



# **The Action Machine 3**

User's Guide

# Introduction

Thank you for downloading The Action Machine 3!

The Action Machine 3 is built around a time-management/productivity concept known as time-boxing.

Time-boxing is a simple but powerful way of not only organizing and managing the things you have to do throughout the day, but it employs a little psychology in order to get you to actually take action on them.

This productivity method is based on a simple, 3-Step process:

1. **Write down all the things (actions) you want to get done for the day.** Everything from writing, creating content, or planning your next project, to answering your email and balancing your checkbook.
2. **Assign a specific time to each action.** Anything from 15 minutes to 2 hours. Chunks of 30 minutes or less work best.
3. **Select an action, start a timer (like an egg time), and focus on nothing but accomplishing that task.** This means you don't answer the phone, you don't get up for a drink, you don't log onto Facebook - none of that. You remain focused on the task-at-hand!

If you've ever used this system, you know that despite its apparent simplicity, it WORKS amazingly well!

Even though it is very effective, doing this system manually, with a written list of actions and a mechanical egg-timer is no way to approach things in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where computers and software can not only help automate processes, but in some ways, make it even better.

Thus, The Action Machine 3 was born...

The software takes this productivity system, wraps it in a powerful, intuitive interface, and adds some useful features that would not be possible otherwise, as you'll soon see.

So, if you're ready to take control of your time and get things done, let's jump right in!

## The Action Machine 3 Quickstart

In this section, you're going to be introduced to some basic, overall concepts about how The Action Machine 3 works, and how to use it effectively.

At its core, there are two simple elements involved in using The Action Machine 3:

- **Actions** – These are the things you want to accomplish, such as *Check Email*, or *Organize Office*.
- **Timers** – You use timers to assign a specific time to accomplish each action, such as 30 minutes.

Within The Action Machine 3, these two elements are brought together, allowing you to quickly create a set of timers from the actions you want to accomplish throughout the day.

To help you understand this process better, let's plan a simple day of activities using The Action Machine 3.

To begin, let's assume you have the following 4 things you want to get done today, and you've allotted a certain amount of time to accomplish each one:

- **Check and Answer Email** – 30 minutes
- **Read News** – 15 minutes
- **Work on Sales Project** – 120 minutes
- **Meet with Client** – 45 minutes

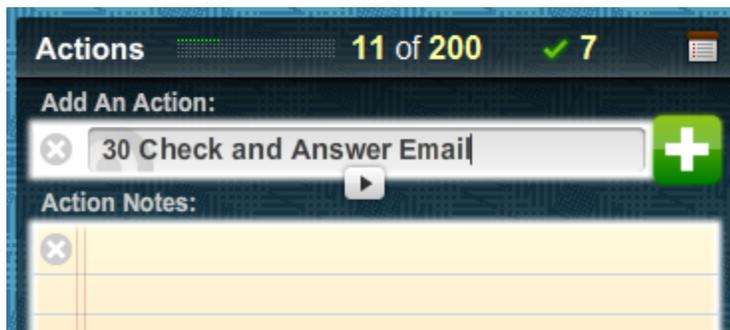
Let's now use The Action Machine 3 to plan these activities.

1. **Launch your copy of The Action Machine 3:**

Start The Action Machine 3 like you would any other program on your computer.

2. **Locate the *Add An Action* box, and type the following:**

*30 Check and Answer Email*



This is telling The Action Machine 3 that you want to allot 30 minutes for checking your email.

If you wanted to allot 45 minutes for this task, you would enter:

*45 Check and Answer Email*

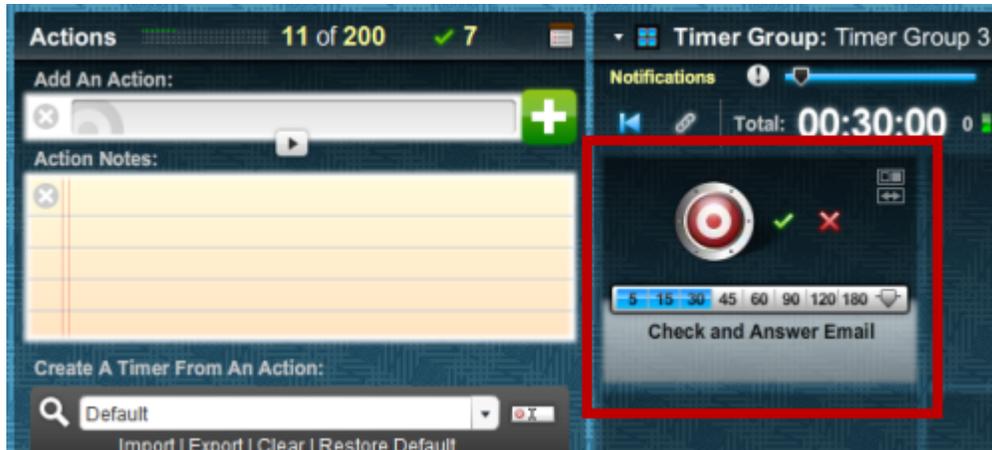
Notice the format of how you enter a time amount first (in minutes), followed by the name of the action:

*[time] [action]*

**NOTE:** If you want to add notes to this action, you can enter them into the *Actions Notes* box before proceeding with the next step.

3. **Press *Enter* or the *Plus* button to create a timer from this action:**

This will automatically add a new, 30-minute timer to the timers section of the interface, labeled *Check and Answer Email*.



You have created the first 'block' of productivity for your day. Let's continue adding the rest of our actions.

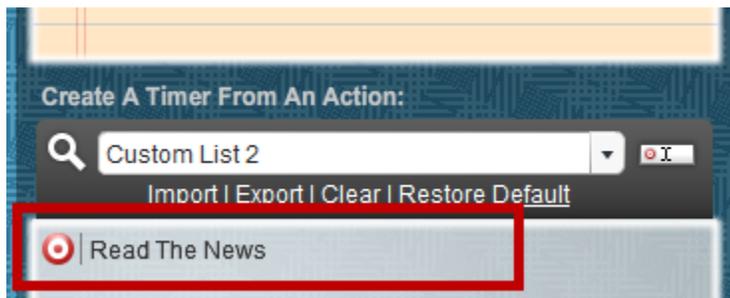
4. **Return to the *Add An Action* box, and enter the following:**

*Read the News*

Now you'll notice that we've not added a time amount to this action, as we did in Step 2. The reason for this is to demonstrate a second way of creating timers from actions...

5. **Press *Enter* or the *Plus* button:**

You'll notice that instead of automatically creating a timer for this action, as was previously demonstrated, the action we entered has instead been added to the current *Action List* (which we'll discuss in more detail later):



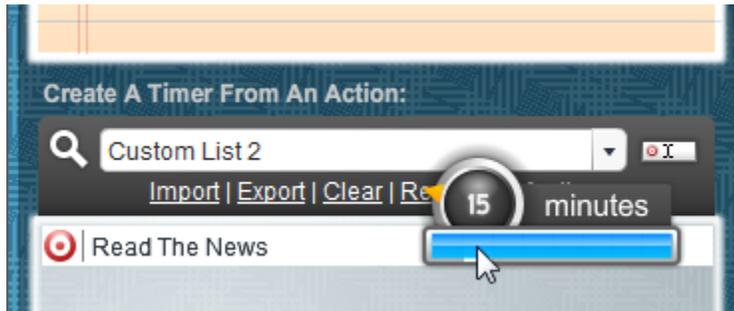
Once again, this happened because we didn't include a time amount when we created the action in Step 4.

The fact that the action has been added to the current Action List means that it hasn't been assigned a specific time value – yet.

Briefly, Action Lists are a way to save commonly used actions, so you avoid retyping them again and again.

Well, now that our *Read the News* action is part of the current Action List, ready for use/reuse, let's create a 15-minute timer from it.

6. Move your mouse over the *Read the News* action on the Action List. When the blue time bar appears, move your mouse over it until it displays *15 minutes*, then click:



You'll notice that this creates a new 15-minute timer next to the first one we created.

The new timer is labeled, *Read the News*.

Each new timer you create will update the total time display (the time and the green bar to the right of the time) to reflect the total amount of time allotted to accomplish all the actions shown:



**NOTE:** Initially, the bar that's part of the total time display is green. If the total time increases above 8 hours, it turns yellow. If you go above 12 hours, it will turn red, indicating that you may want to trim down the amount of work you have scheduled:



Let's finish by adding our last 2 actions.

7. Return to the *Add An Action* box, enter the following, then press Enter:

*120 Work on Sales Project*

This creates a 120-minute timer labeled *Work on Sales Project*.

