

## **WHAT IS THIS?**

DTGCountDown, or “DTG” for short, is a simple event countdown timer for use with Microsoft Windows. DTG is an acronym for “Days To Go”, which is what this program tells you. You enter the date and time of your event, and, as long DTG is running, you will be kept updated with how long you have to wait until it arrives. The program also places that countdown information into a text file that may be used by other programs. One example of this would be setting your Usenet newsreader to use the contents of the text file as your signature block so that you can add a tagline to your posts letting others know how long you have until your event arrives.

## **HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?**

DTG is free! It was originally written for the author’s personal use, but a few friends asked for a copy. It is now offered for free to any individual that wants it for personal use.

## **WHAT ARE THE LICENSE AND WARRANTY TERMS?**

The executable version of this program as published is hereby released to the public domain with the following limitations:

1. The executable may not be modified, de-compiled, de-constructed, reverse-engineered or otherwise tampered with. It must be used and distributed in its whole, published form.
2. The program may not be sold for profit and no fees may be charged for delivery of the program. This means that any charges for media, download or shipping and handling to deliver the program are prohibited. Of course the easiest way to get this program is to download it via The Internet. Access to The Internet may require payment of a fee to an ISP, but that doesn’t violate the terms of this license because it’s not being charged *specifically* for access to *this* program.
3. This program may not be incorporated into any other software that is sold for a profit. It may be incorporated into other free software compilations, but it must still not be de-compiled; i.e. it must remain intact in its original executable form.

This program is provided as-is with no warranties of any kind, neither implied nor otherwise. You agree to use the program at your own risk. Regardless of any limitations your state or country may apply to this, if the program breaks or does not perform to your satisfaction or even if it break your computer and every computer within a ten-mile radius, that’s your problem and the author will not be held liable. After all, this program was *free* so what do you expect?

## HOW DO I INSTALL IT?

First of all, there is no “install script” for this program (remember – it *was* free!) Most users will only need the stand-alone executable file, “DTGCountDown.exe”. Some users may receive an error message regarding a missing or incompatible “COMDLG32.OCX” file. If you do, see below for more information on that.

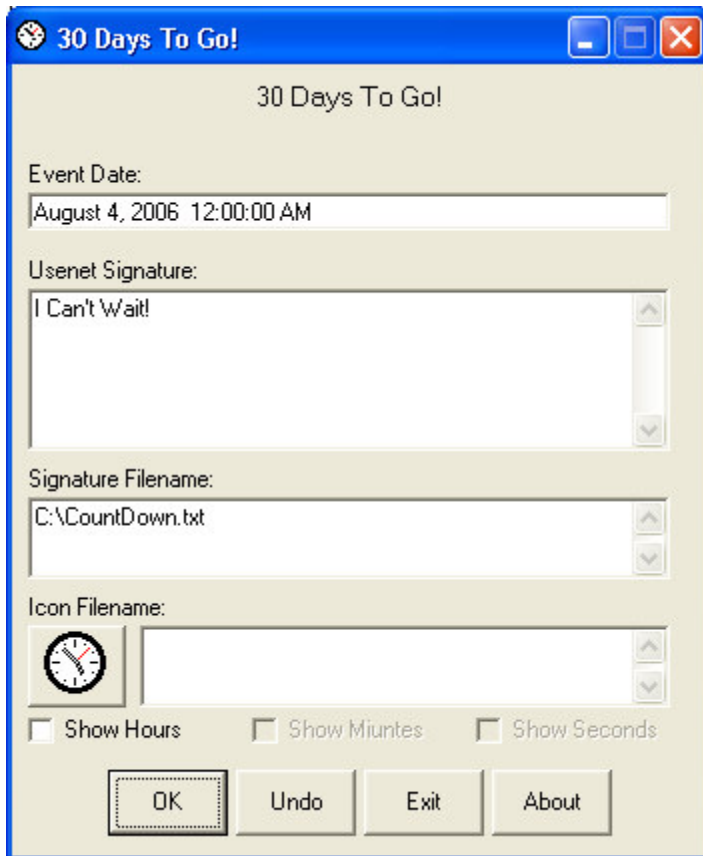
You can place the “DTGCountDown.exe” program file anywhere you want. Because of a special feature of the program, you may not want to tuck it away too “deep” in your computer! You may want to place it in your “My Documents” folder. Specifically, that feature is that the executable program file can be copied and renamed, and each uniquely named “exe” file will have its own settings and thus can countdown any number of different events. Let’s say you are going to Walt Disney World in May, Dollywood in August, and your mother-in-law’s birthday is November. You could keep up with all three by copying the program and naming it three different things, like “WDW.exe”, “Dollywood.exe” and “RootCanal.exe”. Each “instance” of the executable, now having a unique name, can countdown its own event.

