



# Action Machine

## Pro

User's Guide

# Introduction

Thank you for downloading Action Machine Pro!

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

Time-boxing is simple put 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 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 task or group of tasks.** Anything from 15 minutes to 2 hours. Chunks of 30 minutes or less work best.
3. **Select a task, 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 an 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 them even better.

Thus, Action Machine Pro 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!

## Action Machine Pro Quickstart

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

At its core, there are 2 simple elements involved in using Action Machine Pro:

- **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 Action Machine Pro, these 2 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 Action Machine Pro.

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

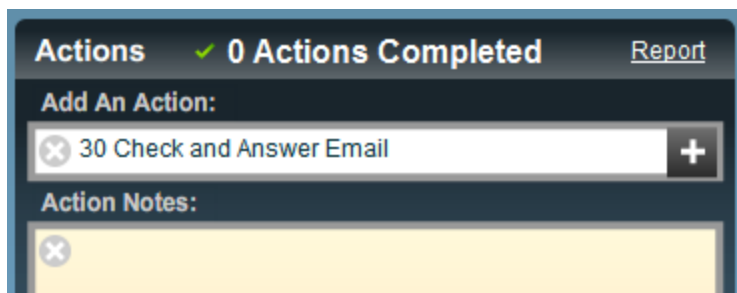
Let's now use Action Machine Pro to plan these activities.

1. **Launch your copy of Action Machine Pro:**

Start Action Machine Pro 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 Action Machine Pro 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*

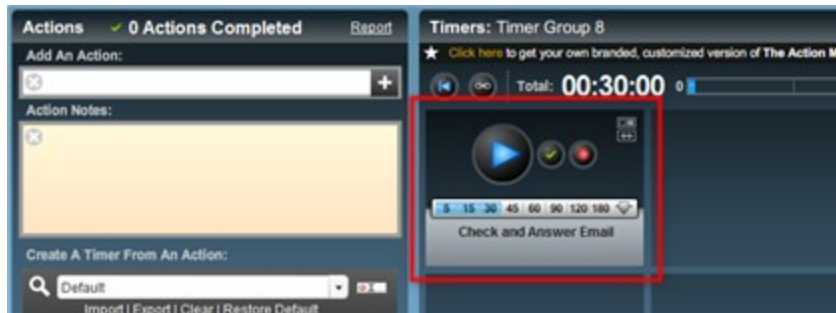
Notice the format of how you enter a time amount first (in minutes), followed by the name of the action:

*[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.

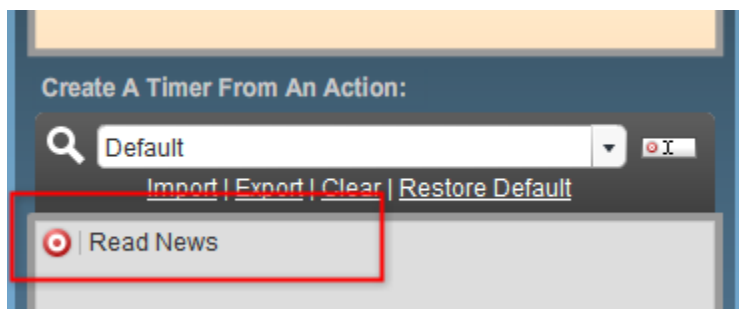
4. **Return to the *Add An Action* box, and enter the following:**

*Read 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):



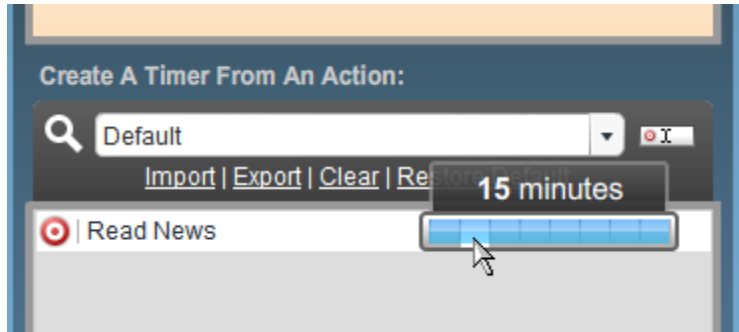
Once again, this happened because we didn't include a time amount when we created the action in Step 4.

