

Help with blanch



Blanch (button launcher), is a part of the dwm applications package, a collection of programs which give the user control over the Windows desktop environment, Windows programs, file launching and file manipulation.

Blanch provides the user with a dynamic way of creating buttons for launching applications and loading files into executable programs. Blanches are created by **dragging** an item from a dob file window or a dwm pop up menu, and dropping the item on the desktop. Hot blanches (blanches for executable programs) will launch any file dragged from a dob file list window (or from Windows File Manager) and dropped onto them, regardless of the file's association.

To learn more about blanch and its abilities, **click** on one of the following topics. For help on one of the other dwm applications, click on its button on the help window button bar. If you need help on how to use Windows help, press the F1 key.

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Running blanch

Blanch is an application which works best in tandem with dwm and dobs. In order to use blanch, **dwm must be running**, as dwm is the communication locus for all the applications. If you are using dwm as the Windows shell, blanch is automatically available on startup.

Blanches are program launching buttons on the desktop that are normally created by drag and drop from either a dwm pop up menu or a dobs file list window. **Double clicking** on a blanch with the left mouse button (the user may optionally **single click**, providing that this option is toggled in the **blanch options** dialog box), or hitting **Ctrl+I** when the blanch has focus, will launch the program or file specified on the launch line of the blanch options box, along with any command line switches and/or files specified in the **Options** and **File lines** of the dialog box. Executable files (and files with extensions associated to executable programs) can also be dragged out of a dobs file list window, or off a dwm pop up menu and dropped onto a blanch, with variable effect, depending on the state of the blanch and the nature of the dropped file. Files without associated executables can still be launched, if they are dropped onto an appropriate **hot blanch**.

Right clicking on a blanch will open the **blanch options** dialog box, allowing the user to change the function of the blanch. Blanches can be moved on the desktop by holding down the **Ctrl** key while left clicking and dragging the blanch to the desired location -- note that if you have a 3-button mouse that has a driver that supports the middle mouse button you can move blanches using the middle mouse button.

Creating and destroying blanches

A blanch is a button on the desktop which can launch a program, or launch a file with an associated executable, or an application with prespecified launch options automatically loaded into the program at the time of launch. Any item **dragged** off a dwm menu or a dobs file list becomes a blanch when dropped onto the desktop, providing the item is an executable program or a file with an **associated executable**.

An icon of the program scheduled for launch appears on the button (this **icon** may be changed in the **blanch options** dialog box). The name on the blanch is the name of the file (executable or file with an associated executable) appearing on the launch line of the blanch. Red text on a blanch indicates that it is **hot**. To move a blanch around on the desktop, hold down the Ctrl key, **left click** on the blanch, and **drag** it to the desired location.

These are the basic methods for creating and destroying blanches:

- Drag an item from a dwm pop up menu, and drop it on the desktop. The menu item must be an executable file (this will include almost all items in the dwm program manager group menus) or a file with an associated executable application. Blanches created from dwm menu items inherit the launch options (files, command line switches, default directory etc.) that are predefined for the menu item (see Editing menus with the **dwm menu editor**). Blanched executables are initially hot, by default.
- Drag a *single* item from a dob file window, and drop it on the desktop. Multiple selections cannot be blanched simultaneously, they must be dropped individually. Blanches created this way will be raw (i.e.: no predefined options, files, etc.), and the user must edit the blanch through the **blanch options dialog box** to customize the launch parameters.
- Open any blanch dialog box (**right click** on a blanch), and specify blanch.exe on the launch line, and enter an executable program or a file with an associated executable on the **File** line. This special blanch acts as a **blanch generator**. Launching the blanch will create a *new* blanch for the program specified on the **File** line of the generator blanch. Edit the blanch options of the generator blanch, to create as many new blanches as you need.
- To **destroy** a blanch, single **click** on the blanch, then type **Ctrl+d**, or open the blanch options dialog box (right click or Alt+Enter), and click on the **Destroy** button.

Note: The drag and drop method for creating blanches only works for executable programs or files with associated executables. Files which do not fall into either of these categories can still be quick launched if they are dropped onto an appropriate **hot blanch**.

