

SkedEzy - Intelligent Windows Scheduler

Introduction

SkedEzy is unique (outside of university research labs) in that it is designed to understand English in the context of dates and times. Hence there are no commands to remember, nested menus to wade through or anything else which lies between you and what you want the program to do. Basically, you tell it what to do in English, by typing in text just like you would jot down a note to yourself on a scrap of paper.

SkedEzy looks good no matter what colour scheme you choose for your desktop because it uses matching colours for any colored areas. The custom push buttons were modeled on real objects - even the tick (check) and cross, which were based on marks made by a wide tipped felt marker.

Note: SkedEzy keeps all the events you schedule in a file called skedezy.que, and automatically keeps an exact copy in a backup file called skedezy.bak, every time you run the program. Hence, should anything happen to skedezy.que, it can always be restored by copying from or renaming skedezy.bak.

Although SkedEzy is a reliable program, you should make a copy of skedezy.que on a floppy disk at least once a week (preferably once a day) if you intend storing important information with it. Then your info is safe no matter what happens.

This manual assumes that you have basic Windows keyboard skills, such as tabbing around the fields of dialog boxes, editing the text in those fields, selecting radio buttons etc.

In case of any problems, or if you have any suggestions for this product, feel free to contact the author at any of the following addresses:

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System Menu Items

Schedule Message Event

This menu item brings up a dialog box containing 6 text input boxes. The first 3 allow you to specify a message, a day and a time. The remaining 3 are optional, and allow you to specify a recurrence period, an early warning period and a reserved period. There are also 2 check boxes which set options for the message event being scheduled. Leave the 'Beeps' check box checked if you want an audible warning (3 short beeps) when the event pops up. If you just want the beeps, as an alarm, you can uncheck the 'Event action' check box. No action will occur i.e. no dialog box will pop up.

The first text input box allows you to enter a message, up to 150 characters long.

The second text input box allows you to specify the day on which the message will first appear. If left blank, SkedEzy will assume you mean today. Otherwise, type in anything that refers to a day in the future. For example:

3/5 (the next 3rd of May)

October fourth, '97 (SkedEzy accepts numbers written out in full)

6th Apr 1996 (abbreviations are OK)

Fri. week (try anything reasonable, and it will probably work)

In a couple of day's time (extra words, punctuation etc. are OK)

The third text input box allows you to specify the time that the message will appear on the specified day. If left blank, SkedEzy will assume you want to see the message as soon as you start your computer on the specified day - it will do this by setting the time to 12am. Examples:

3:08pm (8 past 3 in the afternoon)

at qtr past (the next time the time is 15 minutes past the hour)

ten twenty, in the morning (20 past 10 in the morning)

'round midnight (anyone out there play jazz?)

Half past 4 this arvo (Australianisms OK)

456 (the next four fifty six - lazy typists OK)

now (the current time)

in two hrs time (in 2 hours time)

The fourth text input box allows you to specify a recurrence period for the message. If left blank, SkedEzy assumes that you only want the message to appear once. Otherwise, the message will appear periodically until you delete it. For example:

20 min (every 20 minutes)

every two days (every 2 days)

a fortnight (every 2 weeks)

yearly (once a year)

The fifth text input box allows you to specify an early warning period for the message. If left blank, no early warning will appear. Otherwise, an early warning dialog box will pop up at the specified time before the message is due to appear. For example:

2 hrs (early warning pops up 2 hours before message pops up)

five days (early warning pops up 5 days before message pops up)

The sixth text input box allows you to specify a reserved period for the message. If left blank, there is no reserved period. Otherwise, SkedEzy will prevent you from scheduling another message in the specified time period after the scheduled message pops up. For example:

2 wks (message 'leave for vacation' - no point in scheduling anything to be done at home)

an hour (message 'meeting with the boss' - that hour is unavailable for anything else)

SkedEzy includes support for calendar months for dates and recurrence periods. For example, 'Second Fri. in Nov' would be a valid date, and 'every 2 months' would be a valid recurrence period. Normally, a monthly recurring event would occur on the same day of the month, as in the following examples:

Date: 'the 17th'

Time: '2pm'

Recurrence: 'monthly'

Assuming the current date is earlier than the 17th, the first message would pop up on the 17th of the month, and the following month it would pop up on the 17th again, and so on.

