

WinCron

Event Scheduling for Microsoft Windows

The WinCron program allows you to execute system backups, long printing jobs, or time consuming tasks long after you have left for the day. Put simply, WinCron is an alarm clock that runs programs. WinCron also provides a clock icon that displays the current time.

One of the more helpful features of WinCron is that it does not matter if the computer is turned off between event schedules. The schedule is always saved. As long as the computer is on either at the time of an event or after it, the event will run.

Imagine setting up the command line: "backup c:*.* f:" (f: is a network drive) to execute at 12:00 AM. This command allows you to backup your system to the network without you having to be there.

WinCron has several features that help you automate tasks to improve productivity.

- I) Events are scheduled by Year, Month, Day, Hour, and Minute. Events are in the form of a command line and a path and are entered in the "Schedule Event..." entry in the WinCron system menu.
- II) Events can be deleted or run any time you wish with the "Edit Event Schedule..." menu entry.
- III) Any program can be run in any directory from the "Run Program..." entry.

HINTS

Since WinCron is a simple program, there is little to say about its operation. Here are a few hints that may make some of Microsoft Windows' quirks a little less confusing.

.EXE files:

WinCron assumes (because Windows assumes) that all programs that you wish to run end with a '.EXE.' If this is not true, simply add the ending, i.e. rather than "chkdsk" enter "chkdsk.com." The extensions that need to be specified are: .com, .bat, and .pif.

386 enhanced mode:

Some DOS programs will not run in Windows' 386 enhanced mode, most notably Sytron Corporation's "SY-TOS" tape backup system. SY-TOS will run in 286 standard mode. Before scheduling an event, try using the "Run Program..." entry as a dry run. If it works here, it should work when scheduled.

Running WinCron at startup:

Having WinCron run each time Windows runs is simple enough with NOTEPAD.EXE. From the File Manager, doubleclick on the file "win.ini." This will run the Notepad. Under the "[windows]" section you will see the line "load=." It may be followed by other programs. Just add "wincron," i.e., "load=wincron" or if you have a few programs already, it could look something like this "load=rolodex.crd daytime.cal wincron."

COMMAND.COM internal commands:

DOS has two basic types of commands: programs and shell commands. The program COMMAND.COM has built in to it all the commands referenced in the DOS manuals as "internal." Since these commands do not have a corresponding program, WinCron cannot run them directly.

One such internal command is "copy." If you try to copy a group of files from one location to another from WinCron it will fail. To execute command.com internal commands you must run command.com.

To use the DOS copy command to copy files from one location to another, the WinCron command line would be: "command.com /c copy *.* d:" This is simply your copy command prefixed with "command.com /c." What you are actually doing is running command.com as a program and telling it to copy these files. (Hint: if you have an older version of DOS you can use this same technique to run a batch file from within another batch file.) Some internal command.com commands are: dir, copy, type, chdir, cls, date, del, mkdir, and rename.

Pif files:

Pif files have some interesting gotchas also. If you specify a program, WinCron will run that program through Windows. If you have a specific pif file for that program, those defaults will be used. For example, if in the pif file you specify a starting directory, the starting directory that WinCron specifies will be ignored and Windows will use the settings in the pif file.

Rule of Thumb:

All you can count on WinCron doing is running the program, if it is able, at or after the scheduled time. Considerations of the task being scheduled should be thought out. The simpler the task, the better the chance of success. Complex tasks with the macro recorder can work with careful planning and practice. The best type of event for WinCron is a DOS batch file that performs a lengthy process or a program that can run in a standalone or "batch" mode and correct errors by itself.

Problems

As you can probably imagine, there are a number of things that can disrupt an event. Although WinCron saves and reloads its schedule automatically (it never even asks), situations can prevent it from working.

- a) Program failure. If a program fails and requires human correction, it will not run correctly.
- b) Interactive Programs. Programs that require human interaction cannot be scheduled.
- c) If you are executing a command that runs on a network, the network must be running. If the network "goes down" while WinCron is waiting, there is no guarantee that the network connections will still exist.
- d) Windows must be running WinCron at the time of the event. If WinCron is not running, it has no way of gaining control long enough to run your event.

Support Programs

WinCron comes with two support programs: RUNREC.EXE and ATTN.EXE. Runrec.exe solves a deficiency in Microsoft Windows' Recorder program. All runrec does is either find the recorder running with the correct file name, or runs it with the macro file name you had specified and tells recorder to play the macro immediately. Instead of using the command line: "recorder print.rec" you would enter "runrec print.rec."

Attn.exe is a simple program that pops up a message box of text you want displayed. The command line "Attn it's 12:00 - Go to lunch" would display:



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WINCRON.EXE, RUNREC.EXE, and ATTN.EXE are distributed through the shareware concept. If you use them, please send a \$20.00 donation to:

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