

Watchdog

Beta version 0.70

Introduction

Watchdog watches you work at your computer. At regular intervals it checks what task you are actually performing and builds up a database of the programs, tasks and documents you have been using along with how much time you have spent on them since they were started. This database is saved to disk and so can accumulate time spent on tasks which are run over a number of days or Windows sessions.

Unlike other timer utilities, there is no need for you to start and stop a stopwatch as you change between tasks. Watchdog does it all for you automatically.

To get the most benefit from Watchdog you should load it automatically at the start of your Windows session by including it in the LOAD= line in your WIN.INI file or putting it in the Startup Group in Program Manager (Windows 3.1 only).

At any time you can view the Watchdog log of tasks being monitored. The logfile is saved to disk automatically when you close Watchdog, and at regular intervals that you can set. You can choose to start a fresh logfile each time you run Watchdog or to keep a logfile rolling from one session to the next.

To prevent your logfile becoming filled with trivial tasks that only last a few seconds, you can specify a minimum duration necessary before details of a task are saved to the logfile on disk.

Installation

Watchdog is distributed with the following files:

Watchdog.exe	Program	Place in Watchdog directory
Watchdog.wri	This file	Place in Watchdog directory
Grid.vbx		Place in windows SYSTEM directory
Watchdog.wav	Sound file	Place in Windows directory or Watchdog directory

Watchdog also needs VBRUN100.DLL to be present in your Windows directory.

To install Watchdog copy GRID.VBX to your Windows/System directory. You should also have a copy of VBRUN100.DLL in your Windows directory or path.

Copy the remaining files to a directory of your choice.

Using Watchdog

Run Watchdog from File Manager, or from a Program Manager group in which you have installed the program, or from BackMenu or another Windows shell. Ideally you should arrange for Watchdog to be loaded each time you run Windows so it is always there watching how much time you spend on your work.

It is not possible to run more than one copy of Watchdog. If you try to do so a warning message will be displayed.

The Watchdog Startup/Information screen shows the author's details, along with pricing information if you have not registered the product. Once you register Watchdog your name and Registration Number will appear on this screen.

When the Startup/Information screen closes you will see Watchdog running as an icon on your Windows desktop.

All Watchdog facilities and configuration can be accessed from the Database screen which can be viewed by double-clicking or Restoring the Watchdog icon.

The Database Grid

The Database screen shows you all the tasks in the current Watchdog database. The columns show:

- Application program path and name
- Main task name, including any open documents
- Child window title if there is a subsidiary window open
- Date and time task started
- Total number of minutes you have been working on the task.

The Grid is automatically updated every 30 seconds.

The **Continue** button closes down the window so Watchdog is running as an icon once again.

At the bottom of the window is a message telling you how long Watchdog has been running and how long since the database was autosaved.

Watchdog can be instructed to ignore certain programs. See the **Exclusions** entry below in the **Preferences** section for how to specify these from the

Database screen. In addition entries in the database can be deleted from the grid or added to each other. See **Consolidate** and **Delete** below.

Clicking on the Watchdog icon on the Database screen brings up the Watchdog Startup/Information screen.

Watchdog has a limit of 50 tasks that it will keep track of. Whenever a new task is detected and there are already 50 tasks in the database, the oldest smallest task is deleted from the database to make room for the new one.

The Database File

Watchdog saves your database to a file called WATCHDOG.LOG in the directory you specify. If no directory has been specified on the Preferences screen then the file is saved in your Windows directory.

The database file is in Comma Separated Value format. The first line in the file details the field descriptions. Each subsequent line contains one record, with text fields surrounded by double quotes, and each field separated by a comma. This type of file can be imported into a wide variety of database, spreadsheet and word processor programs.

The fields saved in the database file are as follows:

Field description	Example
Start date	"5/10/1992"
Start time	"10:15"
Full program path and filename	"C:\AMIPROVAMIPROUI.DLL"
Top/main task window title	"Ami Pro - [WATCHDOG.SAM]"
Subsidiary child window title	"Spell Check"
Total duration in minutes	2
StartCode	"199210210000"

The date is saved in default Windows Short Date format. This can be changed using the Windows Control Panel. The Time is shown with the hours and minutes separated by the Windows default time separator. Again this can be changed using the Control Panel. The Startcode is used internally by Watchdog to help identify which tasks should be deleted from the database when the 50 task limit is reached.

File menu

The File menu is where you manage your Watchdog Database.

Reload logfile: This option will reload the Database grid with the last explicitly saved logfile. An explicit save is performed when you Quit Watchdog or when

you Save the logfile using the **Save** option on the File menu. Reload does not restore the database from the temporary file used by the Autosave feature.

Save: This option will save your database to the your logfile.

Compact database

This option will remove from your database any items whose duration is shorter than the minimum time specified on the Configuration screen. In effect it does a Save followed immediately by a Reload. When you Save your database, only entries with durations longer than this minimum time are saved.

Suspend: This option will stop Watchdog monitoring your work, while not requiring you to Quit the program. When Watchdog is suspended the open-eye icon will change to a flashing closed-eye picture both on the Database screen and when Watchdog is minimised to run as an icon.

Wake up: When Watchdog is suspended a **Wake up** option appears on the File menu. Select this to resume Watchdog's timing activity.

