



What is Automator?

Automator, first released with Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger, is an application that brings the power of workflow automation to the user level, with no programming required!

Within Automator, users work with two main types of components, actions and workflows. Actions are built by developers, and each action's purpose is to perform a single task, such as opening a file, checking your email, or rotating an image. Workflows are designed and constructed by users, by piecing together actions in a sequence, to create a virtual assembly line of automated tasks.

Once constructed, workflows may be saved and triggered by a user in a variety of ways. Workflows may be run from within the Automator application, saved and run as an application, as a Folder Action, as an iCal alarm, as a print workflow, and more.

Automator's Reach

Automator is installed with over 150 different actions for performing a variety of tasks in Apple applications and the operating system. However, the power of Automator may be extended even further by installing new Automator-compatible applications, or by downloading and installing actions from third-party developers.

Apple applications that are Automator-ready include the following:

- Address Book
- Aperture
- Font Book
- iDVD
- iPhoto
- iTunes
- Keynote
- Mail
- Safari
- TextEdit

Automator actions are also available for many third-party applications, including:

- Adobe InDesign
- Adobe Photoshop
- FileMaker Pro
- Graphic Converter
- iView MediaPro
- NetNewsWire
- QuarkXPress
- Transmit

Uses for Automator

Your usage of Automator is limited only by your imagination, and by the actions that are available to you. Since each action performs a single specific task, multiple actions can be intertwined in virtually infinite ways to create a workflow that meets your very unique needs. Some common uses for Automator include:

- Backups
- Desktop Publishing
- File/Folder Creation
- Image Processing
- PDF Processing
- Podcasting
- Video Processing
- Website Maintenance

Benefits of Automator

There are many benefits resulting from the implementation of Automator in daily routines, including:

- Increased Consistency
- Increased Efficiency
- Increased Productivity
- Reduced Errors

Getting Started with Automator

There are many resources available that can provide more information about Automator:

- Apple's Automator Page:
 - <http://www.apple.com/automator>
- Third-Party Automator Actions:
 - <http://www.apple.com/>
 - <http://www.apple.com/downloads/macosx/automator/>
- Automator News and Information
 - <http://macscripter.net>
 - <http://www.automatorworld.com>
- Mac OS X Technology Guide to Automator (available in print and eBook format)
 - <http://www.spiderworks.com/>



What is AppleScript?

AppleScript is a scripting language that is installed with the operating system onto every Macintosh computer. Scripting differs slightly from programming. Programming generally allows you to write a compiled application that directly controls the behavior of a computer. Scripting allows you to write a set of instructions to control existing applications on a computer. On a Macintosh, this includes the operating system.

AppleScripts are written in an editor application, and Apple has included a script editor in the operating system. Simply called "Script Editor," this application can be used by anyone to write, compile, and save AppleScripts.

Not all Macintosh applications are AppleScriptable. However, there are many well-known applications that are scriptable. It is up to software developers to implement scriptability into their products. Some applications provide little or no support for scripting, while others provide a lot of support. In addition, the quality of AppleScript support can vary greatly from application to application, making some applications easy to script, and others more difficult.

For more information about AppleScript, visit <http://www.apple.com/applescript/>

Presentation Materials

Sample materials for Ben Waldie's presentations, including example scripts and documentation, are available for download from www.automatedworkflows.com/presentations.html.

Ben Waldie

Ben Waldie is president and CEO of Automated Workflows, LLC, a company specializing in providing AppleScript and workflow automation consulting to Macintosh-based businesses.

A frequent presenter at Macworld, Macintosh User Group meetings and other popular events, Ben also writes regular AppleScript columns for MacTech magazine and X-Ray Magazine. He is the author of “AppleScripting the Finder” and the “Mac OS X Technology Guide to Automator,” available from SpiderWorks.com, is a contributing editor on MacScripter.net, and is president of The Philadelphia Area AppleScript Users Group.

For years, Ben has been developing professional AppleScript-based solutions for businesses across the globe, including Adobe Systems, Apple Computer, NASA, PC World, and TV Guide Magazine. He has also taught custom AppleScript training classes and authored an introductory AppleScript training CD for The Virtual Training Company. Ben may be contacted by email at ben@automatedworkflows.com.



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