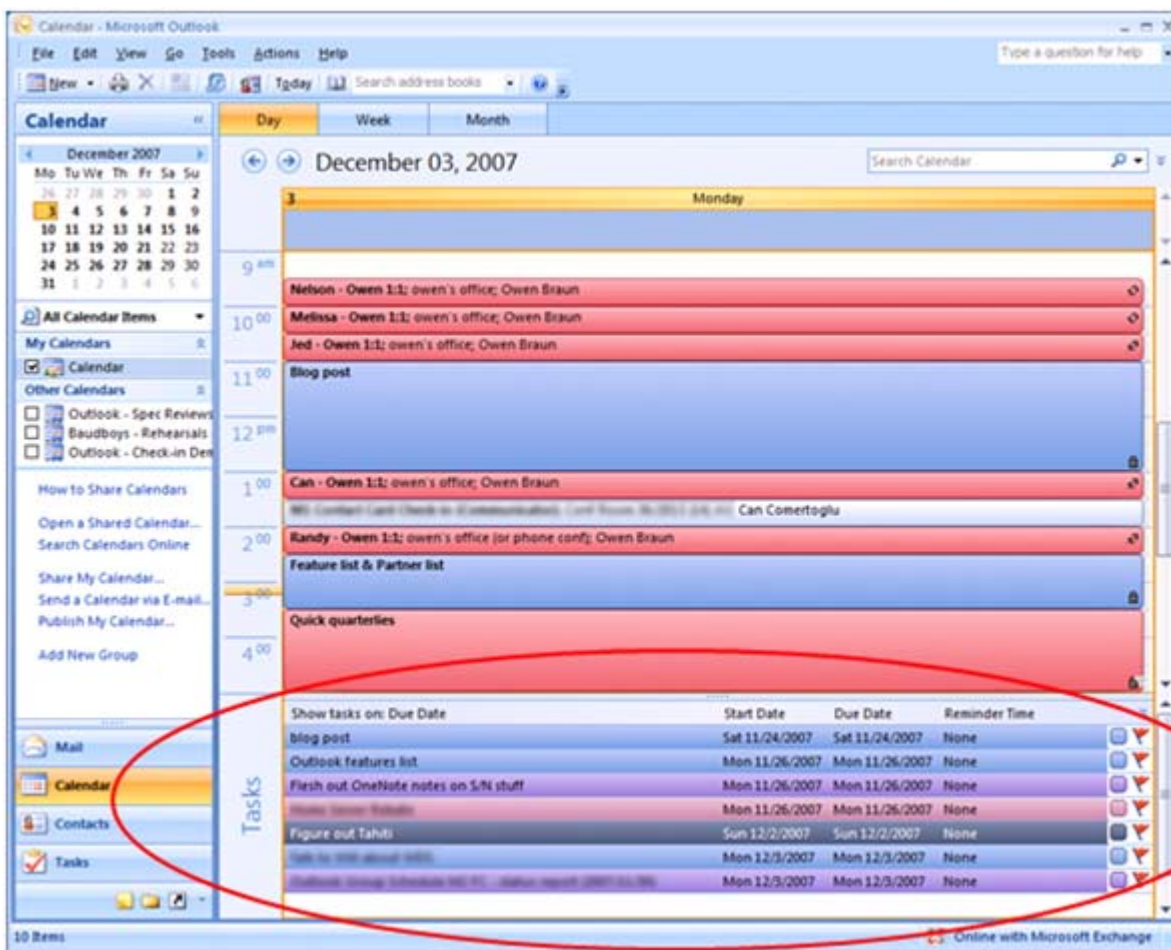


Outlook Daily Task List

A few months ago we blogged about the [new To-Do Bar in Outlook 2007](#), and today I'm going to expand on that by talking about the new **Daily Task List**, and how you can use it together with the To-Do Bar as a pretty cool little task-and-time-management system.

