
Ration-it

Parental control software for
controlling the time a child can spend
on the computer each day

Installation and User guide

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1 Introduction

Thank you for trying *Ration-it*. If you are reading this, it's probably because you know how frustrating it can be trying to limit the amount of time your child spends on the computer each day. Perhaps you find it difficult getting them to log off, with an argument or conflict being the result.

The purpose of *Ration-it* is to apply a limit on the time your child can use the computer for each day. When their time has been used up, they are automatically logged off (after a couple of warnings to give them time to save their work or game).

The theory is that children are more likely to accept a limit imposed by the computer rather than a parent – you can't argue with the computer!

2 Installation

Ration-it works on Windows XP Home, Windows XP Professional and Windows 2000.

NOTE: Installation should be performed when you are logged on as an administrator or owner – ideally your children should be given their own usernames. Each Windows user should have a password.

After downloading the **Ration-it-Install.exe** program you should launch it – this installs *Ration-it* on your computer.

If you see a message like this:

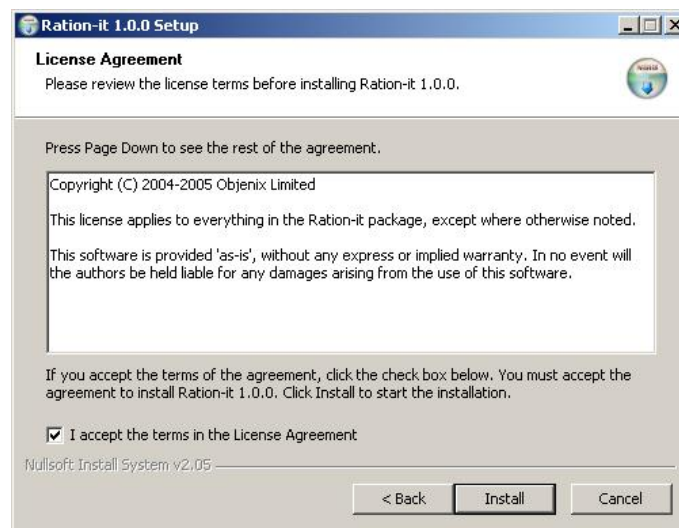


Click the “Run” button if you are sure that you downloaded the file from a well-known website such as www.rationit.com, www.tucows.com or www.download.com (If in doubt, download the program from www.rationit.com).

You should then see a screen like this:



Click the Next button. You will then see this screen:



Click the check-box to accept the Licence Agreement and then click Install. You should see this screen:



If you want to run **Ration-it** straight away, click Finish, otherwise un-check the “Run Ration-it 1.0.0” checkbox and click “Finish”.

After a successful installation you will find a new item on your Programs menu called “Ration-it”. There are three icons:



- **Ration-it** launches the **Ration-it** program (this is not normally required since it starts automatically when a user logs on).
- **Uninstall** removes **Ration-it** from your computer and removes your licence
- **Website** is a link that opens the www.rationit.com website in your browser

This program menu is available only to the user who installed **Ration-it**.

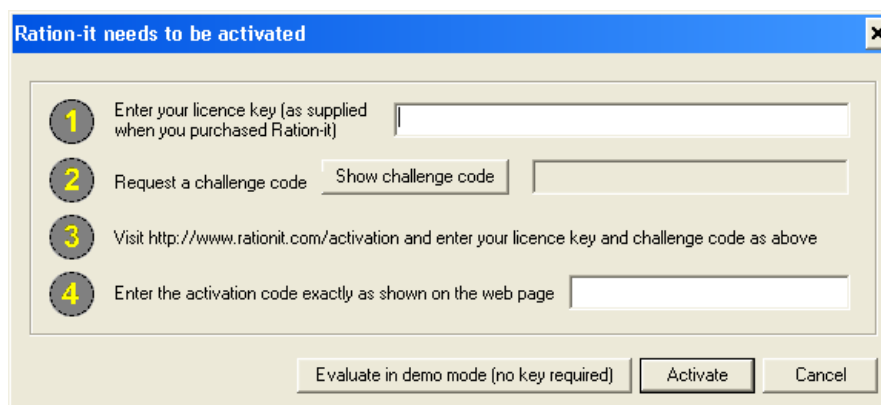
In addition, a Windows Startup item is created that causes **Ration-it** to be started whenever a user logs on. However, by default **Ration-it** is disabled for each user until you explicitly enable it (see the *Configuring Ration-it ...* section below).