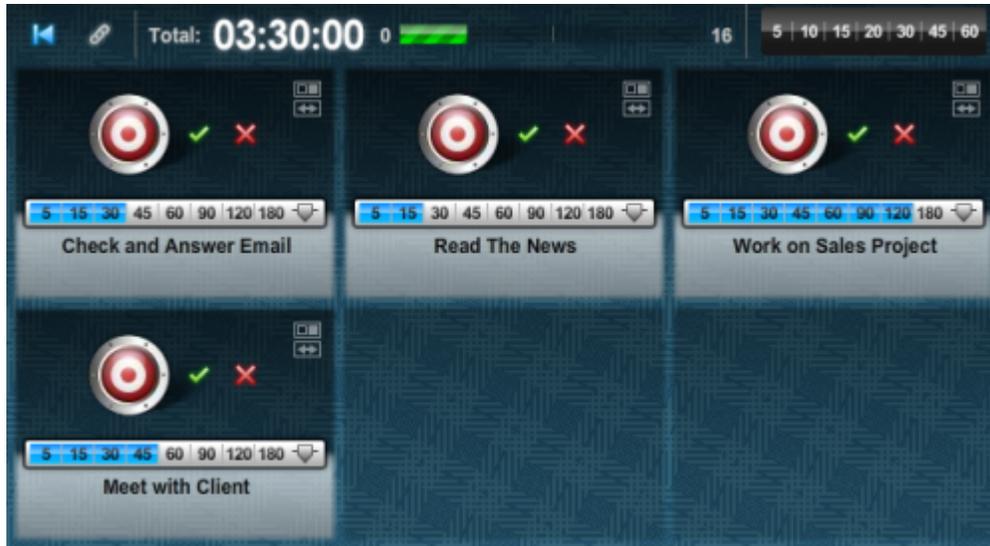
8. Finally, in the *Add An Action* box, enter the following, then press Enter:

*45 Meet with Client*

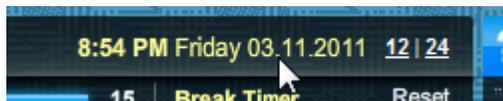
This creates the last timer for our demo.

You should now see 4 timers in the timer area of the interface.

The total time amount displayed should be 3:30, representing 3 hours, 30 minutes.



9. **Place your mouse over the current time display to see the estimated time of completion:**



Anytime you place your mouse over the current time display on the interface, the text color will change to yellow, indicating that the time shown is the estimated time you will complete all the actions you have created timers for, if you begin right away.

The amount shown is dynamic, meaning it updates as you add, remove, or pause timers.

With our timers in place, it's time to begin using them to get things done!

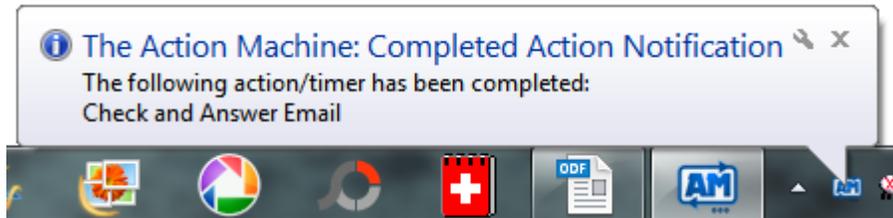
10. **Press the *Play* button on the *Check and Answer Email* timer, and start taking action:**

When you press the *Play* button on the timer, it will begin counting down - in this case, from a starting point of 30 minutes.

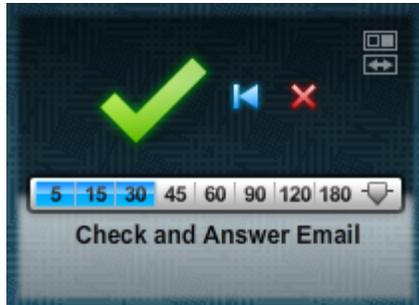
The goal now is to do nothing for the next 30 minutes except the task-at-hand, which in this scenario is to check and answer email.

As you work, you can either minimize The Action Machine 3, or bring other windows in front of it to get your work done.

After the allotted time is up (the timer has finished counting down), an audio alarm will go off, and a notification balloon will appear in your Windows System Tray indicating that the timer has completed.



When you view The Action Machine 3, you will see a big, green checkmark that indicates that the timer you started has completed.



At this point, you can press the *Play* button on the next timer to begin taking action on that activity.

You continue this process until all the timers have been completed.

**NOTE:** If you don't want to have to manually start the next timer when one has finished, press the *Link Timers* button, which will auto-start the next timer in the sequence when a timer is completed.



That's it!

You've just completed all the necessary steps to begin using The Action Machine 3 right away! But as you can imagine, there's more power and functionality available within the application than what we've been able to discuss in this short Quickstart.

In the sections that follow, we'll be looking at the various elements of The Action Machine 3 in greater detail, to help you get the most value from using it daily.

## Creating And Managing Actions

Actions, or the things you want to accomplish, are essential elements to using The Action Machine 3.

There are 2 types of actions you can create:

- One-Time Actions

- Repeated Actions

Let's look at each of these in more detail.

## ***One-Time Actions***

One-time actions are just as the name implies – actions you likely only need to do once.

These could be things like creating an eBay auction, fixing a screen door, or something similar.

## **Creating Timers From One-Time Actions**

Let's look at the procedure for creating timers from one-time actions:

1. In the ***Add An Action*** box, enter the number of minutes you want to allot for the action, followed by the name of the action:

As described in the Quickstart, this entry should be in this format:

*[time] [action]*

For example:

*20 Create eBay Auction*



This will create a 20 minute timer labeled, *Create eBay Auction*.

**NOTE:** Always be sure to enter the minute amount first, followed by a space, then the name of the action.

The length of time you can allot for an action (in minutes) ranges from 1 to 479 (7 hours and 59 minutes). This time is adjustable even after the timer has been created, as you'll learn in the next section, *Working With Timers*.

Optionally, you can give an action a priority (*low*, *medium*, or *high*) by adding either 1 (\*), 2 (\*\*), or 3 (\*\*\*) asterisks before the action name.

For example, to give the action in this step a *medium* priority, you would enter it as:

*20 \*\* Create eBay Auction*

Doing this will cause an orange (*medium*) flag to appear on the timer when it is created from this action:



2. (Optional) Click inside the *Action Notes* box to include some notes to the action:

Notes can contain tips, reminders, or any other kind of information related to this action you might feel would be helpful.

In addition to standard text, notes can include basic HTML for formatting purposes.

Supported HTML tags include:

**Bold** - `<b></b>`

**Italic** - `<i></i>`

**Underline** - `<u></u>`

**Numbered List** - `<ol></ol>`

**Bulleted List** - `<ul></ul>`

**List Items** - `<li></li>`

**Links** - `<a></a>`

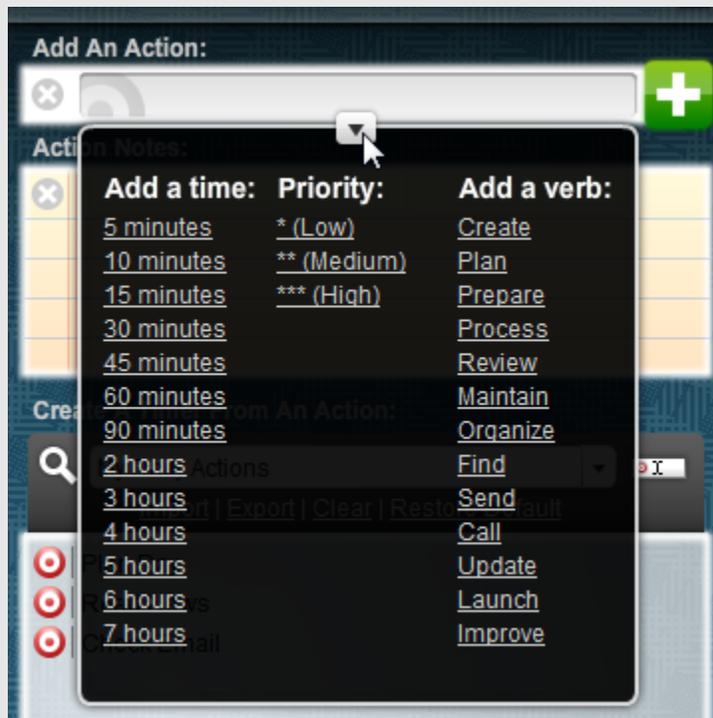
3. Click the *Add An Action* button (the green plus button) to create a timer from the action:

This will automatically create a timer for this action.

As you've seen, creating one-time actions is a quick and simple process. But for those actions you perform on a regular, ongoing basis, you need a little more of a robust system, which we'll be looking at next.

## Using The *Add An Action Panel*

Below the *Add An Action* box, you'll find a small arrow button, which when you move your mouse over, will reveal a panel known as the *Add An Action Panel*:



This panel contains three columns of links that help you quickly define various elements of an action (its time, its priority, and a verb that represents what you want to do in the action).