Executable files and associated files

Executable programs are files with names that usually end with the extension `.exe` (or, less frequently, `.pif`, `.bat` or `.com`). Other files, which may have virtually any other extension, are generally used or operated on by an executable application. Files which in themselves are not executable may be *associated* with an executable program. When files are associated, they can be quick launched (typically by **double clicking** on the file in a file window), the quick launch opens the associated executable program and loads the selected file into the program automatically. These file associations must be specified by the user, in the **[extensions]** section of the `win.ini` file (a Windows system file), or by using **regedit.exe** (a registration editor that comes bundled with Windows).

When an executable program is blanch, it leaves a button on the desktop which is a deferred launch site for that application. Opening the blanch options dialog box for the executable blanch will reveal the name of the executable program on the launch line. The user can specify a file for the blanch to launch on the **File** line of the dialog box. The name and icon on the blanch is that of the program pending launch. By default, executable blanches are **hot**.

If files with associated executables are blanch, they initially leave a button on the desktop which is a deferred launch site *for the blanch file*. The name on the blanch is that of the file, the icon is that of the associated executable. Opening the blanch options dialog box for this type of blanch reveals the name of the blanch file on the launch line.

Note: You can quickly check a file for its associated executable by right clicking on the file in a file list window. See: **Viewing and changing file attributes**.

Hot blanches and cold blanches

The problem with file associations is that only one executable program can be associated with a given file extension. For instance, a user may have a number of graphics / painting / drawing programs able to operate on bitmap files, but there can only be one of these programs associated to *.bmp* files. Quick launching a *.bmp* file (i.e.: by **double clicking** on the file in a dob file list window) will always load it into the associated executable. Similarly, blanching a bitmap file will always leave a blanch with the associated executable's icon painted onto it, reminding the user that it will be the associated executable handling the bitmap when the blanch is activated. Additionally, non-executable files without associations cannot be quick launched, and cannot be directly blanchied.

When an executable file is dragged from a dwm pop up menu or a dob file list, and dropped onto the desktop, it is initially a **hot blanch**, by default (hot blanches have their captions painted red). A file can be dragged from a dob file list window (or the Windows File Manager) and dropped onto an appropriate hot blanch (i.e.: the file has a format that can be handled by the hot blanch). where it will be immediately loaded by the blanchied executable, regardless of the file's association.

Blanches created by dropping **associated** files are cold, and cannot be made hot. Cold blanches have their captions painted yellow. If an executable blanch is made cold, by opening the options dialog box for that blanch and unselecting the Hot blanch option, it will not accept dropped files. Dropping a file onto any cold blanch will replace the blanch with a new blanch, corresponding to the newly dropped file.

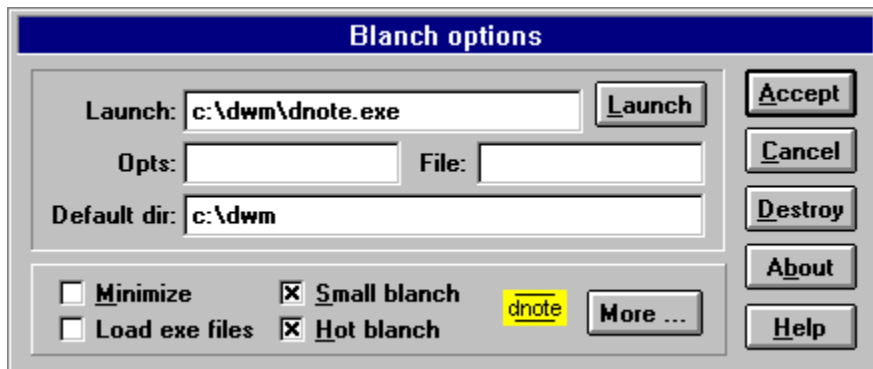
Example: A user has several graphics programs which can manipulate bitmaps. We will call these hypothetical programs *draw.exe*, *paint.exe* and *artwork.exe*. The user has also associated files with the extension *.bmp* to the program *artwork.exe* (association made in the win.ini file).

The user now creates blanches for each of these programs (i.e. there are three hot blanches on the desktop for the users graphics programs). If the user now selects a bitmap file (say, from a dob file list), and **double clicks** on the file, the program *artwork* will start with the bitmap file loaded automatically (due to the association). If the user **drags** the bitmap file from the file list window and drops it on the desktop, it leaves a cold blanch with the icon for *artwork* (also due to the association), meaning the file will be loaded into *artwork* automatically when the blanch is activated. Alternatively, if the user drags the file from the list and drops it onto the blanch for *draw.exe*, the program *draw* will start, automatically loading the bitmap, despite the association of bitmaps with the program *artwork.exe*.

