ComTimer 1.12

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ComTimer 1.12 is intended to help you control the cost of using Internet.

This software is shareware, ie if you like it and continue to use it, then you're supposed to pay the author the price of this program, USD 10.

HOW IS COMTIMER USED ?

See Installation of ComTimer for instructions about setting up ComTimer.

If you use for example the dialer included with Win95, then you have to start ComTimer either before or after you've been connected to the net. If you choose to start it before connecting, then you'll have to define an average calling time before connection. 30 seconds has proved to be a suitable value for me. The average time for connecting is used to keep ComTimer waiting until connection has been established. ComTimer will not start counting time before the specified amount of time has expired.

If you use for example Trumpet Winsock or some other program which use scriptfiles, you'd enter ComTimer into the file in such a way, that ComTimer is started after connection has been established. In this case you don't need to define any average time.

You can activate a menu containing all functions by right clicking on ComTimer's counterdisplay.

If ComTimer is still waiting for connection to be established, press upon the icon at the taskbar and choose 'ComTimer menu'.

The average time for connecting, charge per minute and eventual monthly base charge are enterd under SETTINGS. You enter the monthly base charge if your operators' policy is to charge you a monthly minimum fee which allows you to use a certain amount of time on the net before they start charging you more.

Go to Advanced options for more details about monitoring cost of usage. Go to Additional features for details about customizing ComTimer.

ComTimer is designed to be minimized upon the Taskbar, where the time and cost spent is shown. That's why the window with the digitalcounter may seem to be large, as it is intended to be seen only when wanted.

If you use advanced monitoring of usage, then you can enable an indicator on the tray, telling you what kind of rate you're paying at the moment, economy, medium or expensive. You define these levels your self.

ComTimer saves the information about your surfing on the net and the cost spent doing this. You can later remove this data, when you get the bill for the period in question. You do this and other manipulation of data with the separate utility ComLog which is included in the package.

ComTimer configures automatically. This won't work in some special cases. Look at Choose modem manually to learn why and what to do if you encounter this.
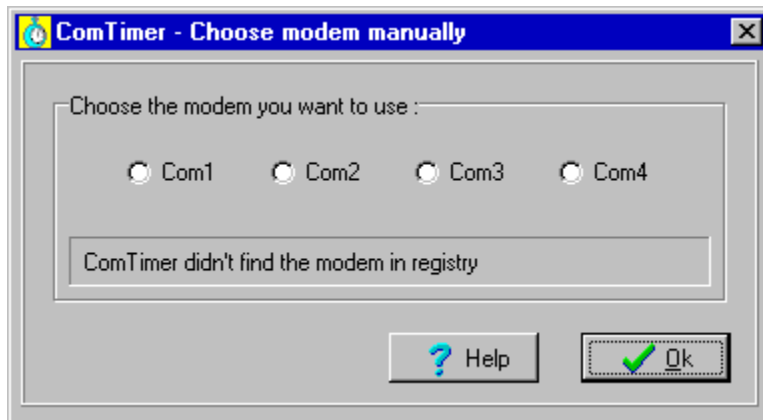
Copyright

MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT

ComTimer supports three languages: English, Swedish and Finnish.

Choose modem manually

ComTimer locates the modem in your computer. Sometimes there can occur such a situation, when ComTimer is unable to do this. In this case you'll be asked to give the com-port used by the modem. The cause for this is that something did go wrong when you installed Win95 on your PC and the modem did get a label which can't be understood by ComTimer. ComTimer locates the modem by reading directly from the Registryfile, where all data about your PC is stored.

If you have to choose the modemport by yourself, you'll see the following dialog:

Check first from the Control Panel's modem-function where the modem is installed, before selecting the port here. Once when you've chosen the port, ComTimer'll use it allways. This data is stored in the file ComTimer.ini.

NOTE:

If you choose the wrong modemport, then ComTimer'll ask you again to give the right port.

NOTE 2:

ComTimer can't distingush between a modem waiting for faxes and a connection over the modem. In both cases ComTimer will "think" that it has found a modem that's active with a connection. ComTimer looks only for traffic, not what kind of traffic over a modem. I designed it in this way to make sure that ComTimer won't screw up any traffic by accident.

NOTE 3:

If needed, you can force ComTimer to monitor any com-port. Change the following entry in the file comtimer.ini, that's found in your windows-directory:

[modem]

port=COMx   ,where x is the number of the port you want to monitor.

NOTE 4:

If you run ComTimer for the first time and your modem is activated before you start ComTimer, there might rise a situation that Comtimer can't identify the modem, as the application using the modem is interfering with the checkout performed by ComTimer.

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If you've got opinions or comments about this program, mail me ! I'd also appreciate if you had the kindness to further spread this software and telling me where you found it.

Special thanks to Alberto Garcia Alvarez, Spain (e-mail: agarcia@etsiig.uniovi.es), who has written the VCL for the digits.

All brands, productnames and trademarks mentioned are such or registered such of their respective holder.

The author denounces all responsibility for whatever the use of Comtimer might cause. The author does neither give any kind of warranty for ComTimer, ie the user uses this application at his own risk. ComTimer is ditributed "as it is".