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 can avoid retyping them again and again.

Well, now that our *Read 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 News* action on the Action List. When the blue timebar 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 News*.

Each new timer you create will update the total time display to reflect the total amount of time allotted to accomplish all the actions shown:



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!

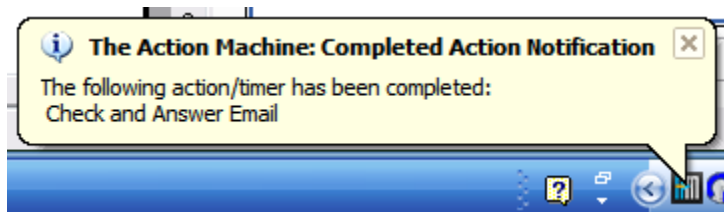
10. **Press the *Play* button on the *Check and Answer Email* timer, and start taking action:**

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

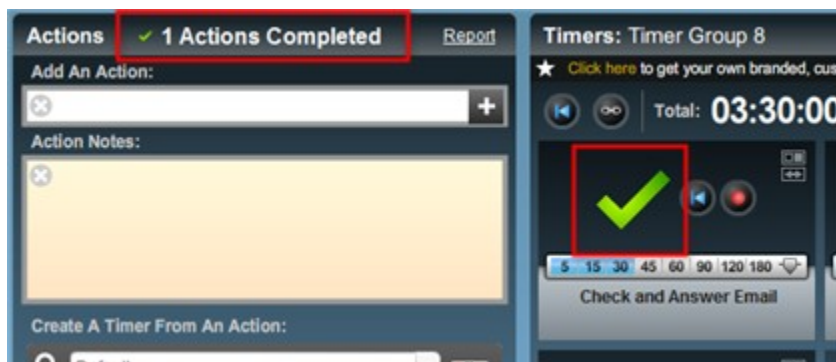
The goal now is to do nothing for the next 30 minutes except the task-at-hand, which in scenario is to check and answer email.

As you work, you can either minimize Action Machine Pro, 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.



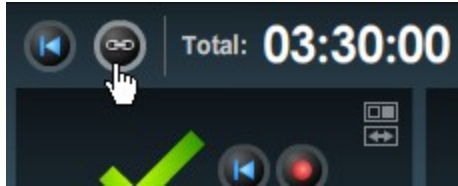
When you view Action Machine Pro, you will see two noticeable changes on the interface: A big, green checkmark that indicates that the timer you started has completed, and an updated total of actions you have completed (more on this in the section, *Generating And Using Reports*).



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 help you understand how to begin using Action Machine Pro right away! But as you can imagine, there's more power and functionality available within the application than we've been able to discuss in this short Quickstart.

In the sections that follow, we'll be looking at the various elements of Action Machine Pro 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 Action Machine Pro.

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.

Since these are one-time actions, it's very simple to create timers from them within Action Machine Pro.

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

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

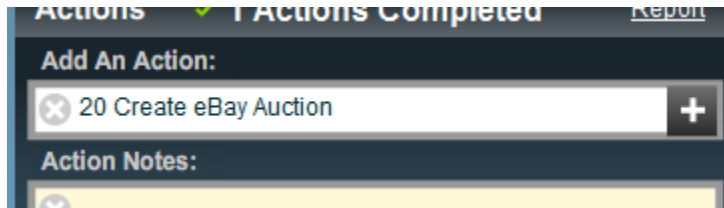
1. **In the *Add An Action* box, enter the number of minutes you want to allot for the action, followed by the name of the action:**

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 Action*.

**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 a timer (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*.

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.

[HTML INFO BOX]

3. **Click the *Add An Action* 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.