Once you have the program located where you want it, you might want to make a copy and rename it as desired (make sure to keep the extension as “.exe”). To start the program, just double-click on it in your Windows Explorer program. If you want to put it on your “Start” menu, just right-click the file and keep the mouse button held down while you navigate over your “Start” menu button, and then through your programs until you find where you want to put it. When you “drop” it, choose the option to “Create Shortcut”. If you want to have your countdown run automatically each time you turn on your computer, then place it in the “Startup” folder in the “all Programs” section of your Start Menu.

## HOW DO I USE IT?

Most people will find the program to be very intuitive and likely not need any instructions. Others simply refuse to read instructions and will jump right in and start playing with the options and will have it mostly figured out on their own. The rest of you will read the instructions and will be kindly rewarded with the “*secret hidden option*”. You want to know what that is? Well, keep reading!

When you start DTG for the very first time (including the first time you start a newly renamed instance of the executable), it will default to an even that is 30 days from today. DTG starts running “minimized”, meaning it will only appear as an entry on your taskbar. The entry will have a clock as the icon and the label “30 Days To Go!” To change that instance of DTG for your particular event, click on the taskbar item and the setting screen will appear:



You can click or tab to the “Event Date” field and enter your own date. Dates can be entered in most any reasonable format. For example, if you enter “sept 2”, then the program will assume your event is September 2<sup>nd</sup> of the current year, starting at 12:00am. Note that if you enter a date in the past, DTG becomes a “count up” timer (i.e. it always tells you the amount of time between “now” and your event).

The “Usenet Signature” box is used to add any information to your signature block, for example, your name or nickname. This information will be stored in the Signature Filename as indicated in the next field. Keep in mind that anything you place in the Usenet Signature field will come before the DTG tagline. By default, this field has “I Can’t Wait!” entered in it, so your signature file will contain “I Can’t Wait! (30 Days To Go!)”. To insert line breaks in your signature block, use CTRL+ENTER.

The “Signature Filename” is the name of the file that will contain your signature block. By default, it is “C:\CountDown.txt”. You may want to put the file in a location that is easily accessed, such as “My Documents”. Also, if you will be using multiple instances of DTG< you should use different, unique filenames for each. To change the filename, click on or tab to the Usenet Signature field and a standard Windows dialog box will open allowing you to select the filename.

The “Icon Filename” field allows you to enter the name of an icon or other bitmap image to use as your icon. To change it, click on or tab to the Icon Filename field to access a dialog box allowing you to select an icon file. Note that if you choose the “Cancel” option in the file browser window, you will be asked if you want to remove any custom icon and revert back to DTG’s standard clock icon. Keep in mind that the program does not permanently load the icon from that file, so that icon file must always exist in the same location on your computer. For this reason, you may want to copy that icon file to the same folder where your DTG executable is located. Using different icons can help you easily identify different events when you have more than one instance of DTG running. If you need help creating your own icons, I recommend the program AWicons Lite, which is freeware.