ComLog

ComLog is a simple utilty that allows you to view a list over time spent on the net. This list includes the date and time for beginning each session and it's duration. If ComTimer is activated, you'll be able to watch the contents of the log, but you can't remove items from it.

You remove entries from the log by marking them with the mouse and pressing on the button EMPTY.

Remember to remove entries for a period after you've recieved the bill for the period in question.

COPY TO THE CLIPBOARD

You can copy all or selected entries from the log to the clipboard.

Mark the entries you want to copy, press Ctrl + Insert or right click to get a menu where you can select the function you want.

RECALCULATING THE COST OF USAGE

ComTimer does automatically recalculate the total sum of usage after you've removed entries.

If you by some reason has destroyed the file ComTimer.ini, then you can recalculate the total sum by right clicking on ComLog's main Window, provided the file ComTimer.log is still intact.

If you've ran ComTimer as a simple timer without monitoring of cost, then ComTimer won't calculate costs for logentries from that time, if you later decide to enable the monitoring.

SETTINGS

If you change settings using ComLog, theses changes will not be effective until you've restarted ComTimer.

Advanced options

ComTimer 1.12 is able to handle advanced monitoring of your usage of Internet.

ComTimer is equipped with these functions:

1. Define x hours of use for totally $ y, thereafter $ z per hour.

2. Define $ x for the first minute, thereafter $ y per minute.

3. Allows 4 different rates to be defined for periods downto 15 min.

4. If needed, define each day differently from the rest of week.

5. Graphical interface for definition of rates.

6. Possible to force ComTimer to use Sunday rates on heydays.

7. If wanted, an indicator on the tray showing if you're paying economy, medium or expensive rate at the moment.

As there seems to be about as many different policies of charging for usage as there are ISPs, I can't cover everything. With these options, that ComTimer can handle, you ought to be able to make a combination that suits most people's needs.

HOW TO DEFINE THE ADVANCED OPTIONS:

To enable the advanced options, do the following:

-Choose settings.

-Right click on the dialog.

-Check 'Enable peak and off peak rates'

You can use up to 4 different rates. When you enter the rates, note the colour of the editbox where they're entered. The colouring is important, as the exact definition of when to use each rate relies upon this. Yellow means rate 1, red rate 2, lilac rate 3 and cyan means rate 4.

When you open the page for Tables of rates, you'll se a matrix and four coloured buttons in the right lower corner. Look at the numbering around the matrix. This tells you what hour each panel of the matrix stands for. Each panel in the matrix stands for half an hour.

Press upon the colour for the rate you are going to define. If you then press on 'All', the entire matrix will be coloured, ie the whole day is assigned to this rate.

If you want to assign other rates on this same day, press upon the appropriate colour, and click upon a panel in the matrix. The panel changes colour and this means that this half hour is assigned to this rate.

If you need to define a rate for a quarter of an hour, choose the right colour and double click upon a panel. The panel will display four possible texts:

-15   means from xx.00 to xx.15

15-   means from xx.15 to xx.30

-45   means from xx.30 to xx.45

45-   means from xx.45 to (xx+1).00

When you've assigned rates to every hour of the day, press upon the tab for the following day and repeat

the procedure.

You aren't allowed to leave any hours unassigned.

See <u>Examples using different rates</u>

1. X HOURS FOR THE TOTAL OF $ Y, THEREAFTER $ Z PER HOUR:

You don't need to define the usage of rate separately, if you want to use this option. Check the box next to 'Usage', enter the value for hours X, the value for $ Y and the value for $ Z, and accept.

2. DEFINE $ X FOR THE FIRST MINUTE, THEREAFTER $ Y PER MINUTE.

This is an optional choise. You have at first to define when each rate is to be used, thereafter you can enter the value for the first minute of usage after you've connected to your ISP. Check the box for each rate you want this option to be used with and enter the initial price.

You can use this, if you only use one rate, but you have then to define the whole week for this rate.

6. POSSIBLE TO FORCE COMTIMER TO USE SUNDAY RATES ON HEYDAYS.

ComTimer's menu contains an option, that allows you to force the program to use Sunday rates when it's checked. ComTimer hasn't got automated identification of heydays, since they vary too much between different countries.

7. ENABLE INDICATOR ON THE TRAY.

If your ISP bills you peak and off peak rates, it's handy to be able to determine if you're using a cheap or expensive connection at the moment, that's why you can enable an indicator simulating a flashing LED on the tray. To enable this function, you have to check 'Enable indicatoroption'. Thereafter you define for each rate you use if it is classed as economy, medium or expensive rate.

The indicator will flash green for an economy rate, yellow for medium and red for expensive and it changes colour as the rate changes.

Installation of ComTimer

HOW TO SETUP COMTIMER 1.12

ComTimer can be run from any directory. I haven't therefore included any setup-utilty. I do this to keep down the size of the package to some extent, as larger files takes longer to download.

