

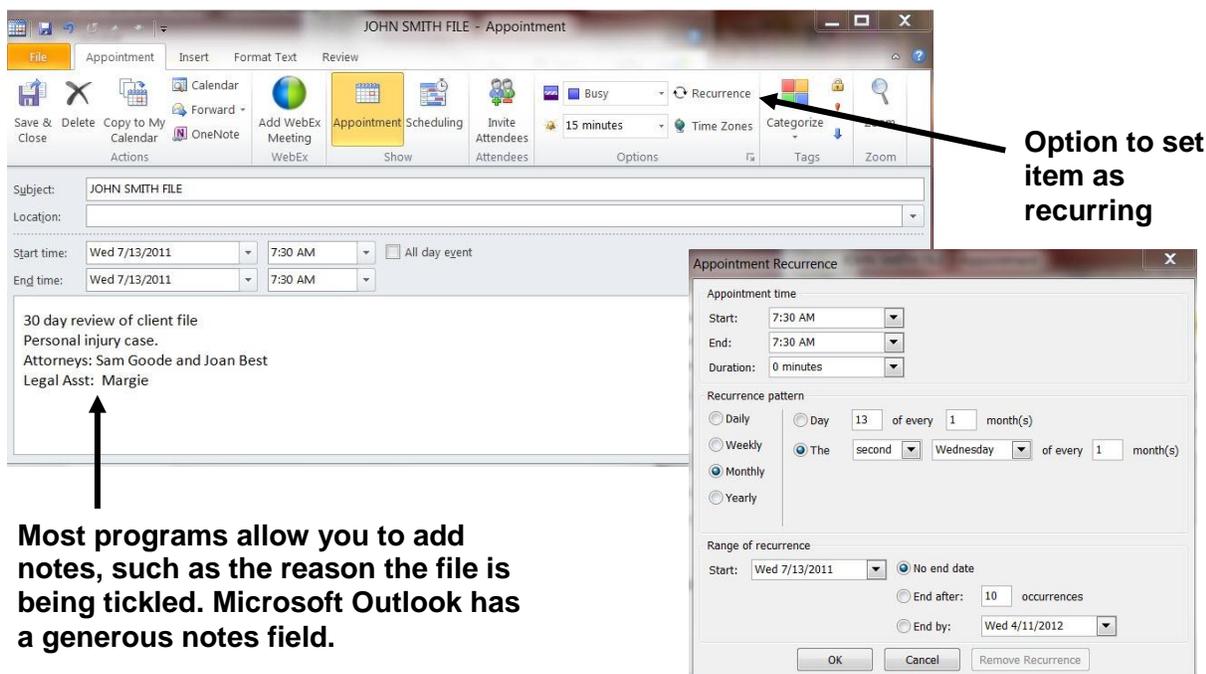
REMINDER AND TICKLER SYSTEMS

No file should ever be put in the file cabinet without a reminder date on it or be tickled for more than 60 days, unless it is a corporation and only annual meetings need to be noted. It is best to review all files at least once in any 30-day period. If the attorney working on the file does not indicate a reminder date, the assistant should check with the attorney to determine when the file should next be reviewed.

A simple system for a sole practitioner with a limited number of files is to keep a list of all open files. This list should be generated on the first day of each month. Keep it readily available on your desk or on your computer. As work is performed on a file or the file is reviewed during the month, that file is crossed off the list. On the last day of the month, a quick review of the list will indicate which files were not seen during the month. You can then pull these files for review.

If you are using a computerized calendaring program, you can set reminder or tickle dates for each of your files by using recurring appointments or tasks. In most cases, the screen to create a new appointment or task will have an option to set that item as recurring. If you are using recurring appointments or tasks to tickle files, choose a recurrence pattern that falls on a work day (i.e., the fourth Monday of the month) instead of a specific date, which may fall on a weekend or holiday in the future.

There are two ways to set up a file tickler in Microsoft Outlook: recurring appointments or recurring tasks. Here is an example of a recurring appointment set in Microsoft Outlook:



The screenshot shows the Microsoft Outlook interface for creating a recurring appointment. The ribbon includes options for 'Recurrence', 'Categorize', and 'Tags'. The appointment details are as follows:

- Subject: JOHN SMITH FILE
- Location: [Empty]
- Start time: Wed 7/13/2011, 7:30 AM
- End time: Wed 7/13/2011, 7:30 AM
- Duration: 0 minutes
- Recurrence pattern: Monthly, The second Wednesday of every 1 month(s)
- Range of recurrence: No end date

The appointment body text reads: "30 day review of client file. Personal injury case. Attorneys: Sam Goode and Joan Best. Legal Asst: Margie".

