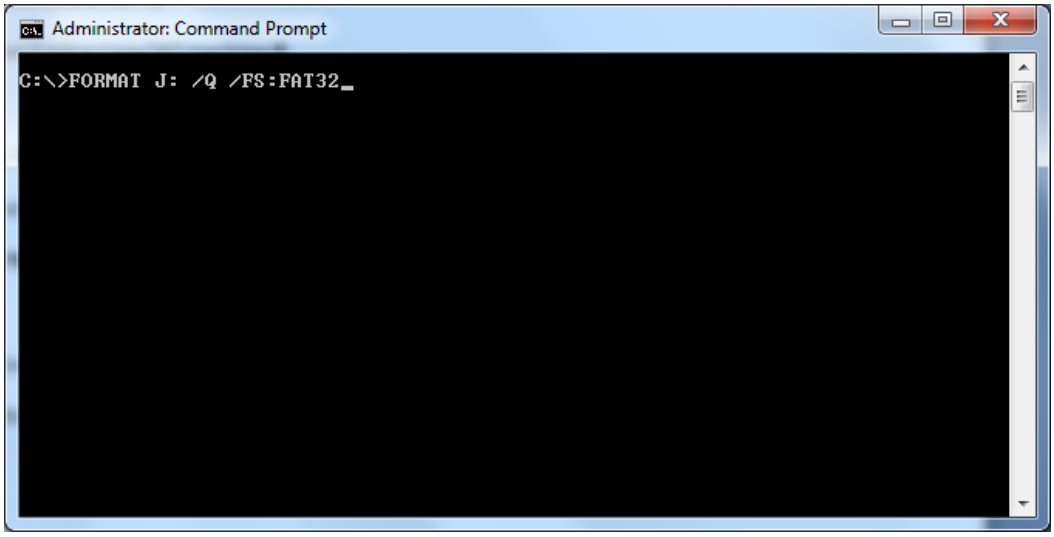
How to Create a Bootable USB Drive in Windows Vista or Windows 7

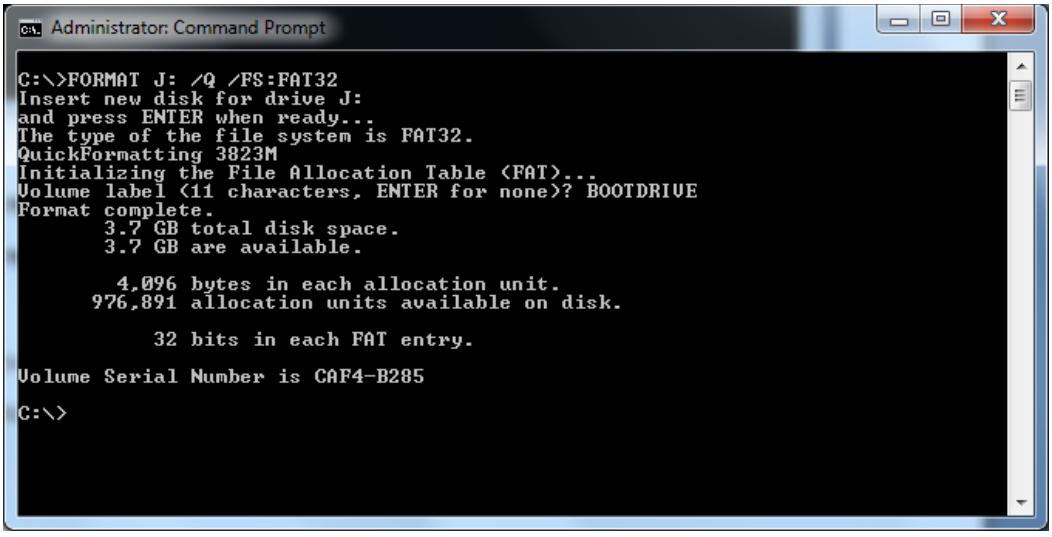
First, format the drive from a Windows Vista or Windows 7 PC. You can format via Windows Explorer or do it the old-fashioned way as shown here…

