

ComTimer 1.2

Copyright 1996-97 by Göran Strömstén

E-mail: gstromsten@ngs1.pp.fi

WHAT IS COMTIMER ?

ComTimer 1.2 is an utility intended to aid you in keeping account of time and money spent using the Internet.

SHAREWARE

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.

You'll receive a DLL after registering as a user, which will convert your shareware copy into a fully registered one.

HOW TO INSTALL COMTIMER ?

See Installation of ComTimer for instructions about setting up ComTimer. See also Automatic handling of several accounts

ABOUT COMTIMER IN GENERAL

ComTimer will work with any dial up utility, which is supporting the RAS (Remote Access Service). ComTimer runs in the background and displays on the taskbar a counter display with both time and cost of usage in real time.

To determine if RAS is supported

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. It's recommended that you take advantage of ComTimer's Auto run feature to automatically run the dialer and up to two more applications, as this simplifies the whole operation to open a connection to the Internet and will produce a more accurate log of connections.

ComTimer is a flexible program, allowing users to configure it to fit very different needs. See Advanced options for more details about monitoring cost of usage. See Additional features for details about customizing ComTimer.

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, right-click upon the icon at the taskbar and choose 'ComTimer menu'.

Charge per minute and eventual monthly base charge are entered 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.

If you use the services of several ISPs, then ComTimer will provide you with a fully automated service for keeping separate logs for each account. You can configure each account independently from the others. (Automatic handling of several accounts)

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.

See Troubleshooting for tips and aid if you experience trouble with ComTimer.

Note that you can use a rightclick when you want to copy or paste data in CT.

Copyright

MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT

ComTimer supports three languages: English, Swedish and Finnish.

A few words about the user interface

Troubleshooting

ComTimer is taking advantage of the RAS (Remote Access Service) created by Microsoft, and is fully Windows 95 compatible.

To determine if RAS is supported

ComTimer finds automatically out all it needs to be able to monitor your connections. If ComTimer remains dormant and waiting, without any sign of activity, although you have an connection running, then the reason is very simple; The dialer you're using doesn't support the RAS, thus CT is unable to work properly.

If this is the case, there's 2 possibilities to cure this problem :

1. Change to another dialer, which supports the RAS (for example the original Win 95 dialer)
2. Look for a previous version (1.1x) of ComTimer or email the author.

The latest versions of both ComTimers are always available at the author's homepage
<http://www.parnet.fi/~timer>

If the package you've downloaded aren't directly from the author's homepage, there should be included a packed file named COMT113A.ZIP. This file contains the very last version of ComTimer 1.1x, which will work in systems which doesn't employ the RAS. This is a good and reliable program, but it doesn't provide all goodies which the new generation of ComTimer offers you.

If you can't find COMT113A.ZIP, then you can download it from <http://www.parnet.fi/~timer>

I used a totally different (and less reliable) technique in versions prior to 1.2. CT did monitor the hardware directly. This technique did work quite well in most computers, but it did eat more resources, did produce a less accurate log compared to the technique I now employ, and did have some drawbacks.

As I switched to the more sophisticated technique of employing the possibilities offered by the RAS, the functioning of CT has become smoother and more failsafe.

The drawback with this method, is simple: the dialer in use must support the Win 95 (or NT) RAS, for ComTimer to be able to function at all. In any other cases, CT won't simply work.

If you find any bugs or strange side effects caused by ComTimer, email the author, please !

Email: gstromsten@ngs1.pp.fi

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ComTimer version 1.2

Copyright by Göran Strömstén 1996-97

E-mail: gstromsten@ngs1.pp.fi

<http://www.parnet.fi/~timer/>

Postaladress: Göran Strömstén, Heikelgränd 6, FIN-02700 Grankulla, Finland

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.

Thanks to all the people who have helped in the developement of ComTimer with suggestions for improvements and by betatesting new versions.

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

The registration fee is USD 10. Registered users recieve upon registration a file, which updates their shareware-copies into fully registered ones. The registration is valid for future releases too.

Registrations outside of the Nordic countries are handled through postal order.

Send the postal order to the authors homeadress. Email the author for further details.

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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 distributed "as it is".

ComLog

ComLog is a simple utility 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.

If you're using several user accounts, see [Automatic handling of several accounts](#)

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](#)

[Additional features](#)

[Automatic handling of several accounts](#)

[Set alarm](#)

[Auto run feature](#)

Advanced options

ComTimer 1.2 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 down to 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 weekdays.
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 see 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 [Examples using different rates](#)

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 choice. 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 1.2

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

ComTimer doesn't manipulate in any way your registry or system files, as good shareware should in my opinion behave politely, ie without any tampering with the system.