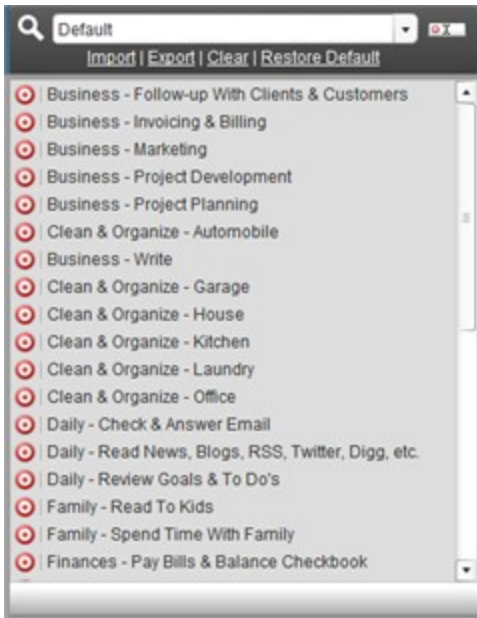
## ***Repeated Actions***

Some actions in your life you perform regularly.

Things such as: checking your email, reading the news, planning your day, and so on.

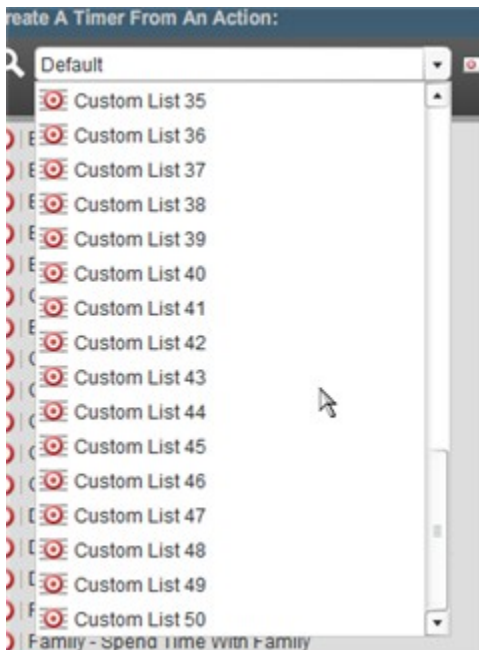
Because you perform these actions regularly, even daily, having to enter them into Action Machine Pro using the method described in the previous section would quickly become tedious and time consuming – not something you want from a productivity tool!

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



Action Lists are simply groups of actions (including notes) that are saved in Action Machine Pro so as to facilitate the quick creation of timers from those actions – saving you a lot of time and repeated keystrokes.

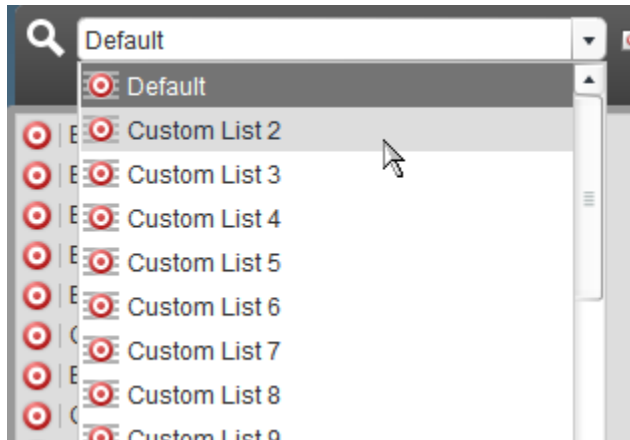
Action Machine Pro provides 50 different Actions Lists you can use to organize the various actions of your life into.



## 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:**



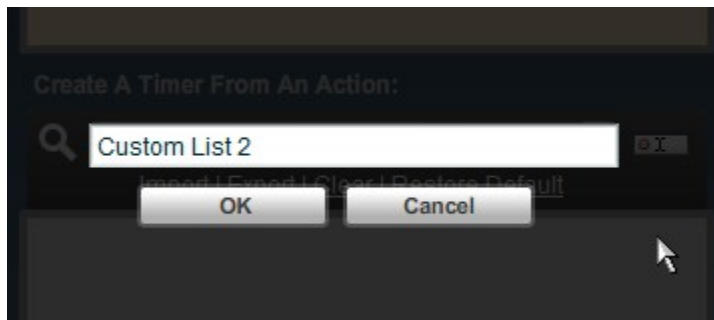
When you do this, the Action List display will update to display any actions currently in this list. By default, this list is empty, so the Action List display should be clear of any actions.