For example, if you want to spend 30 minutes organizing your office, and it's of medium priority to you, you would click the following links, respectively:

- [30 minutes](#)
- [\\*\\* \(Medium\)](#)
- [Organize](#)

This would fill the *Add An Action* box with the beginnings of an action:



All you would need to do is add the word, *Office*, to the end, and press the *Add An Action* button to create a timer.

Here are few important things to keep in mind when using this panel:

- Elements you add to an action must follow this sequence:

*[time] [priority] [verb]*

**NOTE:** There's a space between each item.

**NOTE:** This is the sequence in which you'll find these elements listed on the panel itself.

- You're not required to use all three elements when using the links on the panel. Just make sure that when you forgo using an element, that you maintain the sequence shown in the previous bullet point for elements you DO use. For example:

*[time] [verb]*

or

*[priority] [verb]*

**NOT**

*[priority] [time]*

or

*[verb] [priority]*

- If you use the links on this panel to create the beginnings of an action, and you enter the sequence wrong for some reason, click the *Clear* button (the circle with an X in it) to the left of the *Add An Action* box and try again.

## ***Repeated Actions***

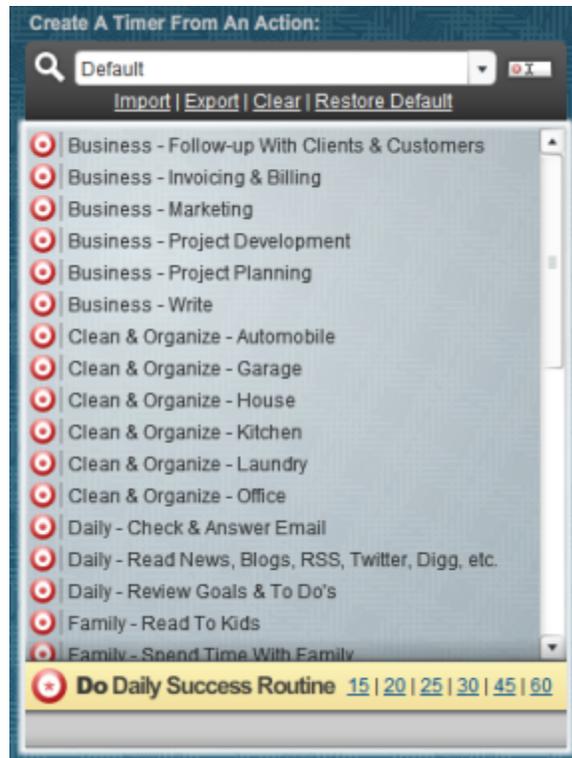
Some actions in your life you perform regularly.

Things such as:

- Checking your email
- Reading the news
- Planning your day
- And so on...

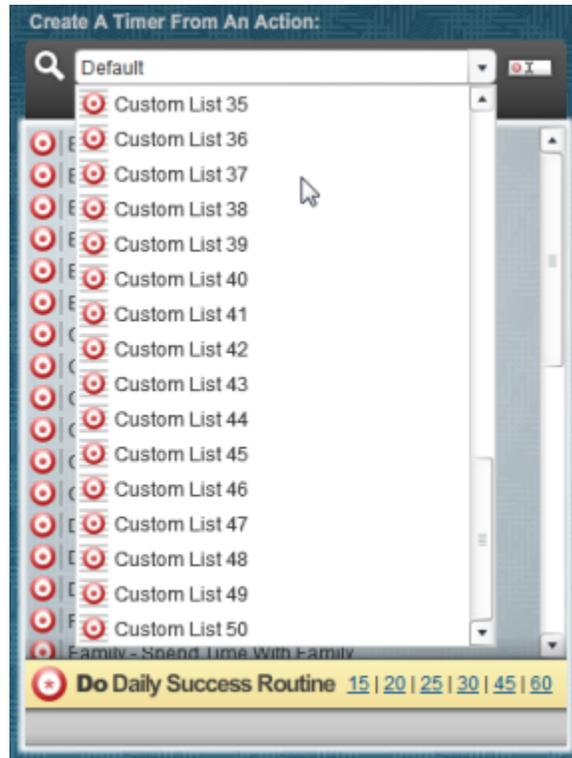
Because you perform these actions regularly, even daily, having to enter them into The Action Machine 3 using the method described in the previous section would quickly become tedious and time consuming – not something you want from a productivity tool!

In order to make creating and managing repeated actions easier, The Action Machine 3 makes use of *Action Lists*:



Action Lists are simply groups of actions (including notes) that are saved in The Action Machine 3 from which you can quickly create timers – saving a lot of time and repeated keystrokes.

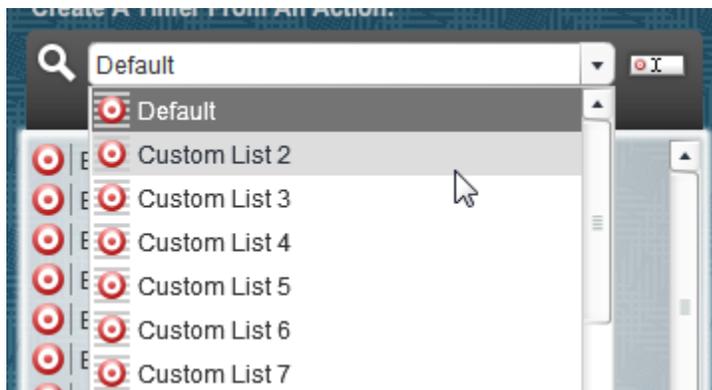
The Action Machine 3 provides 50 different Actions Lists you can use to organize the various actions of your life into:



## Creating Timers From Repeated Actions

Let's look at the procedure for adding actions to an Action List and then creating timers from those actions:

1. **From the Action List drop-down box, select Custom Action List 2:**



When you do this, the Action List display will update to display any actions currently in this list. By default, this list is empty, so the Action List display should be clear of any actions.

By selecting this Action List and making it the current list, any actions we add (which we'll do in a moment) will be added to *this* list.

Before we add any actions to this list, let's first rename it.

2. **Click the button to the right of the Action List drop-down box to rename the current Action List:**

A simple dialog box appears allowing you to edit the name of the current Action List.



3. **Give the Action List a new name, such as *My Daily Actions*, and press OK:**

You'll see that the name of the current Action List has been updated.

Now let's begin adding some actions to it.

4. **In the *Add An Action* box, enter the name of the action, such as *Check Email*:**

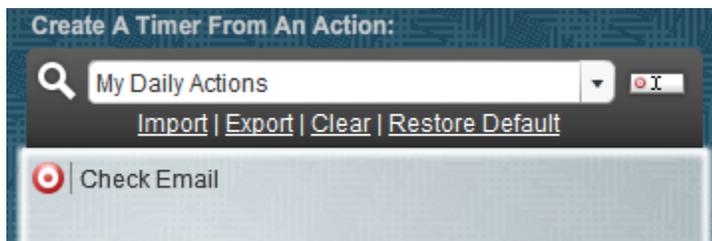
You'll notice that we've *not* included a time amount when entering this action, as we did when creating a one-time action in the previous exercise. This is because actions that are added to an Action List (thus are used over and over again), can be assigned various times whenever timers are created from them.

This will make more sense in a moment.

5. **(Optional) Click inside the *Action Notes* box to include some notes with the action:**

Once again, if you choose to add notes to this action, do so in this box. If not, move on to the next step.

6. **Click the *Add An Action* button to add this action to the current Action List:**



The action you entered has now been added to the top current Action List.

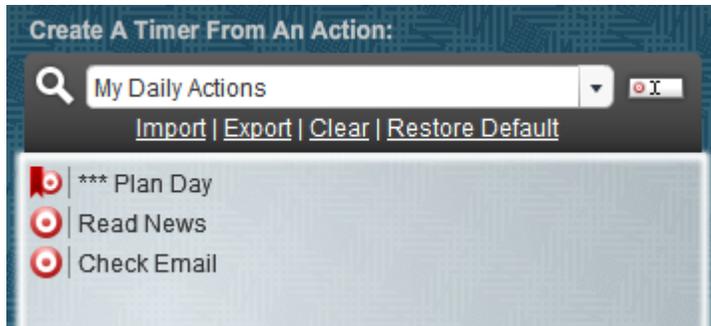
Let's add a few more actions to this Action List.