NOTE: After installing Ration-it, the initial admin password is set to “password”. This can be changed in the admin dialog (see below).

3 Activating your licence

Software piracy is a big problem, so we have introduced a product activation procedure to make life hard for the pirates. This does mean that you will need to take a few moments activating your copy of **Ration-it**. We apologise for asking you to perform this extra step, but protecting our interests will allow us to invest more in the future development of **Ration-it**.

When **Ration-it** first runs it is not yet activated. You will see a screen like this:

A screenshot of a Windows dialog box titled "Ration-it needs to be activated". The dialog has a blue title bar with a close button. It contains four numbered steps: 1. Enter your licence key (as supplied when you purchased Ration-it) with a text input field. 2. Request a challenge code with a "Show challenge code" button and a text input field. 3. Visit http://www.rationit.com/activation and enter your licence key and challenge code as above. 4. Enter the activation code exactly as shown on the web page with a text input field. At the bottom, there are three buttons: "Evaluate in demo mode (no key required)", "Activate", and "Cancel".

If you have not yet purchased a licence, click the “Evaluate in demo mode...” button. This allows *Ration-it* to run but with the following restrictions:

- The admin password cannot be changed
- The number of minutes per day cannot be greater than 10
- The number of minutes remaining cannot be changed to a value greater than 5

If you have purchased a licence, you will have been given a licence key in the email you received – e.g.

```
Thank you for purchasing Ration-it. Your licence key is  
  
AB56-3724-07BE-FEE5
```

1. Carefully copy this key into the field where it says “Enter your licence key...”
2. Click the button called “Show challenge code” – this will display a code that you will need in a moment
3. Do NOT close the *Ration-it* activation dialog
4. Using your web browser, visit <http://www.rationit.com/activation>
5. Copy the licence key and challenge code into the appropriate fields on the web page
6. Enter your email address and click the “Request activation code” button.
7. Copy the resulting activation code into the *Ration-it* activation dialog and click the “Activate” button.

NB: In Windows you can copy text by selecting it and pressing Ctrl-C – paste using Ctrl-V

All being well, your copy of *Ration-it* will now be activated. If you have any problems, repeat the steps above very carefully – if you still have problems, send an email to support@rationit.com - send a copy of the email you received when you purchased the licence.

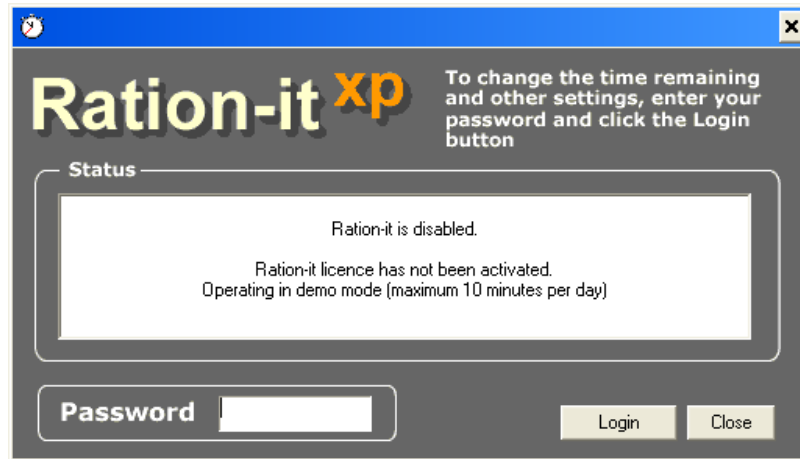
If you have been running in demo mode and subsequently purchase a licence, shutdown *Ration-it* and restart it – the activation dialog will be displayed.

