**Countdown Game Timer Version 2.3a**

The countdown game timer was written in January 2012 for the Chesapeake Curling Club, requested by Dick Bemis. Its intended purpose is to allow curling rinks on the ice to monitor their progress and keep games moving during league or bonspiel play. All times, and font size, are configurable at run time, with the ability to choose between counting down to zero and up to a specific time limit such as 1 hour 50 minutes.

In December of 2012, Dick Bemis requested an enhancement to add sound, based on a suggestion from curlers visiting Chesapeake from the Nutmeg Curling Club. Sounds work fine, and may be turned off at runtime. In clubs where there is a timer for each sheet, it may be confusing (or annoying) for sounds to be active. Consider running the gametimer silently. If the club has one timer for all the sheets, and the games start at the same time, go for the sound! An external speaker is highly recommended.

In July of 2013, additional enhancements for “autostart”, “autoClose”, the “overtime counter” and the ability to reduce the size of the “seconds” characters was added.

The code is offered “as is” at no charge. Feel free to modify it with the text editor of your choice.

**Architecture**: The decision was made to continue with javascript and html using the new html5 audio tags. This makes the application very portable. It is written entirely in javascript, surrounded by a few html tags, and has been tested on multiple versions of Windows, Linux (Ubuntu), Mac OS X, and the iPad and Android based tablets. It is a web (html) application that also runs locally on your PC (or Mac or Linux or whatever) computer. The FireFox, Internet Explorer, Chrome, and Safari web browsers have all been successfully tested. Most reasonably modern browsers will have no trouble at all. Your mileage may vary.

**Sounds:** Even the “standards” for sound in html5 are not implemented the same across major browsers. Some browsers play .wav files, some don’t. Some play .mp3 or .ogg files, some don’t. The best solution I found was to include all three major sound types, and let the browser decide what to play. A javascript library written by Jay Salvant (buzz.jaysalvant.com) makes this implementation much simpler. His free library (buzz.js) is required and included. If buzz.js is missing, the code defaults to the silent version. All sound files are stored in a “sounds” subdirectory. To the best of my knowledge the sounds are all in the public domain or free for personal use. Audacity was used to convert and trim the original sounds into the missing formats. Default sounds supplied are listed in the code defaults section at about lines 42 – 66, liberally commented.

**Small font for the “seconds” characters:** After observing the gametimer in use in Pittsburgh during the Tropicurl Bonspiel, it seems that the timer is difficult to see for folks in the warm room. It’s a long ways away from the computer displays. In order to increase screen real estate the option was added to reduce the size of the seconds characters. They are still there, ticking away, but just less significant. Seconds are not critical to a game taking about two hours. If they are critical, such as in a championship playdown event, curlclock should be used instead of gametimer. Enough rambling, there is now room to increase the font size by at least 30%. It won’t cure anything, but it helps. If you don’t like the 25% size, search the code for the variable “theFontSize2” and adjust as you wish. It’s currently set at 25% of the “regular” font size. Sadly that “theFontsize2” variable needs to be set twice, once for the regular run, and once for the “autoStart”.

**autoStart?** One gentleman from the York Curling club in Ontario, Canada, requested the ability to “autostart”. That is to bypass any menus and just take all the defaults and run the clock. That is now a configurable option, simply change the autoStart switch in the defaults section from “0” to “1” using your favorite text editor. Configuring cron or the Windows Task Scheduler is an exercise best left to the user.

**autoClose?** Since the York Curling Club will be using Windows Task Scheduler to start the timer, they would also like to close it. That can be done by setting the autoClose variable. I suggest 25 minutes. It defaults to zero meaning no autoClose. Setting it to any positive number will allow the script to close the window in most browsers. You can set it to 0.1 for testing. **FireFox** is the notable pita. By default FireFox will not let a script close a window unless the script opens the window. Scheduler opens the window, not a script, so the script cannot close it. But there is a work around. You need to change the FireFox defaults as follows:

1. Start FireFox
2. In the url window enter “about:config”, without the quotes, press enter and accept the warning.
3. In the search window enter “dom.allow\_scripts\_to\_close\_windows”.
4. The Value must be set to “true” by double clicking that row. Double click again to revert to the “false” default.
5. Restart the timer and you should be good to go.

The autoClose feature has been successfully tested in both IE and FireFox. Even if it doesn’t close the window (or tab) properly, the application will continue to function as you might expect. The clock will stop, the screen will turn red, and nothing else happens.

