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Introduction to Break Timer

What is Break Timer?

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What is Break Timer?

Break Timer is a Microsoft Windows program which sets off an alarm at a pre-defined interval. Break Timer was written as a program to remind people who work at their workstations for long periods of time to stop and take a break.

In recent years with the popularity of personal computers in the business there has been an increase in the number of repetitive stress injuries occurring from continuous use of the keyboard and mouse. One aspect of avoiding such injuries is to periodically take a break from working, however people often get involved in working and forget to take breaks. Break Timer is a program which reminds one to take a break.

What Break Timer is not.

Break Timer is not a general purpose alarm program. It is not designed to remind you of your next meeting or your doctor's appointment. There are plenty of fine programs around which will do that for you. Break Timer is an interval timer. It starts a countdown for a period of time. At the end of that period of time, it notifies you to take a break. Once OK is selected, it starts the countdown again. Alarm programs do not work well for repeating the same period alarm continuously. Likewise Break Timer does not work well for setting alarms at different times.

Operation

Autostart Break Timer

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Changing and Saving the Time Period

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Autostart Break Timer

In order to autostart Break Timer, place it in the Startup Group of Program Manager.

Responding to the alarm

When the timer period has expired Break Timer will present an alarm dialog box. There are two buttons on the dialog box. The left button is labeled "OK"; pressing this button will cause the dialog box to disappear and the timer will begin timing for the specified period of time again. The right button is labeled "Snooze". This button is similar to the snooze button on alarm clocks. Pressing the Snooze button will cause the dialog box to disappear, but it will reappear in five minutes. This feature is useful when you are engaged in something that cannot be interrupted. Pressing this button gives you a time to find a stopping place in your work before taking a break.

Changing & Saving the time period

Choosing Change Time Period from the File menu presents a dialog box in which the user can specify the number of minutes between alarms. Changing the current time period does not change the value that the program loads upon startup. In order to change the permanent time period use the Save Time Period menu option.

Choosing Save Time Period Value from the File menu saves the current time period for loading each time the program starts.

Disabling the Alarm

Choosing Disable Alarm from the File menu turns the alarm off without stopping the Break Timer program. This option is useful when you are running a long program while the computer is unattended. This option will prevent the alarm from going off.

Always On Top

By turning on Always On Top, the alarm window will float above of all other windows on the Windows desktop. This feature is useful so that the alarm window does not get lost below the application you are currently working with.

To turn Always On Top on, select the menu option. A check appears next to the menu option when Always On Top is enabled. To turn Always On Top off, select the menu option again.

Exit

Select exit to terminate execution of Break Timer.

Commands

File

File

Change Timer Period

Save Timer Period

Disable Alarm

Always On Top

Exit

Repetitive Stress Injuries

Repetitive stress injuries are a class of injuries occurring from repeated activity. The specific class of repetitive stress injuries Break Timer attempts to address are those caused by long-term computer activity, specifically typing and using the mouse. A large number of cases of repetitive stress injuries have been showing up in recent years. The increase in use of personal computers has provided an environment where people work for hours at the same highly repetitious, high-speed tasks with little or no breaks. Older mainframe computers gave us a "break" while the host computer did its processing. Those small breaks allowed our muscles to relax. With high-speed personal computers, we get no breaks, consequently more injuries.

Repetitive stress injuries can show up in a variety of ways. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is certainly one of the most well known. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is the build-up of scar tissue around inflamed tendons and nerves where they pass through a small bone structure (the Carpal Tunnel). Another more common ailment is tendonitis of the wrists.

Break Timer attempts to address these problems by reminding you to take a break every so often. The break does not need to be a long involved coffee break or exercise break. It could just be thirty seconds of letting your hands relax at the keyboard, though periodic "stretch" breaks are also a good idea (Exercises).

Break Timer is not a complete solution to repetitive stress injuries. There are many factors including environment, keyboard position, user posture and hand positioning. Some of these are addressed by more ergonomically designed keyboards and desks. However Break Timer does attempt to address one important area, which is the need for periodic breaks in repetitive activities.

Exercises

Taking a break every hour to do a few stretches can reduce muscular tension that builds up during prolonged bouts at the computer.

Tense stretches were selected with the needs of computer users in mind; feel free to add any favorites of your own to your routine.

Extend and separate the fingers until you feel the stretch (A); hold for 5 seconds.

Relax.

Then gently bend your fingers for 5 seconds (B).

Repeat 5-10 times.

In a standing position, slowly raise and lower your arms while turning your head from side to side until you feel a gentle stretch.

Repeat 5-10 times.

To relax the shoulders and upper back, lace your fingers behind your head and pull your shoulder blades toward each other until you feel tension through the upper back. Hold for 5-10 seconds, then relax. Repeat 5-10 times.

With fingers interlaced behind head; keep elbows straight out to side with upper body in a good aligned position.

Pull your shoulder blades together to create a feeling of tension through the upper back, chest and shoulder blade area. Hold this feeling of mild tension for 8-10 seconds, then relax.

Do several times. This is good to do when shoulders and upper back are tense or tight.

This stretch counteracts the effects of leaning forward to stare the screen. Slowly tuck in your chin, hold for 2 seconds, and then release.

Repeat 10 times.

An excellent stretch to do when you find yourself slumping forward.

Lace your fingers behind your arms. Hold for 5-10 seconds.

Repeat 5-10 times.

With fingers interlaced behind your back, slowly turn your elbows inward while straightening your arms. This is good to do when you find yourself slumping forward from your shoulders. This stretch can be done at any time. Hold for 5-15 seconds. Do twice.

To stretch your calves, lean on a support, and slowly move your hips forward until you feel a stretch in the straight leg. Keep the heel of the straight leg on the floor and toes pointed forward. Hold for 30 seconds without bouncing, then switch legs.

Raise the top of your shoulders toward your ears until you feel slight tension in your neck and shoulders. Hold this feeling of tension for 3-5 seconds, then relax your shoulders downward into their normal position. Do this 3 times. Shoulder shrugs are good to use at the first signs of tightness or tension in the shoulder or neck area.

Interlace fingers above your head. With your palms facing upward, push your arms slightly back and up. Feel the stretch in arms, shoulders and upper back. Hold stretch for 15 seconds. Do 3 times. Do not hold your breath.

Sit with left leg bent over right leg, then rest elbow or forearm of right arm on the outside of the upper thigh of the left leg. Now apply some controlled, steady pressure toward the right with the elbow or forearm. As you do this look over your left shoulder to get the stretch feeling. Hold for 15 seconds. Stretch both sides. This is a stretch for the side of hip, lower and middle of back.

Hold onto your lower leg just below the knee. Gently pull bent leg toward your chest. To isolate a stretch in the side of your thigh, use the right arm to pull your bent leg across and toward the left shoulder. Hold for 30 seconds at easy stretch tension. Stretch both sides.

Registration and Licensing

Break Timer Registration

Break Timer Registration

With registration you will receive a license number which will prevent the shareware screen from soliciting you to register your software. This registration will be good for all future shareware versions of Break Timer. The registration does not include update disks, a manual, or any other service.

