

Coffee Break

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Legalese

Coffee Break is shareware. If you keep it, you should send \$5 to the address listed in the Read Me file. I won't bore you with the details here -- see the Read Me or the end of this help.

What it is

Coffee Break is an application that sits in the background most of the time. The only evidence of it's existence is the new window that keeps counting down like a timer, and the new item in the Application menu. So what is it good for? Just wait until the timer hits zero, and you'll find out! If you're too impatient to wait, read on.

The sole purpose of Coffee Break is to replace your weak willpower. For those of you who sit for hours on end in front of your computer -- knowing all the while that you're setting yourself up for carpal tunnel syndrome, or other Repetitive Stress Injuries (RSI), but you just can't tear yourself away from that game -- this program may just prove invaluable. It will quietly sit in the background, timer ticking away. When the timer hits zero, Coffee Break will shove it's way into the foreground, taking total control of your Mac. It will lock your computer for a specified period of time, forcing you to take a break from typing. While it's locked, the program will give you suggestions for things to do during your break to further reduce the possibility of developing RSIs.

For those of you who are thinking, "How rude! It just bustles in and stops you in the middle of things?", this is not entirely what it does. You may specify a "warning period," and when the timer reaches that point, the program will tell you you'd better wrap things up soon. This prevents control being taken away before you have a chance to save your work. (Not that Coffee Break would cause you to loose any of it, but we want to be careful, don't we?)

The interface is fairly simple -- there are only six menu items. (Not counting the About item in the Apple menu.) They are:

Set Options - presents you with a dialog in which you may set the various options. Each option is described in detail below.

The Work time is the time in minutes that you have between breaks. The Sleep time is the minimum time the computer remains locked. (Work time will not begin again until you acknowledge the end of sleep time. This is so that if you specified a ten minute break and were away for fifteen minutes, you don't lose five minutes of work time.) Both of these values must be integer values greater than or equal to 1, and are in units of minutes. Save warning time is the time at which you are prompted to get ready for

sleep time. This value is also an integer value, but is in units of seconds. Note that these time settings won't take effect until the next time the program goes from work time to sleep time, or vice versa. So you can't extend the time of your next break when you get close to it!

The Save warning notification with group specifies how you will be notified at the specified save warning time. The Sound check box specifies that the computer will make a special warning sound. Note that if the main Sound check box isn't on, this option isn't available. The Alert check box specifies that the computer will remind you with an alert. The Flashing menu bar check box will make the computer flash the menu bar twice to warn you. Finally, the Flashing icon check box will make the Application menu (you know, the one on the far right) alternate between the current application's icon and Coffee Break's icon. The flashing will stop either at sleep time, or if you bring Coffee Break to the front. You can specify any or all of these items.

Sound simply specifies whether Coffee Break will make any sounds or not. Do not confuse this option with the notification Sound option.

The Timer in sleep option lets you see the amount of sleep time left when the program is in sleep mode.

The Restrict user option exists to give the user more control, if desired. It allows you to do two things that are ordinarily not allowed. First, it allows you to quit during work time. Ordinarily, choosing Quit will put the program into "Quit pending" mode. If this option is off, choosing Quit will give you the option of actually quitting the program. Secondly, it gives you an emergency exit from sleep mode. By pressing Command-X, you may exit sleep mode. However, whatever time is left on the sleep timer will be added to your next break!

To prevent casual use of this feature to quit the program, turning this option off will not take effect until after the next break.

(Note: to find out if your screen saver supports the next two options, check the table in the Read Me file.)

The Built-In Screen Saver check box allows you to tell the program whether or not to use the built-in screen saver during sleep time. If this item is unchecked, the built-in screen saver will come on anyway, but your screen saver will be able to come on over it. If you check this item, it only affects AfterDark and any other screen savers that support screen saver control through the same method. Coffee Break will turn your screen saver off while in sleep time, and turn it back on when sleep time is over.

