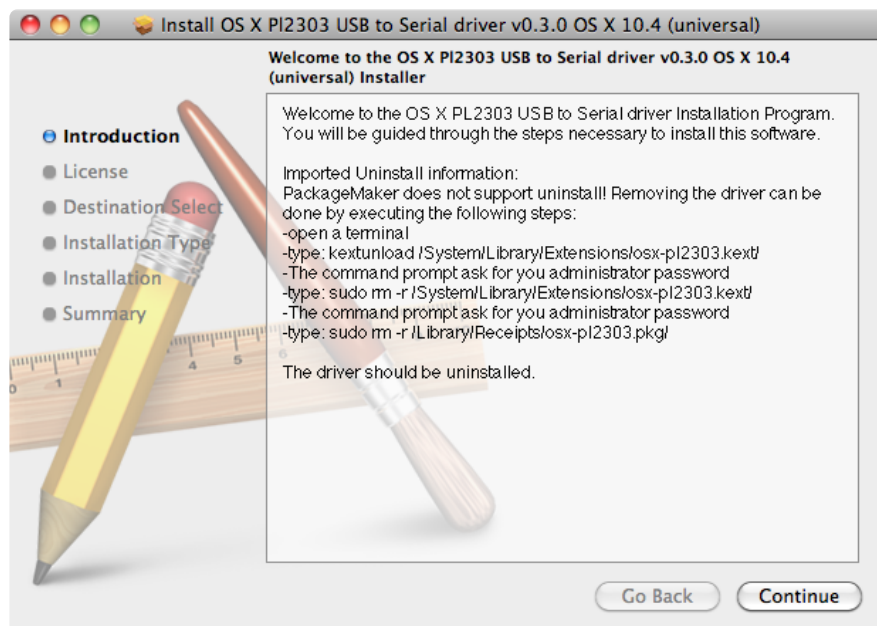
If you are using Mac OS 10.12.6 (Sierra) and you cannot upload with the latest Mac OS VCP driver, please try the legacy v4 driver below. Note you will need to uninstall the v5 driver using `uninstall.sh` (in the driver package)

Download LEGACY Mac CP210X
Driver

<https://adafru.it/ymF>

Install!

Both downloads are standard Mac installers. Accept all defaults when prompted.



Software Installation (Windows)

Download and install Putty from here: <http://www.putty.org/> (<https://adafru.it/aUb>)

From the list of downloads select the binary called just **putty.exe** from the section **For Windows on Intel x86**. This will prompt you to save the file. Save it onto the **Desktop** for now.

Note that this actually saves the Program itself not an installer. Simply double click putty.exe to run putty!

Install Drivers

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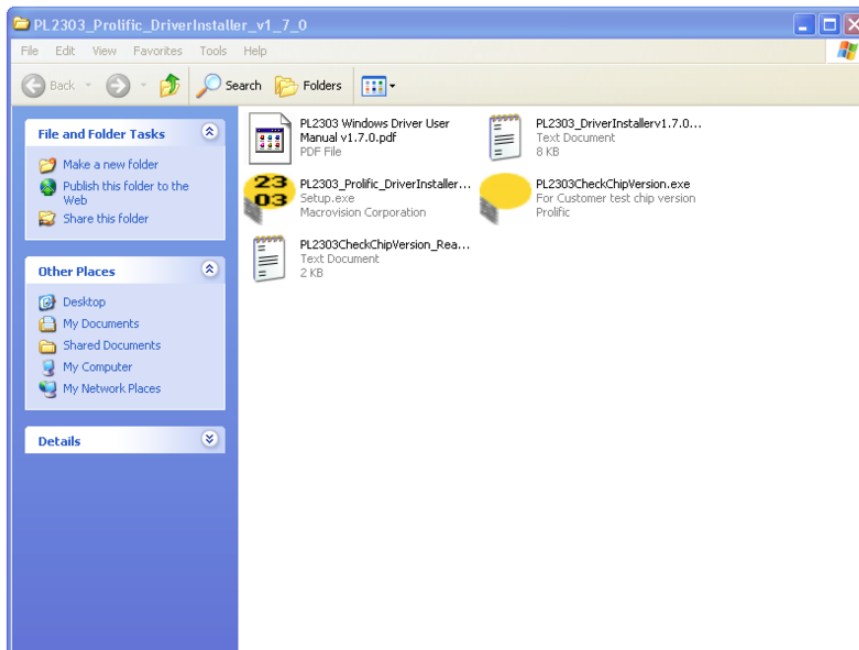
Prolific Chipset

