

Net Timer Pro 3.1

a software for monitoring internet usage under Microsoft Windows 95



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Table of content

<i>NET TIMER PRO 3.1</i>	
TABLE OF CONTENT	
INTRODUCTION	
WHAT'S NEW	
FEATURES	
REQUIREMENTS	
QUICK INTRODUCTION	
FUNCTIONS DOCUMENTATION	
REGISTRATION	
PRODUCT SUPPORT	

Introduction

This document is the user manual of Net Timer Pro (NTP). The software is an internet timer, it counts the time you stay on the net. This is especially useful if you are billed by hour or if your Internet Service Provider (ISP) does not let you know how much time you used the net until you receive your bill. Another nice feature for parents is the multiple user support and time limit. You could use these features to make sure your children won't pass too much time online.

Back in time (approx. 1 ½ - 2 years ago), I needed an internet timer. A few were available but none were easy to use and most of them were not truly automatic. You had to press 'Start/Stop' button or modify your connection scripts. Nothing I found would satisfy my needs so I wrote one myself. After 5 months I had a working version. In the summer '96 the first public 16bits version (1.1) was available. The 2.0 was out in September '96. This was the first 32bits version. The 3.0 was available in May '97. It introduced multiple ISPs and multiple users support and detailed statistics for each user and/or ISP.

And now here is version 3.1 of Net Timer Pro !

What's new

New features in this version of NTP:

Mail checking: After detecting the connection, NTP can check if the user has new mail. This is very useful as you don't have to load your email program just to see that you don't have any new mail !

Very small window: Nice feature, a very small window displaying the three timers can be activated by clicking on Options...Small mode (Ctrl-S). Right click this window to hide it. Click anywhere on this window to drag it.

Optional warning before disconnection: Many users wanted to be notified before NTP disconnect them when reaching their time limit. Now, NTP can optionally be told to notify the user when his or her time limit is going to be reached soon.

And of course bug fixes:

The Black box print function is now fixed. There was a bug in the 3.0 that prevented users from printing the last month's Black box.

A rather serious bug was fixed concerning the time limits. When users reached their time limit, NTP disconnected them but the next time they would go online without being disconnected.

Features

Below is a list of features implemented in version 3.1:

- Automatic detection of connections with no user intervention and no script modifications.
- Multiple users and ISPs support.
- Configurable time limit for each user on each ISP.
- Black box (or log file) logs every connection.
- Detailed statistics.
- Support for modem, ISDN and any supported PPP dial-up connection on Windows 95.
- Adjustable timers.
- Password for each users.
- Configurable billing date for each ISP.
- Ease of use.

Requirements

NTP only needs Windows 95 and a PPP internet dial-up connection. It will not time anything else than a PPP connection. This might be useful if you have special serial line IPX connection or Windows for Workgroup connection. You would not want to time these connections as these are not internet connections.

Quick introduction

When NTP start, it will put itself in the system tray. Click on the timer icon to show the main form. It looks like this:



As you see there are three timers. One for the session, day and month. The time displayed corresponds to how long a user has connected to the net using a particular ISP.

Initially when NTP load, it may have a similar appearance as above or it may show *000:00:00*. This happen when you have two or more users and/or two or more ISPs.

If you want to add users, you will have to click on *Setup* and click on the *Admin* tab. ISPs are added automatically, you do not need to enter them. NTP will detect if you use a new ISP and will add it to its list. The first time you use an ISP, you will be asked for a billing date (date at which your ISP start billing you). Every month when this date is reached, NTP will reset all timers to zero and create a new empty Black box for all users.

The Black box is where connection logs are kept. Click on Blackbox to access it. Each user has a Black box on every ISPs.

You already know enough to use NTP !

Functions documentation

Not every feature will be explained in details. The vast majority are pretty obvious and easy to understand.

Setup

The setup is divided onto three part: *Options*, *Admin*, *Misc*.

In the *Options* tab, you can enable or disable Black boxes. The *Check black boxes* button has the same effect as clicking on the *Black box* button in the main window.

You can also tell NTP if it will always times every connection or ask you if it must time the connection each time one is detected.

The Warn XX minutes before disconnecting is only useful in the registered version. When you set a time limit, NTP will warn you XX minutes before you reach it. When it is reached, NTP disconnect you. Enabling this feature has no effect in the unregistered version.

The *Admin* tab is where you can set time limit, add/remove users. The user window should show at least the Supervisor user. This is a special user that can enter the Setup (other can't) and view other user's Black boxes (again, other users can't do that). If this is the only user, NTP won't ask you any password because it is operating in « mono-user » mode. If you have two or more users, NTP will ask you a password when connecting, entering in the Setup or Black box. A user can view his Black box by typing his or her name and password in the login dialog box. As stated before, the Supervisor is able to check every user's Black box.