**Overtime Counter:** Chesapeake requested an enhancement, essentially to keep the clock running after the screen turns red. This has been implemented in a roundabout method. Instead of keeping the counter running, a second row has been added that only shows up if 1) the screen turns red and 2) you ask for it via the “showOtCounter” variable. It’s a simple switch, in the defaults section of the code, “0” for no and ”1” for yes. The small font size defaults to 25% of whatever you choose. Again, search the code and find the text “theFontSize3” and adjust as you wish. It too appears twice.

**Installation:** Unzip the downloaded file, keeping the file structure intact. Just copy the structure wherever you wish e.g. “my documents”. The gametimer2.htm file and the buzz.js file need to be in the same directory (folder). There should be a subdirectory named “sounds” containing the various .wav or .mp3 files. The documentation word documents may be deleted to save space. Some browsers may complain about running scripts locally, and in this case it’s OK to say yes. You can turn off the browser warning permanently by changing the internet security settings.

If you don’t want the sounds, you may remove the sounds folder and the buzz.js file. The code recognizes their absence and won’t even ask about sound.

**Defaults:** Default values are all specified in the first few lines (about 15 – 70 including many comments) of code. They are set up for a demo, counting for only two minutes with a one minute warning. These need to be changed with your favorite text editor to something more reasonable. Chesapeake Curling Club counts up for 1 hour 50 minutes, with a 10 minute warning. Pittsburgh counts down from 1 hour 50 minutes, also with a 10 minute warning.

Sound availability (the tryToPlaySound variable) can be turned on and off here. If it is left on, the default of sound on or off can be set by updating the defaultSoundOnOff variable. This allows for turning sound on or off at run time.

If you prefer small or large seconds on the timer (play with it and see) that too is configurable as a default (defaultSmallSecs) and is changeable at run time.

The “autoStart”, “autoClose” and “showOtCounter” variables have already been discussed.

**Tablets:** Oh, how I wish they were standard, but they’re not. If your tablet reaches the internet, the countdown timer may run from the web with no installation. If that’s not reliable, the files may be copied to the tablet and run locally. Some tablet browsers will not play the sounds, but FireFox will. The Chrome browser on a nexus 7 tablet doesn’t play the sounds, but the FireFox browser on the same tablet does. The Asus Transformer Prime (tf201) defaults to the Safari browser, and the application plays erratically, skipping some seconds, doubling up on others, and is just plain unreliable. The FireFox browser, on the same tablet, works perfectly. Go figure! I’ll test the iPad after I get my hands on one.

**Usage:** The original recommended use was that when the screen turns red, teams are allowed to finish the end they are playing, but not to start another. As an optional warning, the screen can turns yellow at a predetermined amount of time (e.g. 10 minutes) before the timer runs out. During the time the screen is yellow, another end may be started. Some curlers have found that the sound played at the yellow warning time may be distracting while they are actively delivering a stone. A person ringing a bell may wait a few seconds, but the computer isn’t omnipotent and just goes ahead with the sound. There are “pause” and “resume” buttons that works within one second, so that an attentive moderator may accomplish the few seconds delay without interrupting play. Be sure and click the “resume” button only one time, as multiple clicks cause the clock to run faster. If that happens by accident (or testing), a “pause” click, followed by 1-2 seconds delay, then a single click on “resume” puts the time pace back in good working order. Let’s call that double clicking and making the timer run fast a “feature” rather than a “bug”.

One additional suggestion for use was to have the warning time set for 20 minutes. When the screen goes yellow, the teams may finish the end in progress, and play one more. That way everyone knows when the last end will start and can plan strategy accordingly. It also avoids the situation where one team may play excruciatingly slowly so as to avoid the additional end.

How you choose to implement or utilize the software is up to your club. In fact it’s quite possible to have multiple versions of the gametimer in the same directory (obviously with different names) with different default times. This accommodates experienced competitive curling leagues vs. a beginner or coached league. It’s up to you.

**Older versions:** Well, the old versions still work, there’s no denying that. As far as I know they’ll continue to work for a long long time, so if you’ve got them, go ahead and keep on using them. All enhancements will be in the newest version. The zip file contains the current version, with the latest enhancements, and yes bug fixes that were discovered during testing. So obviously I recommend the newest version, especially if you want the autostart or small seconds features. The zip file also contains the last version 1 code, before sound was added, in case you want simplicity instead of flexibility. Even the newest version can run without sound with just the one gametimer2.htm file.

If perchance you are looking for the CurlClock used for the timing of competitive events, it is located at <http://curlclock.com>

Questions? Contact the author, Howard Griffin, sweephard {at} gmail.com and **Good Luck** with your bonspiels.