Start a Command Prompt as an Administrator… right-click Command prompt in the Start Menu – All Programs – Accessories, and issue the following commands…

FORMAT J: /Q /FS FAT32

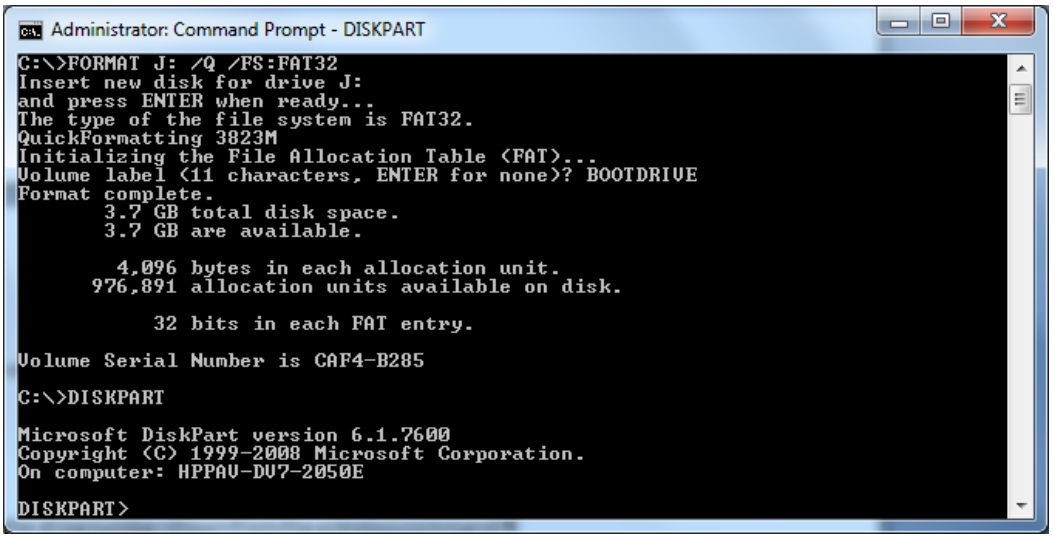
(where J: is the drive letter of the USB drive)





In this example, I have "quick" formatted a 3.7GB USB drive (by using the /Q switch), with a file system (/FS☺ of FAT32, but you could equally have specified NTFS.

This screen shows that the command has completed successfully.



Next we use a tool that should be “handled with much care”. The disk partitioning tool or DISKPART.

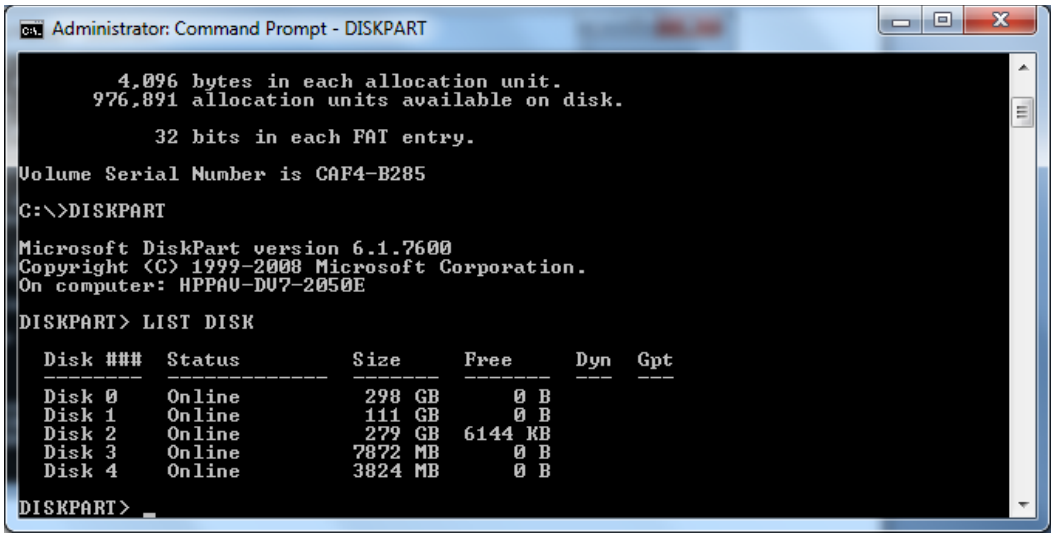
To activate the first partition on the drive that has just been formatted, start DISKPART.

