Tock Time Tracker - the manual

Disclaimer

Tock calculates dollar amounts for time and aims to be right but this is not an accounting application. The dollar calculations produced should not be relied on directly for billing. Use the CSV export feature to export the data to a spreadsheet confirming the totals for financial calculations.

While all care has been taken, the app maker cannot be held responsible for how the application data is used.

Languages

This manual is available in English.

For help translating to other languages, please email support@groundhum.com. All help is appreciated.

The app has been translated into English, Spanish, German, Japanese and Chinese (traditional). Please email any translation errors to suport@groundhum.com (thank you).

Introduction

Tock is a time tracking application. I wrote this app after my day job started to require by-the-minute time tracking. After checking out the competition, I wanted to find a better and faster way - that's Tock Time Tracker.

Controlling Tock

Creating a new time entry

Either:

1. Tap on the screen where you would like the event to start and type in a name then click OK. You can move or size it later.
2. Tap the + button on the bottom-right of the screen. The app will create a 1hr event in the next logical spot in the day.

Moving between days

Either:

1. Swipe left or right
2. Tap the date at the top of the screen and choose a new date

Moving and sizing time entries

Moving a time entry:

1. Tap toward the center of the time block
2. Hold briefly until the block changes color
3. Drag to the new location. The start time changes in the title while dragging.

Sizing a time entry:

1. Tap the size handle at the bottom of the block
2. Hold briefly until the block changes color
3. Drag to resize the block. The duration of the time block changes as the size changes.

If the time block needs to be moved or sized beyond the end of the page, move or size the entry in multiple steps. Additionally, multiple time blocks with the same title can also be created and this may be a more flexible approach. The report will merge these together when summarizing time.

Tock cheat sheet

Tock is packed with useful features to make time tracking way easier. Here is a list of my favourite features and a kind of cheat sheet to get you started fast.

The database

Time data is saved in a local SQLite database. If the calendar is an online calendar, the data is also synchronized to the online Google, iCloud or Exchange calendar provider using the inbuild iOS calendar APIs.

Blocks of Time

Time data should be considered as malleable blocks that can be sized, shifted, moved to a different day, copied, searched and duplicated.

Use codes in the title of time entries

Use a code at the start of the title. If the title of the time data contains a code, this can be used for quick searching and will display on reports and searches as part of the title data.

Future app releases will have the option to interpret the first word of a title as a code for integration with external systems.

Tap and hold briefly when moving or sizing

Tap and hold briefly - the time block changes color and you can then drag to move. Tap and hold the size handle the same way to drag the event to be larger. If the event is longer than a page drag the event multiple times or use multiple time blocks with the same name. Reporting will combine them.

Daily and Weekly report

You can view a daily report or weekly report that shows the last 7 days from the day you are on(inclusive). An ad-hoc report can span much larger time spans.

The Action menu

When modifying a time entry, there is an action menu. This adds the option to copy the time entry as an all day event. The event will display in the slide-out tray at the top of the day view.

Export

Data can be exported via Dropbox or as a CSV (comma separated values) file.

You can also use Dropbox to export the whole SQLite database file. The time data becomes quite valuable after a while as a time record and as a reporting tool.

Exporting the database is a way to snapshot the data and ensure it isn't lost.

The built-in iOS backup should also be used as a way to protect against data loss if your phone or iPad get lost.

Backup and Restore

WARNING: Restoring a database REPLACES all time entry data in the app with the earlier backup. Make a backup of your data first before restoring in case you need to revert.

Dropbox can be used to backup the database. It will write a new date and time-stamped file each time the database is backed up.

NOTE: The database can be restored ONLY back to the same device when using online calendars.

The database should NOT be restored to a different device when using online calendars as the calendar IDs do not match up even when syncing the same calendar accounts on different devices. In this instance, use the metadata import and export and use the calendar sync to sync the time data.

If using calendar sync to restore time data, you can broaden the date range by navigating to the start and end points in the month view then generate an ad-hoc report using these dates. This will re-read all time data from the calendar prior to generating the report and update the local database.

If you are using Tock (not an online calendar account) to store time data, the database can be backed up to Dropbox on one device and restored to another without issues but note that restoring a database replaces the database on the device.

HUD

For use throughout the day, the on-screen HUD shows you the time to the end of the current event and time to the start of the next event. This is very useful for timing meetings or appointments.

Online calendars & Apple Watch

The app syncs time data to online calendars. These calendars can then be shared with other users, sent to a desktop widget or used on the calendar complication of the Apple Watch. The changes you make in the app should update within seconds on the watch or online calendar.