For the "Prolific Chipset" cable, grab the drivers from here

**Download the latest PL2303 drivers
from Prolific here!**

<https://adafru.it/aTV>

This will save a zip file called **PL2303_Prolific_DriverInstaller_v1_7_0.zip** (or similar). Unzip this onto the desktop and within the folder run the installer called **PL2303_Prolific_DriverInstaller_v1.7.0.exe**



If you're having issues, [you can also try this older PL2303 driver \(v1.0.13\)](https://adafru.it/ten) (<https://adafru.it/ten>)

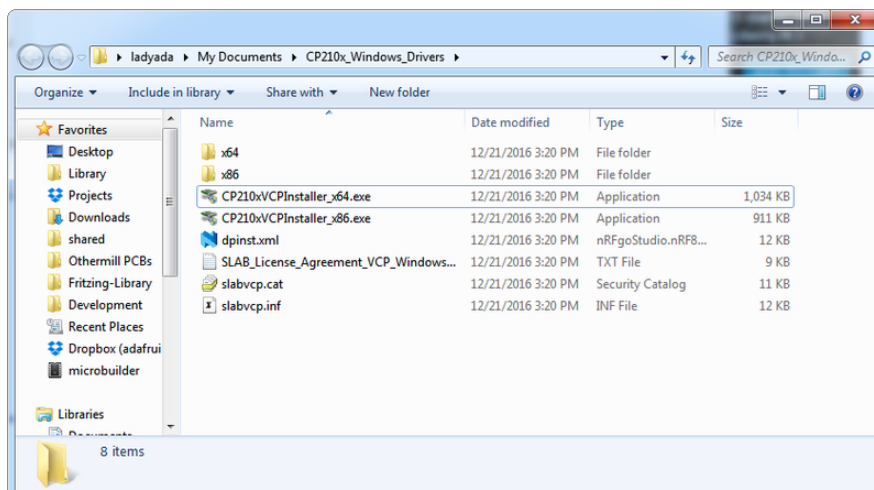
SiLabs Chipset

For the "SiLabs Chipset" cable, grab the drivers from here

[Download Windows CP210X Drivers](https://adafru.it/U3F)

<https://adafru.it/U3F>

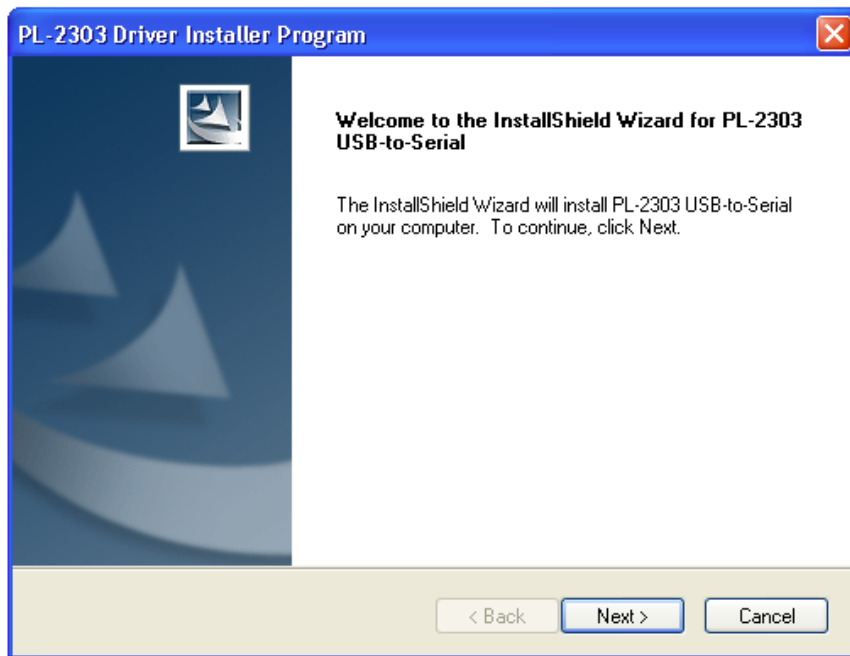
This will save a zip file called **CP210x_Windows_Drivers.zip** (or similar). Unzip this onto the desktop and within the folder run the installer called **CP210xVCPInstaller_x64.exe** (or **CP210xVCPInstaller_x86.exe** if the x64.exe doesn't run)



