

Play Hourly Newscasts v1.2

4 AppleScripts for iTunes

Find more **free** AppleScripts
and info on writing your own
at Doug's AppleScripts for iTunes.

These four script applets will each, respectively, download and play the latest **AP NewsPulse**, **BBC Hourly World News Bulletin**, **CNN News Update**, or **NPR Hourly News Summary** podcast episode when it becomes available enabling you to integrate an hourly newscast into your iTunes music listening throughout the day.

These scripts are Donationware. If you use them and like them *please* consider making a donation to support my AppleScripting efforts. Click here for more info.

Installation:

If you installed the files from the downloaded disk image by dragging them to the "Installer", then the AppleScript and this Read Me document have already been installed in your `[user name] > Library > iTunes > Scripts` folder. The scripts will appear in iTunes' Script menu, where you can activate each by clicking on its name.

To manually install, if necessary: Put AppleScripts in your iTunes Scripts folder. This is located in `[user name] > Library > iTunes`. If there is no folder named "Scripts" there, create one and put the script(s) in it. AppleScripts will then appear in iTunes' Script menu, and can be activated by selecting by name and clicking. Be sure to also save this Read Me document in a safe and convenient place.

Caveats:

Each applet is meant to be used to detect when the most recent episode of its respective podcast is posted, download it, and then play it. **Ideally**, a script should be used during unattended iTunes use. That is, while you are passively listening to an iTunes playlist or radio stream, or just while iTunes is activated.

These applets probably should not be used while you are doing iTunes "housekeeping" tasks; situations where you may skip from track to track or playlist to playlist, or while using any applications or other AppleScripts that need to access iTunes. At the very least, these activities should not take place near the time the particular episode is downloaded (see below for schedule and timings). Situations like these may make it difficult for a script to operate correctly and/or cause unintended results.

An "always-up" internet connection is *strongly* recommended.

Subscribe:

You must be subscribed to the particular podcast you wish to play.

- **AP NewsPulse**

Subscribe via iTunes:

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=97868611>

- **BBC World News Bulletin podcast**

Subscribe via iTunes:

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=132395704>

- **CNN News Update**

Subscribe via iTunes:

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=73983154>

- **NPR Hourly News Summary**

Subscribe via iTunes:

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=121493675>

How to use any particular script:

Run the script for the newscast you wish to play. It is a Stay-Open AppleScript applet whose icon will appear in your Dock while it is active.

When first started the script will check for the most recently downloaded and not-yet-played episode and ask if you want to play it *now*. If iTunes is playing a track it will ask if you want to play it *next*, that is, after the current song is finished playing.



This is the startup screen for the BBC Hourly World News Bulletin applet

Otherwise, episodes will play automatically shortly after they are downloaded.

- **If iTunes is playing an audio or movie/video file** the script will wait until the current track has finished playing before playing the episode and then play the *next track in the current playlist* when the episode has finished playing.
 - **If iTunes is playing a radio stream** the episode will play immediately and re-connect to the stream when the episode has finished playing. There is no way to "neatly" break away from a radio stream.
 - **If iTunes is *not* playing anything** then the episode will play as soon as it is downloaded.
- To **Quit** the script, click-and-hold, Control-click or right-click on its icon in the Dock and select Quit from the contextual menu. Or activate it and click the "Quit" button at the dialog that appears.
 - If you Quit iTunes while the script is running then the script will shortly thereafter Quit also.
 - You can re-initialize the script (that is, make it behave as though it were just starting up) by single-clicking its icon in the Dock.

Hacking the scripts:

While I don't recommend making changes to a script unless you know what you are doing, there are some simple changes you may want to make out of necessity.

To make changes, drag the particular script to the Script Editor application (in the */Applications/AppleScript/* folder) and look for the **properties** mentioned below near the start of the script. Change the value of a property by back-spacing over the current value and entering a new value. Then "Save" the script and Quit Script Editor. Changes will take effect the next time you run the script.