7. **Repeat Steps 4-6 to add the following repeated actions:**

*Read News*

\*\*\* *Plan Day*

The Action List should now contain 3 actions:



**NOTE:** As previously mentioned, adding 1-3 asterisks to the name of an action will allow you to set the priority of the action. When creating *repeated* actions, this will cause a small flag to appear next to the action name on the list. This priority is displayed/transferred when you create a timer from the action in the future:

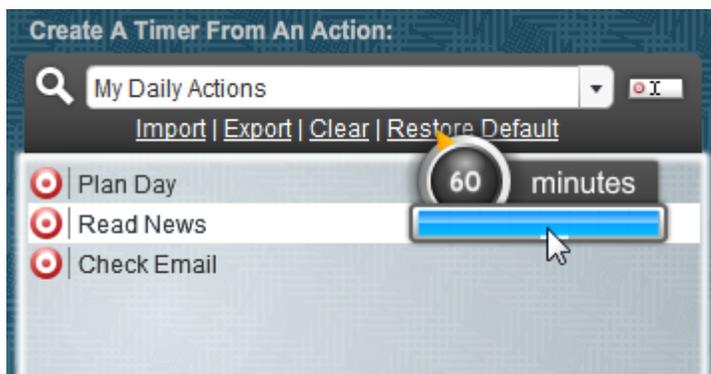


In a section below, you'll learn how to edit and arrange actions on the list if you need to, but for now, let's create some timers from these actions.

8. **Place your mouse over the name of an action on the list:**

This will cause the time bar to appear next to the action's name.

9. **Move your mouse over the time bar, and select a predefined time that represents the amount of time you want to allot for this action, and click:**



This will create a timer from this action based on the time choice you selected.

The time amount can be changed at any time. For more information on how to do this,

see the section, *Working With Timers*.

10. **Repeat Steps 8 and 9 to create additional timers from actions on the Action List:**

This is just to familiarize yourself with the ease of creating timers from items on the Action List.

If you want, you can even select a different Action List and create timers from actions on it.

Once you've added your own custom actions to a list, creating timers from them in the future is a breeze!

## ***Schedule A Daily Success Routine!***

At the bottom of the Action List panel you'll see a special yellow bar, shown here:



This bar identifies a *very important* action that you should include daily on your list of actions to complete – that of going through a daily success routine.

This action is given a special place on the interface, because **doing it is that important**.

So, what is a daily success routine and why is it so important?

A daily success routine is a simple process where you set aside just a little time each day (preferably in the morning, before you start on anything else) to feel good, get focused, think about important things, learn something new, and review the direction your life and business are headed.

Doing this process *consistently* is so important because living a life of excellence isn't the result of one or two things you do every now then. **Excellence is the result of your habits** – what you think about and feel on a *regular, daily* basis.

A well-designed daily success routine trains you to achieve awesome results in life in much the same way daily practice and training turn good athletes into world champions, or even Olympians!

Where do you find a well-designed daily success routine?

Well, when you create a timer from this action (by clicking one of the links

to the right of the bar), the *notes* section of the created timer contains the basics of a simple 7-Step routine based on on a powerful and effective system I developed called **The Day Launcher System**. (for more information, please visit <http://www.daylaunchersystem.com>).

While I'm obviously a big believer in my system, even if you choose not to use it, **I highly recommend** that you create and implement *some* sort of daily success routine in your life.

Burn it into your brain that it's your daily habits, your routine, and what you feed your mind regularly, that make you who you are and that largely determine your results in life. Get consistently better results by practicing a daily success routine!

At this point, you should have several timers shown on the interface, each related to the custom actions you added in this section. Now you can start a timer a go to work!

If you're ready to learn more, keep reading...

## Managing Action Lists

You've already seen how to edit the name of an Action List, now let's look at some of the other features you have to manage your lists.

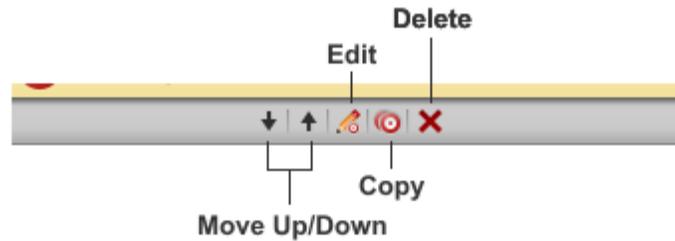


- **Search All Lists** – Clicking this button will reveal a search window that allows you to do a search for a specific action. This search functionality searches across ALL 50 lists instantaneously.
- **Export** – Allows you to export the current Action List as a simple text file (.txt) that you can use as a backup, transfer to use on another computer, or share with another user of the application. Actions and notes are preserved.
- **Import** – Allows you to import an Action List.
- **Clear** – Clears the current list of all actions. This cannot be undone!
- **Restore Default** – This automatically adds all the items from the default Action List to the current Action List – allowing you to use actions from it as a starting point for your own custom list.

## Managing The Actions In Action Lists

Individual actions in an Action List can be moved, edited, and more.

To perform a task with an individual action on a list, first click to select it. When you do, a toolbar will appear at the bottom of the Action List panel:



Here's what each of these tools do:

- **Move Up/Down** – Moves the selected action up or down on the list.
- **Edit** – Opens the contents of the selected action (including its name and any notes) so they may be edited.
- **Copy** – Copies the contents of the selected action into the *Add An Action* and *Action Notes* boxes so you can use it as the start of a similar, new action.
- **Delete** – Deletes the selected action.

**NOTE:** Normally, when your mouse hovers over an item on the Action List, a preview of the action and its associated notes will appear in the area where actions/notes are entered. To display the action and its *full* notes, Ctrl-click the action on the Action List.

## Working With Timers

In addition to actions, timers are at the heart of what makes The Action Machine 3 such a great productivity tool.

In this section, we're going to look at how timers work, how to edit their labels and time, and how to organize them to fit your needs.

### Timer Modes

When timers appear on the interface, they appear in one of three modes: *activated*, *running*, and *completed*:

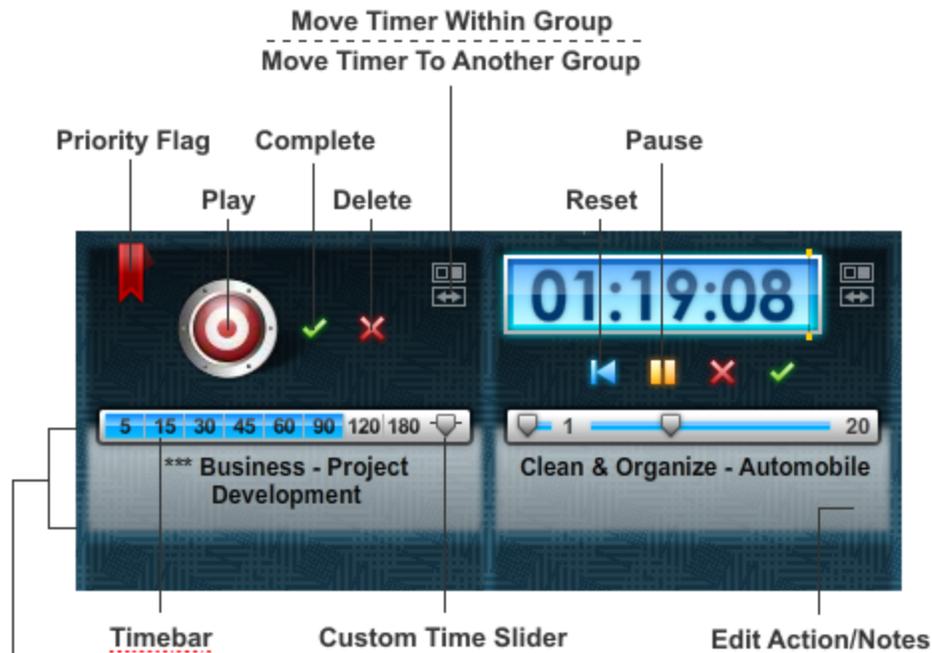


- **Activated** – This is the mode of a timer when it has been created, and is ready to be used - it hasn't been started or completed yet.
- **Running** – This is the mode a timer enters when it has been started by pressing the Play button. While in this mode, the timer's display appears, it counts down, and it can be paused. When a timer is in this mode, you should be working on the action it's associated with.
- **Completed** – A timer enters this mode when it has completely count down, or you have manually pressed the *Complete* button to complete the timer.

Each timer mode changes the look of a timer, as well as some of the buttons that appear on it. Let's look at the various interface elements that appear in each mode.

## Parts Of A Timer

Here are the various parts of a timer, and an explanation as to how they're used:



### Expand Notes

- **Play** – Activates the timer and starts its countdown.
- **Pause** – Pauses the timer countdown.
- **Delete** – Deletes the timer from the interface.
- **Complete** – Manually completes the timer. Press this button whenever you complete an action *before* the scheduled amount of time you have allotted for it.
- **Reset** – Returns the timer back to its original, activated state, ready to be used again.
- **Timebar** – Contains buttons that allow you to quickly change the time of the timer using pre-defined time amounts.
- **Custom Time Slider** – Pressing this button will open up a time slider, allowing you to change the time of the timer to specific amounts – from 1 to 479 minutes.
- **Edit Action/Notes** – Opens up a panel that allows you to edit the action name and notes associated with the timer. When using this feature, any editing you perform is confined to this specific timer only – this does NOT edit the original action on the Action List in any way.
- **Expand Notes** – When you hover your mouse over this area, the left side of the interface will display a compact version of the action/notes associated with the timer. *Click* this area to open a panel that displays the full notes.
- **Move Timer Within Group** – Allows you to move the timer to a different position within the current Timer Group (see the next section for more information).
- **Move/Copy Timer To Another Group** – Allows you to move or copy the timer to another Timer Group (see the next section for more information).
- **Priority Flag** – This is a visual cue to help you quickly and easily see or set the priority of a timer. To change a timer's priority, simply move your mouse left and right over the top-left corner of the timer (on top of the priority flag). As you do, the priority flag will either disappear or change colors (no flag = no priority; yellow = low priority; orange = medium priority; red = high priority). Once the priority you want appears, click the mouse to select it.

