



# Washington Area Computer User Group

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## TClock Taskbar Utility with NTP

### Timesetting for your Computer - by Bill Walsh

TClock by Kazuto Sato (also called "TClock by Kazubon" on some sites) takes the bland clock display in the taskbar and lets you customize it with any format display you like for the day of the week, month, year, and time, and it allows you to customize the font type, size, and color so you can actually see the time display in the taskbar. While the author includes other enhancements to the taskbar and Windows Start button, my only use of this gem is for its time display and timekeeping capabilities.

I have TClock display the un-abbreviated day of the week ("Saturday"), the written month and day ("April 17"), a "hierarchical" numerical date format ("2004-04-17") and the time in a 12-hour format. The author includes a synchronizer that goes to an internet NTP (Network Time Protocol) server to update your pc to the exact date and time. You can set this to re-synchronize at regular intervals, keeping your pc clock up-to-the-second for your satellite tracking, astronomy, or other important scheduled events like the end of an eBay auction. The program displays a status message when it successfully synchronizes and you can add a synchronization alert sound if you like; you can even sound a selected audio file to do hourly "chimes." (The wife had me stop the hourly "Big Ben" sound-off for some reason.)

This synchronization has another useful purpose. I can check whether a website is slow or locked up by manually attempting a synchronization. TClock will sound the audio alert and display the synchronization message if the internet itself is still available. For the (fortunately) infrequent times when the internet connection totally fails, I can set the program to attempt synchronization once every minute and walk away from the computer; when I hear the audio alert from a successful synchronization, I know the internet is available again.

The program is available as freeware from the author at: <http://homepage1.nifty.com/kazubon/tclock/>

The current version I use is 2.2.8 and his website has newer versions available, which I have not tried yet. Note that there is another author, Dale Nurden, who has a program called TClockex that is almost identical to this one, but it has a pop-up calendar instead of a time synchronizer.

There are many listings of NTP "time servers" you can load into TClock. One site that is fairly new is <http://www.ntp.org/> which also has more details about network time synchronization. However, this site goes way beyond our casual use for timekeeping; TClock only needs one reliable NTP server to keep your PC up to date.