When you're running ComTimer for the first time, it's recomended that you do this:

1. Run ComLog and use the 'Settings'-functions, so that you can configure ComTimer before it's run. You can configure ComTimer after you've started it, but it's allways better to do it in advance.

2. When you start ComTimer for the first time, make sure that your modem   and/ or your dialler isn't activated. This is needed to allow ComTimer to correctly determine the configuration of your system without any kind of interference.

3. If your dial-up utility complains about another application using the modem, then you have to open ComTimer's Settings-dialog, klick upon the icon in the left upper corner and choose 'ComTimer refresh'. This allows you to enter a value between 1-2000 which determines the interval for checkouts wether the modem is active or not. A larger value is allways better. This allows the dial-up utility ample time to establish contact over the modem without ComTimer interfering. A value of 1000 is default.
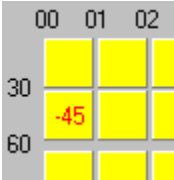
See <u>Choose modem manually</u> for more information.

IMPORTANT:

If you keep your modem constantly activated waiting for faxes, then ComTimer will "think" that the modem is active with a connection to your ISP. ComTimer does only check if the modem is active or not, not what kind of traffic is passing by it. I wrote ComTimer in this way to be sure that there's no possibility for me to screw up traffic over the modem.
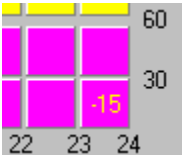
Examples using different rates

Here are some examples on how to define when a rate is used:

This stands for

00.00-00.30 rate 1

00.30-00.45 rate 2   (you define quarters by double-clicking on panels)

00.46-01.00 rate 1

01.00- and on rate 1

This stands for

23.00-23.15 rate 1

23.16- and on rate 3

Simple.

For users in anglo-saxon countries, the hours will be displayed in am and pm format. These example pictures were captured using 24 hour format.

Additional fine tuning

ComTimer has got these additional options enabling you to fine tune it's function according to your taste and needs:

-Possible to disable the dialog at end of session showing total cost of usage.

-Possible to disable the default rounding of seconds at end of session.

I wrote ComTimer orginally starting from my own needs, and as my ISP doesn't charge for seconds, only for whole minutes, I made rounding of seconds default.

-Enable logging of tries to make connection with your ISP.

Some ISP's are greedy indeed. They charge the equal to 1 min of usage for any attempt to make connection. A failed try is defined in ComTimer as an connection lasting < 1 min, maybe disconnected before the counter even has started. Such a connection will be logged as +FAILED+ in the log and equal the charge of 1 min.

-Disable monitoring of costs of net-usage.

This allows you to run ComTimer as a simple timer.

-Enable logging of sessions shorter than a minute.

ComTimer doesn't by default log sessions less than 1 minute. Here you can enable this feature,if your ISP counts seconds, too. My ISP doesn't.

See Advanced options for information about the option 'enable peak and off peak rates'.

If you use the advanced options for monitoring costs, then you can adjust how often ComTimer will check if it's time to update the recent charge per minute.

Open ComTimer's menu by right clicking and choose 'Adjust monitoring'.

You can set how often ComTimer updates the value used for charge per minute. Default is 20 seconds, ie ComTimer updates this value 3 times per minute. This value must be between 5 - 20 seconds.

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See Advanced options for information about the option 'enable peak and off peak rates'.

History

All previous versions of ComTimer.

1.0

The first version

1.0a

English is used as default instead of Swedish

Animated icon added on the taskbar

Altered the window to be non-sizeable

1.1

Added the possibilty to close down ComTimer before the dial-up procedure has taken place.

Added a possibilty to change the interval between checkouts of the modem, in case of possible conflict with dialer.

Changed the way calculated cost of usage is shown at the mainwindow and the Statisticsdialog.

Linked the statistics shown to reality, not anylonger frozen as before.

Rewrote some of the code, resulting in smaller size and less usage of resources.

Made ComTimer to wait for the specified average time before starting to count time.

Corrected a bug that kept ComTimer from finding the modem, if ComTimer was run after the dialer was started.

1.11

Added possibility to disable dialog showing total cost at end of session.

Corrected a bug in ComLog, that didn't zero the total time used when you removed all entries.

Allowed the user to enter cost/min with 3 decimals instead of   2. This change was made for users in the UK and other countries with "strong" currencies.

Possible to copy all or selected entries from ComLog to the clipboard.

1.12

Possible to disconnect default rounding downwards of seconds when session is terminated.

Possible to enable logging of sessions shorter than 1 minute.

Possible to disable the monitoring of costs and instead use ComTimer as a simple timer.

Possible to log connections < 1 min as failed tries, costing you the charge for 1 min of usage. (Some ISPs are greedy indeed).

Activated the shortcut Ctrl + Insert to copy items to the clipboard.

Added the price of each session to appear together with each row copied to the clipboard.

Added tabs into the data copied to the clipboard, to make the data better suited for spreadsheets.

Possible to adjust how often ComTimer updates the value for cahrge per minute if you use the advanced options for monitoring of costs.

Advanced handling of different rates:

1. Define x hours of use for totally $ y, thereafter $ z per hour.

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