Recurring events

To set up a regular set of events to be added each week, use the Weekly Template feature. Each new week, you can apply the weekly template to the week. The app will figure out which events haven't yet been applied and present a pick list of events to apply to the week, day by day. Those chosen are added to the appropriate days.

The app does not import recurring events from online calendar accounts.

Search

Search for a particular time entry in the search and you can get a quick summary of total time accrued for that entry. The search dialog also tells you for each event how far from the current date the event is and how many business days. This is useful for planning. Press enter (without entering a search term) in the search dialog and you can see the latest 1000 entries in the database ordered from most recent.

Tap Visualize to display all the search results highlighted on the calendar month view.

Watched entries

If there are particular future time entries that are regularly checked these can be added to a watch list. Tapping Menu I Watched entries will show a list of all watched entries from most imminent to least. The display shows the number of days until the event, and the number of business days. Tap on the entry to go to the day and time the entry occurs.

Month view

The month view shows a dot for each day with event data. This is useful when looking for future events.

Timers

If adding a timer, the block will count up the minutes and resize when stopped. It can then be moved and started or stopped again. Timer blocks have a star beside the title, but in all other ways are just regular time blocks.

Blocks size to the nearest time interval and are meant to be flexible.

Undo features do not apply to timers - changes are applied immediately.

Running out of space to move or size events?

If there is no horizontal space because of adjacent events, turn off the rotation lock and turn the app to landscape to have more room, or use the app on an iPad if more horizontal space is required. It also can help to decrease the minimum time interval to 5 mins - this expands the app on the y axis and may make moving time blocks easier.

How data is synchronized

See the "How data is synchronized" section in settings for a description of how data is synchronized.

Exporting data

CSV

Data can be exported as a CSV file to a spreadsheet application. Choose Menu I Export to CSV and choose the date range. When the report opens, the share button can be used to email the CSV or open it in a spreadsheet application. See also the DB export feature.

Dropbox

If the app is linked to Dropbox (see Settings), the application database or metadata can be uploaded to

Dropbox. The location is /Apps/Tock Time Tracker in your Dropbox folder.

The database can be backed up as often as needed. The filename looks like this: tock-iphone-yyyy-mm-dd-hh-mi-ss.sqlite where iphone is either iphone or ipad - so the backup will have a unique filename each time.

The application metadata (Settings I Export Metadata) is overwritten each time, saved in a file called tock_export.json.

Reports and Auditing

Weekly report

To generate a weekly report, move to the final day (Sunday or Monday normally) and choose Menu I Weekly Report. The app shows a summary of the last 7 days broken down by project code. Swipe to the right for details of time spent on each day.

To mark off items that have been billed or reported to a time-tracking or billing system, tap the button to the right of each entry. This audit data is saved and recalled whenever the report is generated.

Note that the audit system stores that a particular named time entry and billing code against a day. If extra time is added with the identical time entry and billing code, the item will still show as DONE but the change in time since last audit will also be displayed.

If Freshbooks is linked and configured, a "Send to Freshbooks" link will display the project name.

Ad-Hoc report

Data can be summarized for abitrary time periods using the Ad-Hoc report feature.

Time periods in the spinners represent days where data has been logged in the application. This report is functionally identical to the weekly report but the start and end date are chosen by the user.

If the date span is too large, a limit of 80 pages will be displayed on the horizontal scrollable view, but the summary will include all data.

Project and Billing codes

See Settings to create and manage Project and Billing codes.

Project codes are used to group and color time entries.

Billing codes are used to associate a billing rate ($/hr) to time entries. This data is summarized on reports and output when generating CSV reports. Billing data is also used to calculate the dollar amount on the daily statistics summary on the top-right of the main screen.

Settings summary:

The Settings button is on the top-right of the main screen.

Tock Time Tracker Premium:

Buy Premium

Certain features are only available in the Premium version of this free app. Thank you for your support to make this app possible!

Restore Purchases

Tap Restore Purchases if you have bought the Premium in-app purchase previously.

Ensure you are logged into the App Store with the right account in Settings.

Calendar (Premium):

Selected calendar

One active calendar can be selected at a time. This setting changes the active calendar. This is a Premium feature.

Calendars can be either online or local. There is a default local calendar created called Tock. Local calendar data stays within the app. Online calendar data is stored in the app and also sent to the calendar provider.

You can change the calendar on the main screen by tapping the calendar name on the top left, below the Menu button.

Add New local calendar

To add a local calendar, give the calendar a name. Time entries can then be logged against this new local calendar. This is a Premium feature.

Be sure to back up the application database to Dropbox regularly and turn on iOS device backup to ensure data is not lost if your device is lost or broken.

