

# 4x20 Serial LCD Module (BPP-420) v4.0

The BPP-420 is an LCD module with attached serial interface. This combination works like a simple serial-receive terminal at 2400 or 9600 baud (switch selectable). Common control codes like carriage returns, linefeeds, tabs, backspace, etc. are supported. The display also implements instructions for cursor positioning, backlight control, large-character display, and right-aligned printing.

**New Features in Rev 4.0.** This latest version of BPP-420 has the following new features:

- Ability to redefine custom, block-graphics characters.
- Jumper pads to increase backlight brightness or set backlight always on.
- 64-byte buffer, large alpha (A-Z) characters, right-alignment (introduced in rev 3.0)

The revision is identified by “BPP4/PT” printed in the lower right portion of the serial daughterboard.

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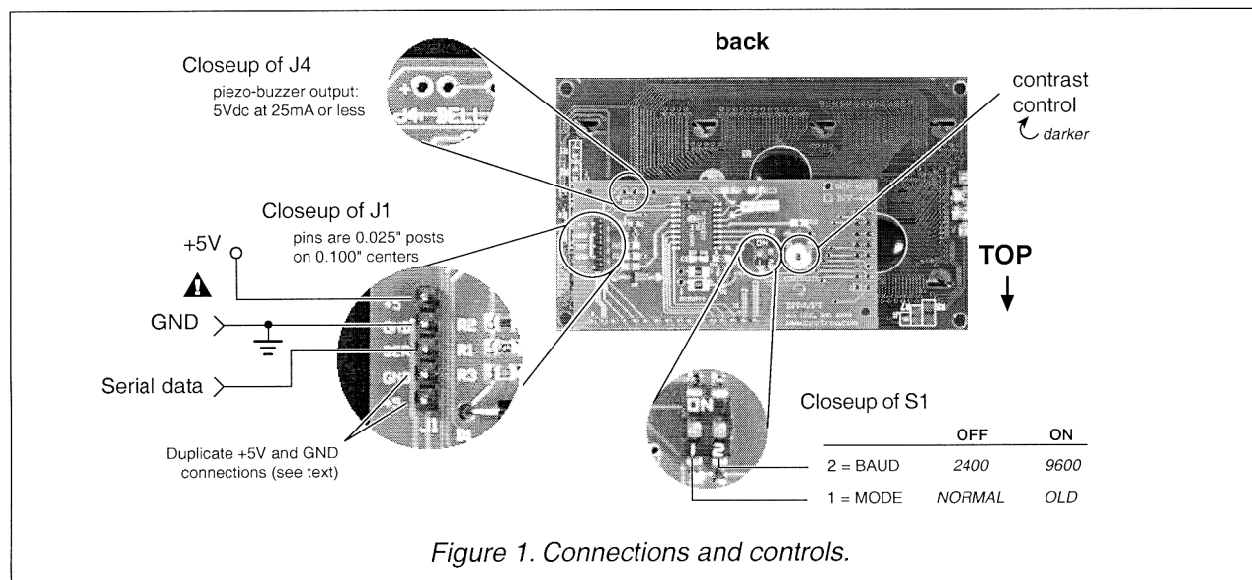
- Note: Abusing the module, or attempting to repair or modify it, voids this warranty.

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## Pinout of the BPP-420

Connections to the BPP-420 are made through a 5-pin header on the serial interface daughterboard, as shown in figure 1 below. Note that the photo is upside down with respect to the LCD. This was done in order to show the labels on the circuit board rightside-up. (The same board is used with 4x40 LCDs, where the labels match the LCD orientation.)



**Do not reverse +5V and GND, even momentarily.** Reversed power will destroy the electronics.  
**Do not exceed 5.5V into +5.** Overvoltage will damage the module.  
**Connect power only through J1.** Connecting power to other points on the module will damage it.  
**Read and follow installation guidelines on page 10.** Improper handling voids the warranty.

## Configuration

**Mode.** Set the mode switch (1) OFF/down to use the features and instructions described in this manual. Set mode ON/up to emulate operation of the LCD Serial Backpack®. Unless you are using this display to replace an older (circa 1996) 4x20 serial display, leave this switch OFF. See note on page 3.