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*:**

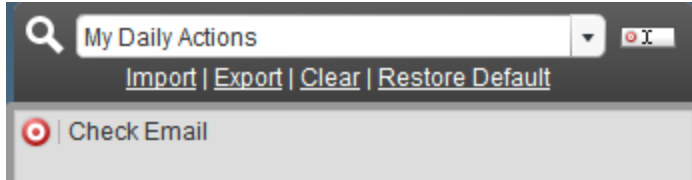
You'll notice that we've *not* included a time amount when entering this action, as we did when creating a one-time action in the previous exercise. This is because actions that are added to an action list (thus are used over and over again), can be assigned various times whenever timers are created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

This will make more sense in a moment.

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



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

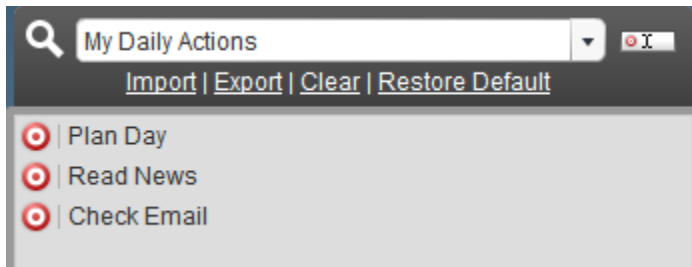
Let's add a few more actions to this Action List.

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

*Read News*

*Plan Day*

The Action List should now contain 3 actions:

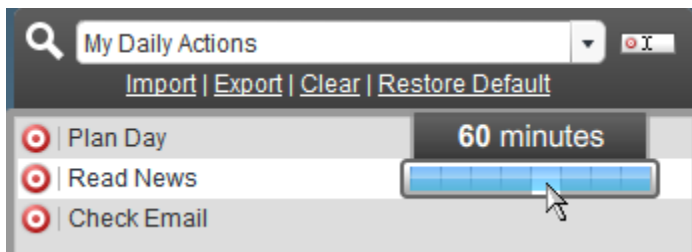


In a section below, you'll learn how to edit and arrange these if you need to, but for now, let's create some timers from these actions.

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

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

9. **Move your mouse over the timebar, 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.

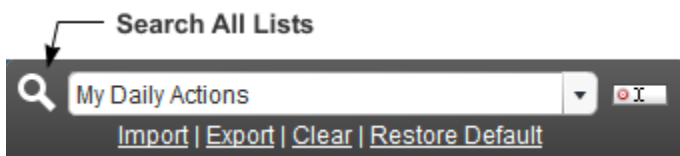
Once you've added your own custom actions to a list, creating timers from them in the future is a breeze!

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 and 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.

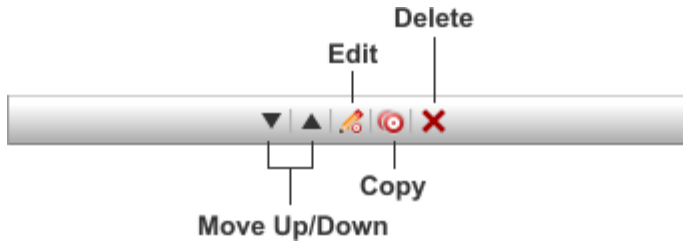


- **Search All Lists** – Clicking this button will reveal a search window that allows you to do a search for a specific action. This search functionality searches across ALL 50 lists instantaneously.
- **Export** – Allows you to export the current Action List as a simple text file (.txt) that you can 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:



Let's look at 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 Action Machine Pro 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 timers 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. Note that editing when using this feature is confined to this specific timer only.
- **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* the 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).