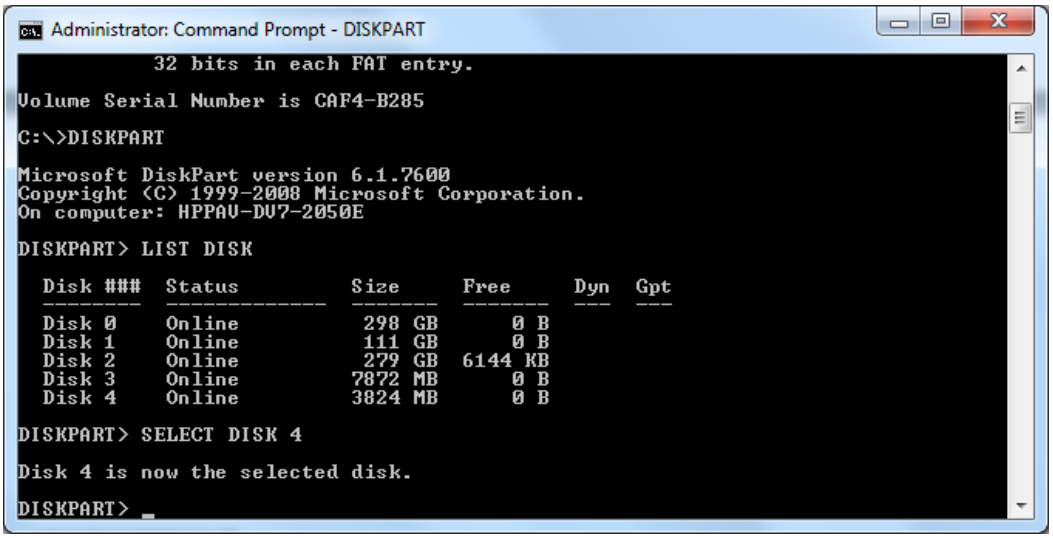
List the available disks attached to the system, using the following command…

LIST DISK

Note the 3.7GB drive is listed as drive 4, and is 3824MB in size.

This is obviously the disk that was previously formatted, as disks 1 and 2 are hundreds of gigabytes in size, and disk 3 is about twice the size of the drive seen above.





Next, select the disk that has just been formatted, using the SELECT DISK command.