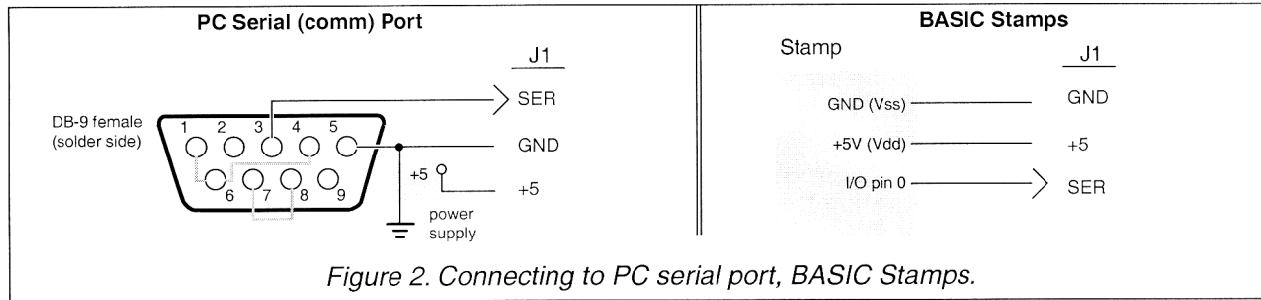
**Baud.** Set baud switch (2) OFF/down for 2400 baud, ON/up for 9600 baud. Other parameters are always no parity, 8 data bits, 1 stop bit (N81).

**NOTE:** The BPP-420 reads the switches only at startup. Change settings only with the power off.

## Hookup for Use

Figures 1 and 2 show how to connect serial I/O and power to the BPP-420. Make sure that the power polarity is correct. Reversing +5 and GND will damage the BPP-420 and possibly your power supply. The power source should be regulated to 5 volts  $\pm 0.25$  volts and be capable of supplying 100mA (maximum current draw with the LED backlight on).

J1, the 5-pin connector, has two extra pins for +5 and GND. These pins are arranged in a *pallindrome* layout. If you make a matching 5-pin connector, the connections will always line up properly regardless of connector orientation. Suitable female crimp sockets for making connectors are available from Jameco ([www.jameco.com](http://www.jameco.com), PN: 100765). Digi-Key carries ready-made 5-pin socket and flex-cable assemblies in varying lengths ([www.digikey.com](http://www.digikey.com); example part no.: A9BAG-0506F ND).



**Piezo Buzzer “Bell”**

As figure 1 shows, you can connect a piezo buzzer to the BPP-420. The buzzer will beep when the ASCII bell character (ctrl-G) is received. The buzzer must have an internal oscillator and work on 5V at 25mA or less. Suitable units are Jameco 76021, Radio Shack 273-065, and Digi-Key P9948. *Connecting anything other than a suitable buzzer to J4 will void the warranty.*

**Backlight Option Pads (BRIGHT and BL\_ON)**

Pads marked BRIGHT and BL\_ON customize the operation of the LED backlight. Soldering a wire across the pads marked BRIGHT changes the current-limiting resistance in the backlight circuit from 16Ω to 8Ω, increasing the brightness of the light. This increases max current draw to about 150mA.

Soldering a wire across the pads marked BL\_ON connects the backlight directly to the module’s power input so that whenever the unit is powered up the backlight is on.

*Do not attempt these modifications unless you are skilled at soldering. Damage due to poor soldering is not covered by warranty.*

**Basic Operation**

Set the configuration and connect serial input/power to the BPP-420 as shown in the previous sections.

Now you can send text serially to the display. On a PC, you may use a terminal program (such as the Windows Terminal or Hyperterminal accessory, or Procomm for DOS). Set it for the appropriate baud rate (matching switch 2). In addition to the baud rate, the terminal should be set for:

no parity      8 data bits      1 stop bit      flow control = none      local echo = on

**OLD-MODE Operation**

The codes and features described in this manual are available only when switch 1 (mode) is OFF. When mode is ON, the interface emulates the operation of our original LCD Serial Backpack® installed to a 4x20 LCD. There are some inevitable differences:

- BPP-420 draws about 5mA versus 2mA for the older unit.
- BPP-420 does not require a delay after clearing the screen (buffer).
- BPP-420 controls the LED backlight, even when in old-compatibility mode. Send bytes <254><255> for ON and <254><0> for OFF (old mode only).

