

ComTimer 1.20b

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For the latest update : <http://www.parnet.fi/~timer>

What is ComTimer ?

ComTimer is a simple utility intended to aid you in keeping track of the cost of your use of Internet.

If you are updating from a previous version earlier than v 1.13 read the update section later in this document !

How does one use ComTimer ?

Before you run ComTimer the first time for keeping track of your on-line time, you have to start the included utility RasTest, to determine whether your dialer supports the RAS or not. Look at section named RASTEST later in this document to learn how to do this. It is advisable for you to read the contents of the helpfile UKComTimer.Hlp, prior to setting up ComTimer.

If you use a Winsock utility like the one included in Windows 95, you can configure ComTimer to automatically run this utility plus two more applications when you open ComTimer for the first time. Please see the helpfile for more instructions.

You can define the cost per minute and eventual monthly minimum cost. (Some net operators charge a monthly minimum fee which includes a certain time of use. ComTimer takes this in account when it keeps track of your net-usage.) ComTimer logs the total cost and time spent surfing.

ComTimer has been considerably improved. This version is able to handle a quite sophisticated monitoring of costs. Look at the 'history' section of this document to see what v1.2 is able to do and for information on how to use all the goodies included, You can read the helpfile UKComTimer.Hlp, for help in English, SComTimer.Hlp for Swedish and SFComTimer.Hlp for Finnish. As there seem to be as many different policies for charging as there are ISPs, I can't cover everything in ComTimer. With the possibilities offered by ComTimer, most people will be able to create a combination suited for their needs.

ComTimer logs the usage with the date and total time in a file named COMTIMER.LOG. This is to be found in Your_Windows_directory. You can read and edit this file with the separate utility COMLOG.EXE. By default, ComTimer takes into account and logs sessions lasting 1 minute or longer You can disconnect this feature if you want, so that ComTimer will log all sessions regardless of length. By default, ComTimer rounds all seconds to 0 at shutdown, but this feature can be disabled too. If you enable the logging of sessions shorter than 1 minute, the rounding will be automatically disabled. ComLog allows you to watch the logfile if ComTimer is running, but won't allow you to edit it. Read the helpfile's contents for more information on how to tune ComTimer to suit just your particular needs.

If you right-click on ComLog's main window, you'll be able to copy all or selected entries from the log to the clipboard. All changes of settings done under ComLog will not be effective in ComTimer at once, instead ComTimer must be restarted after the changes have been made. If you make changes in ComTimer, they'll be effective at once.

ComTimer is designed to be run minimized on the taskbar, therefore some of you may find the window with the digital counter to be somewhat big. This window is intended to be seen only when you want it to be seen. The window itself isn't displayed until the connection is established. Until this happens, you can't open it, as ComTimer looks for the modem and nothing else. As soon as ComTimer detects that connection has been established, it opens the main window, which you can minimize if you wish to.

If you rightclick with the mouse upon this window, you will get a popup menu where you can enter the settings for your net connection, i.e., cost per minute, minimum fee and eventual average time of connecting to the net. (Look into the helpfile for more information about all options that ComTimer offers you to monitor costs.) If you look at the statistics and ComTimer shows 2 values, of which one is in brackets, the latter means that's the real amount you've used. The first value in this case is your monthly minimum fee.

ComTimer saves the last position of it's main window upon exit and will use this the next time it i's activated.

Automated handling of multiple user accounts

ComTimer provides fully automated handling of multiple user accounts. If you use 2 or more accounts, then CT will detect which account is used and log it in a separate log.

You can use this feature to create individual logs for each member of your family.

IMPORTANT:

It's recommended that you first configure each account using ComLog before you use this feature in ComTimer. ComTimer will create the basic configurations for each account the first time you run the program, but you can only configure fully the currently active account using ComTimer, while ComLog allows you to configure each one. ComLog contains a function labled 'Initialize accounts', which creates the basic configs for all accounts.

How to setup ComTimer

ComTimer can be run from any directory, therefore isn't any setup-program included with the package. In this way I've kept down the size of the zip-file, as larger files need more time to be downloaded.

ComTimer is a fully 100% RAS compatible utility, that will start counting time at once CT detects that connection has been established to the Internet. (RAS = Remote Access Service)

IMPORTANT:

Never run ComTimer together with another application of this type, as this might cause an conflict between these 2 applications that might mess up your system.

RASTEST, what is that ?

As ComTimer is employing the RAS, it will not function if the dialer you use doesn't support RAS. To determine if your dialer provides RAS support, there's an included utility, RASTEST.

NOTE : If you're using Win 95's default Dial-up Networking, you don't need to run RASTEST.

Open a connection to the Internet while RASTEST is running. If RASTEST starts telling you information about the state of the connection, then your dialer supports the RAS. If RASTEST remains dormant and shows a blank dialog, then your dialer doesn't support it.

IF YOUR DIALER DOESN'T SUPPORT THE RAS, YOU SHOULD USE COMTIMER 1.13b, WHICH IS INCLUDED IN THE ZIP-FILE COMT114.ZIP.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR USERS OF VERSIONS OLDER THAN v1.13:

Logfiles written by an earlier version will appear when viewed with a '>' at the beginning of each row, to notify the user that the marked rows don't contain all data needed by the new ComLog to work properly.

You are able to update your logfile by running the included tool **TuneCT**, which is intended to be run only once.

This tool will analyze your logfile, and add the missing data to all entries.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN USING A VERSION PRIOR TO 1.12, PLEASE CONTACT THE AUTHOR !

System requirements:

Any PC equipped with a modem and running Windows 95.