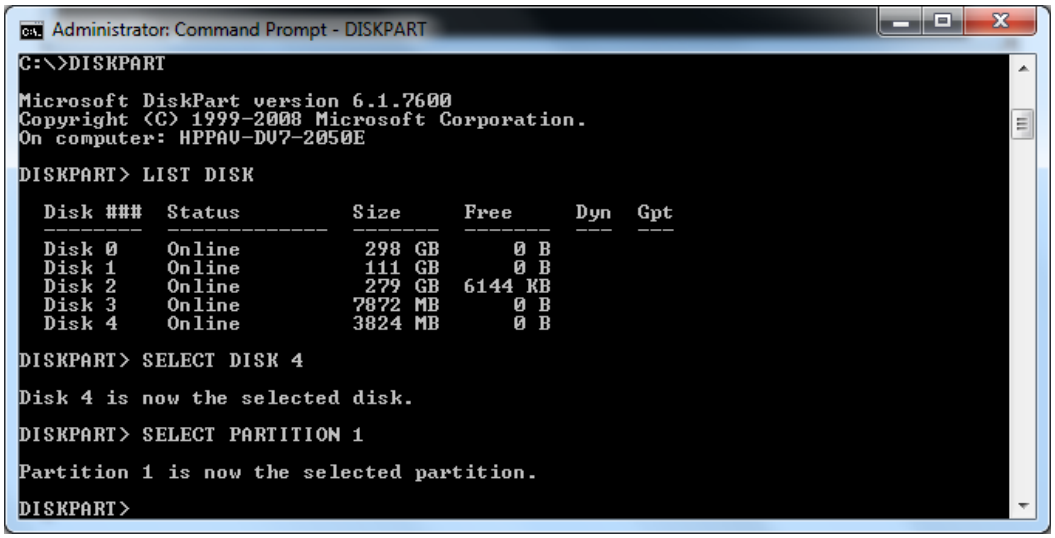
SELECT DISK x

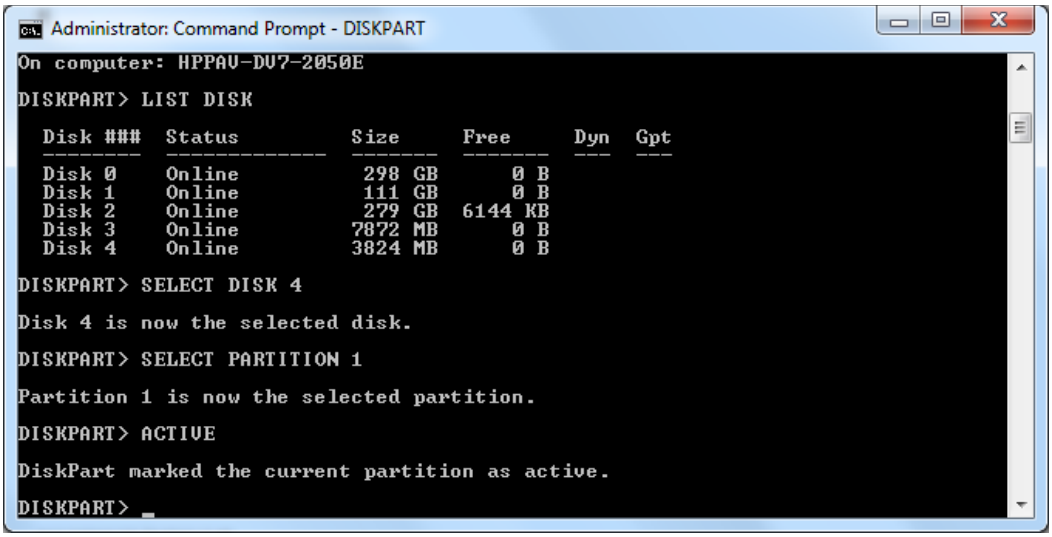
(where x is the drive number shown from the previous command, in this case “4”)

BE CAREFUL TO SELECT THE RIGHT DISK NUMBER.