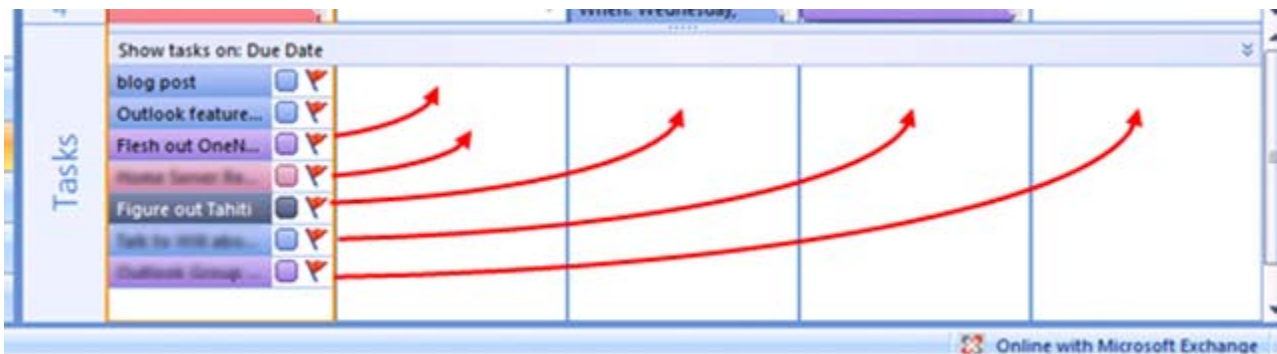
Every good feature starts with a real-world problem, and the Daily Task List's problem is: "How do I relate the stuff I have to do (my task list) with the time I have to do it (my calendar)?"

Outlook's approach is to carve out some space at the bottom of your calendar and use that to show you the tasks for that day. These are the exact same tasks (including flagged mails) that you see in the To-Do Bar.



This area is called the Daily Task List. It shows in both the "Day" and "Week" views in the calendar, and for me, the Week view is where it really shines. Every Monday morning I spend about 10 minutes looking at my accumulated tasks for the week, typing in new ones, and assigning them to days of the week based on when they're due, or when I think I'll have time to get to them - like dealing out a deck of cards.

Before



After

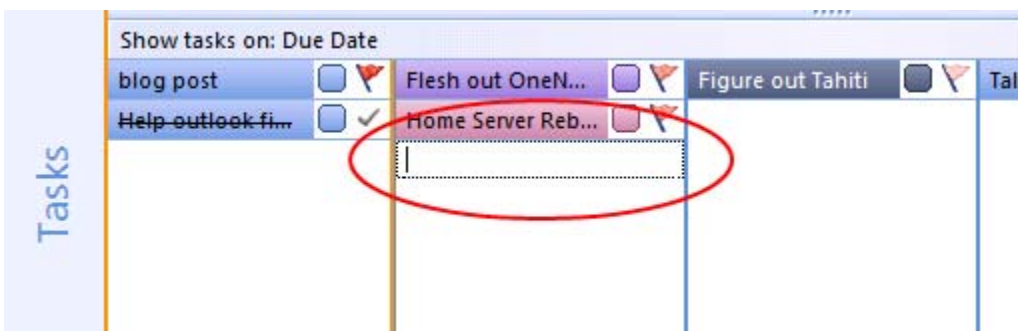


Since these are the same tasks you see in the To-Do Bar, when you move them to a different day on your calendar, their dates are updated in the To-Do Bar as well.

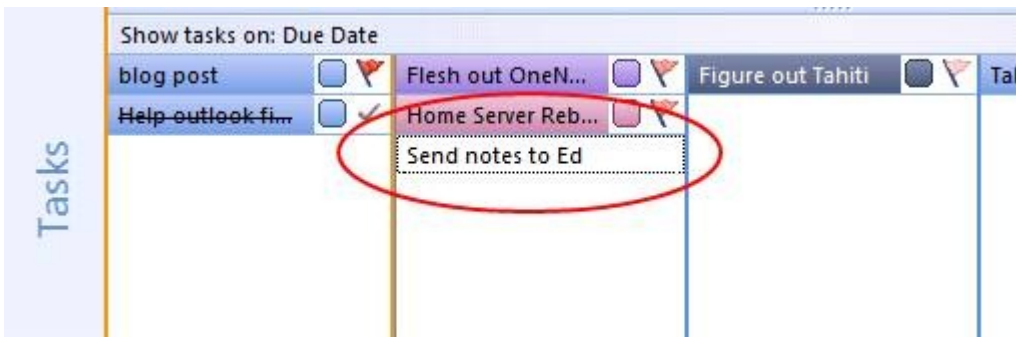
Note that tasks assigned to "No Date" don't show up in the Daily Task List, since, well, there's no date for them to appear on. This makes "No Date" a good place to stash tasks that you'd like to get to some day, but that really don't have a deadline. (Tip: you can hide them in the To-Do Bar as well by double-clicking on the "No Date" header. Then you can use "Today", "Tomorrow", etc, just for things that really *do* have deadlines.)