Date: 'in 4 days time'

Time: '2pm'

Recurrence: 'every couple of months'

The first message would pop up in 4 days time. Suppose this was the 24th of the month, then 2 months later it would pop up on the 24th again, and so on.

Sometimes you may require something to be scheduled on the same day of the week, on a monthly basis. For example, a meeting that is held on the second Monday of the month, every month. SkedEzy assumes this is what you want, if you ever specify a date with a day of the week in it. For example:

Date: 'next Thurs'

Time: '2pm'

Recurrence: 'monthly'

Assuming that next Thursday is the 3rd Thursday in the month, the first message would pop up next Thursday, and the following month it would pop up on the 3rd Thursday of that month, and so on every month.

Date: '1st Tuesday of the mth'

Time: '2pm'

Recurrence: '3 months'

Assuming that the 1st Tuesday of the current month has passed, the first message would pop up on the first

Tuesday of the next month, and 3 months later it would pop up on the first Tuesday of that month, and so on every 3 months.

Pressing the *Confirm* button will bring up the 'Edit Event' dialog box. Then you can check all the details and make any necessary changes before pressing *OK*. If you want to schedule more than one message at a time, press the *Confirm, do another* button. This will let you schedule and confirm several messages, one after the other.

Schedule Program Event

This menu item also brings up a dialog box containing 6 text input boxes. Instead of typing in some message text, you type in the pathname of a program to run, along with any parameters that it may require. Alternatively, you may press the *Select File* button to bring up the standard Windows file selection dialog box. Date, time, recurrence, early warning and reserved time work exactly as for a message event. In addition to the option check boxes *Beeps* and *Event Action* there is a check box *Confirm* for confirming a program run. If this box is checked, a dialog box appears when the program is about to run, giving you the opportunity to delete the event (and thereby preventing the run) if desired.

List Events

This menu item brings up a dialog box which contains a list box and a number of push buttons along the bottom. The current date and time (updated every minute) is displayed at the bottom right corner of the dialog box. The list box contains all the currently scheduled events, one of which can be selected by clicking on it with the mouse. If not all events are visible, the list box may be scrolled up or down using the scroll bar on the right. The push buttons are used as follows (from left to right):

OK

This will return you to the SkedEzy icon, making permanent any changes that you have made.

Cancel

This will return you to the SkedEzy icon, undoing any changes that you have made using Delete message or Edit message.

Delete

If an event in the list box is selected, this will delete the event so it never appears again. If no event is selected, a hint dialog box pops up, telling you to select an event from the list. You can also use the <Delete> key on the keyboard to delete an event.

Edit

If an event in the list box is selected, this will bring up a dialog box containing edit boxes with all the details of the event. If no event is selected, a hint dialog box pops up, telling the user to select an event from the list. See the chapter 'The Edit Dialog Box' for more information.

Print Events

This menu item brings up a dialog box in which you can specify the time period which the printout will cover. The default values are set so that it is only necessary to push the *OK* button to get a listing of next week's events. Otherwise, you can specify a starting day for the printout period, and how much time it will cover. Like scheduling an event, the date and time period can be specified in virtually any way that makes sense to you. The listings produced are identical to the listings that appear in the Event List dialog box. Pressing the *Cancel* button will get you out without printing anything.

Options

This menu item brings up a dialog box which allows various options to be set.

Always on top. If ticked (checked), SkedEzy will always float above all other Windows on the desktop. This is useful if you like to have SkedEzy handy no matter what other programs you are working with.

Save events after every change. You might find this option useful if you frequently enter, delete or edit events. It makes sure that nothing is lost if some other program causes a crash, you kick the power plug etc etc

US date. If you live in the United States, check this check box to ensure that all dates, wherever they appear in SkedEzy, will be in the form mm/dd/ccyy. This also ensures that dates you enter will be recognized correctly.

24 hour time. If you live in Europe, or simply have a preference for the 24 hour format, you can use this option to ensure all dates appear in 24 hour format. Also, any date you enter will be assumed to be in 24 hour format.

Short form event details. There are 2 formats for the event list which appears in the Event List dialog and on printouts - short form and full form.

The short form displays only the most important details of events, and can save time if there is a large number of events. Graphic symbols are used for the optional information. From left to right, they represent recurrence, early warning, reserved period, beeps and event action. For example, if the early warning symbol appears then you know that event has an early warning period associated with it.

The full form displays all details of events, and may be preferred if there are not too many events.