Now select the first partition on the chosen disk…

SELECT PARTITION 1



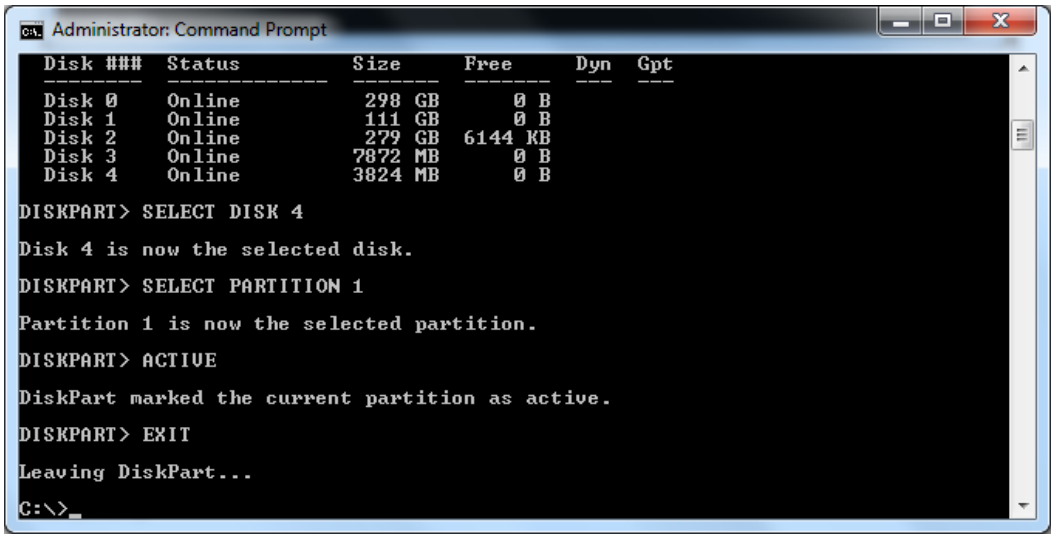


… and make that partition “active”…

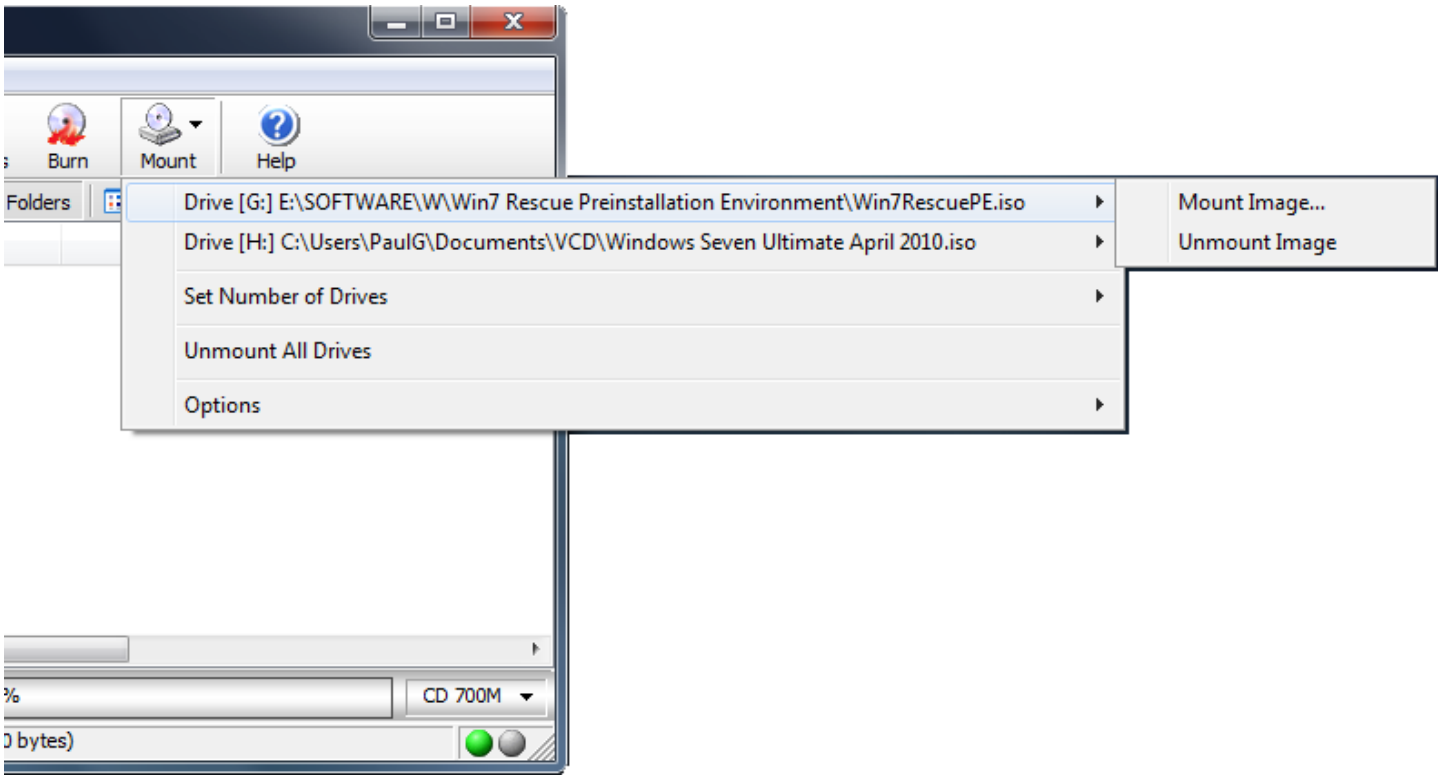
ACTIVE

You can now exit the DISKPART utility…

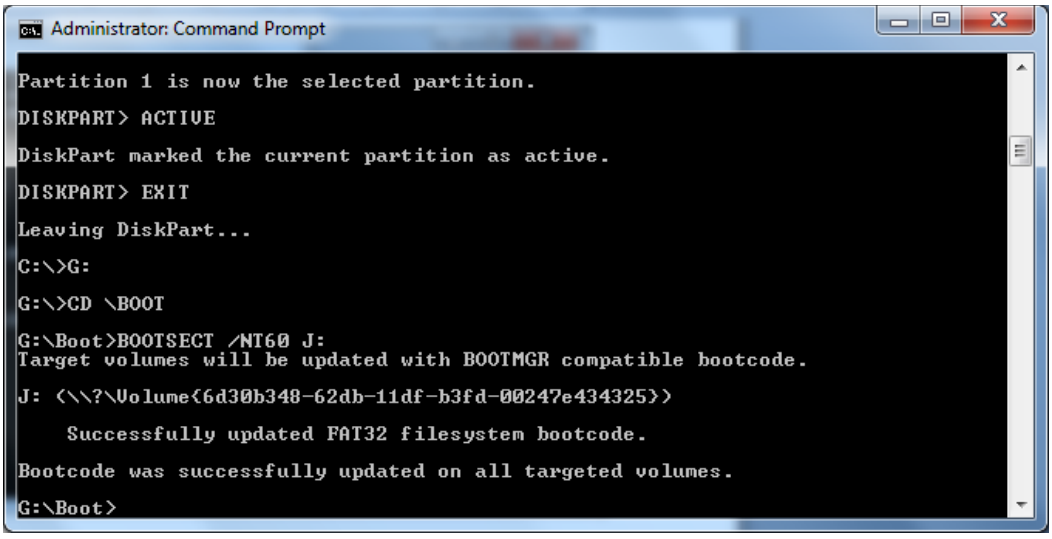
EXIT



The next step requires the image of the bootable disk, for example a Windows 7 rescue disk. This is usually a CD/DVD image such as an *.ISO file. Files such as these can be “mounted” (viewed as a drive, with a drive letter assigned to them), using a tool such as PowerISO (http://www.poweriso.com)...