You can add tasks on any day simply by clicking on any blank space in the Daily Task List:

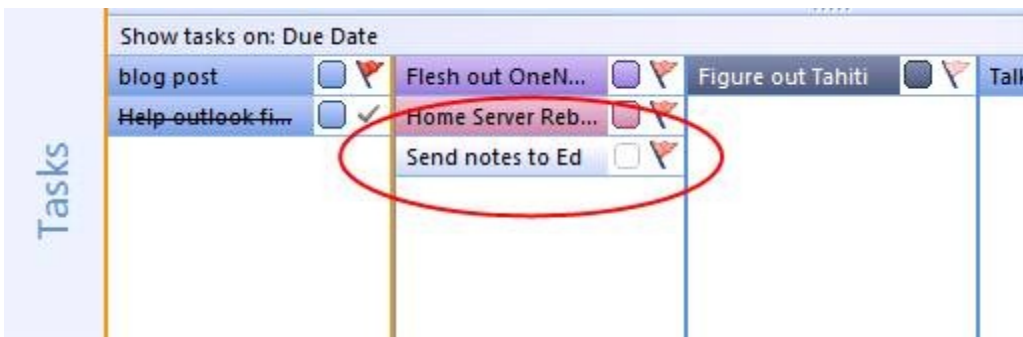
1. Click



2. Type

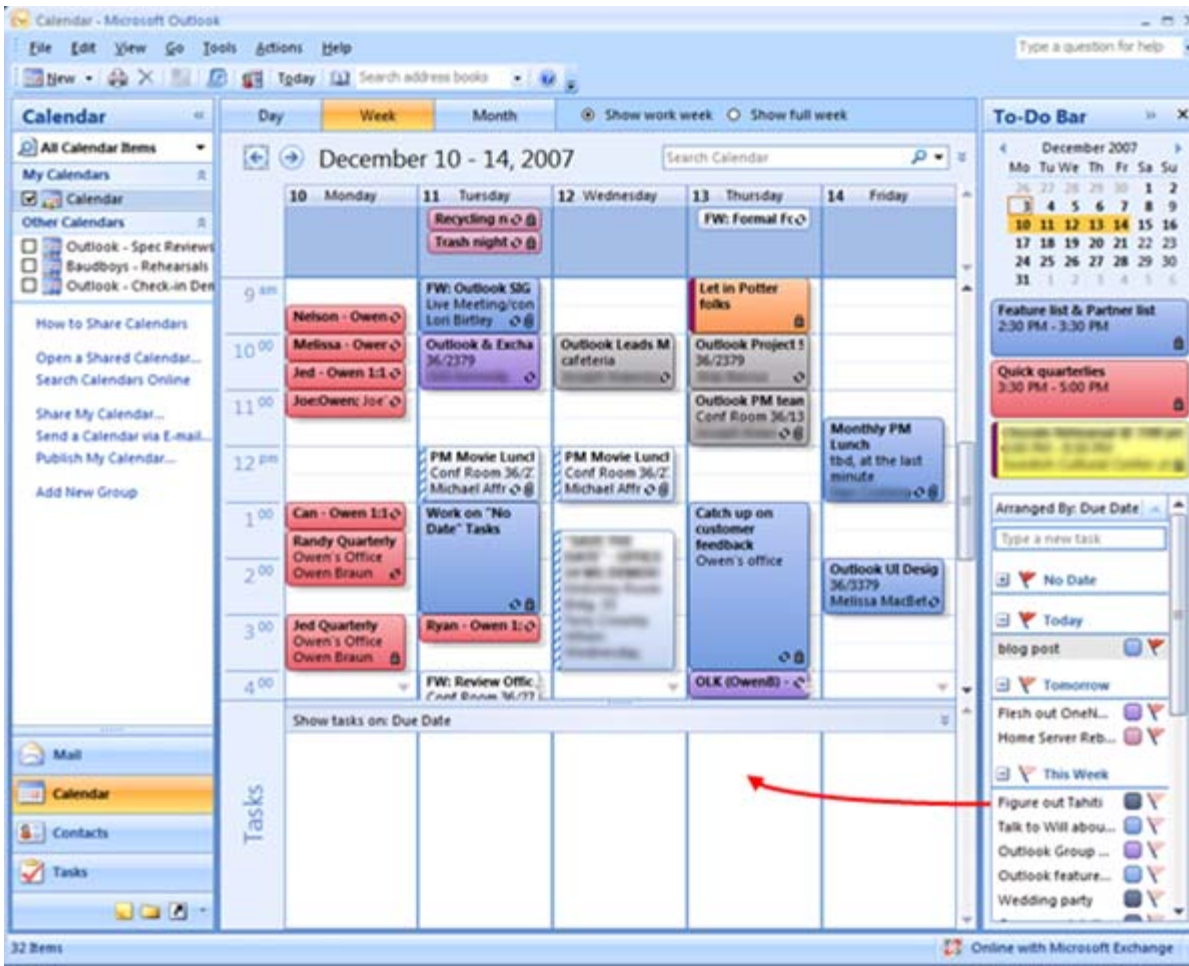


3. Press Enter



So the Daily Task List provides an easy visual way to organize your tasks. But an even bigger value for me is that it simply keeps my tasks visible when I'm looking at my calendar. Collectively, the To-Do Bar and the Daily Task List ensure that wherever I go, my tasks are there, so they never get forgotten. (Or perhaps more accurately, so that I cannot escape them.) I'm apparently in good company here - [Bill Gates wrote a couple of weeks ago](#) that he started using tasks in Outlook 2007 for precisely this reason.

If you use the Daily Task List a lot, another tip is to turn on the To-Do Bar in the Calendar (View > To-Do Bar > Normal). It's off by default in the Calendar because most of the information in it is already visible. But turning it on makes it easier to drag tasks to future weeks – just switch to next week in the calendar, and your tasks from today or this week will still be accessible in the To-Do Bar. Note that I've switched my Calendar here to show only my work week (View > Work Week).

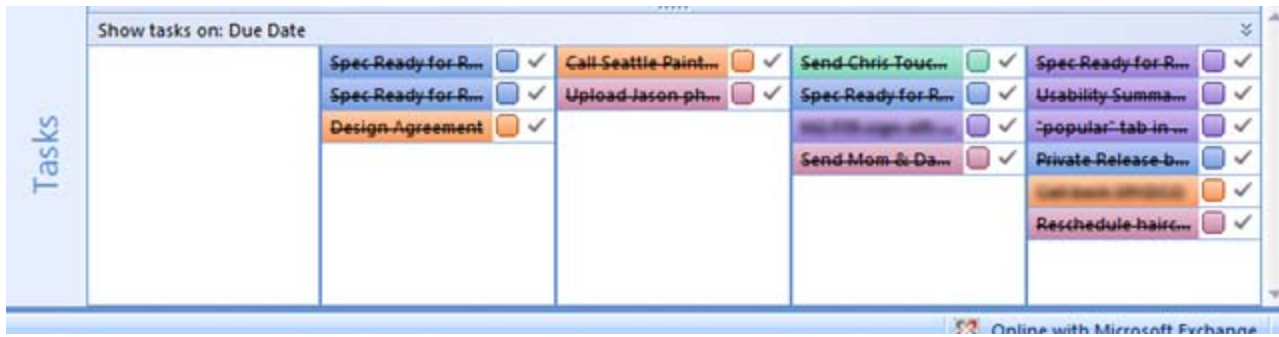


This also highlights another thing I like about the Daily Task List, which is that in terms of planning my time, it's a nice middle ground between a task list and a set of detailed task appointments. The list is often a bit too much to deal with all at once. And the appointments tend to need a lot of maintenance, since the tasks can slide around during the day, as meetings, fire drills, and other Events From Real Life intervene. The separate task area at the bottom is "fuzzy time" - I plan to do this task approximately on this day, but there's some wiggle room. And since these are the same tasks you see in the To-Do Bar, they have all the same smarts, including rolling over to the next day if you don't finish them.

One cool way in which the Daily Task List is different from the To-Do Bar is that when you complete a task, it does *not* disappear. Instead, it stays put, with a highly satisfying strikethrough:



Furthermore, the completed task then stays put on that day, allowing you to build up even more satisfying records of your accomplishments over the week:



Which you can then survey smugly on Friday afternoons. Or lament the lack of, depending how your week goes. Of course, if you find your completed tasks to be pointless clutter, you also have the option of turning them off (View > Daily Task List > Arrange By > Show Completed Tasks.) From the same menu, you can also change the arrangement to Start Date if that is how you prefer to work.