*New users of this product should always leave switch 1 OFF to use the newer features.*

**NOTE:** Users of older 4x20 serial LCDs connected the backlight to power separately. DO NOT do that with this version! Connect power only through J1.

## Control Codes and Special Features

Table 1 lists the BPP-420 control codes. To send control codes from a terminal program, hold down Control and press another key. For example, to send cntl-E (underline cursor) hold down Control and press E. To send control codes from a program, send the ASCII value as a single byte (*not* as a text representation of the number). Using cntl-E as an example, send a single byte containing the value 5 (00000101 binary). Control codes not listed in the table are ignored by the BPP-420 and have no effect.

Function	Code	ASCII
Null (ignored prior to buffer)	cntl-@	0
Cursor home	cntl-A	1
Start big characters	cntl-B	2
End big characters	cntl-C	3
Hide cursor	cntl-D	4
Show underline cursor	cntl-E	5
Show blinking-block cursor	cntl-F	6
Bell (pulse piezo-buzzer output)	cntl-G	7
Backspace	cntl-H	8
Horizontal tab (cursor to next multiple-of-4 column)	cntl-I	9
Smart linefeed (cursor down one line)	cntl-J	10
Vertical tab (cursor up one line)	cntl-K	11
Formfeed (clear screen)	cntl-L	12
Carriage return	cntl-M	13
Backlight on	cntl-N	14
Backlight off	cntl-O	15
Accept cursor-position entry	cntl-P	16
Format right-aligned text	cntl-R	18
Begin special instruction*	ESC (cntl-[])	27

\*NOTE: New (rev 4.0) custom-character instructions (ESC-D and ESC-E) begin with the Escape character; see listings under Escape at the end of this section.

### Null (control-@, ASCII 0)

Nulls are ignored; sending a null to the display has no effect. However, unlike other unused codes, nulls are not even stored in the display buffer. They may be used as a brief time delay whose length depends on the baud rate: 2400 bps = 4.16 ms delay; 9600 bps = 1.04 ms.

### Cursor Home (control-A, ASCII 1)

Move the cursor to the first character position of the first line.

### Begin Big-character Display (control-B, ASCII 2)

Put the display into big-character display mode. In this mode, characters are displayed as four-line-tall graphics. The display can show up to four big characters at a time. The big character set includes numbers 0—9, letters A—Z (uppercase only), and symbols period (.), hyphen (-), colon (:), and space. The display remains in big-character mode until it receives a character other than the ones listed, or a control-C. Note that null (ASCII 0) will not end big-character mode because it is discarded before being buffered.

The numbers and letters are four columns wide followed by one blank column; punctuation and spaces are two columns followed by one blank column.

*Tips for using big characters:* Give the display approximately 10 ms to 'draw' the characters. If you have used ESC-D to redefine any of the custom characters, send ESC-E 1 to reset them to defaults before displaying large characters.

### End Big-character Display (control-C, ASCII 3)

End big-character mode without otherwise affecting the display.

**Hide Cursor** (control-D, ASCII 4)

Hide the cursor (either type, blinking or underline).

**Show Underline Cursor** (control-E, ASCII 5)

Show a non-blinking underline cursor at the printing location.

**Show Blinking-Block Cursor** (control-F, ASCII 6)

Show a blinking block cursor at the printing location.

**Bell** (control-G, ASCII 7)

Pulse J4 for approximately 100 ms to beep piezo buzzer.

**Backspace** (control-H or backspace key, ASCII 8)

Move the cursor back one space and erase the character in that space.

**Horizontal Tab** (control-I or Tab key, ASCII 9)

Move the cursor forward to next multiple-of-four column.

**Smart Linefeed** (control-J, ASCII 10)

Move cursor down one line. If immediately preceded by carriage return, linefeed is ignored.

**Vertical Tab** (control-K, ASCII 11)

Move cursor up one line.

**Clear Screen** (control-L, ASCII 12)

Clear the screen, leaving the cursor in position 0 (see figure 3).

**Carriage Return** (control-M, ASCII 13)

Move the cursor to the first position of the next line.

**Backlight ON** (control-N, ASCII 14)

Turn on the LED backlight.

**Backlight OFF** (control-O, ASCII 15)

Turn off the LED backlight.