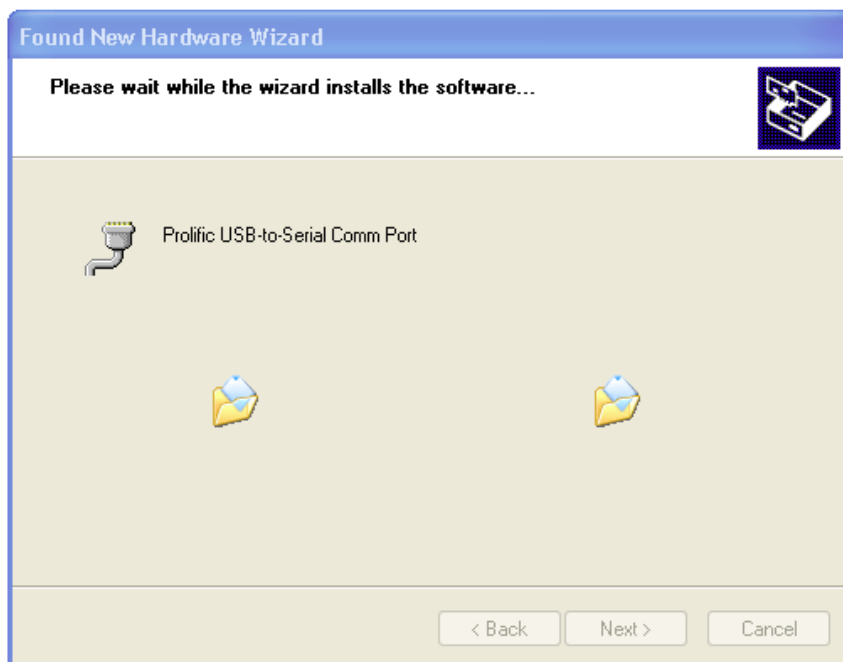
Complete Installation

Click through the entire driver installation process to completion

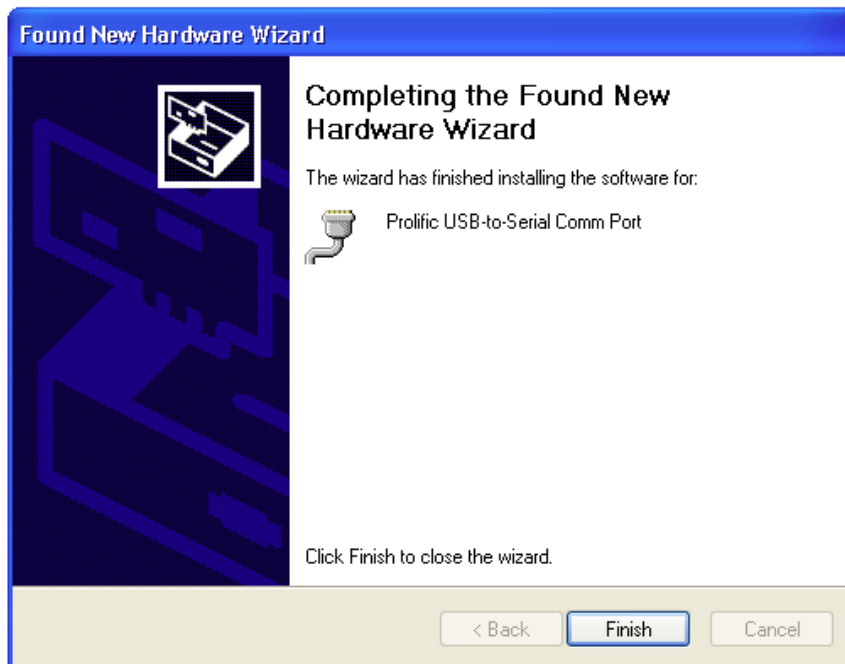
You may need to reboot!