In addition to counting down the days until your event, for you terribly anal-retentive over-planners, you can also countdown the hours, minutes and even seconds. There are check boxes that you can select to do this. Note that this does not change the unit from “days” to hours, minutes, or seconds. It simply allows a higher precision to your countdown. Note that you can’t show the seconds unless you show minutes, and you can’t show the minutes unless you show the hours.

Once you have set the options for your event, you need to click the “OK” button. Your changes will be saved and DTG will return to its minimized state on the taskbar. If you have made an erroneous entry and want to undo your changes, click the “Undo” button. This will revert the settings back to what they were before you made any changes and leave you on the settings screen. This does revert to DTG’s *default* settings, just what settings were on the screen before you starting changing them. Of course if this is the very first time you have run this instance of DTG, then it would be the DTG default settings because that’s what it would have started with, being the very first time it was run.

If you press the “Exit” button, any changes made will *not* be saved (just as if you had pressed the “Undo” button), and the DTG program will exit. It will no longer be running on the taskbar, and your signature block text file will no longer be updated. The same thing will happen if you press the “X” button on the upper right-hand corner of the settings screen window. The “About” button will show you basic information about the program.

Now, for those of you that did bother to read the instructions, here is your reward! The settings that you make for a particular DTG instance are stored in your Windows registry. There are some discrepancies based on different system configurations, but generally, your settings will be stored in the following key:

“HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\VB and VBA Program Settings\DaysToGo”

Under that key, for each instance (i.e. exe filename) you have created, there will be another key that will contain seven values for the different settings. It is not advisable to change the keys directly in the registry as unpredictable outcomes may result (that's computer-speak for "bad things might happen to the program or your computer"). In fact, it's really not advisable to change *anything* in the registry unless you know what you are doing! The only reason this is mentioned at all is because if you decide not to use DTG, there is no "uninstall" program, you will be left with these rogue entries in your registry. While they won't hurt anything, some people are just anal-retentive and prefer they not be there. In order to remove the settings from the registry, there is a secret hidden option. If you double-click on the settings screen in the area to the far right of the words "Usenet Signature", just above the scroll bar arrow for the text box field, you will be prompted "Delete all settings and quit?" Clicking the "Yes" button will delete the registry settings for *that* instance of DTG and will exit the program.

### **YOU MEAN THAT'S ALL?**

Well what did you expect? It's free! Yes, that's all there is to DTG. If you like it, then enjoy it. If not, well, just delete it. If you find any errors, then feel free to contact the author and they might be fixed in a future release. If you think of something that might be a "neat feature", then contact the author. He might think about incorporating it into a future release. Keep in mind the version history below (you wouldn't want to be too disappointed). Also keep in mind that a "neat feature" that involves a lot of work will likely be but off for several releases (again, check the version history below to see what that might mean in terms of ETA).

### **HOW DO I CONTACT THE AUTHOR?**

If you would like to slather praise or suggest some worthwhile features, the author's name is Rodney T. Grill and he can be contacted at [rodney@grill.org](mailto:rodney@grill.org). If you would like to complain about the program or if it has crashed your computer causing you to lose everything, including your priceless notes for how to build a perpetual motion machine that really works, the author's name is Ralph and he lives in a shack in the hills of Montana along with his wild hound dogs and enough ammunition to scare North Korea.

### **THIS IS VERSION 2.0.1 – WHAT WERE IN THE OTHER VERSIONS?**

The version history of DTG is as follows:

Version 1.0, May 1998: It was written in Visual Basic and called "MickeyTime" to countdown the days to the author's Walt Disney World vacation. Most everything was hardcoded.

- Version 1.1, June 1998: A settings screen was added so the date could be adjusted.
- Version 1.2, Feb. 2002: Ability to create a text file for Usenet signatures was added.
- Version 1.3, Dec. 2004: General clean-up and porting to Visual Basic 6.0
- Version 2.0, Mar. 2006: More cleanup, added ability to track multiple events by renaming the EXE file.
- Version 2.0.1, June 2006: Added hours, minutes, and seconds display capability.