**Position Cursor** (control-P, ASCII 16)

Accept a number (0 to 79) and move the cursor to that position (where 0 is the 1st character of the 1st line and 79 is the last character of the 4th line; see figure 3). Number may be in text or single-byte format:

*Text method:* Send the desired display position as a printable text. For example, to move the cursor to position 21 (2nd character, 2nd line) from a terminal program, press control-P, and type "21" followed by a space or other character (which will be discarded).

*One-byte method:* Send the display position as a single-byte value equal to the position plus 64. For example, to move to position 21 you would send control-P (ASCII 16) followed by ASCII 85 (21 + 64).

**Clear Column** (control-Q, ASCII 17)

Clear the current column and advance the cursor to the next column, same line. This feature can be used to clear a four-line-high section of the screen.

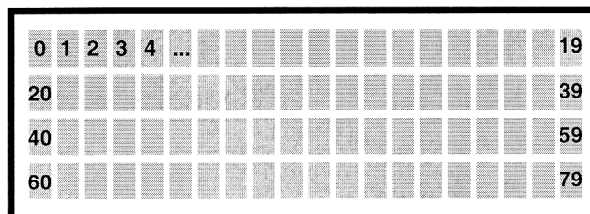


Figure 3. Layout of the 4x20 LCD

**Right-align Text** (control-R, ASCII 18)

Accept a number from 2 to 9 (as text) representing the width of an area on the screen in which right-aligned text is to be printed. Cursor will back up that number of characters from present cursor position. Subsequent text will be stored without printing to the screen until one of the following is received:

- The specified number of characters.
- A control character (ASCII 1–31).
- A decimal point [the period (.) character, ASCII 46].

The display will print the text with right alignment and erase any leftover text within the specified width. For example, move the cursor to the right end of the screen, send control-R (ASCII 18), followed by “5” (ASCII 53), then “123” and Enter. The “123” will be printed right-aligned within the 5-character space.

Right alignment works only with the standard LCD character set, not with “big” characters (cntl-B).

**Escape Sequences** (control-[, ASCII 27, followed by additional parameters)

BPP-420 understands two instructions that begin with the escape code (ASCII 27).

• **Define a Custom Character** (ESC D n B0 B1 B2 B3 B4 B5 B6 B7)

The BPP-420 has eight custom-character slots. These characters are mapped to ASCII codes 128 through 135. At startup, the unit loads bitmaps into these slots for the big-character (cntl-B) mode. Using the Define instruction, you can change a bitmap. Send Escape (ASCII 27) followed by the letter D (ASCII 68), then the symbol number you wish to define (0–7, ASCII 48–55), followed by eight bytes defining the bitmap. The contents of those bytes map to the custom character as shown in figure 4.

NOTE: If you redefine any of the custom characters, you must restore them using ESC E before using big-character mode.

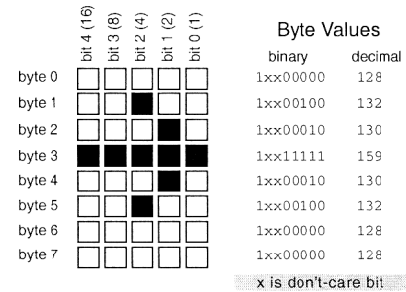
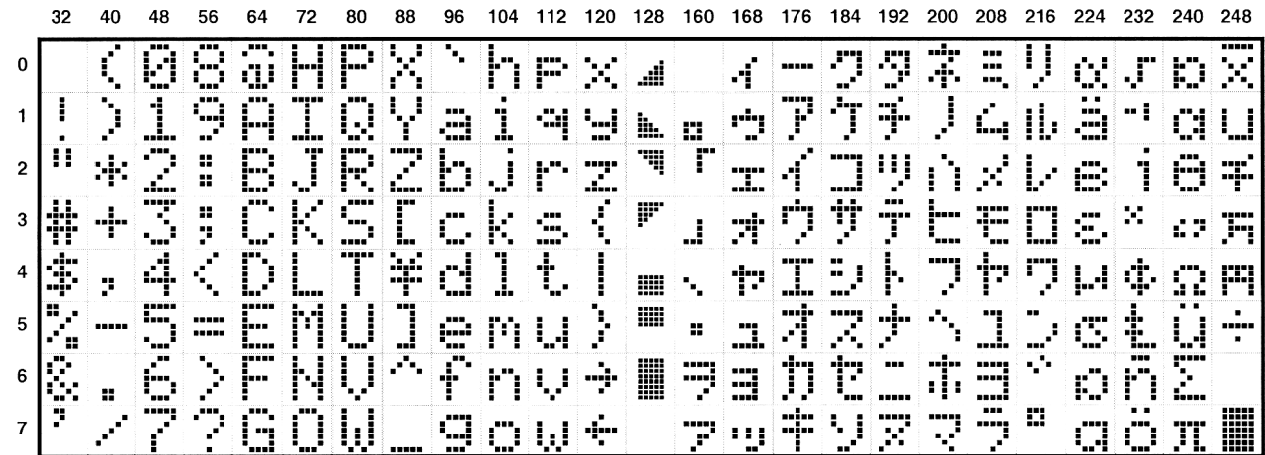


