



Tracks and Time Management with GTD

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Getting Things Done

- **Getting Things Done, or GTD**
- Originated by David Allen, management consultant
 - “35 professions before the age 35”
 - Work for Lockheed on productivity in the 1980s



Getting Things Done

- GTD is a set of modular guidelines
- Additive



Getting Things Done

- GTD is a set of modular guidelines
- Additive
- Implementation-agnostic



A few GTD Principles

- Mental and Physical *Stuff*
- Contexts and Projects
- Next Actions
- Workflow
- Action Management



Stuff

- **Get *stuff* out of your mind into a system you trust**
- Consider all of your commitments, across all of your inputs:
 - voicemail, email, mailboxes, colleagues, notes from meetings
- Any commitments running through your head
- Record them



Collect Incompletes – Why?

- **Get *stuff* out of your mind into a system you trust**
 - The brain is wonderful at solving problems
 - *It can only do this for one problem at a time*
- Like a single-core CPU with multiple processes, your brain will revisit unfinished tasks in time-slices
- Even at times when you can't do anything about it.
 - ...3am



Physical Stuff

- Also consider the drain on your mind of physical stuff
- Such as mailboxes, desk inboxes, ...
- Workflow should accommodate dealing with it.
 - Coming up in a few slides



Contexts

- Only revisit tasks that you can work on right now.
- Break your lists of tasks into appropriate ***contexts***
 - particular time/place/tools available
- Each context list is specific to you. Examples:
 - Office
 - Home
 - On the phone
 - At a computer
 - Errands



Next Actions

- Within each context, items to do are ***Next Actions***
 - Break tasks into smaller physical actions
 - The next action to move your work along
 - Finishing next action may suggest a new next action

- **Project:** any desired result requiring >1 action step
- You don't do projects, they are a measurable result
 - GTD projects can be small
 - Reminder of what you're working toward.
 - Without the reminder, it will slip back into your brain's obsession-loop.

- A project often has many next actions
- You can do any of them

Project: Find a general contractor

Next Actions:

ask colleagues at work

ask neighbour who just finished renovation

determine budget

...



Doing Things

- Your choice of which is the right next action
 - Context
 - Energy levels
 - Time available
 - Priority

Filter incoming stuff from inboxes into:

Non-actionable items

- Throw away
- Put into “Someday/Maybe” lists/folders
- Archive in storage

Actionable items

- Act on in < 2 minutes,
- Delegate to someone else
- or defer action until later in the appropriate ***context***



Action Management

- Payoff: getting all that *stuff* off your mind means you get to think about your actions in a clearer way
- Not by managing time, information, or priorities




Tracks

- Open-Source (GPL), active developers
 - Install is straightforward for Linux / Mac / Windows
- Free (ad-free) web host
 - <https://tracks.tra.in>
 - Try it right now: user 'watitis', password 'waterloo'



Tracks

- Open-Source (GPL), active developers
 - Install is straightforward for Linux / Mac / Windows
- Free (ad-free) web host
 - <https://tracks.tra.in>
 - Try it right now: user 'watitis', password 'waterloo'
 - Really; try it now if you want to follow along.
 - (See link on that page for mobile devices.)

 **Completed actions**

Currently there are no completed actions.

[Add a next action >](#)

Active Projects (0)

- None

Active Contexts (0)

- None

Hidden Projects (0)