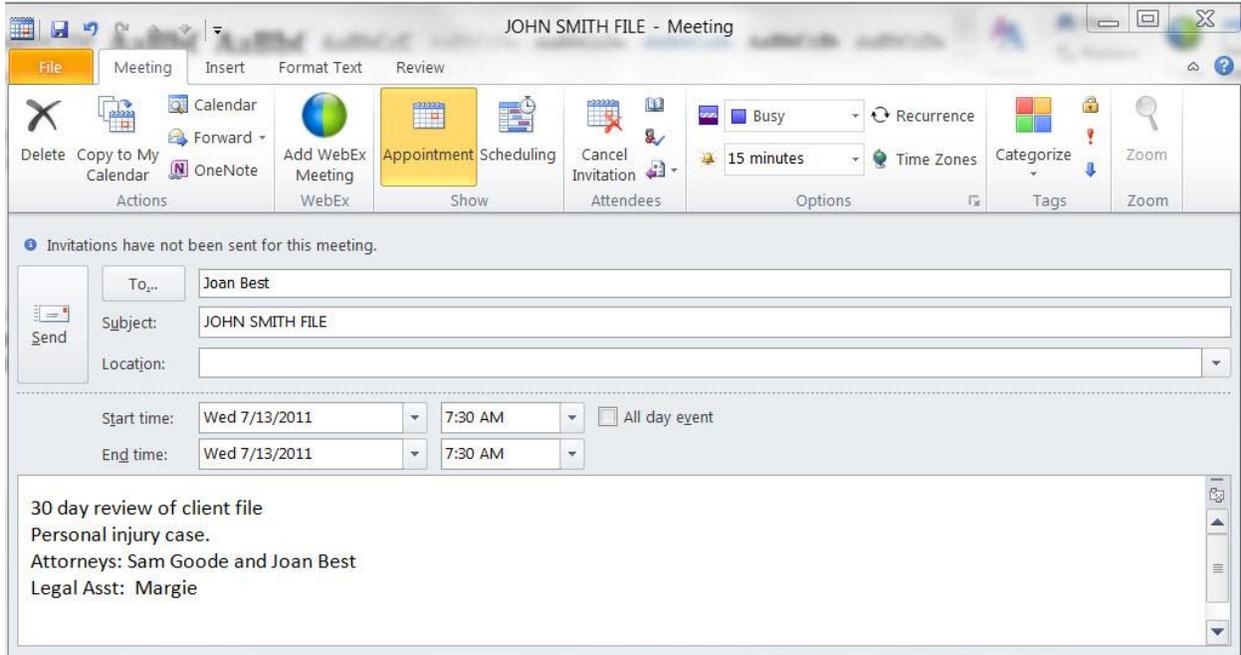
Option to set item as recurring

Most programs allow you to add notes, such as the reason the file is being tickled. Microsoft Outlook has a generous notes field.

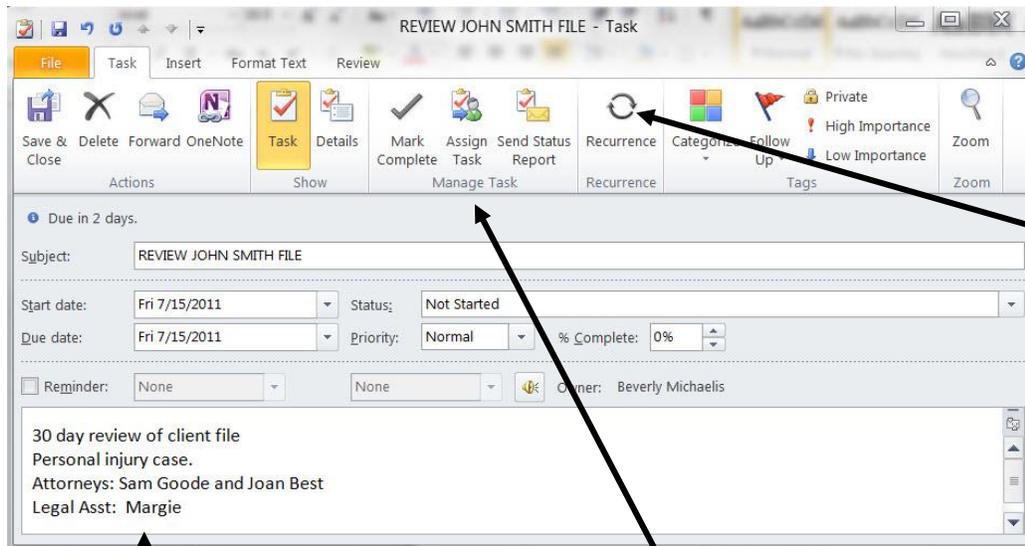
Your program may also allow you to set up a group of attorneys and legal assistants who need to participate in the file review by selecting the option to invite attendees. Your calendar appointment becomes an e-mail that you send to the people who should attend the file review.