The driver is installed in such a way that when you later plug in the USB console lead, it will still launch the “Found New Hardware” wizard. If you allow the Wizard to search the Internet and install it should work.



When it has finished installing the driver, you should get this message:



Software Installation (Linux)

Linux Kernels 2.4.31 and above already have the PL2303 and CP210X USB driver for the Console Lead built-in, so you should not need to install that.

Some distributions such as Ubuntu 12.10 do not include the "screen" command. Try running the command "screen" and if you get an error message, you can install it by typing the following command:

```
sudo apt-get install screen
```

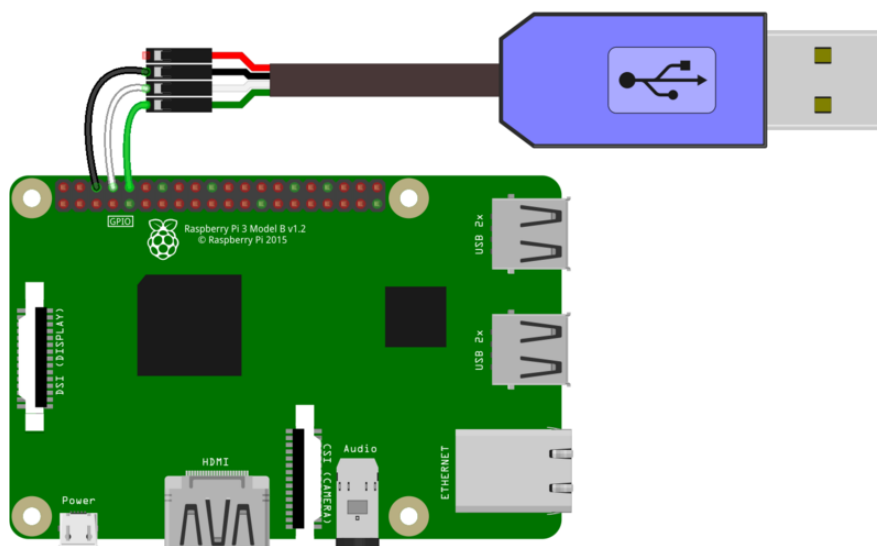
Connect the Lead

The Console lead has four female connections that can be plugged directly onto the GPIO header of the Raspberry Pi.

The Adafruit USB console cable has 3.3V logic, so its safe to use with your Pi.



Attach the leads as shown below:



fritzing

The connections are to the outside pin connections of the GPIO header. See Lesson 4, for more information about the header: <http://learn.adafruit.com/adafruits-raspberry-pi-lesson-4-gpio-setup/the-gpio-connector> (<https://adafru.it/aTW>)

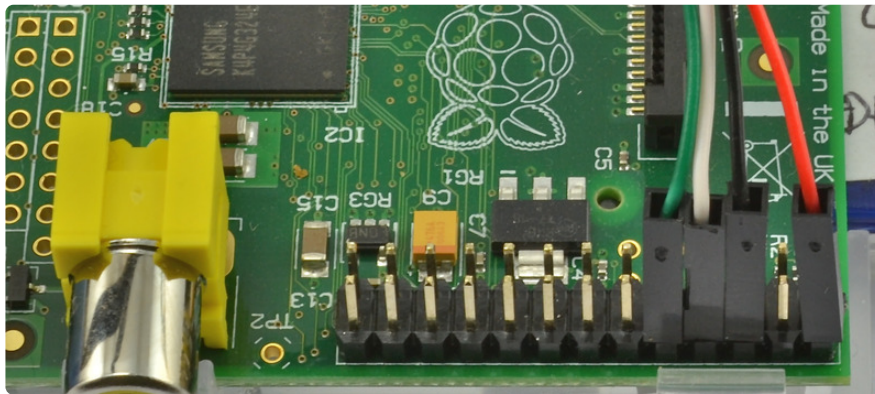
- The red lead should be connected to 5V if you want to power via the cable, see below for details
- The black lead to GND (3rd pin down)
- The white lead to TXD on the Pi (4th pin down)
- The green lead to RXD on the pi (5th pin down)

