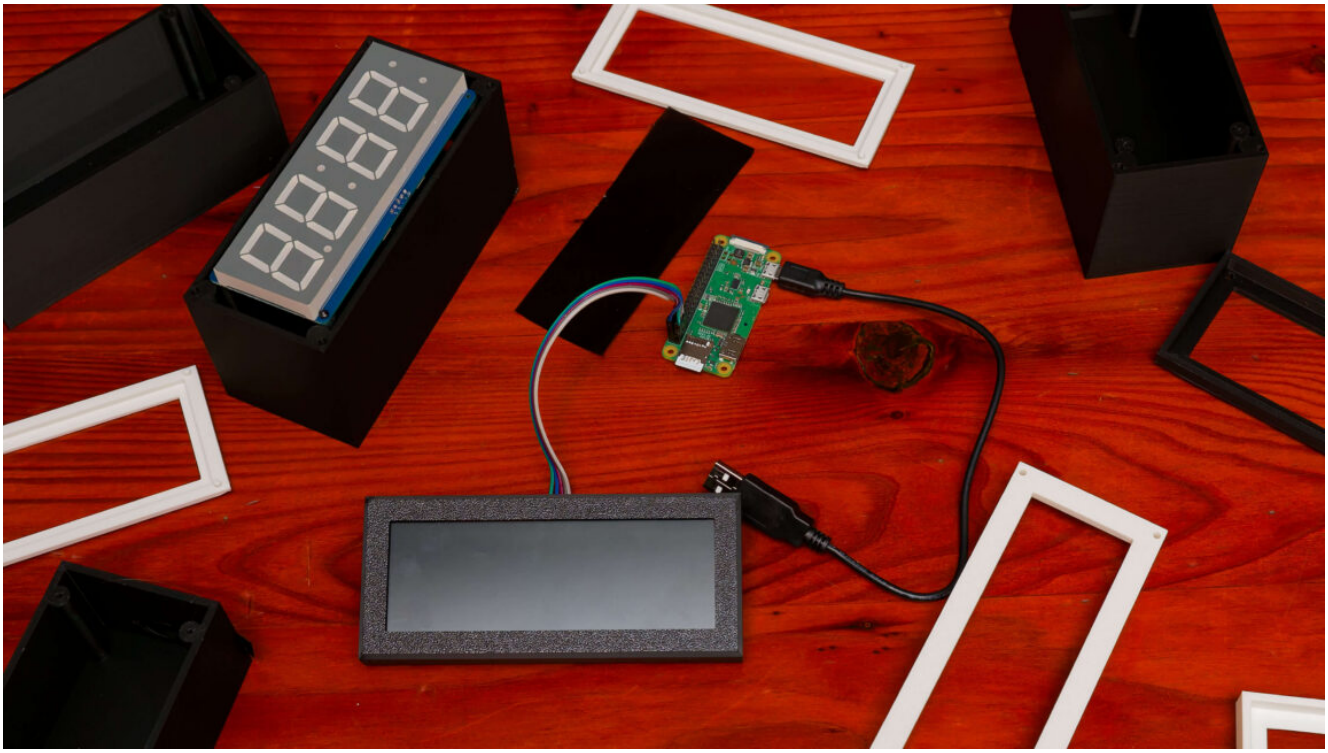
I wanted a clock that never needed setting. Things escalated.



I wanted a clock that, annoyingly, didn’t seem to exist.

Since childhood, my bedside clocks have been a series of red, seven-segment LED clock-radio specials from Walmart or Target. They are invariably cheap, simple, and long-lived—but they require manual intervention at the start and end of Daylight Saving Time and whenever the power flickers. After a recent power flicker, as I found myself standing by the sideboard holding down “TIME” and mashing the “HOUR” button, frustration boiled over, and I thought to myself, “We’re a quarter of the way through the 21st century. There has to be a better way!”

My perfect clock would be self-setting. It would offer auto-DST adjustment (or not, depending on how this bill fares!). It would manage drift and always show the exact sub-second time. It would show that time on a red seven-segment display—not blue, not green, not yellow, and absolutely not white. And I

shouldn’t have to install any privacy-destroying garbage apps to make it work.

Simple? No. While many bedside clocks meet one or perhaps two of these requirements, I couldn’t find anything that meets them all. Battery-backed self-setting “atomic” clocks that get their updates via the cosmic ether have been a thing for years and get me most of the way there, but damned if I could find one with a red seven-segment display that I liked (maybe someone else’s search kung-fu is better than mine?).

For a time, despair won out. But as I closed dozens of browser tabs featuring fruitless searches and close-but-no-cigar product pages, I thought to myself, “Wait a second. I’ve got a 3D printer. I’m, like, smart and stuff. Why not buy a seven-segment display and *make* my own clock?”

And so, standing on the shoulders of giants stacked up so high that I could practically touch the Moon, I did.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/07/i-wanted-a-clock-that-never-needed-setting-things-escalated/