The Pause when saver on check box tells the program to pause the timer whenever it detects that a screen saver is on. However, this results in more work. So, you may find that your computer slows down slightly with this option on. (I haven't found any slowdown on mine, but I added this option just in case...) With this item checked, a

new field will appear that is not visible if this item is not checked. In this field, the Check for screen saver every: ____ seconds field, you enter the interval at which the program will check for screen saver activity. By setting this value higher, you will reduce slowdown, but you will also decrease the accuracy of the timer. (Every time your screen saver comes on, you stand a chance of gaining or losing up to the number of seconds in this field.) As an added benefit of the pause option, if Coffee Break is paused due to the screen saver being in the front for as long as a forced break would be, it will reset the timer for you. That way, you'll get your full work time back if you take an early, "unscheduled" break.

Set Hot Key - allows you to set a hot key which brings the application to the front. Since the timer stops whenever the application is in the front, this serves as another convenient way to "pause" the timer if you need to get up and do something during work time, but you don't want to loose that time. When you choose this menu item, you will be presented with a dialog containing an outlined box with a hot key displayed in it. (The hot key that should be set when you receive this program is Command-Option-p.) Simply press any key combination, and you'll see it appear in the box in place of the old one. Valid key combinations can contain any combination of the modifier keys (Command, Shift, Caps Lock, Option, and Control) plus one non-modifier key. It is possible to define a hot key that consists of only a non-modifier key, but I wouldn't recommend it. (With a few exceptions -- Esc or Clear might be okay if you never use those keys for anything else.)

When you use the hot key to bring the application to the front, you can't just tap the keys. You have to hold down the keys until the application comes to the front. I know that this isn't wonderfully user-friendly, but it beats writing a messy extension that would be more likely of conflicting with something!

Save Window Pos. - saves the current position of the time window. This is so that you don't have to move the window every time you start up. (Moving the window is simple: just click on it and drag it.)

Show time window - this item starts out checked and should, in my opinion, stay that way so you can keep tabs on how much time you've got left. However, I added this feature for those of you who might not share my opinion. I almost left this out, but decided at the last minute to add it. By the way, there IS a reason that I didn't do something a little "cleaner" with the timer. The only other reasonable place for it is in the menu bar. But, that would probably make it interfere with SuperClock, which is a favorite of mine.

Help - either you know what this one does, or you're a hopeless case! ;-)

Quit - this doesn't work quite the way you would expect. People like me are sneaky. If I were coming up on the end of my work time, and couldn't tear myself away from that game of Civilization I was playing, I'd quit the app and restart it, thus starting my work time from the beginning again. That's cheating, a very nasty type, since it allows you to reduce the usefulness of this program to ZERO! So, when you select quit, the

application goes into "Quit Pending" mode. This means that the app won't quit until AFTER the next sleep time is over. Pretty sneaky, huh? (Of course, those of you who are REALLY determined will STILL find ways around it. I know of several!) I am WELL aware that many of you won't like this feature, but most likely you won't like it because it's working! It's replacing your flimsy willpower that really wants to keep working (or playing)!

The easiest way to use Coffee Break is to simply drop it in your Startup Items folder. The next time you restart, it will start up automatically. The nice thing about it is that, unlike some similar programs I've seen, it automatically places itself in the background on startup.

One gotcha: Coffee Break is STRICTLY a System 7.x application. It will not work on machines running System 6. Sorry about that, but life must go on!

Registering

To register Coffee Break, just send a check for \$5 (or cash) to:

Thomas Reed

4476 Greenwich Ct. #C-2

St. Louis, MO 63108

Also, PLEASE INCLUDE A NOTE TELLING ME YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS, if you have one. I would prefer to notify people of updates via e-mail, so if you have an e-mail address, I'd love to know what it is. If you don't, I'll send you update information through "snail" mail (U.S. mail).

Hope you like Coffee Break!