Powering Via Cable

Here's a photo showing an older Pi and also powering it via USB. Pi 2 or later are not suggested for this technique as they draw over 500mA

The important thing here is to only power it from one source, the USB power adaptor or the Console Lead **BUT NOT BOTH**. Unless you have a Pi A+ or Pi Zero, don't connect the red wire!

If you do decide to power the Pi from the console cable, **DO NOT** attach the Pi's USB power adapter. If you would rather power the Pi from your USB power adapter then leave the Red lead from the Serial lead un attached.



OK now power up your Raspberry Pi!

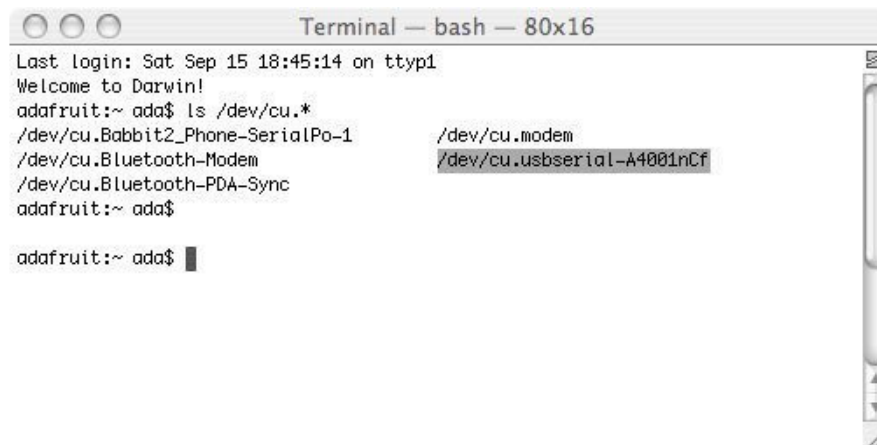
Test & Configure

Mac OS X

If you are using a Mac, then all you need to do is open a **Terminal** window and issue the command

```
ls /dev/cu.*
```

To list all of the available serial ports. You should see something like this:



```
Terminal — bash — 80x16
Last login: Sat Sep 15 18:45:14 on ttty1
Welcome to Darwin!
adafruit:~ ada$ ls /dev/cu.*
/dev/cu.Babbit2_Phone-SerialPo-1    /dev/cu.modem
/dev/cu.Bluetooth-Modem            /dev/cu.usbserial-A4001nCf
/dev/cu.Bluetooth-PDA-Sync
adafruit:~ ada$

adafruit:~ ada$
```

You'll see a few items listed including a `/dev/cu.Bluetooth` device. You're looking for something like `/dev/cu.usbserial-NNNN` or `/dev/cu.SLAB_USBtoUART` or `/dev/cu.usbmodem`

Once you've identified the name, you can then run:

```
screen /dev/cu.PL2303-00001004 115200
screen /dev/cu.SLAB_USBtoUART 115200
screen /dev/cu.usbserial-A4001nCf 115200
```

The device will have a slightly different name than the above. One way to quickly figure out the name is start typing `screen /dev/cu.` and then press the TAB key to auto-complete to whatever your device is called, before adding 115200 (which is the baud rate) to the end.