**NOTE:** Because the priority flag setting is tied with the use of asterisks (\*) in the name of the action/timer, changing a timer's priority value will automatically update its name accordingly.

## About The +5 Feature

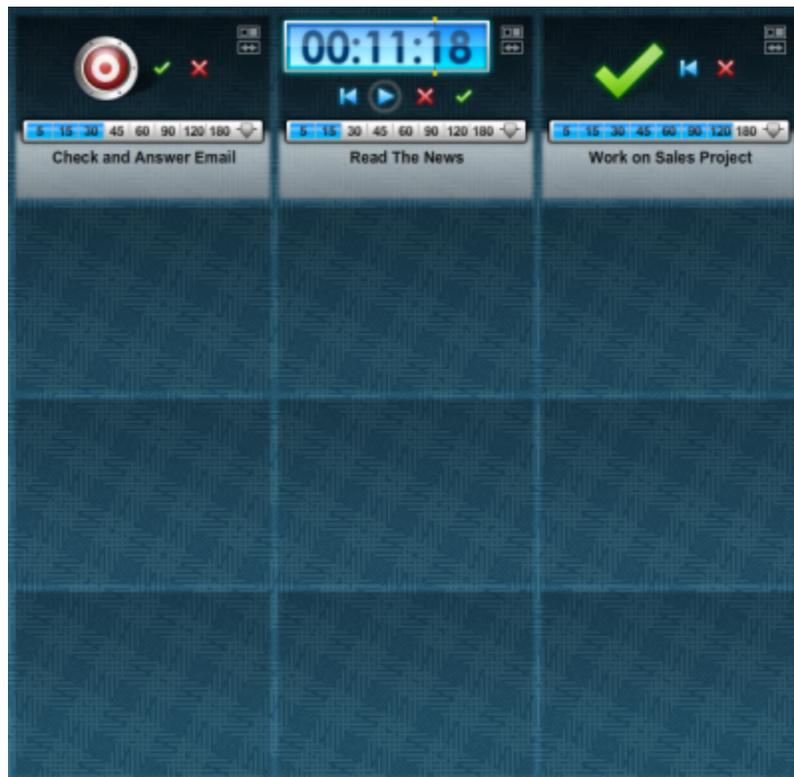
Whenever you place your mouse over the the time display area of a timer, its interface will temporarily change to show the following:



This is known as the +5 feature, and it has a very simple function – clicking the display in this mode will add 5 minutes to the timer (each click adds 5 more minutes). This allows you to increase the time of a timer in small increments more quickly than using the Time Slider.

## Using Timer Groups

When looking at the timer section of the interface, you'll see 12 blocks for timers. These 12 blocks represent what is known as a *Timer Group*:



A Timer Group is nothing more than a collection of timers that are related in some way.

For example, you might have a *Monday* Timer Group that contains timers for actions you want to complete on Monday.

You might have another Timer Group named *Vacation Preparation* that includes everything you need to get done to prepare for a vacation.

The Action Machine 3 allows you to create and save up to 50 custom Timer Groups. In addition, there are also Timer Groups for the 7 days of the week, as well as 31 days of the month. This allows you to organize actions/timers in a variety of ways, depending on your personal preferences.

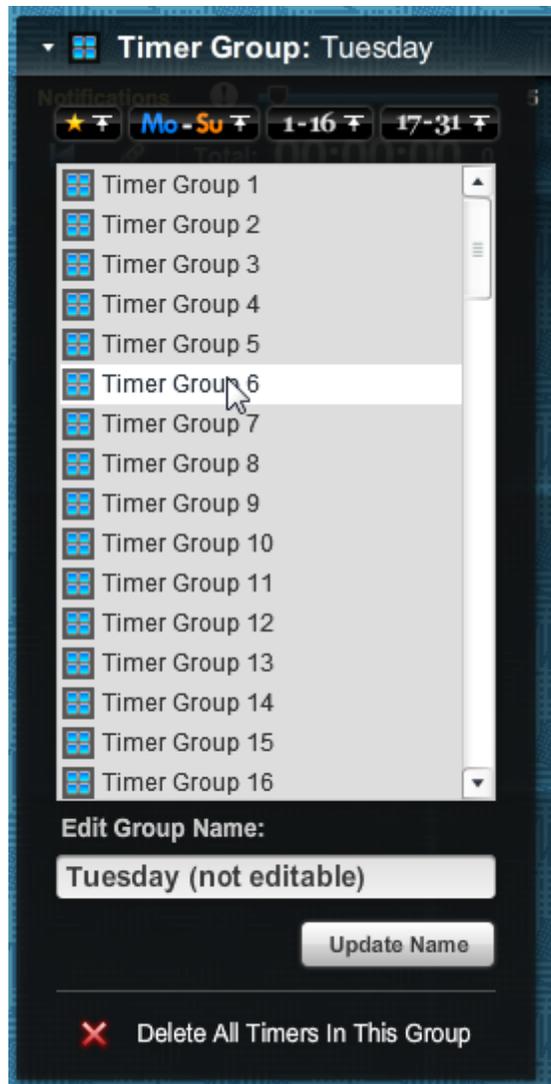
**NOTE:** While you are free to edit the names of the custom Timer Groups, the Timer Groups for the days of the week and the days of the month aren't editable.

A Timer Group is *always* displayed on the interface, and the name of that (current) Timer Group is shown in the upper-left section of the timer-portion of the interface:



Whenever you create a new timer from an action, the timer is added to the currently displayed Timer Group.

To switch to a different Timer Group, move your mouse over the name of the current Timer Group, which will slide out a panel from which you can choose a different Timer Group to display:



Click the name of a group from the list to select it. Doing this will automatically update the interface to display timers in that group.

**NOTE:** While this panel is visible, pressing and holding the Spacebar on your keyboard will temporarily make it transparent so you can quickly see all the timers that are part of the currently selected Timer Group.

At the top of the of the panel you'll see four buttons that allow you to quickly scroll the list to various Timer Groups when your mouse is moved over them.

The buttons (from left to right) will scroll to the following sections on the list:

- **Custom** – There are 50 default Timer Groups (identified on the list as *Timer Group 1* – *Timer Group 50*) which you can rename to fit your needs. To rename one of these groups, select it on the list, then below the list, enter a new name and click the *Update Name* button.
- **Days of the Week (Monday – Sunday)** – These are set of Timer Groups with non-editable names based on the 7 days of the week.

- **Days of the Month (1<sup>st</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup>)** - These are set of Timer Groups with non-editable names based on days 1-16 of the month.
- **Days of the Month (17<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup>)** - These are set of Timer Groups with non-editable names based on days 17-31 of the month.

As already mention, how you choose to use Timer Groups to manage timers is totally up to you.

For example, you may choose to create Timer Groups based on the type of work you're doing, such as creating a presentation, for which you would simply rename one of the default groups something like, *Presentations*, then you would as timers to that group that represent the series of actions you go through to create a presentation.

Or you may simply prefer to use any of the built-in day or date-based Timer Groups to manage timers/actions based on the day of the week or the day of the month, or you can use a combination – whatever suits your needs!

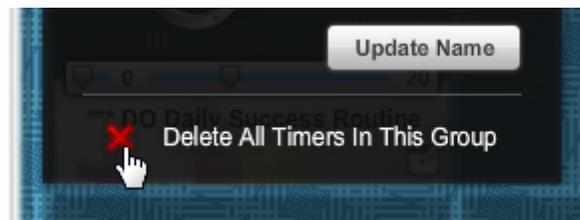
There are 3 main tasks you can perform on ALL timers in a group:

- Deleting
- Resetting
- Linking

Let's look at each of these tasks a little closer.