If there is no ISP in the ISPs field, click on *Cancel* in the bottom of the setup window and connect to the net. NTP will add your ISP to the list. Once you are online, you can already disconnect. Your ISP should be added to the list.

Almost all buttons are obvious. Some of them requires you to select a user and an ISP, a single user or a single ISP. The *Remove ISP* button needs some clarification. You will **rarely** need to use it. Suppose you use two ISPs. These ISPs will be in the list. But if you stop using one, it will remain in the list even if you don't use it. This button could be pressed to remove all references about this ISP inside NTP.

A very nice feature is the time limits. When your time limit is reached, NTP will disconnect you. You can set limits for session and/or day and/or month. If you have children and you don't want them to use the net for more than XX hours, add a user for each of your child and set a time limit for these users.

The mail check button is also very handy. It is used to configure the automatic mail checking. If it's enabled, NTP will check your mail when you go online. Clicking on this button will show a form on which you can enable or disable mail checking. If you enabled it, you will be asked for your email username (the part before @. In *sparadis@globetrotter.qc.ca*, the username is *sparadis*), POP Host (part after the @. *globetrotter.qc.ca* in the last example), POP Port whose default value is 110 and your password (your email password, not the user password of NTP). A timeout is also requested. The default value of 30 seconds should be enough unless your email server is very slow. In case the mail checking times out, NTP will show an error message. If you have new mail, a message box will tell you how many messages you have and on which server.

The *Misc* tab contain some less often modified options. Since all of them are easy to understand, I won't tell every details.

Black box

This will fire up the Black box viewer. If you have two or more user, you will be asked for your username and password. Normal users can only view their own Black box. The Supervisor can view every black boxes. The *Statistic* button provides more detailed usage statistics. The Supervisor can consult normal user's statistics.

Password

Like is says, it's function is to change passwords. If you only have one user, changing the password won't be accepted. This is normal since passwords are not needed when there is only one user. If you add a new user, you'll be able to add/modify passwords.

About

If you registered NTP, your name will be shown here. The time since Windows 95 has booted is shown. If you leave your PC running days and nights like I do (Too lazy to turn off the switch. It does not need enough power, just 250 Watts, to be worth the trouble :-), don't count on this tough because the internal Windows timer will reset after 49 days.

Small mode

Just a word before. If you look at the main window, you'll see that NTP does not seem to have a menu bar. In fact, there is a menu bar but it's hidden. Drag the mouse cursor near the title bar. The menu bar will appear. Drag the mouse elsewhere on the main window and it will disappear.

The Small mode is a feature to help save screen space. Click on the menu Options...Small mode. The main window will hide and a smaller window will appear containing the session, day and month timer. To move this small window, click on it. It will turn to cyan and you can drag it. To hide the small window, right click it.

Registration

To help support the shareware industry, you should register your sharewares. Net Timer Pro is no exception. Registration removes the annoying nag-screen and will also unlock the functions to set time limits and adjust the timers. It also entitles you to purchase future versions with a 50% discount on the normal price and encourages me to update and enhance Net Timer Pro.

Here is how to register:

First, it is strongly recommended that you go on the Net Timer Pro homepage at <http://ntp.home.ml.org>. I may have a new version available or I may have important things to tell before you register.

Next, you must fill the registration form by clicking on the Fill registration form in either the about box or the nag screen. Once completed, click on Print to print the form. If you do not have a printer, use Copy to clipboard instead. You could then paste the text in Notepad to write the information by hand.

Registration fee for Net Timer Pro 3.1 is 20\$ US. Other currencies are accepted but the amount must be equivalent to 20\$ US (please, check the exchange rate). The fee must be either in the form of a check, postal mandate or money. Credit card order cannot be processed.

However, users who registered any previous versions of Net Timer Pro can already benefit from the 50% discount mentioned earlier. These users can register the 3.1 version for 10\$ US instead of 20\$ US. When you click on Print or Copy to clipboard in the registration form, you will be asked to type the name to whom the older version of Net Timer Pro was registered and the serial code. If you did not register a previous version, just leave the field blank.

Finally you may send the registration form and fee by mail to:

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Rimouski, (Québec), Canada
G5L-7B5*

By experience, I have noticed that most international mail takes about two weeks to come, so be patient. I send registration keys the same day I receive registration forms by mail. Your registration key will be sent by email. Once you have received it, you may enter it by clicking on the Registration button in the about box or the nag screen.

Product support

In case you have problems, questions or ideas you can email me at *sparadis@globetrotter.qc.ca*. You will receive a reply usually in less than 24 hours. Please, be specific when asking question or reporting bug. If you received an error message, note the text and write it in the email.

The Net Timer Pro homepage is at *<http://ntp.home.ml.org>*.