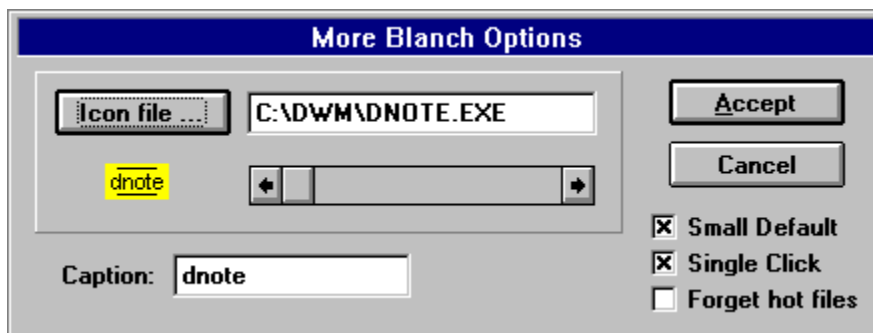
Assume now the user has other graphics files (say with the extension *.vec*, for vector art) which can be manipulated by *draw* or *artwork*, but not *paint*, and which are not associated with any application. These files cannot be quick launched directly, and cannot be blanchied, as they lack association. A *.vec* file can be dragged from a dob file list and dropped onto the blanch for *artwork* or *draw*, where it will be launched immediately. Dropping a *.vec* file onto the *paint* blanch will return an error from *paint*, as it is unable to interpret graphic files with the *.vec* format.

Blanch options

Right clicking on a blanch will open a blanch options dialog box, shown below. Click on various parts of the box for more information about their functions.



Clicking on the **More** option in the above dialog opens this dialog box.



Launch line: Specify an executable file or file with associated executable, along with the path, if necessary. The default icon appearing on the blanch is that of the executable pending launch. When a blanch is created by dragging an item from a dwm pop up menu or a file from a dob file list window, the launch line automatically contains the name of the executable program (or the file name, if the file has an associated executable application). Similarly, the default directory will be set to the directory of the executable (or file with associated executable).

Options line: Specify **options** (command line switches, etc.). Options are placed immediately before the file(s) entered in the **File** line when passed to the executable specified on the **Launch** line. Note that if you drop a new file onto a **hot** blank the options remain constant, that is, only the **File** line is changed. *This entry is optional.*

Default dir: Specify the **default directory** for the executable program (this is generally the first directory the application offers whenever the user requests a search for files to open, or a directory to save work; prespecifying the default directory eliminates the need to search through directory trees etc.). When a file is dropped onto a hot blanch, the default directory is set to be the same as the dropped file.

Minimize: Causes the application to be run minimized (i.e.: appears as an icon on the screen) when first launched.

Small blanch: Toggle for blanch size; small blanches are 48 pixels square, large (i.e.: not small) blanches are 64 pixels square. This toggle is for aesthetic preference, mostly.

Hot blanch: Turns blanch into a "file drop execution site": dropping an appropriate file onto a hot blanch (i.e.: a file that the application can handle) will start the application represented by the blanch, automatically loading the dropped file into the program. Files must be executable to be made hot. Files dropped onto a cold (i.e.: not hot) blanch will have their **Launch** line modified by the dropped file, but will not launch immediately, instead acting as a deferred execution site.

Accept button: Validates any changes to edit controls or checkboxes, and closes the blanch options dialog box. The program represented by blanch will not be run when Accept is chosen, but can be launched by double clicking on the blanch.

Launch button: Immediately launches the application specified on the launch line, with any command line switches specified on the **Options** line and/or file(s) specified on the **File** line.

Cancel button: Closes the blanch options dialog box, ignoring any changes to edit controls or checkboxes.

Destroy button: Destroys the blanch.

About button: Opens the multipurpose about box for the dwm distribution, with info on the various applications.

Help button: Launches the dwm help system (initially in the blanch help section).

Load exe files: Toggle on to have this blanch load files with the extension **.exe**. Normally executable files dropped on a blanch replace a blanch but if this has been toggled on the file will be loaded by the executable specified in the **Launch** line. This option should be on for programs that are used to process or operate on .exe files (a compression utility, or a hex editor, for example).