- None

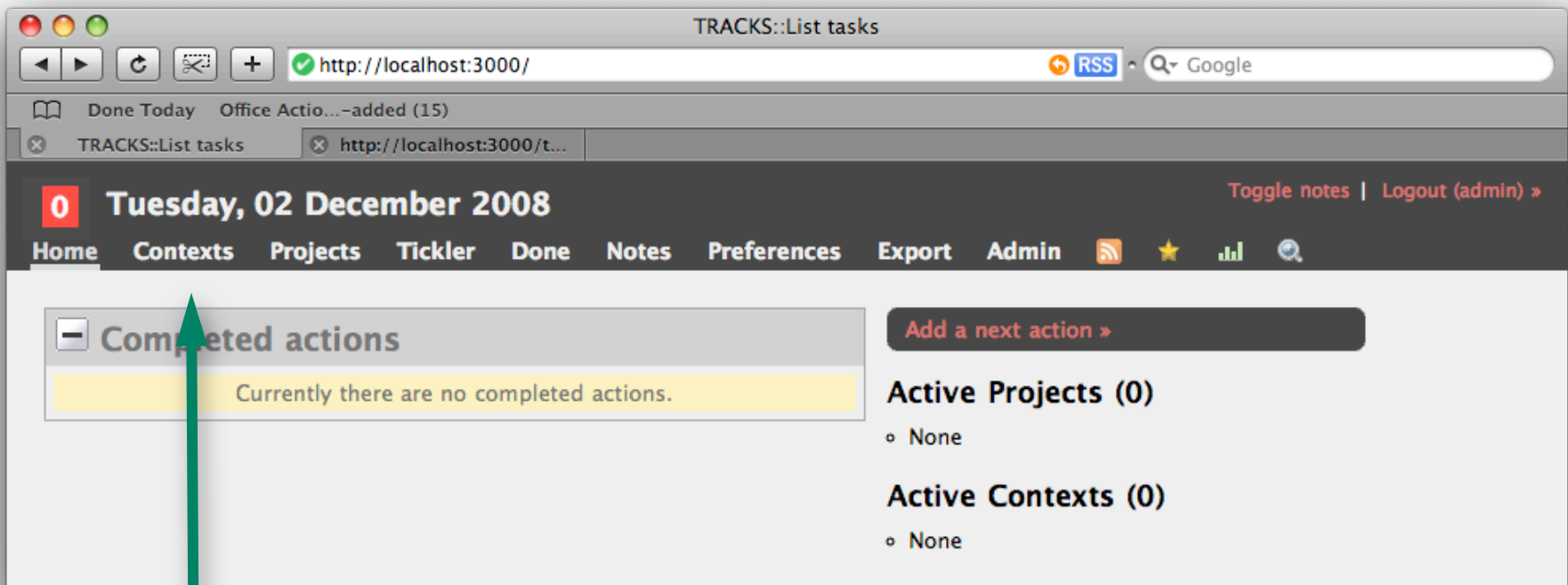
Completed Projects (0)

- None

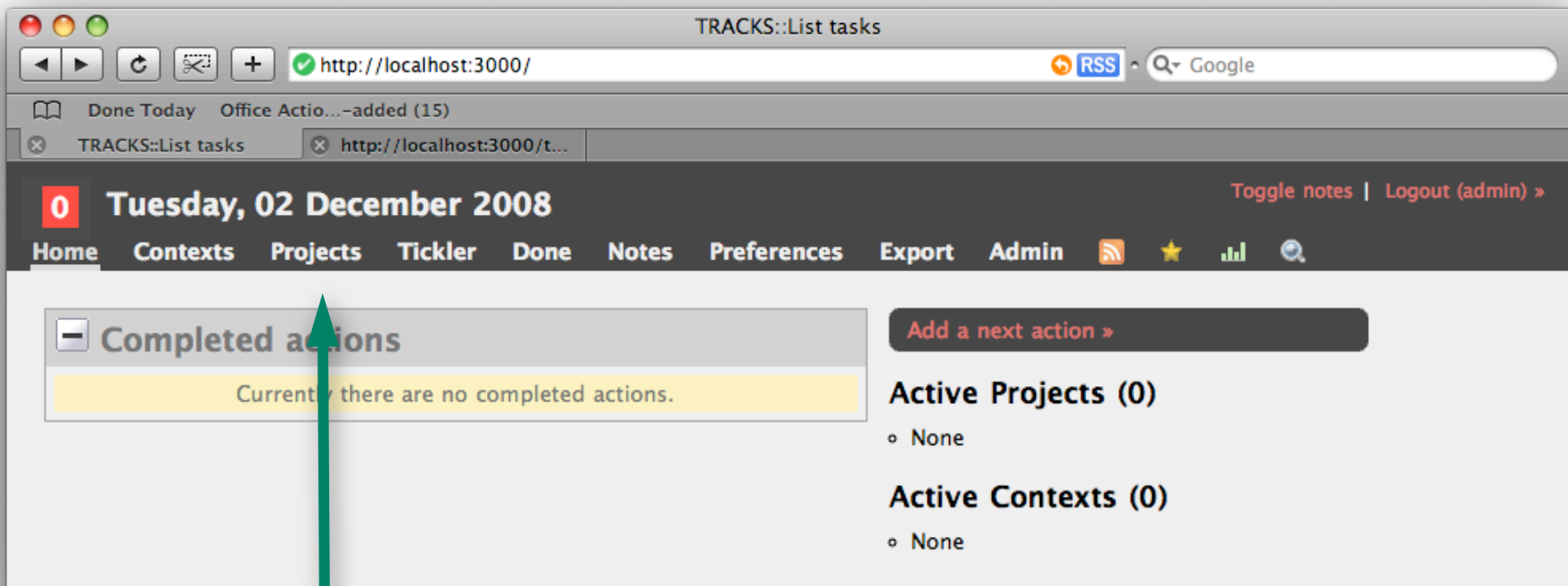
Hidden Contexts (0)

