

Action Encyclopedia Article

Action

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Action

The term action is associated with macros, and has several meanings. First, an action is the basic building block of a **macro**. A macro is typically written as a multi-step process, where each line represents an action, or a task that is performed. When the actions are taken in sequence, an overall action results. In other macro languages, an action is sometimes referred to as a command.

A macro is a self-contained instruction that can be combined with other actions in order to automate a task. In the following example, containing a macro with instructions to indent every fourth line of a document by eight spaces, each of the lines is an action. Together, once a name for the macro is supplied, the actions make up the macro.

- move cursor to beginning of line
- move cursor down one line
- insert eight spaces

In the above example, the macro is made up of a series of actions, self-contained instructions. Also, the overall task that the macro was constructed to speed up (the indenting of a designated line) is itself an action. Thus, the term action can also refer to the task for which the macro has been constructed. A series of actions combine to produce an overall action. In the absence of a macro, the performance of many constituent actions would fall to the user. Considering each of the self-contained instructions as a command eliminates confusion, as does considering the overall function specified by the macro as an action.

Macros, and their constituent actions, are used in **word processing** and spreadsheet documents. Macros can be simple, consisting of only a few actions, as in the example above. Complex macros can be made up of hundreds of actions. In spreadsheets, the actions in a macro often take the form of performing a mathematical calculation on the **data** appearing in designated cells of the spreadsheet. Other actions can be constructed to relate one spreadsheet to other spreadsheets and one line of a program to other lines in the same program. Tax calculation software relies upon such actions.