Next, place a Windows Vista or Windows 7 “boot sector” on the USB drive. This is done by copying from the mounted *.ISO image…



G:

(where G: is the disk drive letter of the mounted ISO image)

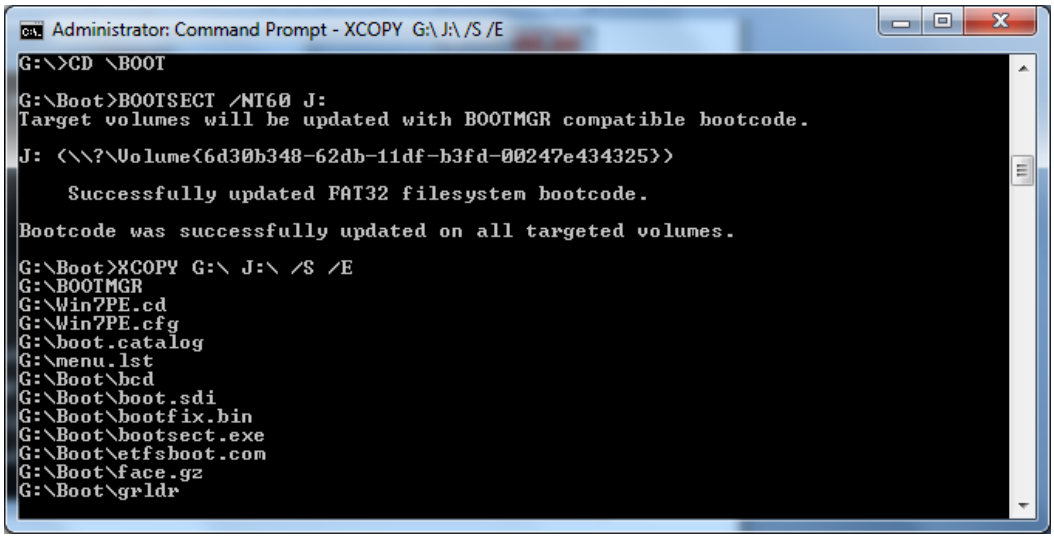
CD \BOOT

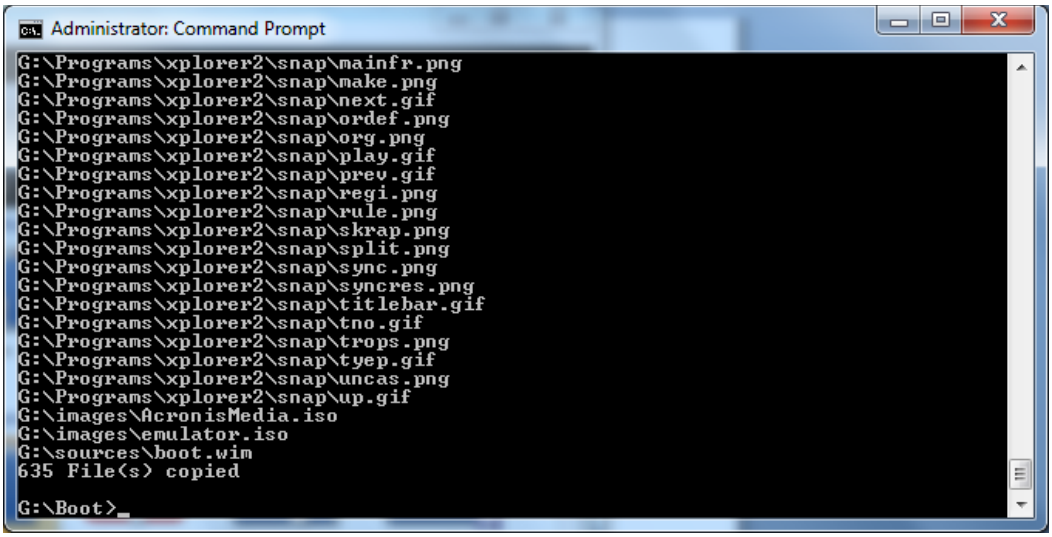
Copy the boot sector data from the mounted ISO image to the USB drive, using the following command…

BOOTSECT /NT60 J:

Now copy all of the files of the mounted ISO image to the USB drive, using the XCOPY command…

XCOPY G:\ J:\ /S/E





This may take a while, but when it's finished, the bootable USB drive will be ready for use.