- None

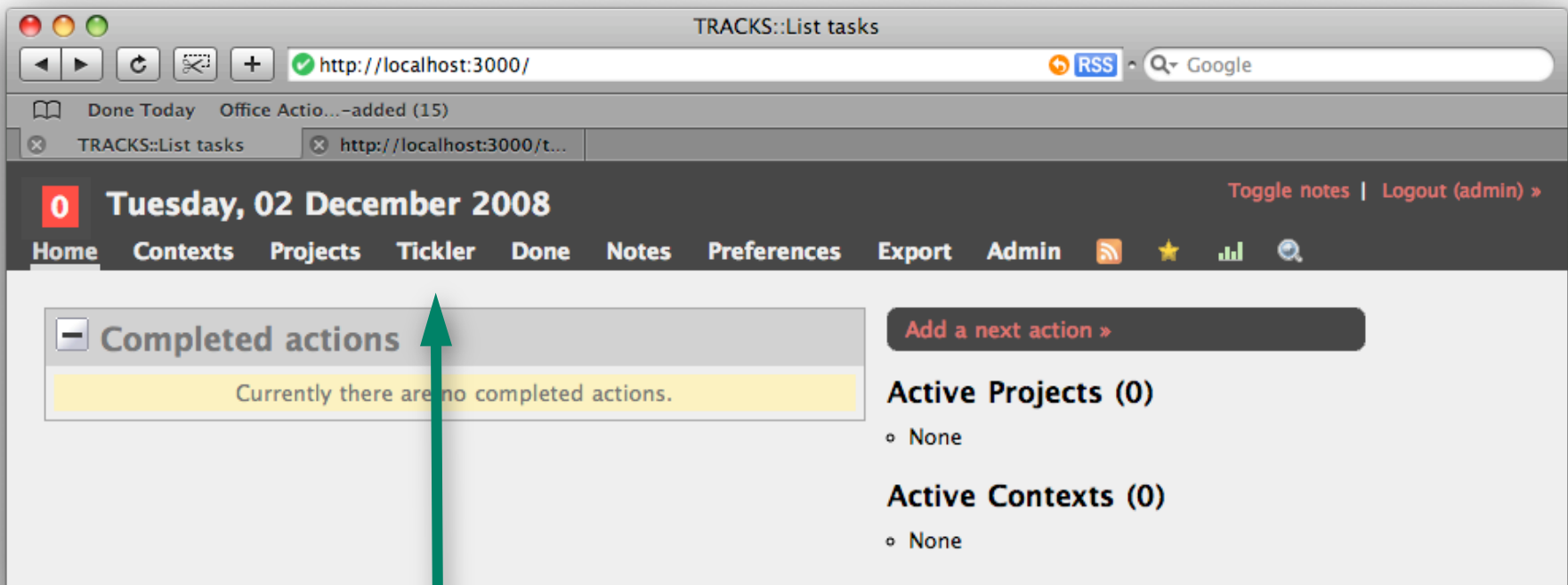
- [Integrate Tracks](#)
- [REST API Docs](#)



- Any Next Action has a single Context
- “When can I do this task?”





- Projects are collections of related next-actions



- Tickler is for time-deferred Next Actions that will pop up when appropriate
- You don't want to be distracted by these

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[Home](#) [Contexts](#) [Projects](#) [Tickler](#) [Done](#) [Notes](#) [Preferences](#) [Export](#) [Admin](#)    

Completed actions

Currently there are no completed actions.

[Hide form](#)

Description

Notes

Project

Context

Tags (separate with commas)

Due **Show from**

Active Projects (0)

- None

Active Contexts (0)

- None

Hidden Projects (0)

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Legend: RSS Feed TXT Plain Text Feed iCal iCal feed

Note: All feeds show only actions that have not been marked as done.