ComTimer will create 3 files in your windows directory:

- ComTimer.ini which contains the settings you use
- ComTimer.log where data about your surfing is logged
- ComTimer.dta if your settings are such that this file is needed.

The program will create in addition to this a new subdirectory under your windows directory. This subdirectory is named CT_Log. This directory is used by ComTimer to create fresh backups of the 3 files mentioned above. If you're taking advantage of the Automatic handling of several accounts, it'll use this directory as a swapping directory, storing all data here.

If you're using several accounts, ComTimer itself will create the basic configurations when it's run for the first time, but it is recommended that you should create and configure the accounts by using ComLog prior to running ComTimer. ComTimer itself allows you to configure only the currently used account, while ComLog allows you to view and edit all accounts.

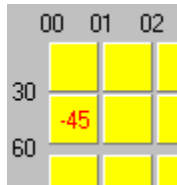
See To determine if RAS is supported

See ISDN support too.

See Troubleshooting if you experience trouble with ComTimer.

Examples using different rates

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



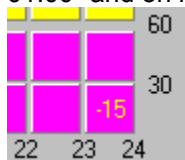
This stands for

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, although the user can if he / she wants to, change to 24 hour format.

These example pictures were captured using 24 hour format.

Additional fine tuning

Additional features

(This pages is here only to provide compatibility if someone'd use the new helpfile together with an old version of CT.)

Additional features

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

Show summary of total cost of usage at end of session

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

Disable the rounding of seconds at end of session

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

I wrote ComTimer originally 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

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

Disable monitoring of costs of net-usage.

This allows you to run ComTimer as a simple timer.

Enable logging of sessions shorter than one minute

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.

Calculate cost per second instead of cost per minute

Possible to calculate cost per second instead of cost per minute.

This is a feature requested by several users, so therefore I did add it in ComTimer.

Start monitoring at once when dialing

This allows you to use ComTimer for monitoring phone bills. This feature was created for users in countries, where this feature is needed instead of monitoring of the connection itself.

Show cost of actual session during run-time

Show cost of actual session during run-time.

ComTimer does as default show the total cost of usage for a period, but here you can set it to show the cost of the actual session.

Allow ComTimer to remain active after session has been ended

Allow ComTimer to remain active after connection has been broken.

This is a handy feature, that leaves CT active and waiting after you break connection. Now you don't have to restart CT when you want to log onto the net for send mails etc.

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 time unit . Default is 20 seconds, ie ComTimer updates this value 3 times per minute. This value must be between 3 - 20 seconds.

IMPORTANT:

If you calculate cost per second, then you have to set the value for 'Adjust monitoring' to 3 or 4 seconds. Otherwise ComTimer will be unable to produce an accurate log !

See [Advanced options](#) for information about the option 'enable peak and off peak rates'. See [Set alarm](#) for information about setting an alarm warning you when a certain amount of time has been used up.

History

The development of ComTimer has been in 3 different stages: v1.0, v1.1x and finally v1.2, which is the most sophisticated of these. All other versions, like for example v1.11 has simply been improvements of the basic designs.

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

Added a possibility 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 cahрге 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.
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.

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' always shown as 'dd'. This applies for months, too.

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

1.13a

Contains the same bug fixes as v 1.2

Alarm timer and multiple run dialogs improved similarly as in v 1.2

The very last of the CT 1.1x series.

1.13b

The problem with shutdown of Win95 together with CT solved. (This problem was specific for v1.13 only)

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 always shows as 'HH'.

Fully automated handling of multiple Internet accounts. Easy to use.

Stay on top feature added.

Able to monitor connections using an ISDN card

Fixed the following bugs:

Menu now available at the taskbar after first connection 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.

Error in calculating cost per second corrected.

1.20a

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

1.20b

Improved the automated handling of several accounts.

Corrected a bug in the initialization of accounts.

Added automatic creation of basic configurations for accounts into ComTimer.

Added manual option for initializing all accounts into ComLog.
Preventing 2 copies of ComTimer to be run at the same time.

Auto run feature

ComTimer 1.2 offers you the possibility to run up to 3 different programs automatically when you start Comtimer. This is a handy feature simplifying the process of making connection to the Internet.

How do you take this feature into use ?

-Open ComTimer's main menu or the popupmenu under 'Settings'.

-Choose 'Multiple launch'

This opens an dialog with 3 edit boxes. Paste or type into a box the full path or shortcut for the application you want ComTimer to run. You can obtain these by using the 'properties' function in Explorer.

You can paste text into the editboxes by right-clicking with the mouse upon the box you want to paste into.

Simple, isn't it ?

IF YOU'RE USING WINDOWS' DEFAULT DIAL UP NETWORKING :

In this case there are two methods to launch the Dial-Up Networking (DUN) from CT.

