

X10 Tutorial:

How to automate your home on a shoestring budget - Part 3.

By Mike Mallari – X10 Community Director

So far, you've learned the basics of home control using a remote device to talk to your transceiver, and your transceiver initiating the commands or passing off those signals to the proper modules. You also understand the concepts of how modules operate by performing a specific function.

Now it's time to add a new twist... The personal computer...

Involving Your Computer:

The personal computer is a great tool for home automation. The computer has the ability to monitor your home when you are asleep, or even initiate functions while you are away.

Home Automation software for the PC is relatively inexpensive. X10's **ActiveHome Pro software** can be purchased at a price of \$40 USD individually, or can be found packaged as a kit for a greater rate.



X10's ActiveHome Pro Home Automation Software



X10's ActiveHome Pro USB Computer Interface

Another component that you will need is the **ActiveHome Pro USB computer Interface**, a device that will send and receive unit/house codes. This device connects to the computer via a USB cable to the USB port and then the box unit is plugged into a standard 110 volt outlet. There is also an additional battery compartment for the purpose of powering the unit in the event of electrical power loss.

A simple way to describe how these two interact can be seen as: The ActiveHome Pro computer software is the remote control, and the ActiveHome Pro USB Computer Interface is like a transceiver, but with

much more capabilities.



Screenshot of the X10 ActiveHome Pro Software

ActiveHome Pro Software:

The ActiveHome Pro software is a virtual control panel for all X10 and X10 compatible products. ActiveHome Pro allows you to control your modules and place timers on them. You can program ActiveHome Pro with a few mouse clicks to turn on your lights at a certain time of the day then shut them off a few hours later. You can even identify to ActiveHome Pro which modules are in what part of the house then control them by room.

Another great feature to the ActiveHome Pro software is your ability to set macros. A macro is when you program one command into the ActiveHome Pro software and it executes a series of them based on that one command.

Let's explain this further. For example, I'll create a command and call it 'Wake up.' When 'Wake Up' is programmed to occur, a series of commands are supposed to happen:

1. Turn on bedroom light
2. Turn on Stereo
3. Turn on Coffee Pot
4. Turn off Front Door light (which was set to be on all night)

This is an example of a macro, where one command sets in motion a chain of events.



Macro Designer

Front Door Monitor

Select Camera Front Cam
Move Camera Front Cam to Preset 2
Turn Front Porch ON
Turn Chime ON
Start Recording Video

M3 On - 0 Seconds Front Yard

Movie Time

Turn Main Light ON and dim to 20%
WAIT for 15 minutes
Turn Closet Light ON and dim to 75%
Brighten Main Light by 30%

M2 On - 15 minutes Living Room

Wake Up

Turn Overhead ON and dim to 20%
Turn TV Lamp OFF
Turn Hall Lights ON and dim to 35%
Turn Reading Light OFF
Turn Floor Lamp OFF

M1 On - 0 Seconds Living Room



Examples of the ActiveHome Pro Macro Designer

Macros in the ActiveHome Pro software allow you a world of opportunities in setting up things the way you would like and when you would like for them to happen.

Plug-Ins:

Many people choose to add X10 cameras to their automated home system for the fact that they like the added security or monitoring they provide. In addition, many use X10 cameras for hobbies such as bird watching or nature viewing.

ActiveHome Pro has the **iWitness** plug-in, allowing people the functionality to use their X10 cameras with the ActiveHome Pro system. This iWitness plug-in is part of a separate package and must also be ordered when you purchase ActiveHome Pro.

In addition to iWitness, also available are the Smart Macros plug-in and the My House Online plug-in.

The Smart Macros plug-in allows additional advanced macros to be set up on your ActiveHome Pro software while the My House Online plug-in allows the user to control their home from anywhere globally via the Internet. Again, plug-ins are not included as part of the normal ActiveHome pro software package and must be ordered separately.

Definitions:

ActiveHome Pro software: X10's user-interface automation software which allows you to control your modules, cameras, and other X10 devices via your computer. Allows your computer to become a remote control for your modules.

ActiveHome Pro USB computer Interface: A device that sends and receives signals to and from your modules. This interface works in conjunction with the ActiveHome Pro software, and works like a transceiver but with more capabilities.

iWitness: A plug-in for X10's ActiveHome Pro software which allows control of X10 cameras via the computer.

Macro: A single command that is programmed to execute a string of events.

My House Online: A plug-in for X10's ActiveHome Pro software which allows control of your automated home anywhere globally via the Internet.

Plug-In: An accessory software program that extends the capabilities of an existing application.

Smart Macros: A plug-in for X10's ActiveHome Pro software which allows additional advanced macros to be set up via your ActiveHome Pro software.