- RSS TXT iCal Last 15 actions
- RSS TXT iCal All actions
- RSS TXT iCal Actions due today or earlier
- RSS TXT iCal Actions due in 7 days or earlier
- RSS TXT Actions completed in the last 7 days
- RSS TXT All Contexts
- RSS TXT All Projects
- RSS TXT Active projects with no next actions

Feeds for incomplete actions in a specific context:

- RSS TXT iCal Next actions in office
- RSS TXT iCal Next actions in phone
- RSS TXT iCal Next actions in email
- RSS TXT iCal Next actions in errand
- RSS TXT iCal Next actions in lab
- RSS TXT iCal Next actions in library
- RSS TXT iCal Next actions in freetime
- RSS TXT iCal Next actions in waiting for
- RSS TXT iCal Next actions in someday

Feeds for incomplete actions in a specific project:

- RSS TXT iCal Next actions for Build a working time machine
- RSS TXT iCal Next actions for Make more money than Bill Gates
- RSS TXT iCal Next actions for Evict dinosaurs from the garden

Active Projects (3)

- Build a working time machine (2 actions)
- Make more money than Bill Gates (3 actions)
- Evict dinosaurs from the garden (4 actions)

Active Contexts (9)

- office (5 actions)
- phone (3 actions)
- email (0 actions)
- errand (0 actions)
- lab (1 action)
- library (1 action)
- freetime (0 actions)
- waiting for (0 actions)
- someday (0 actions)

Hidden Projects (0)

- None

Completed Projects (0)

- None

Hidden Contexts (0)

- None

- Integrate Tracks
- REST API Docs

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office

- Overdue by 2 days** Buy shares [Make more money than Bill Gates]
- Due Today** Finish TPS reports
- Due in 2 days** Construct trap [Evict dinosaurs from the garden]
- Due in 3 days** Buy stegosaurus bait [Evict dinosaurs from the garden]
- Due in 21 days** Call Bill Gates to find out how much he makes per day [Make more money than Bill Gates]

phone

- Overdue by 1 day** Phone Grandfather to ask about the paradox [Build a working time machine]
- Due Today** Call dinosaur exterminator [Evict dinosaurs from the garden]
- Call stock broker** [Make more money than Bill Gates]

lab

- Construct time dilation device** [Build a working time machine]

library

- library: "Constructing Dinosaur Traps for Dummies" [Evict dinosaurs from the garden]

Completed actions

- 12/02/2008** buy milk (errand)

[Add a next action](#) >
Active Projects (3)

- [Build a working time machine](#) (2 actions)
- [Make more money than Bill Gates](#) (3 actions)
- [Evict dinosaurs from the garden](#) (4 actions)

Active Contexts (9)

- [office](#) (5 actions)
- [phone](#) (3 actions)
- [email](#) (0 actions)
- [errand](#) (0 actions)
- [lab](#) (1 action)
- [library](#) (1 action)
- [freetime](#) (0 actions)
- [waiting for](#) (0 actions)
- [someday](#) (0 actions)

Hidden Projects (0)

- None

Completed Projects (0)

- None

Hidden Contexts (0)

- None

- [Integrate Tracks](#)

- [REST API Docs](#)



As Used in Practice

- Flexible, reliable
- I run it on my work desktop
- I access it remotely via an SSH tunnel
 - Encrypted, through our firewall
- I set up cron/ssh backup to my home machine



Tracks Within CSCF Workflow

- For my use, Tracks fits well within the organization

	Email	RT	Tracks
User-to-user	y	y	n
Client-facing	y	y/n	n
Archive data	y	y	y
Project focus	n?	y	y
'Next-Action' focus	n	n	y
Add /refactor quickly	n?	n	y

■ Useful Resources:

- The book: Getting Things Done, by David Allen, 2002, published by Penguin
- <http://www.43folders.com/2004/09/08/getting-started-with-getting-things-done>
- http://www.davidco.com/blogs/lisa/archives/2006/12/10_beginner_beh.html
- <http://www.coloradocollege.edu/library/Instruction/gtd.html>
- Tracks: <http://www.rousette.org.uk/project/>

- Unexpected Difficulties with GTD
 - Inbox to zero
 - Two-minute rule: 5 minutes?, 10?

- Unexpected Benefits to GTD
 - Clearer mind and focus at work
 - Less work distraction away from work
 - Better planning horizons
 - “I will be able to get to this in a week”



Thank you

Slides with notes and links...
Other GTD tools you like?...



Bonus slides



Various GTD Tools

- http://www.priacta.com/Articles/Comparison_of_GTD_Software.php

- Popular web-based tools
 - Remember The Milk
 - Evernote
 - Toodledo
 - Nozbe



Review Process

- Weekly review
 - Gather and process all your unprocessed stuff
 - Review Next Actions by contexts and projects
 - See what new Next Actions are triggered
 - Proactive instead of reactive attitude toward work
 - A perspective on one's work and life that feels positive and useful



Workflow Details

- Don't put things back in the Inbox
- No daily to-do lists- copied from one day to next-
 - Your context lists are for that.
- Calendar is reserved for the “hard landscape” of your schedule, timing that is non-negotiable.