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Here is an example in Microsoft Outlook:



Alternatively, you can set up a file tickler in Outlook using recurring tasks:



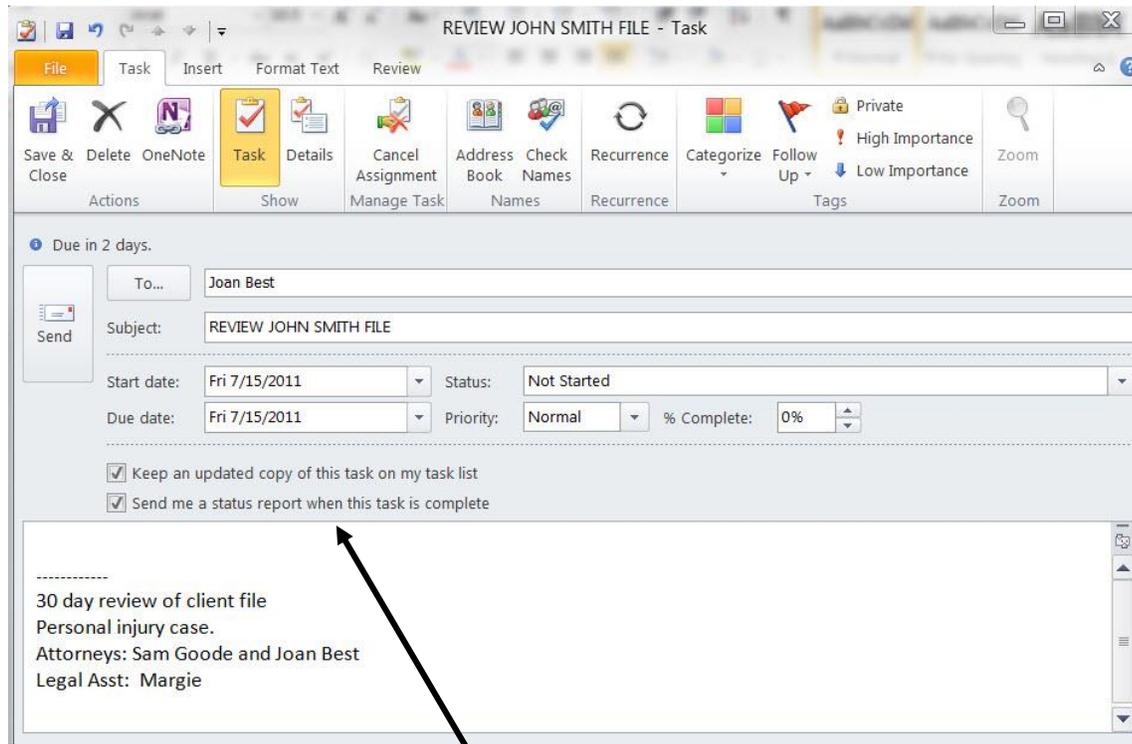
Option to set item as recurring

Optional notes field

Tasks can be managed by assigning them to others.

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Here is an example of assigned task in Microsoft Outlook (sent as an e-mail):



These options are checked by default:
Keep an updated copy of the task on my task list
Send me a status report when this task is complete

When file reminders are set as recurring tasks, they are added to your “Tasks and To-Do” List in Microsoft Outlook. This keeps your calendar free for appointments, court dates, and other scheduled events.

Each morning you or your assistant should pull all files tickled for that day. If, after reviewing the file, you determine there is nothing to be done at that time, the file is re-tickled to another future date. **NO FILE SHOULD EVER BE PLACED IN THE FILING CABINET WITHOUT A FUTURE REMINDER DATE.** If the file is tickled for a specific task to be performed, it should be accomplished that day. If there is no immediate deadline and you are unable to perform the task that day, tickle the file one to three days later when you will have time to complete the task. Do not let files stack up on your desk. Be realistic about what tasks you can complete, and use your reminder system to make sure items you cannot complete today will come across your desk in a day or two when they can be completed.

A good tickler system will alleviate the need to keep files stacked on your desk when they are not being worked on, or the need to set aside an entire day reviewing every open file. A reminder system also prevents files from falling through the cracks when they get stuck in the file cabinet because nothing has happened to create any activity on the file.

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