Multilingual support:

ComTimer supports Finnish, Swedish and English. Choose the appropriate language by pressing upon the appropriate flag.

History:

1.0

The first version

1.0a

English as default instead of Swedish

Animated icon added on the taskbar

Altered the window to be non-sizeable

1.1

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

Added the option to change the interval between checks of the modem, in case of possible conflict with dialer.

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

Linked the statistics shown to reality, no longer frozen as before.

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

Made ComTimer 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 had started.

1.11

Added option 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.

Made it possible to copy all or selected entries from ComLog to the clipboard.

1.12

Made it possible to disconnect default rounding downwards of seconds when session is terminated.

Made it possible to enable logging of sessions shorter than 1 minute.

Made it possible to disable the monitoring of costs and instead use ComTimer as a simple timer.

Made it 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.

Made it possible to adjust how often ComTimer updates the value for charge per minute if you use the advanced options for monitoring of costs.

Changed the order of buttons in confirmation-dialog for 'delete' in ComLog.

Included tool TuneComTimer, to update old logfile for use with v 1.13.

If you're using a pre v 1.12 copy, please contact the author !

Advanced handling of different rates:

1. Define x hours of use for total \$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 down to 15 min.
4. If needed, define each day differently from the rest of week.
5. Graphical interface for definition of rates.
6. Made it possible to force ComTimer to use Sunday rates on holidays.
7. Added, if wanted, an indicator on the tray showing if you're paying economy, medium or expensive rate at the moment.

1.12a

Corrected a bug in the part handling initial rates.

Registered users will receive an additional DLL for ComTimer.

1.13

Made it possible to let CT remain active after connection has been broken.

Possibility to calculate cost per second instead of default cost per minute.

Added a feature allowing CT to run the dialer etc when you start CT.

Made it possible to choose either if the total cost or the actual session is shown.

Added an alarm signal for alerting that time has been used up.

ComLog's window enlarged. Price per session is shown.

ComLog shows number of entries in the log.

A bug in ComLog affecting the data display has been corrected.

Added fixed path to comtimer.dta, thus removing a possible malfunction.

Possible to choose between 24 h or 12 h display when defining rates.

The 12 h display has been improved.

Included better information about how to register.

For clarity, dates in format 'd' allways shown as 'dd'. This applies for months, too.

Included tool TuneCT, to update old logfile for use with v 1.13.

If you're using a pre v 1.12 copy, please contact the author !

1.13a

Contains the same bugfixes as v 1.2.

1.13a is the last version of the old type, which does not employ the RAS and was in fact updated pararel to the development of v1.2, and is nothing more than a debugged version of the earlier v1.13.

v1.13a doesn't contain the improvements found in v1.2.

1.13b

The problem with shutdown of Win95 together with CT solved.

(This problem was specific for v1.13 only)

1.13b release 2

A bug fixed that was specific for 1.13b.

1.14

Similar stay on top feature added as in v1.20a.

1.2 :

CT now employs the RAS. Entire core of the program redesigned.

Easier configuration. Average time for connecting is no longer needed.

CT is now able to distinguish between an Internet session and a faxmodem waiting for faxes.

Setting of alarm timer has been improved. Easier to use.

Dialog for multiple run feature has been improved.

Added separate option to force monitoring from dial up, instead of default on connect.
For clarity, time in format H allways shows as 'HH'.
Fully automated handling of multiple Internet accounts.
Stay on top feature added.

Fixed the following bugs:

Menu now available at the taskbar after first connetion has been broken.
The popup menu at the taskbar did sometimes appear outside the visible screen
Some configurations caused double entries into the log.
Error in handling dates in format (d)d.M.yy(yy) corrected.
Calculating error for cost per second corrected.

1.20a :

Resized the window shown when using the stay on top option.

1.20b :

Bug in initialization of the handling of multiple accounts corrected
Intialization of multiple accounts improved.

Known quirks:

When you copy data to a spreadsheet, you might have to format the column with dates, depending on your settings. It might read dd.mm.yyyy 00.00 or something like that, as the spreadsheet's automatic formatting is playing tricks.

Users who have used earlier versions ought to read the note "IMPORTANT NOTE FOR USERS OF EARLIER VERSIONS"

Known incompatibilities:

ComTimer does not work together with Turnpike 3.x. Turnpike does not provide RAS support. This is the reason why CT and Turnpike do not work together. If you use this program, email to the author for getting tips on how to use CT together with Turnpike.

The same applies for all other programs which do not provide RAS support.

Please report any anomalies to the author, so that I can investigate them. The programmer who claims that his/her code is entirely bug-free is <censored>. A program is never completely bug-free, it only seems to be working quite well.

Other products:

Check out with the author for more products, for example SetFileDate 1.03.
This utility changes the date & time stamps of multiple files selected in Explorer.

Soon to be released :

CDR Assistant 1.0, a tool intended to be used when choosing / optimizing data for storage on a CD ROM.

Credits to:

The digits used in ComTimer are designed by Alberto Garcia Alvarez, Spain; e-mail: agarcia@etsiig.uniovi.es

I thank all the people who've told me their opinion about ComTimer.

All product names mentioned here are either such or registered such of their respective owners.

Disclaimer

The author denounces any responsibility for anything that might be caused by the use of ComTimer. The author doesn't give any kind of warranty for this software. The user uses ComTimer at his own risk.

Files included in the package:

ComTimer.EXE	the timer itself
ComLog.EXE	the logutility
SComTimer.hlp	helpfiles
SFComTimer.hlp	
UKComTimer.hlp	
Setup.txt	textfile with setup instructions
Readme.doc	this file
RasTest.EXE	Test utility to determine if your dialer supports RAS