Figure 4. Defining a custom symbol.  
(see www.seetron.com for bitmap-design tools)

• **Restore Default Custom Characters** (ESC E 1)

The big-character mode (cntl-B) builds 4-line-high characters using the custom-character bitmaps (ASCII 128 —135). If you use ESC D to redefine one or more of these characters, big characters won't display correctly. To restore the bitmaps needed for custom characters, use ESC E 1. That is, send ASCII 27 (ESC), ASCII 69 (E), and ASCII 49 (1).



To find the ASCII code for a given character, add the row and column numbers. For example, capital D is in the column marked 64 in row 4, so its ASCII code is 68. Use the reverse procedure to determine the symbol for a given code. For example, ASCII code 244 produces the symbol Ω, found at column 240, row 4.

NOTE: ASCII 135–160 are blanks

Figure 5. Character code chart

## Program Examples

Any computer/programming language that can produce serial output (2400 or 9600 bps, N81) can talk to the BPP-420. The examples here are in BASIC, chosen because of its popularity and readability.

You may download these and other program listings from [www.seetron.com](http://www.seetron.com).

---

```
' Program: 420DEMO.BAS (Demonstrate 4x20 Serial LCD with BASIC Stamp I)
' This program demonstrates many of the features of the 4x20 Serial
' LCD Module from Scott Edwards Electronics, Inc. Set the module to
' 2400 bps (S1: both switches down). Connect the serial input
' of the module to Stamp pin 0, GND to GND and +5V to +5V.
' Run this program.

' =====Define names for LCD instructions=====
SYMBOL noCurs = 4           ' Make cursor invisible.
SYMBOL ulCurs = 5           ' Show underline cursor.
SYMBOL clrLCD = 12          ' Clear entire LCD screen.
SYMBOL posCmd = 16          ' Position cursor.
SYMBOL clrCol = 17          ' Clear column.
SYMBOL bell = 7             ' Ring bell.
SYMBOL wedge = 128         ' Wedge-shaped symbol.
SYMBOL bksp = 8             ' Backspace.
SYMBOL bigNums = 2         ' Begin big numbers.

' =====Begin demonstration=====
pause 1000 ' Wait a sec.
serout 0,n2400,(clrLCD)      ' Clear the screen.
for b2 = 0 to 79
  serout 0,n2400,(wedge)     ' Fill screen with wedges.
next
pause 1000 ' Wait 1 second.
serout 0,n2400,(posCmd,68)   ' Move to position 4 (64+4= 68).
for b2 = 1 to 12
  pause 350                  ' ...the clear-column feature.
  serout 0,n2400,(clrCol,bell) ' Ring bell (if available) each loop.
next

' Turn on the underline cursor, move to pos. 26, and show message.
serout 0,n2400,(ulCurs,posCmd,90,"4x20 LCD")
pause 1000                   ' Wait 1 second.

for b2 = 1 to 8
  pause 100                   ' Backspace to erase message.
  serout 0,n2400,(bksp,bell)   ' Ring bell (if available) each loop.
next
pause 1000 ' Wait 1 second.
serout 0,n2400,(noCurs)       ' Turn cursor off.

' Print the numbers 0 to 99 in big numbers in the middle of
' the screen. Pause a half second between numbers.
for b2 = 0 to 99
  serout 0,n2400,(posCmd,70,bigNums,#b2)
  pause 500
next b2
END      ' Finished.
```

