

Eva, N. (2017). [Review of ATracker in Work/Life Flexibility Column]. *Public Services Quarterly*, 13(3), 175-176. doi: 10.1080/15228959.2017.1338542

ATracker

<http://www.wonderapps.se/atracker/>

Visited Spring 2017.

Reviewer: Nicole Eva, Librarian, University of Lethbridge

In the quest for work-life balance, it's useful to know how you are actually spending your time. It may be that you are frittering away time on inconsequential tasks, or that you discover that you actually have more leisure time than you thought. An app such as ATracker can help you track your days, and hopefully find places where you can economize or do things differently in order to use your time more efficiently.

ATracker is a free app (though a 'full' version is available for \$4.99) available on Apple's app store – for the purposes of this review, the only the free features are discussed. When the app is first opened after downloading, there are two default activities already loaded – gaming and gym, neither of which were applicable to me. I spent a considerable amount time creating a list of activities I was likely to do in a day – walking, working (which really should be split into various activities such as email, meetings, reference desk, writing, researching, chatting... the list could be endless), eating, meal prep, driving, playing with my child, sleeping, housework. Again, it's nearly impossible to think of everything up front, but additional activities can be added on the fly at any time.

It's very simple to start recording an activity – simply click on it – and a stopwatch-like timer starts counting down the seconds until you tap it again. The default setting is to record everything, but an option to remove any entries of shorter than one minute is available, as are various other preferences such as syncing entries to your calendar and syncing the app between different devices. You can choose to receive notifications, which might be helpful if you don't mind the annoyance because it may have resolved my largest issue with this app – which was to actually use it.

You can see your history both in calendar format as well as a pie chart, in colour-coded categories of how you spent your time. You can also see a 7-day and 30-day average. From an analysis point of view, I can definitely see the utility of doing this for, say, a week to see how you're actually spending your time. But the key is to actually have it out and running constantly – I never did manage to do this in two weeks of trying to use this app. I can only imagine the battery power it would use, not to mention data if you're not on wireless. But if you are used to tracking your billable hours, for example, I can see how this would be extremely useful once you were in the habit.

In short: Once the time spent inputting regular activities has been invested, if you can remember to tap on the task every time you change course, this could be a useful way to track your time; however, for most people a simple calendar entry or paper record could be just as effective. Nevertheless, for someone who must keep track of time for billing reasons, this could be an extremely valuable tool.

Recommended.