Calendar Settings

Min interval (mins)

The minimum time interval is represented on the scale of the day view in the app. The default time interval is 15 minutes and the smallest scale supported is 5 minutes.

The app can be set to scales of 5, 6, 10, 12 and 15 minutes.

When sizing time blocks, the minimum interval dictates the interval the block can grow or shrink.

Start of day/End of day

This setting changes the start and end time of day on the day view scale. If there are events occurring before the start of day or after the end of day, the app displays a notification at the top-right or bottom-right of time scale.

Map App

The setting defines the default mapping application to launch when the "Map" button is pressed while editing a time entry.

The text in the location/notes field (the 2nd text field) will be opened in the mapping app. This is useful if this field is used to store an address.

Choose either Apple Maps or Google Maps.

Color Scheme:

Color Scheme

The currently selected color scheme. The application has 7 built-in schemes:

Default, Night, Soft green, Brown, Funky, Grey, Black and White.

Default is the default day scheme and the Night is the default night scheme.

To switch automatically between the selected day theme and the night theme, choose the selected day theme first then choose the night mode start of day and end of day.

Night mode start/end of day

The time the night mode starts and ends. Usually the night mode would be set to start around sunset and finish around sunrise or before using the aplication for the day.

Time Entry Management

Time entry titles and codes

This screen lists all the time entry titles collected by the application and the default project and billing codes associated with them. This list is called the title cache.

This list of titles are displayed and searched when creating a new time entry. The create time entry screen lists the titles in order of most used. Typing in an entry title and pressing enter will show the matching titles. This is to make it easier to find titles and to quick-enter the project and billing codes.

The Search Titles field can be used to search the titles in the time entry management page.

Tap a row in the list to change the default project or billing code.

Tap Delete to remove the associated title from the titles cache. Note this doesn't remove any time entries recorded that have this title.

To show only titles in the cache with missing default project or billing codes, choose "Show titles with missing codes". This makes it easy to find titles with missing code data.

The Menu button on the top-left of the screen opens a list of batch operations that can be performed on the title cache or time entry data. See below.

Import Menu

Paste in a list of titles, each on a new line. They will be imported into the app title cache with the default project and billing code set.

Batch update entry titles menu

Choose an optional title pattern and then a project and/or billing code. When tapping OK the app will update titles matching the pattern with the new project or billing codes, but only if codes haven't already been assgined.

To overwrite titles in the title cache that already have project or billing codes, tap the "Ovewrite existing codes" switch.

Note this only updates the list of titles in the title cache, it doesn't overwrite any recorded time entry data.

Rebuild title cache from event titles

This option removes the existing title cache and rebuilds the cache from the time entry data in the app. Project and billing codes are not gathered from the time data, so these would need to be updated after rebuilding the cache.

Title frequency data is also cleared during this process. This metadata stores which titles are used most frequently so they can appear at the top of the list when adding a new time entry.

Apply title entry codes to time entry data

This item updates the project and billing codes for all the time entry data recorded in the app with titles that exactly match the title cache.

Please use with caution!

This overwrites existing code data for time entries, so should be run with care. The project and billing codes in the title cache need to be correct before this command is run. Project and biling codes in the time entry data will be overwritten.

Project Management

Project codes and colors

The project codes screen lists all project codes defined in the application, along with the chosen color, default billing account and rate. Each line also includes a count of how many time entries have this project code allocated.

To modify a project code, tap on it and the title, color and default billing account can be modified.

To add a new project code, tap the "Add Project Code" button.

To delete a project code, tap Delete. Note if a project code has been used by time entries the code cannot be deleted, but it can be renamed. Remove all time entries using this project code (or change their project code to something else) to delete the code.

Default Project

The default project to be used when creating new time entries or title cache items.

Freshbooks (Premium)

Freshbooks account linked

Click to link to your Freshbooks account. When you log into Freshbooks, Freshbooks sends an access Token to Tock to allow Tock to upload tasks and time entries. The Freshbooks access token is stored on the device in the secure keychain and doesn't travel out of the application.

After you have linked to your Freshbooks account and mapped some projects to Freshbooks, the app can upload time tracking entries to Freshbooks. These can be used as itemized reports when generating invoices, or just to keep a summary of the work completed for the client.

Time entries can be uploaded from the reporting screen, either for a single project for a day or from the reporting summary screen, where multi-day time entries can be uploaded.

To upload a time entry to Freshbooks, link the associated project in the Freshbooks configuration, then mark the task as DONE in the audit screen. Tap the green "Send to Freshbooks" link beside the project name. The app will upload time entries that haven't been sent yet.