More: Clicking on this button opens a dialog box in which you can specify other options related to blanch.

File: This is the name of the file to be loaded by the application named on the **Launch** line. When a file is dropped onto a hot blanch, the file option is automatically set with the name of the dropped file. See also the description for the **Options** line. *This entry is optional.*

Single click: Toggle on to have blanches launch with a single click, otherwise blanches require a double click. Note that this option is global, that is, if you change one blanch, they ALL behave similarly.

Icon file: Specify the name of the file containing the icon to be displayed on the blanch button. Clicking on the Icon file button opens up a file browsing dialog box, in which the user can search for a desired icon file.

Icon index: Use the scroll bar to scroll through the available icons in the selected icon file (often, there will only be a single choice).

Caption: This entry will be displayed as the caption for the blanch. Users should limit themselves to captions of 8 or less characters.

Accept: Accept changes and close the dialog box.

Cancel: Cancel any changes made and close the dialog box.

Small default: If this is toggled on then new blanches will be small by default, otherwise they will be large (i.e., not small). Note that this option is global, that is, if you change one blanch, they ALL behave similarly.

Forget files: If this is toggled on then files dropped onto a hot blanch will NOT be recorded in the File line of the blanch dialog box (but they will be processed, i.e.: the executable on the Launch line will start up with the dropped file loaded at launch). Note that this option is global, that is, if you change one blanch, they ALL behave similarly.

Tips on using blanch

- **Drag** an executable or an associated file from a **dob file list window** and drop it on the desktop to create a Blanch.
- **Drag** an executable program from a **dwm pop up menu** and drop it on the desktop to create a Blanch for that application.
- Drop a executable file from a dwm menu or dob file list window (or File Manager) onto an existing blanch to change the launch line of the blanch.
- **Double click** on a blanch with the left mouse button to launch it, or **single click** if this option has been set.
- **Right click** on a blanch to open the blanch options dialog box.
- **Click** on a blanch to select it, then hit **Alt+Enter** to open the blanch options dialog box.
- **Ctrl+d** to destroy a selected blanch (or Alt+F4, if you prefer).
- **Ctrl+l** to launch a selected blanch
- **Edit** the **launch line** or the **options line** in the blanch options dialog box to change the function of the blanch.
- Hold down the **Ctrl** key, then **drag** to move the blanch around on the screen (if you have a 3-button mouse and your mouse driver supports the use of the middle mouse button, you can drag blanches about without using the Ctrl key).

Left click: Position the mouse pointer over the object to be *clicked* then press and release on the left most mouse button. **Southpaw note:** if have swapped the left and right mouse buttons in the *mouse applet* of the **Windows Control Panel** you may consider a *left click* to be the right most mouse button.

Right click: Position the mouse pointer over the object to be *clicked* then press and release on the right most mouse button. **Southpaw note:** if have swapped the left and right mouse buttons in the *mouse applet* of the **Windows Control Panel** you may consider a *right click* to be the left most mouse button.

Double click: Position the mouse pointer over the object to be *double clicked* then press and release on the left most mouse button twice in quick succession. **Southpaw note:** if have swapped the left and right mouse buttons in the *mouse applet* of the **Windows Control Panel** you should use the right most mouse button when performing a *double click*.

Single click: Position the mouse pointer over the object to be *single clicked* then press and release on the left most mouse button. **Southpaw note:** if have swapped the left and right mouse buttons in the *mouse applet* of the **Windows Control Panel** you should use the right most mouse button when performing a *single click*.

Dragging: Position the mouse pointer over the object to be *dragged* then press and **hold** the left most mouse button down and move the mouse across the desktop. If the object is draggable it will move across the screen with the cursor; often the mouse cursor changes shape to indicate that something is being dragged. To drop whatever it is that you're dragging, just release the left mouse button. **Southpaw note:** if have swapped the left and right mouse buttons in the *mouse applet* of the **Windows Control Panel** you should use the right most mouse button when performing a *mouse drag*.

Note: Many of the dwm desktop programs (vern, blanch and dobs in the button state) require that you hold down the **Ctrl** key before dragging the program around the desktop. This requirement simply prevents the objects from *sliding* around on the desktop.