You can also try `screen /dev/cu.SLAB* 115200` or `screen /dev/cu.PL2303* 115200` or `screen /dev/cu.usbserial* 115200` To have the shell complete the file name for you

[You may need to disable system integrity protection \(according to feedback from a tutorial-reader\) \(https://adafru.it/rIE\)](https://adafru.it/rIE)

Linux

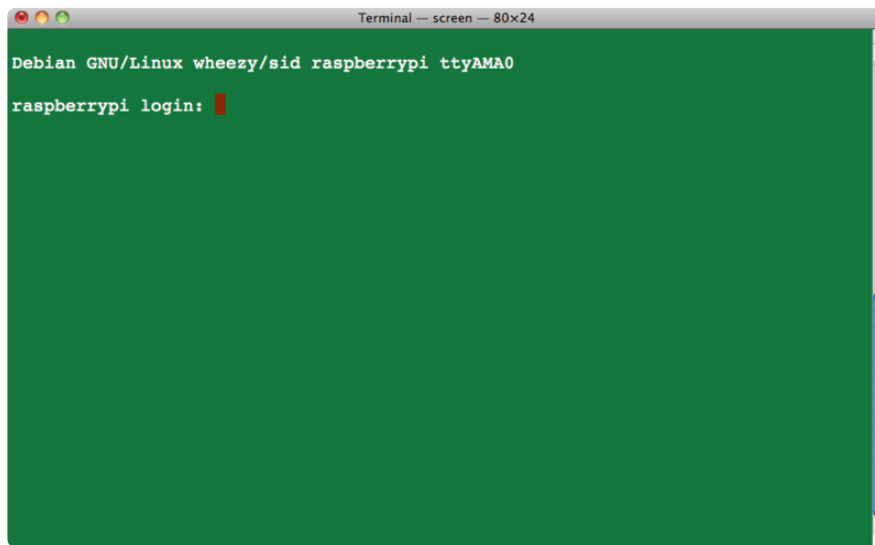
If you are using Linux, its much like the above but often times the device is called `/dev/ttyUSB0` - you may want to run `sudo dmesg` after plugging in and looking for hints on what the device is called.

Then use the command:

```
sudo screen /dev/ttyUSB0 115200
```


To start communication with the Pi, press ENTER and you should see the login prompt from the Pi.

Here it is running on a Mac.

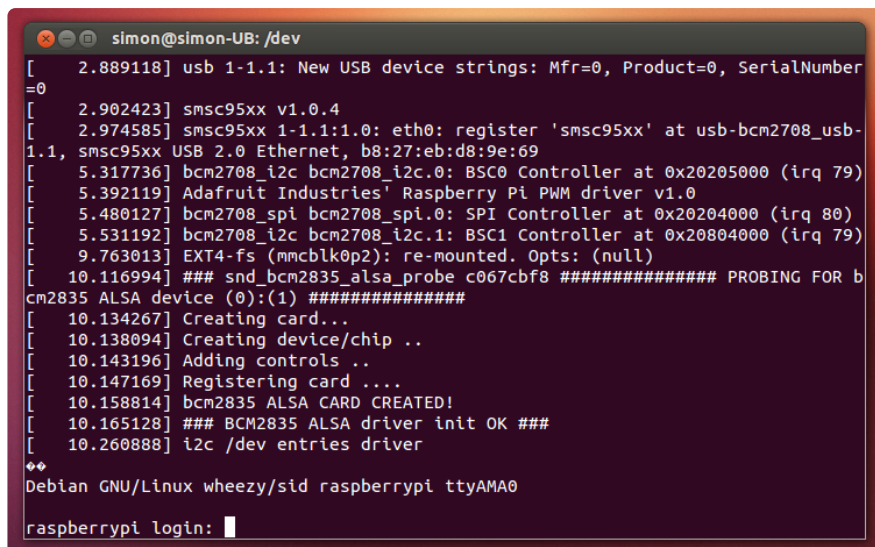


```
Terminal — screen — 80x24

Debian GNU/Linux wheezy/sid raspberrypi ttyAMA0

raspberrypi login: █
```