**Program Examples (cont.)**

```

' Program: 420DEMO.BS2 (Demonstrate 4x20 Serial LCD with Stamp II)
' This program demonstrates many of the features of the 4x20 Serial
' LCD Module from Scott Edwards Electronics. Set the module to
' 9600 bps (S1: switch 1 down; 2 up). Connect the serial input
' of the module to BS2 pin P0, GND to GND and +5V to +5V.
' Run this program.

' =====Define names for LCD instructions, bps=====
noCurs      con      4          ' Make cursor invisible.
ulCurs      con      5          ' Show underline cursor.
clrLCD      con      12         ' Clear entire LCD screen.
posCmd      con      16         ' Position cursor.
clrCol      con      17         ' Clear column.
wedge       con      128        ' Wedge-shaped symbol.
bigNums     con      2          ' Begin big numbers.
N9600       con      $4054      ' Baudmode for inverted, 9600-bps output.
' The constants "bell" and "bksp" are predefined in PBASIC2.

' =====Begin demonstration=====
pause 1000
serout 0,N9600,[clrLCD]          ' Clear the screen.
for b2 = 0 to 79
  serout 0,N9600,[wedge]        ' Fill screen with wedges.
next
pause 1000          ' Wait 1 second.
serout 0,N9600,[posCmd,68]      ' Move to position 4 (64+4= 68).
for b2 = 1 to 12          ' Clear a 12-character swath with
  pause 350              ' ..the clear-column feature.
  serout 0,N9600,[clrCol,bell]  ' Ring bell (if available) each loop.
next

' Turn on the underline cursor, move to pos. 26, and show message.
serout 0,N9600,[ulCurs,posCmd,90,"4x20 LCD"]
pause 1000          ' Wait 1 second.
for b2 = 1 to 8
  pause 100          ' Backspace to erase message.
  serout 0,N9600,[bksp,bell]  ' Ring bell (if available) each loop.
next
pause 1000          ' Wait 1 second.
serout 0,N9600,[noCurs]        ' Turn cursor off.

' Print the numbers 0 to 99 in big numbers in the middle of
' the screen. Pause a half second between numbers.
for b2 = 0 to 99
  serout 0,N9600,[posCmd,70,bigNums,dec b2]
  pause 500
next
END          ' Finished.

```



## Program Examples (cont.)

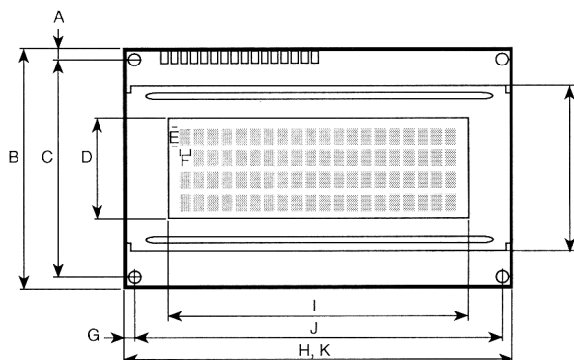
```
' Program: Q420DEMO.BAS (QBASIC Demo of 4x20 Serial LCD)
' This program demonstrates the 4x20 Serial LCD Module from Scott
' Edwards Electronics, Inc. with QBASIC. This program requires
' slight modifications to run under PowerBASIC or First BASIC,
' available from www.powerbasic.com. A modified version is
' available for download from www.seetron.com/bpk_ex1.zip.
' To run this program, connect the serial input of the LCD
' module to the com port transmit-data pin (pin 3 of DB9;
' pin 2 of DB25). Connect GND of module to com port signal GND
' (pin 5 of DB9; pin 7 of DB25). Configure LCD module for 9600 bps
' (S1: switch 1 down; 2 up). Connect +5V power to LCD module : +5V
' to +5V and GND to GND. Run demo.
DECLARE SUB pause (time AS INTEGER)
CONST clrLCD = 12      ' Clear the LCD screen.
CONST noCurs = 4      ' Make cursor invisible.
CONST ulCurs = 5      ' Turn on underline cursor.
CONST bell = 7        ' Beep piezo buzzer (if attached).
CONST bksp = 8        ' Backspace.
CONST bigNums = 2     ' Begin big-number mode.
CONST clrCol = 17     ' Clear column.
CONST wedge = 128     ' Wedge-shaped symbol.
CONST posCmd = 16     ' Position the cursor.
OPEN "com1:9600,N,8,1,CD0,CS0,DS0,OP0" FOR OUTPUT AS #1
PRINT #1, CHR$(clrLCD);      ' Clear LCD.
FOR i = 0 TO 79
  PRINT #1, CHR$(wedge);      ' Fill the screen with wedges.
NEXT
PRINT #1, CHR$(posCmd); CHR$(68);      ' Move cursor to pos. 4 (64+4).
FOR i = 1 TO 12
  PRINT #1, CHR$(clrCol); CHR$(bell);  ' ..screen. Ring bell w/each loop.
  pause (350)
NEXT
PRINT #1, CHR$(posCmd); CHR$(90); CHR$(ulCurs);
PRINT #1, "4x20 LCD";          ' Print message on LCD.
SLEEP 1                        ' Wait a second.
FOR i = 1 TO 8
  PRINT #1, CHR$(bksp); CHR$(bell);    ' Backspace to erase message.
  pause (150)                          ' Ring bell w/each loop.
NEXT
SLEEP 1                            ' Wait a second.
PRINT #1, CHR$(noCurs);            ' Make cursor invisible.

FOR i = 0 TO 99
  theNum$ = LTRIM$(RTRIM$(STR$(i)))    ' Show #s 0-99 as big numbers.
  PRINT #1, CHR$(posCmd); CHR$(70); CHR$(bigNums); theNum$;
  pause (500)                          ' Trim spaces from number string.
  ' Wait 1/2 second.
NEXT
END
SUB pause (time AS INTEGER)
FOR i = 1 TO time
  PRINT #1, CHR$(0);
NEXT
END SUB
```