## 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*:



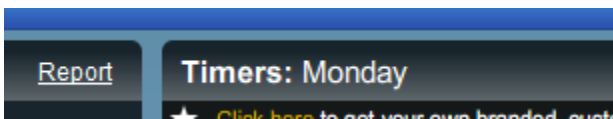
A Timer Group is nothing more than a collection of timers that are related in some way.

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.

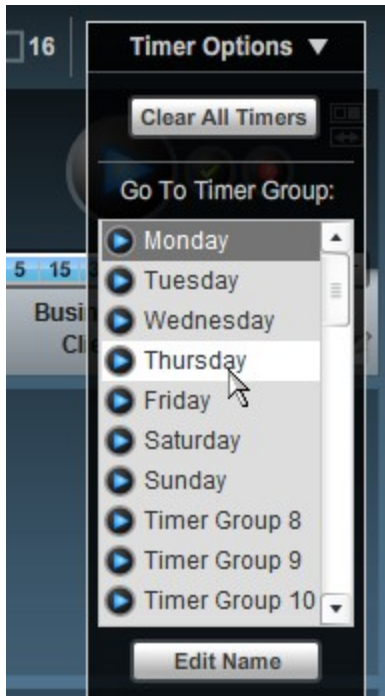
Action Machine Pro allows you to create and save up to 50 Timer Groups.

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, click the *Timer Options* menu button, then select the Timer Group from the list that appears:



At the bottom of the Timer Group list you'll find a button that allows you to edit the name of the selected Timer Group:

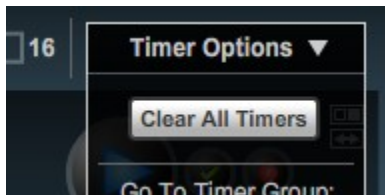
As you select different Timer Groups from the list, the timer section of the interface updates automatically to display timers in that group.

**NOTE:** Once a timer has been added to a group, it will remain there until you specifically delete it.

There are 3 main tasks you can perform on ALL timers in a group: Clearing/deleting, resetting, and linking them. Let's look at each of these tasks a little closer.

### Clearing/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 *Clear All Timers* button at the top of the menu:



**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 again. Instead of manually clicking on each timer's *Reset* button, click the *Reset All Timers* button to get the job done quickly:

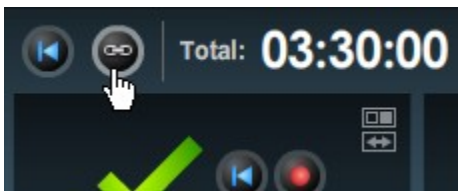


## Linking Timers In A Timer Group

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:

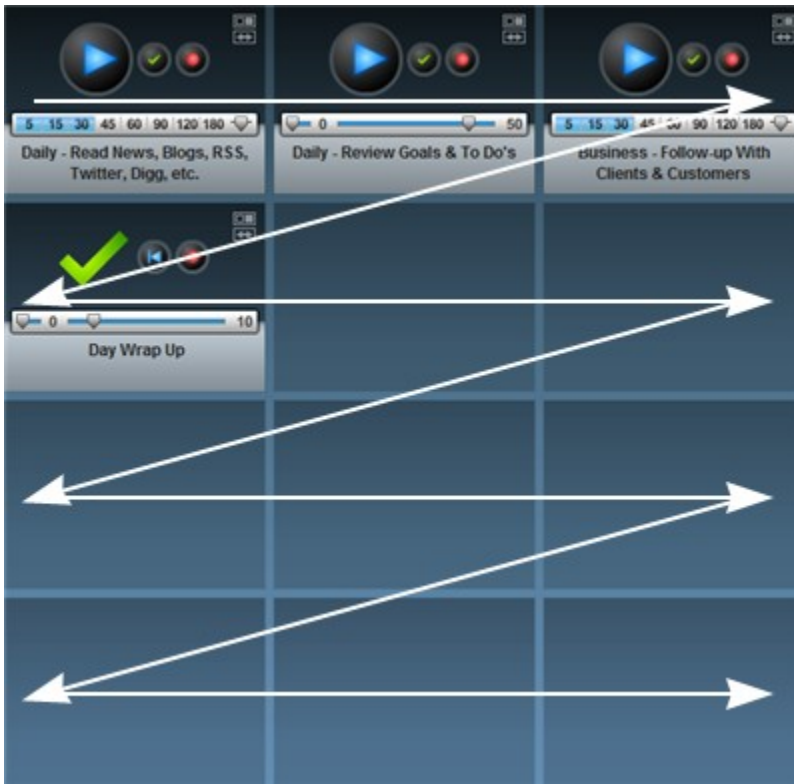


**NOTE:** Even when using this functionality, each completed timer will still set off an alarm to let you know it's time to move to the next task.

**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

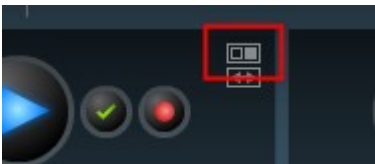
By default, whenever you create a timer from an action, it is placed in the current Timer Group and added to the interface in the following order:



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.

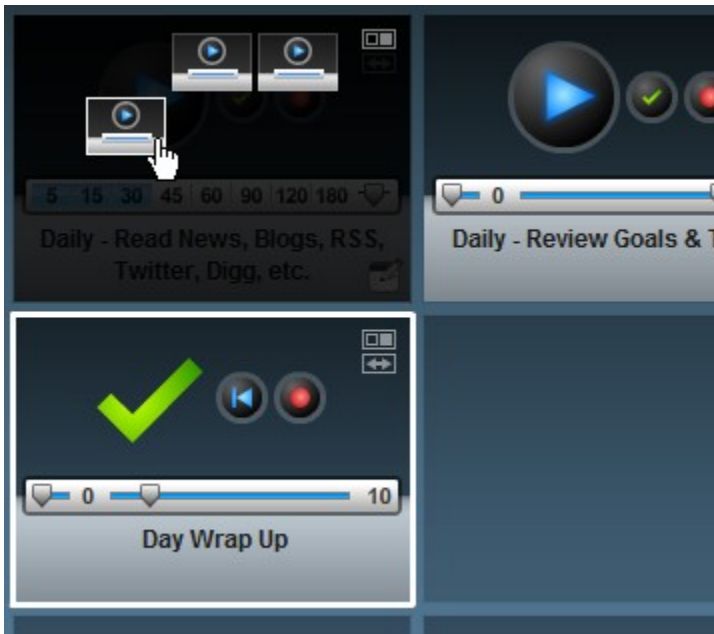
## Moving A Timer Within The Same Timer Group

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



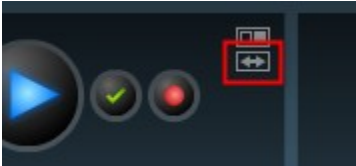
A small panel will appear.

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.



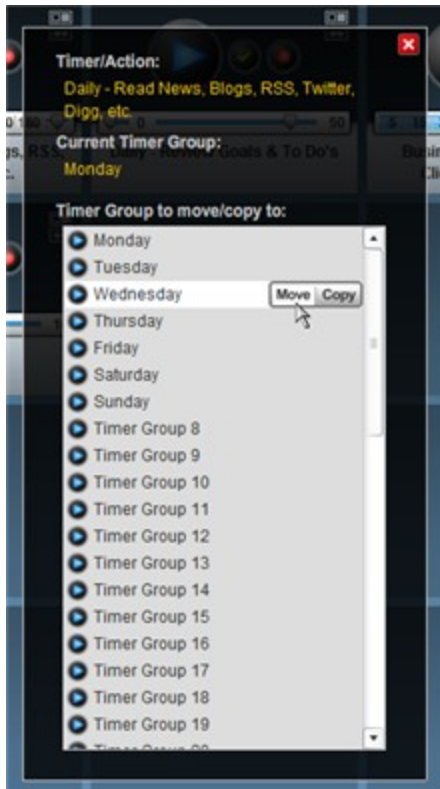
## Moving/Copying A Timer To A Different Timer Group

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!