- **Start and End times** - The script uses two **properties** to adjust the start and finish times of a podcast episode: **my_start** and **my_finish**. These are set to a number of seconds. You may wish to adjust the start and finish times to avoid extraneous content or to take advantage of segmented newscast content; some of the newscasts provide opportunities for radio affiliates to break away for local content and these opportunities are great for shortening the play time of the episode.

Here is a list of the formats for each podcast episode. Times in **red** are each script's **my_start** and **my_finish** default settings (**note that these times could change in the future!**):

AP NewsPulse

start: 0
end option1: 121
end: 182 (181.159)

BBC World News Bulletin

start: 0
faux start: 7 (*skips "This is a download from the BBC...", but interrupts the start of the 'cast)*
end option1: 181 (*2:00 break away start)*
end option2: 301 (*what follows is a choppy transition to regular World Service content)*
end: 309 (308.453)

CNN News Update

start: 0
faux start: 12 (*skips ad billboard)*
end option1: 132 (*:60 break away start)*
end option2: 192 (*rejoin option)*
end option3: 252 (*end of news content; :50 sponsor billboard follows)*
end: 303 (302.184)

NPR Hourly News Summary

start: 0
faux start: 15 (*skips podcast intro and underwriter billboard)*
end option1: 193
end option2: 300 (*skips outro billboard)*
end: 317 (316.264)

• **Check for new episode "window"** - Each newscast is available at different times during the hour. The **properties** in each script which are named **time_check** and **time_check_differential** are currently set--respectively--to the number of minutes after the hour at which to start "pinging" and the number of minutes to continue pinging until a new episode is downloaded and recognized. The script will attempt to download a new episode every sixty seconds during the "window".

If no new episode is downloaded within this window, then, obviously, one will not be available to play, even if it eventually downloads later in the hour or during the next hour.

Currently, **time_check_differential** is always set to 20 (minutes) and **time_check** is set thusly:

AP NewsPulse - 1 (minute)
BBC World News Bulletin - 4 (minutes)
CNN News Update - 12 (minutes)
NPR Horly News Summary - 5 (minutes)

Notes:

- I cannot account for every situation under which these scripts will (or won't) run. If you have a problem please email me.
- These newscasts are available every hour of every day. (**In rare cases I have noticed that an episode is not made available for a particular hour or hours and thus is not downloaded. That's the provider's problem.**) Thus they tend to pile up in your Podcasts playlist. You may want to periodically delete the older episodes manually or set your Podcast settings to keep only the last few.
- In situations where iTunes is waiting for the current track to finish before playing an episode, the current track will quickly fade during its last three seconds. Sorry if its messy, it's the best I can do.
- **Crossfade** playback between audio tracks and a news episode is not possible because the tracks are in different playlists; they are not contiguous in the same playlist. **Also note** that if you do use a Crossfade setting the overlap between tracks may allow the first second or two of the next track to play just as the episode is about to play. This is because the script begins to fade the playing track at minus :03 seconds from its end; during the fade the next track may begin playing and may be audible. However, it will be set back to its start time before it plays after the episode.

Helpful Links:

Click on the underlined URL text:

- Doug's AppleScripts for iTunes
- Assign Shortcut Keys to AppleScripts
- Download FAQ - **Info on downloading and installing AppleScripts**
- Doug's RSS Feed - **Recent site news, script additions and updates** (add link to your news reader)
- 30 Most Recent RSS Feed - **Most recent new and updated scripts** (add link to your news reader)

Information and download link for this script is located at:

<http://dougscripts.com/itunes/scripts/ss.php?sp=playbbhourlynews>

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- pings less often, and only during the time the episode may become available
- refines ensurance of less recent episodes not playing
- creates discrete temporary playlist for current episode for easier playback
- several routines streamlined, titles provided in dialog boxes, new icons

v1.1 apr 28 2006

- properly updates play count of track played before episode
- prevents less recent episodes from inadvertently playing

v1.0 apr 20 2006

- initial release

this doc last updated July 30 07

If you have any trouble with this script, please email me.

My name is Doug Adams

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