## Deleting All Timers In A Timer Group

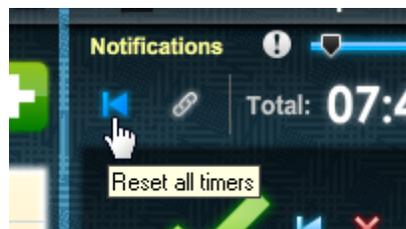
In the event you want to quickly delete all timers in a group so you can fill it with new actions/timers, simply click the *Timer Options* menu button, and press the *Delete All Timers* button at the bottom of the Timer Groups panel:



**NOTE:** Make *sure* you want to perform this action, as it's NOT undoable.

## Resetting All Timers In A Timer Group

Maybe a timer group has a bunch of timers that have completed, but you want to reset and use them again. Instead of manually clicking on each timer's *Reset* button, click the *Reset All Timers* button to get the job done quickly:

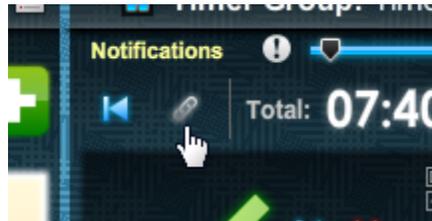


## Linking Timers In A Timer Group

This functionality was touched on briefly, earlier in this guide, but it's worth repeating.

Normally, when a timer in a group is completed, you need to open the application, find the next timer, and manually start it to begin the next action you have planned.

If you'd like to automate this process so that when a timer completes, the next one in the group automatically starts, then click the *Link Timers* button:



**NOTE:** Even when using this functionality, each completed timer will still set off an alarm to let you know it's time to move to the next task.

**NOTE:** When using this functionality, the next timer in the sequence will only start automatically if it is in the *Activated* mode (see the beginning of this section for more information on timer modes). If it's not, then nothing happens.

## Moving/Copying Timers

By default, whenever you create a timer from an action, it is placed in the current Timer Group and added to the interface in the following order:



Even after a timer has been created and placed on the interface, you can move it to a new position within the same Timer Group, or you can move/copy it to an entirely different group. Let's look at each of these options.

## Moving A Timer Within The Same Timer Group

To move a timer to a new position within the same Timer Group, click the button on top-right of its border:



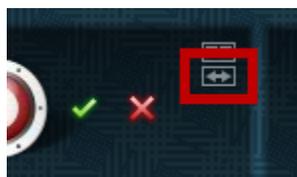
A small panel will appear.

As you move your mouse over the panel, positions within the Timer Group that you can move the timer to are highlighted. When the position you want to use is highlighted, click your mouse.



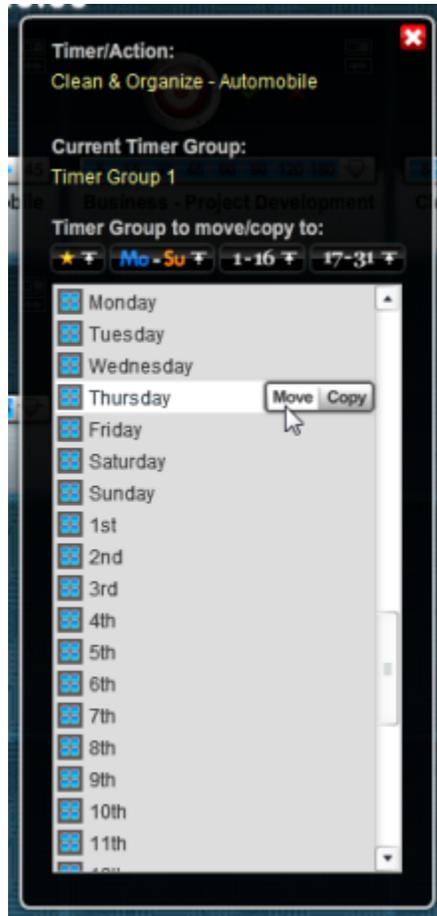
## Moving/Copying A Timer To A Different Timer Group

To move or copy a timer to a different Timer Group, click the button on the timer with the double-sided arrow:



A dialog box will open containing a list of all Timer Groups.

As you move your mouse over the name of each group on the list, two buttons will appear over the list.



When your mouse is over the name of the Timer Group you want to move/copy the timer to, click the *Move* or *Copy* button, depending on which action you want to perform.

The dialog box will close automatically and the timer will be moved or copied.

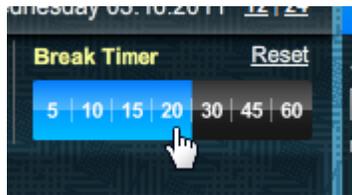
**NOTE:** In the case of you making and sending a *copy* of a timer to different group, you may not notice this has occurred (you won't see a visible change on the interface) unless you open the Timer Group where the timer was copied – it'll be there!

## ***Using The Break Timer***

The timer area of the interface contains a special timer, known as the *Break Timer*:



This timer is built to help you easily manage your breaks in-between taking action. When you're ready to take a break – anything from 5 to 60 minutes (perhaps for lunch) – simply move your mouse over the timer bar and click on a number (which represent minutes):



Doing this does two things:

- Any timers that are currently playing are automatically paused.
- The Break Timer is activated, and begins to count down the time, based on your time selection. The blue bar on the Break Timer will pulse, indicating that it is active.

While the Break Timer is active, you can place your mouse over the blue bar to see the amount of time remaining on the timer.

When the timer has count down to 0, an alarm will sound, letting you know that your break time is over, and it's time to get back to taking action.

The *Reset* link that's part of the Break Timer resets its time to 0, essentially turning it off until the next time you need it.

**NOTE:** The Break Timer uses the same alarm and notification sounds/options as those for regular timers. See below for more information.

## Using And Customizing Sounds And Notifications

Since The Action Machine is time management software – helping you manage *what* you do and *when* you need to do it – as you can imagine, sound plays an important part in its overall functionality.

Sounds are used in the following ways within the software:

- Ticking
- Alarms
- Notifications

Let's look at each of these in a bit more detail.

### ***Ticking***

Whenever you begin a timer, by default, a ticking sound will also begin to play. This is a simple audio cue to help remind you that a timer is counting down, and you should be taking action on something while you hear it.

In most cases, ticking will stop when the timer is either paused or completed – just like a physical timer.

The only exception to this is when more than one timer is currently playing. In this case, ticking will stop only when *all* timers are either paused or completed.

## Alarms

The functionality of alarms within The Action Machine are pretty straightforward.

When a timer completes as a result of a timer counting down completely, it triggers the sounding of an alarm to alert you that it has completed.

## Notifications

Notifications are a special type of alarm, triggered whenever a timer reaches a specific time during its countdown.

There are two types of notifications:

- Alert
- Recurring

Notifications are configurable using the two sliders shown here:



Let's look at how each of these notifications work.

### Alert Notifications

The idea behind an Alert notification is very simple. When a timer has reached the minute-point indicated on the Alert Slider, a notification sound will play. When this notification is triggered, the alarm will repeat, based on the number of minutes the slider is set for.

For example, when the slider is set to 5, the alarm will play in a loop 5 times when it is triggered. This is done for a couple reasons. First, to give you an audio reference of how much time you have left (5 repeats means 5 minutes), and to distinguish it from the Recurring notification, which doesn't ever repeat.

This notification is useful because it acts as a bit of an advanced-warning, of sorts, letting you know that a timer is about to complete. Knowing this allows you to either quickly wrap-up the action you're currently working on, or add more time to the timer if you access that you need it.

### Recurring Notifications

Recurring notifications are triggered whenever a timer reaches a time that is a multiple of the time indicated on the Recurring Slider.

For example, if the Recurring Slider is set to 7, then a recurring notification will play whenever a timer has counted down to the 7, 14, 21, 28, etc. minute-point.

This type of notification is especially useful for helping you manage any actions that you have scheduled to work on for an hour or more.

For example, let's say you've created a 3 hour timer to work on your taxes. Obviously, you wouldn't want to work on your taxes for the *entire* 3 hours without a break. In this scenario, you'd likely set the Recurring Slider to 30, then start the timer. At the 2 hour 30 minute point of the timers' countdown, you'd hear a notification alarm, indicating that it would be a good time to take a break.

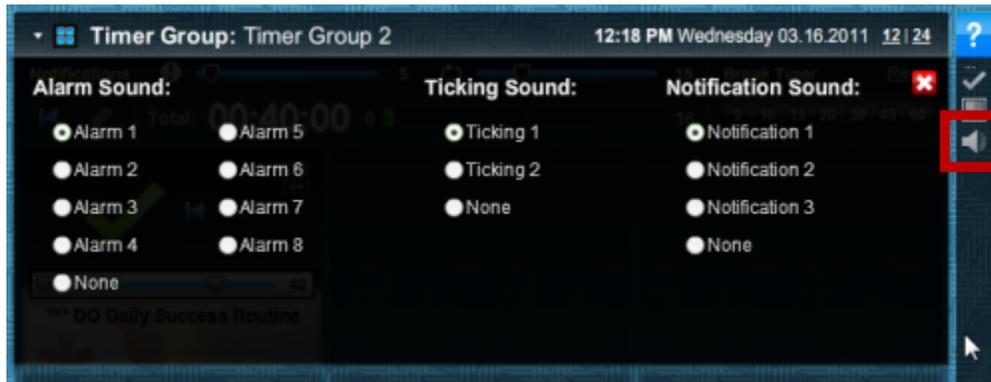
After your break, you'd start the timer again, then at the 2 hour point of the countdown, you'd hear the recurring notification alarm again, letting you know it's time to take another break.