Preferences

Selecting the Preferences menu line will bring up the Configuration screen. All values entered on this screen take effect immediately. Additionally, when you click on the Accept button you will be given the option of making the Preferences permanent or having them operate just for the current session. If you choose to make them permanent they are saved in a file called WATCHDOG.INI in your Windows directory and used automatically every time you run Watchdog until you specify new permanent settings.

Logfile location: Enter into this box the disk drive and directory where you want Watchdog to keep your logfile. If you don't place a trailing backslash "\" after the path, Watchdog will place one there for you when it saves the information. *The default value is for the logfile to be saved in your Windows directory.*

Keep logfile for x days: If this value is zero Watchdog will create a new database and logfile every time it is run. Otherwise Watchdog will start off with the database saved at the end of your last session until it is **x** days old. At this point a new database and logfile will be created. *The default value is zero, in which case a new logfile will be created every time Watchdog is run.*

Make backup file: If this box is checked, then Watchdog will rename your existing logfile (WATCHDOG.LOG) to WATCHDOG.BAK each time a new logfile is created. *The default setting is to create a backup file.*

Autosave every x minutes: To make sure that your database is not lost should Windows terminate abnormally, Watchdog will save your database to a temporary file in your Windows Temp directory every **x** minutes. *The default value is 0, in which case Autosave is off.* When you Quit Watchdog this file is automatically deleted.

Minimum task duration x minutes: When saving the database to disk, only tasks whose total duration was longer than **x** minutes will be saved. *The default value for x is 5 minutes.*

Different combinations of Task Duration and Logfile ageing can be used to produce very different types of Database. One where even the shortest task is saved and the logfile changed every day will give you a daily record of all your work. A longer minimum duration and a logfile kept for a week will highlight those tasks on which you spend most time.

Sound effects: Watchdog's barking dog sound effects can be turned off by unchecking this box. The sound effects will only be heard if your computer is fitted with a Windows-compatible sound driver but there is no need to uncheck this box if you don't have such a driver. *The default is for sound effects to be turned on.*

Exclusions: Watchdog can be instructed to ignore up to ten programs. This facility can be used to exclude your Windows shell, for example. To specify such a program, enter its full pathname into one of the exclusion boxes. A simpler way to exclude a program is available on the Database screen. (See **Exclude task** below under Task Management menu).

To resume monitoring an excluded program, edit out its program name on the Configuration screen.

Task Management menu

This menu provides three functions: to **Delete**, **Exclude** and **Consolidate** a task. These functions apply to the currently selected task in the grid. The menu can also be accessed by double-clicking on any cell in the grid.

Delete task

This function will delete an entry in your Database grid. A confirmation message appears before the task is deleted.

Exclude task

There are some tasks which you may not wish to time, such as your Windows shell or File Manager. Up to ten programs can be excluded. To exclude a

program that has appeared in your Database grid then you should click on it once and select the **Exclude task** menu option. The chosen task will be added to the exclusions list if there is a free space. You will also be given the opportunity of removing that task's entries from the Database grid. You will be warned if all ten exclusions have been used up.

Consolidate task

Sometimes the same task appears in the Database grid more than once. This can happen when the title of the task's window changes. It is possible to delete a task from the grid and for its time to be added to another task. Double-click on the task's cell and choose the Consolidate task option. You will be asked to confirm that you wish to Consolidate the task's time. You should then click on a cell for the task which is to be allocated the time. If you click on anywhere but a cell or the grid's scroll bars then the Consolidation process will be aborted.

WATCHDOG.INI file

Watchdog uses the WATCHDOG.INI file to store some internal settings. Editing these values by hand may produce unpredictable results and loss of your useful Watchdog database.

Registration

Watchdog is shareware. Registration costs £25 or \$40. When you Register your copy of Watchdog, the facility to save and restore your Preferences will become available.

When you receive your Registration number, select About Watchdog on the **Help** menu and click on the **Registration** button on the Startup/Information screen. Type in your Name and Registration Number as they appear in your Registration Document. These details are saved to disk and appear on the Startup screen in future.

Screen savers

Watchdog can tell the difference between an ordinary application and a Screen Saver. Watchdog will automatically ignore time spent when a Screen Saver is occupying your screen.

DOS applications

When a DOS application is running in full-screen mode Watchdog's time logging may be suspended. This depends on the settings in your application's PIF file. To be certain that Watchdog will time a DOS application run it in a

window and it will be logged like a Windows application.

Error log

To help identify problems, Watchdog maintains an error log file (WATCHDOG.ERR) which will help diagnose any problems.

Crash recovery

If Watchdog's Autosave feature is enabled, your Database is saved to a temporary file in your Windows Temp directory. If Windows terminates abnormally, Watchdog may not have been able to save your Database to your logfile. If such a temporary file exists when you next run Watchdog, your database will be recovered from this temporary file automatically.

Beta version notes

This Beta version of Watchdog has all facilities enabled, including the ability to save Preferences to disk and reload them. However this version is time limited until 31 January 1993 after which date it will not run.

I have yet to decide which features to disable/limit for the unregistered version if any and suggestions will be welcome.

Please test this program out and see how well it copes with your own working environment. If you have suggestions for features to add, remove or change then do let me know.

I suggest you set Watchdog up so that it keeps the same log file for a number of days. That way you will be able to see whether the amount of information it keeps is too large or not.

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3 December 1992 1992

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