and here is what it looks like in Ubuntu.



```
simon@simon-UB: /dev

[ 2.889118] usb 1-1.1: New USB device strings: Mfr=0, Product=0, SerialNumber=0
[ 2.902423] smsc95xx v1.0.4
[ 2.974585] smsc95xx 1-1.1:1.0: eth0: register 'smc95xx' at usb-bcm2708_usb-1.1, smc95xx USB 2.0 Ethernet, b8:27:eb:d8:9e:69
[ 5.317736] bcm2708_i2c bcm2708_i2c.0: BSC0 Controller at 0x20205000 (irq 79)
[ 5.392119] Adafruit Industries' Raspberry Pi PWM driver v1.0
[ 5.480127] bcm2708_spi bcm2708_spi.0: SPI Controller at 0x20204000 (irq 80)
[ 5.531192] bcm2708_i2c bcm2708_i2c.1: BSC1 Controller at 0x20804000 (irq 79)
[ 9.763013] EXT4-fs (mmcblk0p2): re-mounted. Opts: (null)
[ 10.116994] ### snd_bcm2835_alsa_probe c067cbf8 ##### PROBING FOR b
bcm2835 ALSA device (0):(1) #####
[ 10.134267] Creating card...
[ 10.138094] Creating device/chip ..
[ 10.143196] Adding controls ..
[ 10.147169] Registering card ....
[ 10.158814] bcm2835 ALSA CARD CREATED!
[ 10.165128] ### BCM2835 ALSA driver init OK ###
[ 10.260888] i2c /dev entries driver

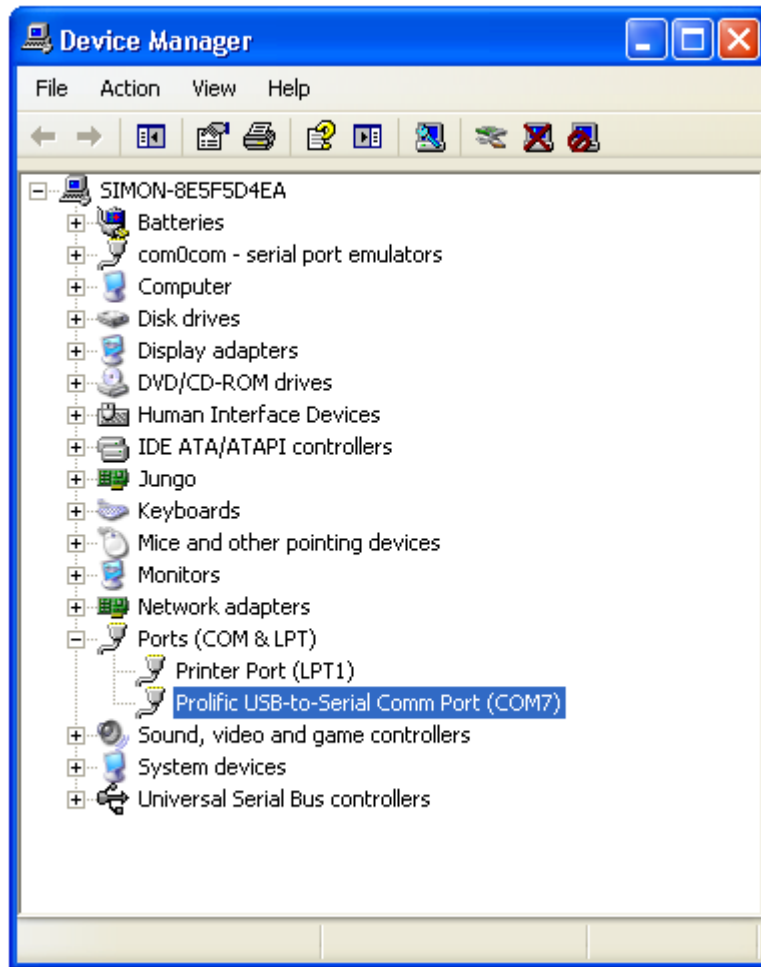
Debian GNU/Linux wheezy/sid raspberrypi ttyAMA0

raspberrypi login: █
```