4 Uninstalling Ration-it

Should you need to remove *Ration-it* for any reason, first login to the admin page and click the “Shutdown rationit” button. Then use the Windows Start menu to run “Start => Programs => Ration-it => Uninstall”.

5 Using Ration-it

When you have just installed Ration-it (and activated it or selected demo mode) the opening dialog is displayed like this (this example is demo mode):

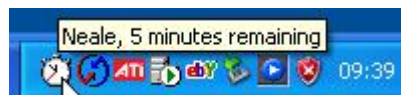


If you click the “Close” button you will see an icon in the system tray like this:



Clicking on this icon restores the Ration-it dialog.

You will also find that holding the mouse pointer over the icon in the system tray (without clicking it) will show the current time remaining, like this:



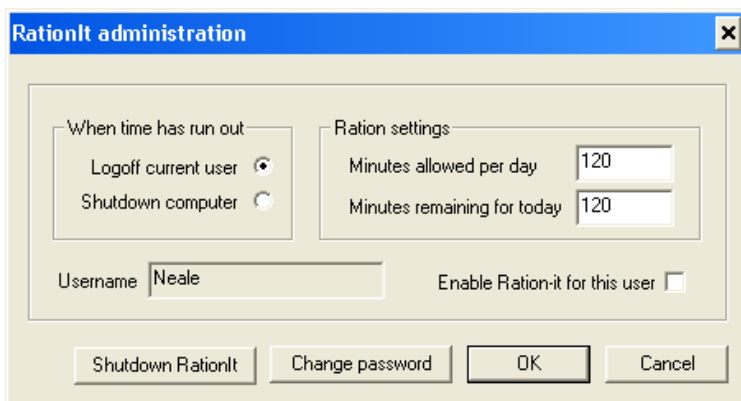
6 Configuring Ration-it for each Windows user

Ration-it will be run for each separate Windows user, each with their own settings. However, the default is for it to be disabled so, for each user (your children, for example) that you want to be rationed, do the following:

1. Bring up the *Ration-it* main dialog by clicking the icon in the system tray



2. Enter your password (the same admin password applies for all users - the initial password is “password”) and click the “Login” button – you will be shown the admin dialog:



3. Edit the values as follows:

Minutes allowed per day – this is the number of minutes the user will be allowed per day. The “Minutes remaining...” is reset to this value at midnight.

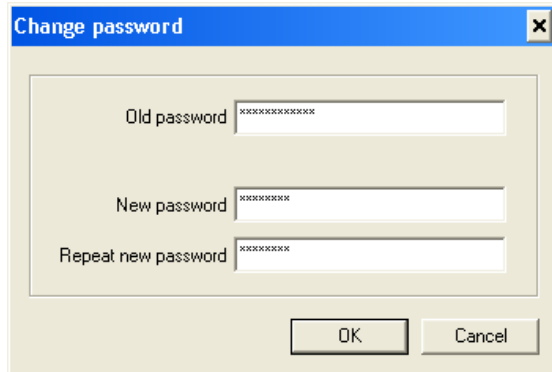
Minutes remaining for today – this is the number of minutes remaining for this user for today only – you can adjust this value to allow more or less minutes for today. The value is reset to the value of “Minutes allowed per day” at midnight.

Enable Ration-it for this user – tick the checkbox if you want Ration-it to be used for this Windows user

When time has run out – select the option you prefer – either to logoff the user or completely shutdown the computer

When you are happy with the settings, click the “OK” button to save them. Clicking “Cancel” will close the dialog without saving any changes. Likewise, clicking “Shutdown RationIt” will not save any changes.

