Welcome to the Countdown for Windows editor!

Countdown is a unique program that allows you to count up to and down to certain days and times like anniversaries, birthdays, deadlines, the end of work or school or a military enlistment, or anything else. This editor program lets you easily and quickly make a data file that the **COUNT.EXE** program can use.

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Creating a File

Once you know what static text you would like to appear on the screen, simply begin typing in the edit window. At one second intervals, the lower window will be updated according to the contents of the box.

Now, you probably want to add a value that will change according to the time, which will be called a fields. In the edit window, you can create a field in a given spot by going to the "field edit" menu item, which will bring up a dialog box, asking you what you want to appear on screen. After deciding what you would like to appear, a field code surrounded by % signs will come up on the edit screen. The contents can be edited with both the "field edit" menu item or manually and are used to put a value on screen.

It is also possible to add a title by going to the title box (top part of window) and editing it. You can center or justify the contents by making sure you are currently outside a % field and going up to the menu item. Commas and daylight savings time translations are done by default.

Main Edit Window

The main edit window is the large middle window, whose contents are used to update the lower viewing window. In the edit window, field codes are shown surrounded by the % sign. To use a % as text, simply type *two % signs in a row*.

Fields and Field Codes

A field will produce a value that will change according to time. In Countdown, they are surronded by the % symbol (to use % in text, use two in a row). A field code may return something as simple as the time or the current more, but it can also return the number of hours, minutes, seconds, etc. until or since a particular date or time.

So that you don't have to memorize a lot of codes, the Countdown editor has the "field edit" function, which allows you, the user, to check off a few boxes to produce the codes.

Doing it manually is also possible and potentially more powerful. For example, to count the number of days, hours, minutes, and seconds until 5:00PM on 12/15/95, you could type:

% days as dhms until 12/15/95 5:00PM % days,
% hours % hours,
% minutes % minutes,
% seconds % seconds until vacation....

The dhms stands for "days, hours, minutes, seconds" and informs the Countdown interpreter to expect these quantities to be needed (that way, you are doing the total days, hours, minutes, and seconds until the time, not the total days, total hours, total minutes, and total seconds).

Manually counting to and from specific dates just involves the words shown above. You can use years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, and seconds in the calculations, and using AD before the year or a BC afterwards will force 95 AD, for example, instead of 1995.

Field Edit Function

To quickly create any time or date field code, the *field edit function* is available. To create a new field code in a given spot, simply activate the field edit menu function. To edit an existing field code, make sure the cursor is somewhere within the field code on the edit screen, and then activate the field edit menu item.

You have the choice to either use a simple value, like today's date, time, the current month, etc. (there are quite an array of these values) or to make a date calculation.

To use a simple value, simply make sure that the "today's" box is checked. Then go through the list of possible functions and find the one you wish to display.

Making a date calculation is not much more difficult with the field edit function. First, heck the "calculate below" box in the top. Then select the date that you wish to count up or down to from the dialog boxes. A year, for example, is not required (it will default to the current year but then go to the next year if you are counting up to that date but have already passed it in the current year). After selecting the date and time, decide whether you want to count up to or down from that date (which is only really necessary if there is an ambiguity in the date).

The last main part of making a date calculation involves deciding what factors you wish to count. In the drop-down box to the left, put in the value (hours, seconds, etc.) that you want to track for that time. In the group of boxes to the right, check everything that is also being tracked for that date. For example, if you wish to track the days, hours, minutes, and seconds to a particular date and time, select "days" in the drop-down box at the left, and check "days," "hours," "minutes," and "seconds" in the boxes to the right. Creating a new field for the hours, minutes, and seconds (after typing text in between) will allow you to display all the needed information.

Doing a calculation based on an outputted number is also possible below. If you knew that every second the U.S. government spends $41,000, you could set Countdown to count the number of seconds since January 1, set the operation for multiplication, set the figure to multiply by 41000, and you could watch it count up.

Using COUNT.EXE

Once you have created and are satisfied with file, you can save it as a data file for the COUNT.EXE program to use. If you specify the name of the data file in the command line when you run COUNT.EXE, it will bring up that file. Otherwise, it will bring up COUNT.DAT, the default file.

Contacting the Author, Registering

I am currently a freshman at MIT as of the finishing this program. The idea for Countdown came from the suggestion of a few users who had seen my earlier "Clinton Countdown Clock" program and had suggested that I create a more generic version.

Please support Countdown, which is $15 plus $2 shipping and handling for the disk!

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Thanks!