Windows

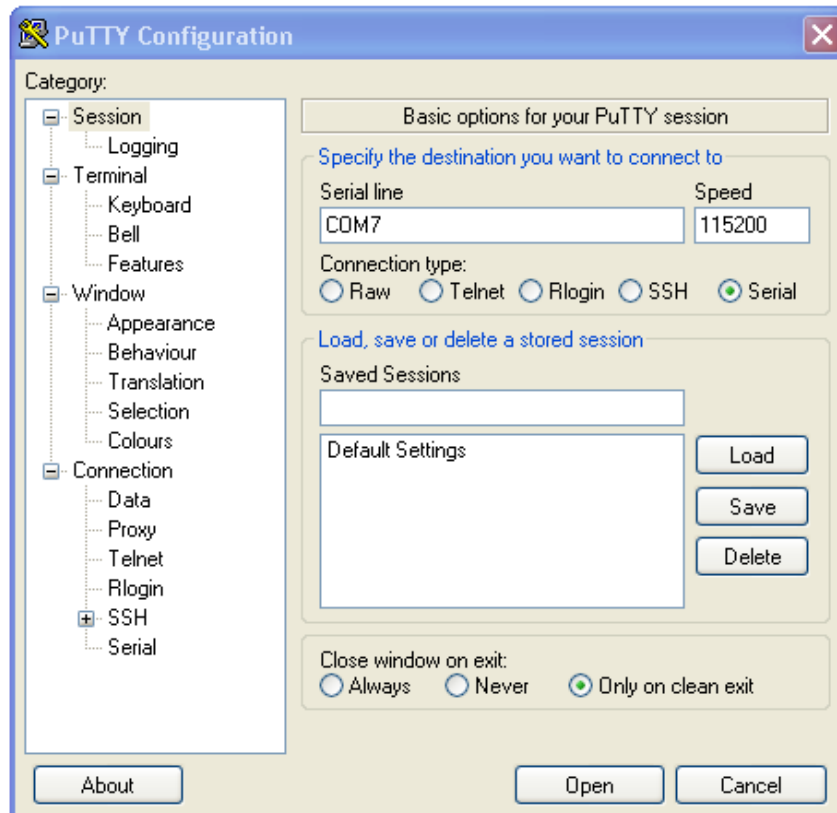
If you are using a PC, then before you start Putty, you need to know which com port is being used for the cable. You can find this by looking in the **Ports** section of the **Windows Device Manager**.

The **Device Manager** is accessible from the **Control Panel** under System.



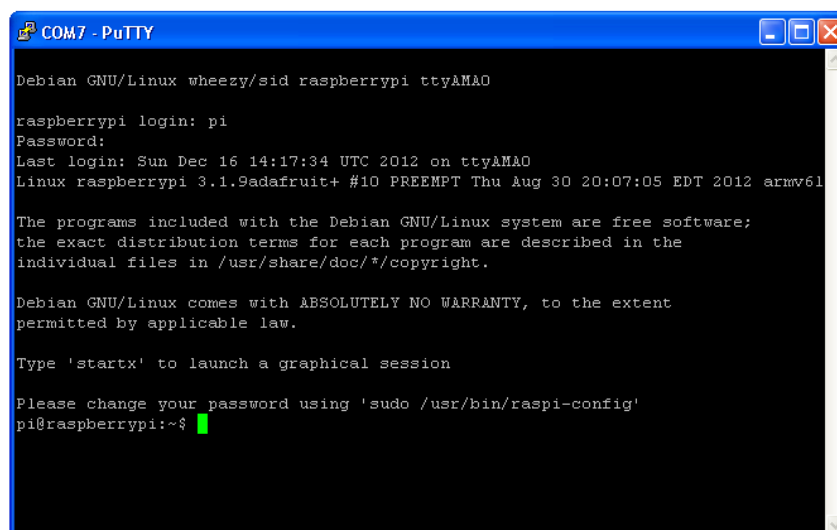
It **isn't** going to be COM1 so never pick that. Chances are its the one right below COM1. It will often say "SiLabs" or "Prolific" or similar next to it. In this case it is **COM7** that is in use.

Now start Putty and you will see a connection window.



Select a connection type of "Serial" from the radio buttons, then set the speed to **115200** and the serial line to **COM7**

Finally click 'Open' to connect. Remember to press ENTER to start communications.



For a new installation of Raspbian, the default username is **pi** and the default password is **raspberrypi**

Thats it! You are connected and can use the command line to navigate around your Pi.

Once you've connected with the console you can set up your Pi to use SSH as another means of connecting to your Pi over your local network.