**NOTE:** The Alert notification has precedence over the Recurring notification. This means that if a timer reaches a time which has the potential to trigger both types of notifications, the Alert notification is the only one that will be triggered.

## Audio Options

The Action Machine contains several basic audio options that allow you to select from several different ticking, alarm, and notification sounds, or to disable the sounds altogether.

To access these options, click the *Audio Options* button to the right of the interface:



Using the Audio Options panel is pretty straightforward: Selecting an option will not only preview it, but also automatically set it as your sound choice.

The volume of sounds within The Action Machine are universal, meaning that the alarm, ticking, and notification sounds all play at the same volume (they can't be set individually).

The universal volume for these sounds is controlled using the volume controller on the bottom-right of the interface:



At the bottom of this controller is a mute button for quickly muting all sounds.

## Tracking Your Progress

A very important aspect to becoming more productive is knowing EXACTLY *where* you're spending your time, and *how much* time you're spending doing it.

With that in mind, The Action Machine 3 includes several progress-tracking features/tools, which include:

- Reports
- The Scoreboard

Let's look at how to get the most from these tools.

### ***Generating & Using Reports***

The Action Machine contains a simple report feature that automatically tabulates useful data as you use it.

You can then review the data to get a crystal-clear picture of how and where you're spending your valuable time.

### **How Report Data Is Generated**

Report data is generated whenever a timer is completed, either automatically (by counting down to 0) or manually (by you clicking the *Complete* button on the timer).

Two things happen when either occurs:

- The number of *Completed Actions* displayed on the interface is updated:

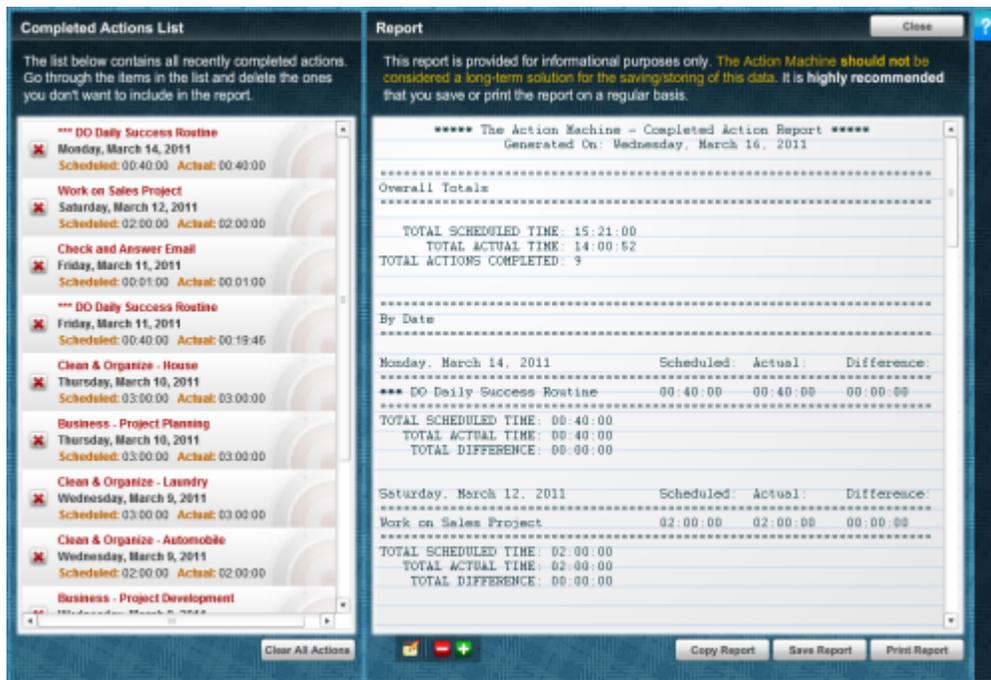


- The name of the completed action, the notes associated with the action, the time scheduled to complete it, the *actual* time it took to complete, and the current date are captured and saved (behind the scenes).

When you press the *Report* button (highlighted in the graphic above), all the data captured from all the actions you've completed is displayed in an easy-to-read format in the *Report Panel*.

## Reviewing And Customizing Report Data

The Report Panel is made up of two sections:



The left side of the panel contains the *Completed Action List*, which is a list of all the completed actions that are included in the report.

As you review items on the list, you may decide that a certain one should not be included in the report. If this is the case, click the *Delete* button next to the item:



This will remove the item's data from the report and the tabulated results displayed in the report will update automatically.

The right side of the Report Panel contains the actual report.

The information within the report is separated into 3 sections:

- **Overall Totals** – This section displays the overall number of completed actions, the total scheduled time for those actions, and the total actual time it took to complete those actions.
- **Totals By Date** – This section displays data based on the date an action was completed. For example, if you complete 6 various actions on Monday, July 27, 2009, that group of actions and their accumulative totals will appear in their own section.
- **Totals By Action** - This section displays data based on the name of the action. For example, if you've performed and completed the *Check Email* action 5 times over the course of the week, that group of similar actions, and their accumulative totals will appear in their own section.

**Note:** After generating a report and reviewing it - maybe at the end of the week - it's a good idea to click the *Clear All* button at the bottom of the *Completed Action List* in order to begin the following week with a 'clean slate'. This action is instant, and is NOT undoable!

## Displaying Action Notes

Because notes associated with actions can be lengthy, displaying them in the report is optional.

To include notes in the report, click the green plus button below the text area where the report is displayed:



This will reformat the report to include any notes associated with the completed actions in the report.

**NOTE:** Because the report is presented as simple text, with no special formatting, notes containing HTML (**bold**, *italic*, [links](#), etc.) are not displayed. If including note information in your reports is important, be sure to avoid using HTML when writing your notes – use plain text instead.

To remove notes from the report, click the red minus button.

## Report Output Options

The Report Panel provides three output options:



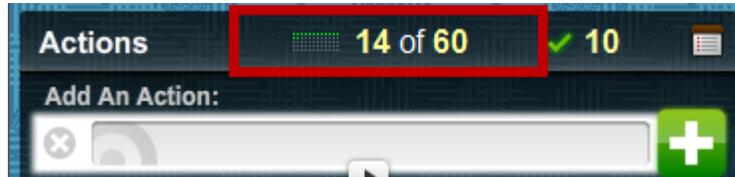
- **Copy Report** – Copies the contents of the report to your computer's clipboard where you can paste into another document, perhaps an email.

- **Save Report** – Opens a dialog box allowing you to save the report as a simple text file (.txt).
- **Print Report** – Sends the report to your printer for printing a hard copy.

## Configuring And Using The Scoreboard

There's real motivating power in the setting of goals and tracking your current progress against whatever progress you've decided represents ultimate success.

This important concept is the basis for a feature in The Action Machine known as the *Scoreboard*:



The idea for using the Scoreboard is simple: You decide on a goal for the number of hours of action you want to complete for the week (or every 2 weeks, or month) then as you complete actions/timers, The Action Machine will track the total time you've spent on those actions, and will update the Scoreboard display to show the difference between the that time, and the time-goal you've set.

For example, the graphic above shows an overall time-goal of 60 hours. At the present time, I've only completed 14 hours of that goal (shown as 14 lighted dots in a 60-dot 'scoreboard'). This visual goal-keeper helps you track your overall progress for the week so you can make adjustments, as needed.

Let's look at how to configure the Scoreboard to fit your needs.

The first thing to understand is where the completed-time data displayed on the Scoreboard comes from (the 14 hours shown in the example above). This data comes from the *TOTAL ACTUAL TIME* data that is tabulated when you run a report:

```

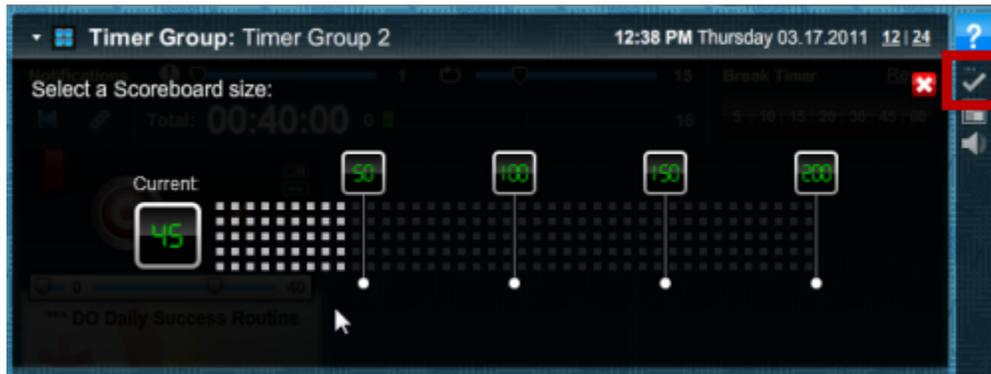
=====
Overall Totals
=====
TOTAL SCHEDULED TIME: 16:01:00
TOTAL ACTUAL TIME: 14:40:52
TOTAL ACTIONS COMPLETED: 10
=====
  
```

Even though the TOTAL ACTUAL TIME shown in the report is 14 hours, 40 minutes, this amount is rounded-*down* and shown on the Scoreboard as only 14 hours. The Scoreboard will only show 15 hours when the the TOTAL ACTUAL TIME reaches at least 15:00:00.