METHOD A :

Enter the following row into the first editbox in the multiple launch dialog of CT:

```
rundll.exe rnaui.dll,RnaDial [connection]
```

You'd replace "[connection]" with the name of the Dial-Up Networking connection name that you want to use. (Launches a specified connection)

METHOD B :

It's also possible to launch the basic dialog of the DUN. To do this :

-Open <your_win_dir>\inf\RNA.INF

-Search for the section [MS_RNA_Inis]

Look for the row marked 'creates link in Accessories'.

The needed data begins with 'EXPLORER.EXE' and ends with 'RNAUI.DLL'.

Add <c:\your_windows_dir>\ to the beginning so that you'll have a string like this pasted into CT's launch dialog:

```
<c:\your_windows_dir>\EXPLORER.EXE ::{String1}\::: {String2}
```

Where using the values found in my system

```
String1=20D04FE0-3AEA-1069-A2D8-08002B30309D
```

```
String2=992CFFA0-F557-101A-88EC-00DD010CCC48
```


Set alarm

ComTimer has got an option that enables the user to set an alarm to alert him when a certain amount of time has been used up during a session. When the time limit has been reached, an alarm will sound for 15 seconds.

Comtimer will use the sounds defined in Windows 95 for the alarm.

How to set this alarm ?

- Open the 'Settings' dialog.

- Right click on the dialog.

- Choose 'Set alarm'

- Use the trackbar to set the time.

You enter the specified amount of time as hours and minutes in the following format :

hh:mm

For example, if you want the alarm to be sounded after 15 minutes, enter the following:

00:15

If you want to disable the alarm, remove the contents of the editbox and press on 'Ok'.

To determine if RAS is supported

ComTimer relies upon the RAS (Remote Access Service*). This means that if your dial-up utility doesn't support RAS, then ComTimer v1.2 will not function in your system.

To help you to determine whether your software supports RAS or not, I've included an utility called RASTEST.

Run the program RASTEST while you are connected to the Internet. If RASTEST starts showing you information about the state of the connection, then your software supports RAS. If RASTEST shows a blank dialog only, then you haven't got RAS support.

NOTE: If you use the default dialer included with Win 95, then you don't need to run the test, as it supports RAS.

If you use software that doesn't support RAS, see [Troubleshooting](#).

*Copyright by Microsoft

Automatic handling of several accounts

ComTimer 1.2 provides you with fully automated handling of several different accounts.

If you use the services of 2 or more ISPs, then ComTimer will automatically keep separate logs for these. You can configure each of these accounts separately.

You don't have to manually tell CT which account to use, as CT determines which connection you're using and act according to this information. All you have to do, is run ComTimer and forget it, as CT takes care of the accounts.

You can utilize this feature to create individual logs for each member of your family. Create a connection for each person in the DUN.

ComTimer will create the basic configurations for all your accounts the first time it is used, but it's recommended that you use ComLog to create and configure the accounts.

Right-click upon ComLog's main window to open the popupmenu, which contains the entry 'Initialize accounts'. By using this function you can create the basic configurations for all registered accounts found in your system. You can also use this function to re-create old settings, but then all previous data will be overwritten. After you have created the basic ini-files, you should configure each account separately.

How do you then choose which account to view or configure in ComLog ?



This combobox is found in the settings dialog of both ComTimer and ComLog. In ComTimer it will only show a list of registered connections in your system, but in ComLog it is used to allow you to load different accounts.

Choose one of the entries in the combobox and press upon 'Accept'. ComLog will load the data.

If ComTimer is activated, then ComLog will not allow you to load the log for another account than the one currently in use. This is a safety measure to prevent malfunctioning. Neither will ComTimer notify changes made by ComLog while ComTimer's running.

Note:

ComTimer will create a new subdirectory on your primary partition. This directory is used to store the files containing both configurations and logged data for each account you use.

This new subdirectory is named <your_windows_directory>\CT_LOG

See [ComLog](#)

ISDN support

Because ComTimer takes advantage of the RAS (Remote Access Service), it can handle both ordinary modems as well as ISDN-cards.

I've had possibilty to test it together with only one brand of ISDN card, so if you use CT to monitor an ISDN connection, please report to me what kind of card you're using and how CT handles it.

My email: gstromsten@ngs1.pp.fi

ComTimer's user interface

It has been my aim to create a simple to use interface for configuration of ComTimer. I decided to divide the settings into different layers, the first layer containing the most basic stuff needed, then the next one etc. The basic idea is that the user will see only those settings which he / she needs, thus simplifying the configuration. If the user needs more complex settings, he can always open the next level.

I've also designed an unique interface for the definition of multiple rates of usage. This is a completely graphical interface, where you can handle the entire definition of rates purely with the mouse. (See [Advanced options](#))