

What is XTimer?

XTimer is a timer for calculating time based charges. The idea came from the desire to keep track of expenses while using extended service areas of CompuServe (CIS). I set off to make an "ex" timer. Later, I expanded the idea to include users of different online services, such as America OnLine (AOL), GENie, and Prodigy.

I thought a generic "X" timer might be useful, to keep track of long distance charges, for billing a client, or some other need. To make XTimer an "X" timer, I gave it the flexibility to be shaped to many different needs.

The charge rates are set to CIS, AOL, GENie, and Prodigy rates, current as of this release. You can easily change them to whatever you like by selecting Preferences under the File menu. XTimer is designed for use with the U.S. currency system. The maximum charge allowed, per hour, is \$99.99. You can enter in your own rate description, up to 20 characters.

How XTimer is Different From Other Timers

The controls are like any standard timer, but the time shown is a little different. The time shown is the time you've been charged for, each minute or part of a minute counts as a full minute. This is the way most time based charges are calculated. The seconds left in the current minute being charged, before the next minute will be charged, are shown as an added help.

You can minimize, or maximize the timer by choosing the option under the File menu, or clicking in the grow window of the timer. Holding the option key down and clicking in the grow window of the maximized timer will show or hide the "Next Notice at..." message.

The minimized "stoplight" version of the timer, allows you to save desktop space, while retaining most of the functionality of the timer. Use the green light to start (G button in B&W), red to stop (S in B&W), and the yellow button to reset (R in B&W).

The timer can log up to 100 hours, after that it will turn over to zero. (If you should happen to let it run for more than four days!)

How Do I Total My Online Charges

Most online services calculate hourly charges by totaling all of the times from a session (from log on, to log off) that you spent in areas where there were hourly charges. The total time is then rounded; if a partial minute is left, it is counted as a full minute, i.e. a charge for 10 minutes 34 seconds is counted as 11 minutes.

You can round your time likewise, at the end of a session, by clicking the "Round" button, on the timer.

The Auto-Return Feature

This allows you to set XTimer to automatically return control to the program you were using after you Start, Stop, or Reset the timer. This enables you to use XTimer without having to reactivate another program afterwards. XTimer can be brought to the front with Auto-Return on by unclicking Auto-Return, clicking on the window title bar, or by selecting XTimer from the Applications menu.

Setting, Saving, Restoring, and Adding

You can set the time to whatever needed, by choosing "Set Time" under the File menu.

You may:

- Save the time on the timer as time charged for any rate.
- Restore a time saved from any rate to the timer.
- Add a time on the timer to charges already logged to any rate.

All of these options are available under the File menu. The rate currently selected under the Rate menu comes up as the default selection when you choose any of these options, but you may use any one of the rates, as you like. If you choose a rate different from the default, the rate you choose becomes the current rate.

Saving, or Adding a time does not effect the time on the timer. You must use Restore to put a logged time back on the timer.

You can Save or Add any time to as many of the rate choices as you like.

Viewing the Log

You can review your charges and times charged for by selecting "View Log," from under the file menu.

The Notify Menu

It seemed obvious that it would really be nice to warn yourself when a certain amount (x) of time had passed, without having to keep an eagle eye on the timer. The Notify menu is set up for that purpose.

The times on the menu represent interval times. If you set a notice to come at 10 minutes, for instance, the notice will arrive at the next 10 minute interval, i.e. at 10 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes, and so on. The notices will continue to come at the

interval you selected. If you check the box "Send Notices Early," your notices will come at the beginning of that minute, rather than at the end.

You can choose to have the next interval time calculated based on the time you first started the timer (from zero), or from the time you last started the timer, the next start will be used if the timer is stopped. So, if the timer has 5 minutes of charges built up already when started, if the interval is 10 minutes, the notices would be sent at 15 minutes, 25 minutes, 35 minutes, and so on.

If you wish to set the next interval from the current time while the timer is running, and you don't want to stop the timer, select "START NOW" from the Notify menu and the "Last START" time will be set to the current minute.

Using XTimer with MacCIM™

I've found the best way to use XTimer is to click on the start button during the transfer to an extended service area. XTimer activates on the first click, so you won't have to click twice. After that, click back in one of CIM's windows to reactive it, or use the Auto-Return feature.

A Couple of Things to Note

1. If you change the notice interval while the timer is running, you could very well set it on the nose of the next notice time. If you do, the notice will be sent, probably sooner than you were expecting!
2. This is true for many programs that use the system clock:
If you change the time on your Mac, say, back an hour in the fall, or forward in the Spring, while XTimer is running, it may produce unexpected results.

I hope XTimer is useful to you. Enjoy!

Short Cuts

Command Key	Application
H	Hide/Show timer
M	Minimize/Maximize timer
T	Set Time
D	View Log
S	Save Time As
R	Restore Time From
J	Add Time To
F	Notify from First START
L	Notify from Last START
U	No Notice

Other command key short cuts are standard Mac command keys.

Other Shortcuts

<option> + Reset	Reset without asking confirmation
<option> + Start	Reset and Start
<shift> + <command> + Start	
	Add time on timer to current rate and Start
<shift> + <command> + <option> + Start	
	Adds time, but Resets before Start
<option> + <click>	In Maximized timer grow window to
	Show/Hide "Next Notice at..." message

System Requirements

XTimer Requires System 7.

Legal Stuff

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XTimer is shareware:

Send \$5 to Eric Long, 4731 28th Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95820

Send E-mail to:

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If not unexpectedly deluged with mail, I will try to respond,
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