Knowing that the Scoreboard uses this report data, the next thing you need to decide is how long you want to collect data for the report before you clear it and start from scratch – 1 week? 2 weeks? A month?

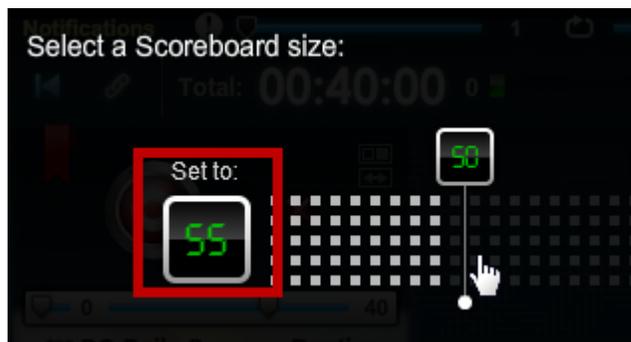
Let's say you regularly collect data for reports on a *weekly* basis, then you clear all completed actions on the Report Panel, and start over. With that in mind, what hour-goal for taking action do you want to reach each week? 40 hours? 50 hours?

Once you decide on an hour-goal, the next step is to configure the Scoreboard display accordingly. You do this by clicking the *Customize The Scoreboard* button to the right of the interface:



This will open a panel that will allow you to configure the Scoreboard's size.

For example, if you decide the hour-goal you want to reach each week is 55, move your mouse over the dots on the panel until you see the number 55 shown in the *Set to:* box and then click your mouse to select that amount:



The Scoreboard display will instantly update, based on your selection:



Your mission now: Light up as many of the 55 'lights' on the Scoreboard as you can before the end of the week.

**NOTE:** Obviously, since the functionality of the Scoreboard is tied directly to the time data shown in the report, the Scoreboard display is reset whenever you clear all completed actions on the Reports Panel, as discussed earlier.

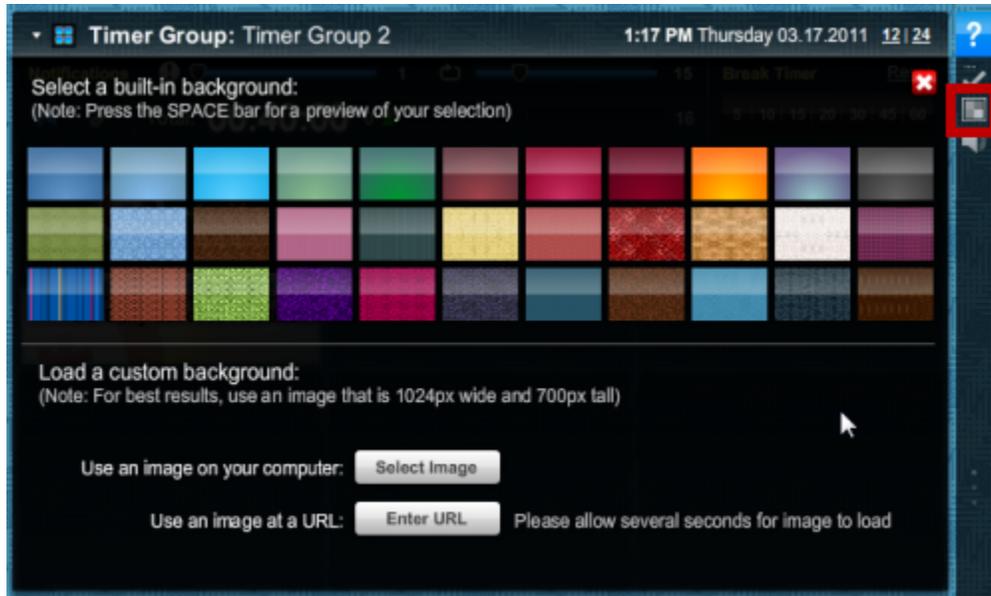
## All The Rest...

There are a couple remaining features of The Action Machine 3 that stand alone in their functionality, so let's briefly look at those.

## ***Background Options***

A simple way to customize the look of The Action Machine 3 is to change its background.

To do this, click the *Background Options* button to the right of the interface:



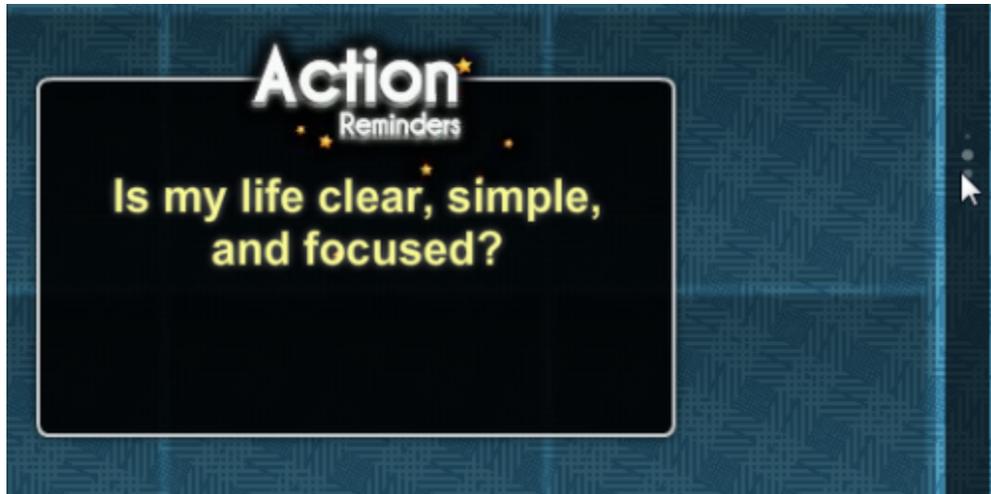
This will open a panel that allows you to select from over 30 built-in backgrounds, or you can use the buttons at the bottom of the panel to load a background image in from your computer, or from a URL (for images that exist online).

**NOTE:** While this panel is visible, pressing and holding the Spacebar on your keyboard will temporarily make it transparent so you can quickly see how your background choice appears on the overall interface.

## ***Using Action Reminders***

In order to stay focused on achieving excellence in our lives, we all need to be occasionally reminded of important ideas, quotes, and even questions that get us to think in new ways. This is the purpose of the *Action Reminders* feature within The Action Machine 3.

When you place your mouse over the three pulsing dots to the right of the interface, an Action Reminder will appear:



When you see an Action Reminder, spend 5-10 seconds to think about its value, and think of ways you can put the idea into action within your own life.

Give it some *real* thought, and if the inspiration hits you, create an action/timer that helps you do *something* to live up to the idea or principle being expressed, even if it's just for 5-10 minutes. If you do this enough, the results you get will compound into something amazing! :)

The Action Reminder that's shown will change every 24 hours (if you leave the software running), or whenever you restart the software.

## FAQS

Here's a short list of frequently asked questions about The Action Machine 3, and their answers.

**Q: Why does text appear twice (ttwwiiccee) when entering a new action?**

**A:** This is usually due to a strange conflict between The Action Machine 3 and a program called ActiveWords. A workaround is to either disable ActiveWords when using The Action Machine 3, or start The Action Machine 3 first, prior to starting ActiveWords.

**Q: I'm not seeing the entire interface, what's wrong?**

**A:** This is usually due to your screen resolution settings. The Action Machine 3 requires a *minimum* screen resolution of 1024 x 768. Check to make sure yours is set to at least this setting.

**Q: I cleaned up files on computer recently, and my saved data has disappeared. How can I get it back?**

**A:** Some Windows 'cleaner' utilities will remove the data file created/used by the software (named ActionMachine.sol) when they 'sweep' your computer clean.

To restore this file to its original location or to set your sweeper utility from removing it in the first place, you need to know its location on your computer, which is:

Main Drive > Documents and Settings > [Your User Name] > Application Data > Macromedia > Flash Player > #SharedObjects > [Random Folder Name] > localhost > ActionMachine.sol

Specifically, this data file is something CCleaner considers a Flash cookie. I believe it has an option to prevent the deletion of these (Flash cookies) in the cleanup process.

If you set it to keep Flash cookies, you shouldn't have this issue again.

**Q: How can I minimize the system resources used by The Action Machine 3?**

**A:** For best results, minimize The Action Machine 3 to the System Tray when you're not interacting or viewing it.