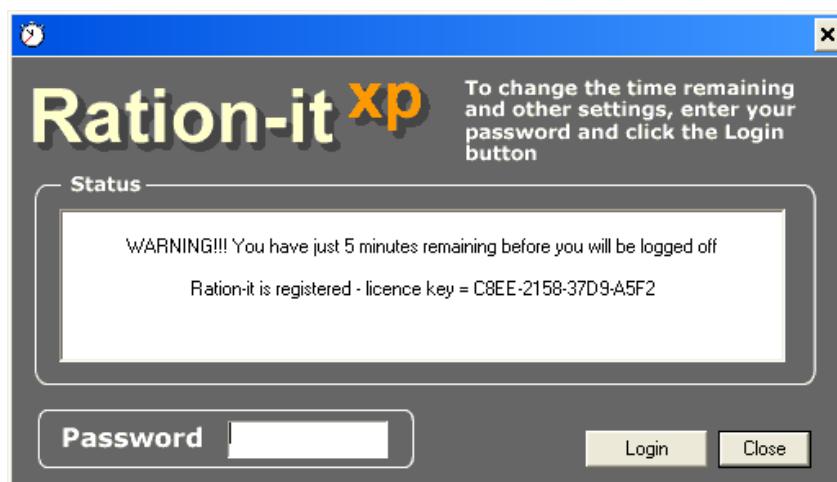
4. **Change password** – click this if you want to change the password used to access the admin dialog. **DO NOT FORGET YOUR NEW PASSWORD!**



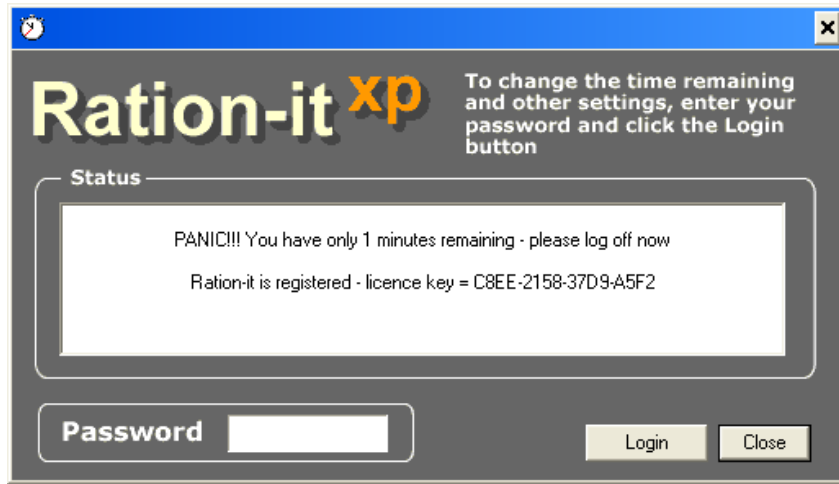
5. **Shutdown Ration-it** – clicking this button shuts down the *Ration-it* program for this session only. However, it will be re-run when the current user logs off and then on again. If you want to uninstall *Ration-it* you must first shut it down as described here.

7 Ration-it from your child's perspective

The whole point of Ration-it is to allow you child a fair amount of time on the computer. When their time is running out, with only 5 minutes remaining, the following dialog is displayed on top of whatever else they may be doing.



This gives them ample time to finish what they are doing and logoff for themselves. Clicking the “Close” button causes the dialog to be hidden. However, if they still haven't logged off with just one minute remaining, another dialog is displayed:



Again, your child has time to logoff. If they haven't logged off after the final minute has elapsed, they will be forcibly logged off (or the system shuts down if that option was selected).

8 How your child can manage his/her computer time

You should explain to your child that each day they can spend up to the maximum number of minutes you have allowed. They should be aware that the clock is counting down all the time they are logged on. Because of the way windows works, the clock continues to count down even if you have done a "switch user" under Windows (i.e. Start => Logoff => Switch User). However, if your child logs off properly (Start => Logoff => Logoff), the clock stops and only continues when your child logs back on. In this way they can choose to divide their time into several shorter sessions.

9 When time has completely run out

If your child's time has completely run out, **Ration-it** allows a one minute grace period during which you can login to your child's account and then login to the **Ration-it** admin page to make changes (for example to give your child some extra minutes – for good behaviour or to finish some homework perhaps).

10 Support

If you have any problems, please contact Customer Support at support@rationit.com