

# What does the “Zw” prefix mean?

 [devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20090603-00](http://devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20090603-00)

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If you spend time in kernel mode, you’re accustomed to seeing functions with two-letter (or occasionally, three-letter) prefixes that indicate which component they belong to.

Prefix	Component	Example
Ex	Executive	ExAllocatePool
Hal	Hardware abstraction layer	HalGetBusData
Io	I/O manager	IoAllocateIrp
Ke	Kernel	KeBugCheck
Ks	Kernel streaming	KsAcquireControl
Mm	Memory manager	MmGetPhysicalAddress
Ob	Object manager	ObReferenceObjectByHandle
Po	Power management	PoSetSystemState
Se	Security	SeAccessCheck
Tdi	Transport driver interface	TdiProviderReady
Zw	????	ZwCancelTimer

What does the “Zw” mean?

Answer: Nothing.

The people who chose the letters wanted to pick something that was unlikely to collide with anything. Perhaps they had a prior bad experience with having chosen a prefix, only to find that somebody ahead of them claimed it already?

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