**Dimensions and Specifications**

Current BPP-420L models use LCDs manufactured by Powertip; older models were made by Truly. The sole significant difference is in dimension L, the y dimension of the screen frame.

	Powertip	Truly
A y offset pcb edge to hole ctr	2.50	2.50
B y pcb height	60.00	60.00
C y hole spacing	55.00	55.00
D y screen opening	25.20	25.20
E y character size	4.75	4.75
F x character size	2.95	2.95
G x offset pcb edge to hole ctr	2.50	2.50
H x screen frame	98.00	98.00
I x screen opening	76.00	76.00
J x hole spacing	93.00	93.00
K x pcb width	98.00	98.00
L y frame height	42.00	38.40
- mounting hole diameter	2.50	2.50
- frame depth, non-backlit	5.00	5.00
- frame depth, LED-backlit	8.50	8.50



- All dimensions in mm.
- Worst-case tolerance for any dimension is ±0.50mm.
- Maximum depth (from front of screen frame to tips of interface header posts) is 26mm.
- Dimensions based on information provided by manufacturers—subject to change without notice.

Figure 6. Physical dimensions

**⚠ Important Notes on Handling, Installation, and Mounting**

LCDs are precision-made electro-optical devices that should last a lifetime of normal use. They are vulnerable to damage from mishandling, however. Our warranty excludes damage from abuse, so it is very important that you handle and mount your LCD with care. Here are some tips:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handle in a static-safe manner</li> <li>• Do not drop or strike</li> <li>• Do not attempt to disassemble, repair, or modify</li> <li>• Do not drill, cut, notch, grind, etc.</li> <li>• Mount with machine screws in corner holes</li> <li>• Do not attempt to enlarge mounting holes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not use glue, epoxy, or paint on this unit</li> <li>• Protect from water, solvents, oils</li> <li>• Do not bend, warp, or stress</li> <li>• Install behind a protective transparent window</li> <li>• Protect from strong electrical fields, ESD</li> <li>• Protect from reverse-power hookup</li> </ul>
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**Table 2. Basic Specifications**

Power requirements (BL off) .....	4.8 to 5.5 Vdc @ 10mA
Power requirements (BL on) .....	4.8 to 5.5 Vdc @ 100mA
User connector .....	5-pin header; 0.025" posts on 0.10" centers
Connector pinout .....	+5 GND SER GND +5
Serial input .....	RS-232, or inverted TTL/CMOS, 9600 or 2400, N81
Buzzer output .....	5V @ 25mA max; pulses approx. 100ms for BELL
Operating temperature .....	0° to 50°C (32° to 122°F)
Serial data rates .....	2400 or 9600 bps