

How long do taskbar notification balloons appear on the screen?

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We saw some time ago that [taskbar notification balloons don't penalize you for being away from the computer](#). But how long does the balloon stay up when the user is there?

Originally, the balloon appeared for whatever amount of time the application specified in the `uTimeout` member of the `NOTIFYICONDATA` structure, subject to a system-imposed minimum of 10 seconds and maximum of 60 seconds.

In Windows XP, some animation was added to the balloon, adding 2 seconds of fade-in and fade-out animation to the display time.

Starting in Windows Vista, applications are no longer allowed to specify how long they wanted the balloon to appear; the `uTimeout` member is ignored. Instead, the display time is the amount of time specified by the `SPI_GETMESSAGEDURATION` system parameter, with 1 second devoted to fade-in and 5 seconds devoted to fade-out, with a minimum of 3 seconds of full visibility. In other words, if you set the message duration to less than $1+3+5=9$ seconds, the taskbar behaves as if you had set it to 9 seconds.

The default message duration is 5 seconds, so in fact most systems are in the “shorted possible time” case. If you want to extend the time for which balloons notification appear, you can use the `SystemParametersInfo` function to change it:

```
BOOL SetMessageDuration(DWORD seconds, UINT flags)
{
    return SystemParametersInfo(SPI_SETMESSAGEDURATION,
                                0, IntToPtr(seconds), flags);
}
```

(You typically don't need to mess with this setting, because you can rescue a balloon from fading out by moving the mouse over it.)

Note that an application can also set the `NIF_REALTIME` flag, which means “If I can't display the balloon *right now*, then just skip it.”

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