## ***Alarm Options***

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.

Action Machine Pro allows you to choose the sound you'd like to hear, or it gives you the option to not hear a sound at all.

To change the alarm sound, click the *Timer Options* menu button and at the bottom of the menu that appears, select the alarm sound you'd like to hear (you'll hear a preview of the sound when you select it).

# **Generating & Using Reports**

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, Action Machine Pro includes a simple report feature that automatically tabulates useful data as you use it.

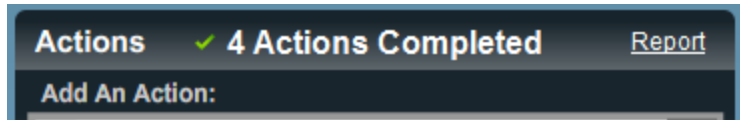
Let's look at how to get the most from this useful feature.

## 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

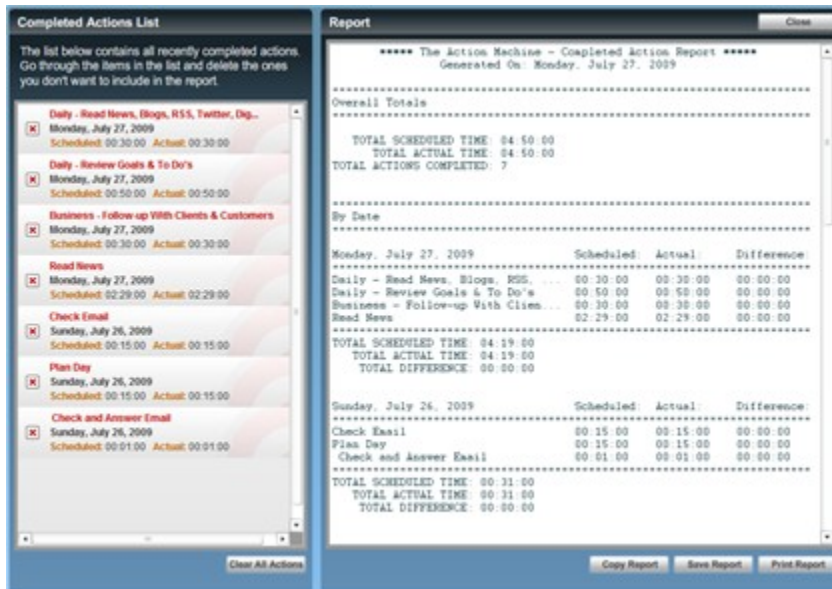


- The name of the completed action, the time scheduled to complete it, the *actual* time it took to complete, and the current date are captured and saved (behind the scenes).

When you press the *Report* link, all the data captured from all the actions you've completed is displayed in an easy-to-read format in the *Report Panel*.

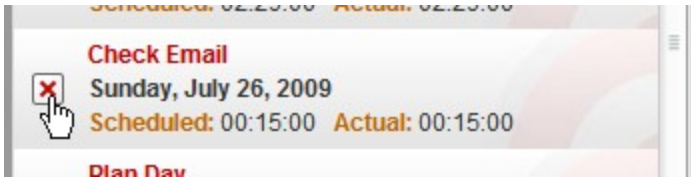
## Reviewing And Customizing Report Data

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.

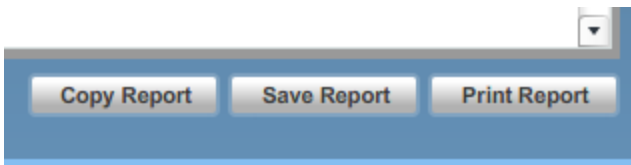
The information within the report is separated into 3 sections:

- **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 in NOT undoable!

## Report Output Options

The Report Panel provides 3 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.

## FAQS

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

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

**A:** This is usually due to a strange conflict between Action Machine Pro and a program called ActiveWords. A workaround is to either disable ActiveWords when using Action Machine Pro, or start Action Machine Pro 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. Action Machine Pro 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 ActionMachinePL.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 > ActionMachinePL.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 Action Machine Pro?**

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