You can also elect to force re-send ALL audited time entries (entries in the project group marked as DONE). Re-sending might cause duplicates if you haven't deleted the time entries from Freshbooks first.

Projects can only be uploaded to Freshbooks from the reporting screen if the projet has been linked in the Freshbooks configuration.

To remove access to Freshbooks, unlink your Freshbooks account. The access tokens are removed.

Freshbooks configuration

When entering this screen, the app downloads the most recent Freshbooks clients, projects and tasks.

For each Tock project, use this screen to associate a Freshbooks client, project and task.

You can also choose to create a Freshbooks task (sometimes called a Freshbooks service) using the Tock time entry name instead of nominating a single Freshbooks task to link to. This will create a new Freshbooks task when the time entry is uploaded, matched on the time entry title. Chose "Create task/services from Tock time entry" as the Task.

Note that Freshbooks task/service titles have a maximum of 50 characters, so the Freshbooks task title will be truncated to a maximum of 50 chars when uploading. This doesn't affect the Tock time entry title.

The app will upload the Tock time entry title and/or description/location field to the Freshbooks time entry note field.

Stats Display - Total Hours and $

Statistics project selector

The project codes that are used to display the total dollars earned in the statistics summary on the top-right of the day view. Choose one or more projects to include these project codes in the summary for the day.

Display $ in statistics

This option turns the dollars earned on or off on the statistics display on the top-right of the day view.

Billing

Default Rate

A default rate to be used in billing calculations for any entries that don't have billing account data. Set to zero (the default) to disable this feature.

Billing accounts

The billing accounts screen lists all billing accounts defined in the application, along with the billing rate ($/hr). The description also includes a count of how many time entries have this billing account allocated.

To modify a billing account, tap on it and the title and default billing account can be modified.

To add a new billing acount, tap the "Add Billing Account" button.

To delete a billing account, tap Delete. Note if a billing account has been used by time entries the billing account cannot be deleted. Remove all time entries using this billing code (or change their billing code to something else) to delete the code.

Default Billing

The default billing account to be used when creating new time entries or title cache items.

Round the calculated dollar values

Rounds off the calculated dollar values when multiplying the hours accrued by the calculated dollar rate. Rounds up or down to nearest cent. Each subtotal is rounded off on reports or the generated CSV and the grand total is also rounded. To stop the app rounding those dollar calculations, turn this setting to No. Default is Yes. Statistics calculations (if enabled) are always rounded.

Formatting

Rotation lock?

Choose whether to lock the rotation or allow the interface to rotate.

Time format

Choose either 24hr or am/pm for displaying time data.

First day of week

Choose either Sunday or Monday as the first day of the week to display on the month view.

Font size

Choose either: Tiny, Small, Medium, Large or Extra Large font size to display time entry titles on the day view.

Import and Export (Premium)

Dropbox account linked?

Whether or not Dropbox is linked. Tap here to log in and link Tock to Dropbox. Backup files will be placed in /Apps/Tock Time Tracker in your Dropbox folder.

Backup database to Dropbox

Uploads the sqlite database file to Dropbox. A new file is uploaded each time. The filename format is: tock-device_type-yyyy-MM-dd-hh-mm-ss.sqlite. The device_type is either iphone or ipad.

Restore Database

Restores a database previously backed up to Dropbox and replaces the existing database.

WARNING - the application database is replaced by the backup. Do a backup first if you want to keep the database before restoring.

The app will ask you which file you want to restore before restoring.

Note that this only works backing up and restoring to the same device when using online calendars due to calendar IDs for synced accounts differing beteween devices. If you are using local calendars only, restoring to another device works.

Export Tock metadata

Export all Tock metadata for import to another device. This includes all local calendars, time entry cache, billing and project codes, audit data, timers and watched time entries. Note that for online calendars, the export only preserves billing and project codes.

Import Tock metadata

Imports and applies all Tock metadata to the current database. The metadata should be generated off the same calendar set.

This feature can be used to sync app the time entry cache, local time entries, watched time entries, timers and project and billing code data between devices. It is a manual process but is provided as a way to periodically keep devices in sync.

It is recommended (and expected) that most users will use a single iPhone or iPad to store time data, and use this feature to keep another device in sync occasionally, which is why this feature is still very manual.

Note that for online calendars, the billing and project codes are applied only if the entries match.

Support

Help - Tock Manual

This document

How data is synchronized

Summarises the data-flow of time entry data between the app and the calendar providers if using online calendars.

This help contains troubleshooting suggestions if data isn't being synced properly between the online calendar provider and the app.

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About Tock

About the app