Expiry days. A number may be typed in the edit box to specify how many days any 'once only' events are to be kept in the event list, after they have popped up. If a 0 is typed in, events disappear after popping up. If left blank, there is no expiry and the events will remain on the event list until you delete them or change the expiry option again.

About SkedEzy

This menu item brings up a small dialog box with the version number, a copyright notice and the name of the author. Also listed are the electronic addresses of the author - CompuServe and InterNet.

Help

This menu item starts up Write with this file loaded.

The Scheduled Event Dialog Box

This dialog box will pop up under two circumstances:

1. A scheduled message is due (or overdue) to appear.
2. A scheduled program run, with 'confirm' specified, is due (or overdue) to run.

Besides the *OK* button, there is a *Put off to same time tomorrow* button, a *Delete* button and an *Edit* button.

The *Put off to same time tomorrow* button causes a copy of the event to be scheduled for the next day, at the originally scheduled time. This has no effect on the scheduling of recurrent events. For example, a message scheduled for every second Monday will still fall due and appear every second Monday regardless of how many times you put it off!

The *Delete* button will delete the event so it never occurs again.

The *Edit* button will bring up the 'Edit Details' dialog box, allowing you to make changes to the event.

Once Only Messages

The date and time that the message is scheduled to appear is shown in the dialog box. This does not necessarily correspond to the current date/time, because the computer may not have been running at that time. Hence, no messages will be missed, even if you use your machine infrequently.

Recurrent Messages

Notice that there are now two date/times displayed. The first is the same as for once only messages. The second is when the message is due to appear again, as specified by the recurrence period when the message was scheduled. When this time arrives (perhaps weeks later) and the dialog box pops up again, the same thing happens again - the scheduled date/time is first, followed by the re-scheduled one. At any time, the message event may be deleted by either pressing the *Delete* button or deleting it via the 'List Events' dialog box.

Once Only Program Runs

These behave just like once only messages, except that SkedEzy will attempt to run the specified program immediately after you press the *OK* button. If it fails for some reason, such as a spelling slip in the file name, SkedEzy will display an error message and wait for you to press *OK* before returning to the SkedEzy icon. If the 'confirm' option was not set when the program run was scheduled, the program will run with no warning at all. This is handy for when the computer is running unattended, since no user response is required.

Recurrent Program Runs

These behave just like recurrent messages, with the addition of the 'confirm' option effect described for once only program runs.

The Edit Details Dialog Box

This dialog box will appear after you press the *Edit* button in the event list dialog box. This enables you to change any aspect of the event you selected in the list.

In the text box at the top, the event text can be changed by using the normal editing keys, as you would in Write or NotePad. If the event is a program run, and you realize that there is an error in the filename, it can be corrected this way. Otherwise, if the event is a message, you may want to change the wording.

If the day of the month is changed, the day of the week changes automatically - this is handy when you know the day of the week but are not sure of the exact date. Just put in a rough date, then change the day number to one which brings up the correct day of the week. All parts of the date or time may be changed.

Below the date and time, the unit of the recurrence period i.e. day, month etc. may be selected by clicking on the appropriate radio button. The edit box to the left of the buttons allows you to change the number of days, months etc. to use as the recurrence period.

In exactly the same way, the early warning period and reserved time period may be changed.

At the bottom right of the dialog box, the options may be changed if desired, by clicking on the check boxes. If the event is a message, the 'Confirm' check box appears gray and cannot be used, since it only applies to program run events.

When you press the *OK* button, all the details are checked for validity. If anything is not right, SkedEzy will tell you about it.

Update History

Version 1.15 Feb 1994

First distributed version.

Version 1.2 Aug 1994

Made all fields editable. 'Once only' messages are not deleted after they have been triggered. They stay on the list but may be deleted manually at any time.

Version 1.21 Sep 1994

Added error recovery to reduce risk of data loss.

Version 1.22 Nov 1994

Fixed a bug which affected the updating of recurrence period. This sometimes resulted in an incorrect value being displayed in the event list, after the user had updated the recurrence period. This fix may also cure the General Protection Fault at 000A:0026 encountered by some users using version 1.2 or 1.21.

Version 1.5 Jul 1995

Major upgrade. Total visual facelift, extra options, subjected to a 6 week Beta Test program by 7 CompuServe beta testers. Incorporated dozens of user-suggested improvements, both minor and major.