

Understanding the pace clock



By Benoit Lavigne



It is essential to use the pace clock if you want to progress in swimming.

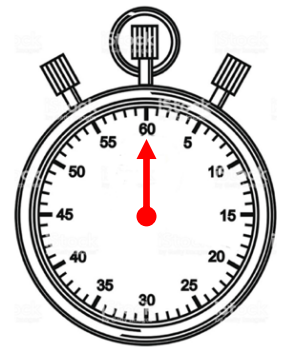
The pace clock will allow you to:

- Be autonomous at controlling the times yourself
- Control your effort, paces and intervals
- Gain experience working toward your goals

Controlling pace is the ability to swim at a certain speed for a certain distance or time and takes a longer time to master. It is a matter of swimming repeat distances on a fixed time to see if you can “*make the interval*”, i.e., hit the target time, consistently and repeatedly.

How to use the pace clock

The most common way to start a swim set is when the hand reaches 60 (“on the top”)



1st: Learn to time yourself

Knowing your speed is the first step. The easiest way to get your time is to leave on “the top”, when the hand gets to the 60 (or sometimes 00). After you’ve swum the distance that you want to time, glance back up at the clock. This will help you determine what your time is.

For example, if the hand was at 40 when you touched the wall, that means you swam the length in 40 seconds.

It gets more complicated if you leave the wall at a different time.

For example, if you left the wall on the 10 and touched the wall on the 55, then you’ll have to do some simple math to figure out your time.

E.g. $55 - 10 = 45$ This means you swam the length in 45 seconds.

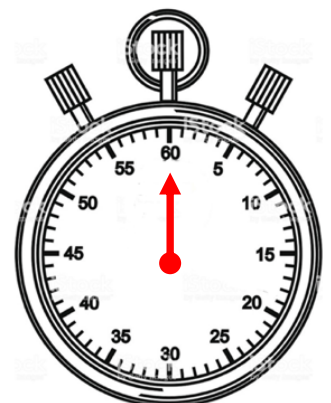


2nd: Use the clock for your swimming sets and send-off intervals

Another instance where you’d use a pace clock is if you’re using send-off intervals in practice.

For example, 10 x 50 m/yd Freestyle on 1’00 m/yd swimming each 50 m/yd starting every one minute. You start when the first 50 m/yd is on 60 (or 00) and when the following 50 m/yd are on 60 (or 00) again.

Here are some practical examples of using the clock:

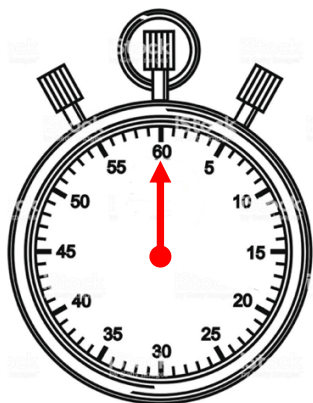


Swimming 100's on 2'00:

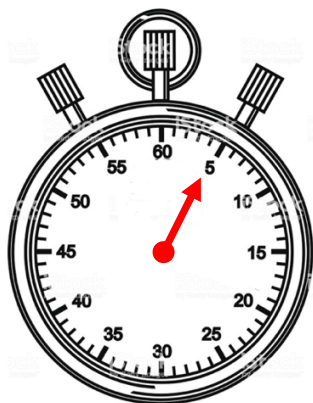
If you start the first length on 60 (or 00), then you start each subsequent 100 on 60 (or 00).

Swimming 100's on 2'05:

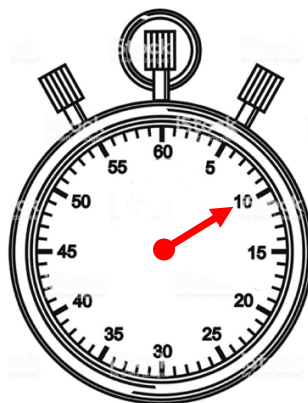
Simply add five seconds at the clock for each repetition. E.g., you start of the first 100 on 60 (or 00), the second when the hand is on 05, the third 100 when the hand is on 10, the fourth on 15, etc.



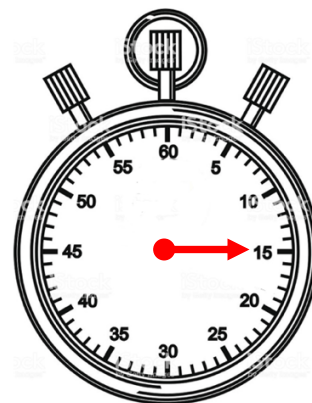
1st 100 starts on 60



2nd 100 starts on 5



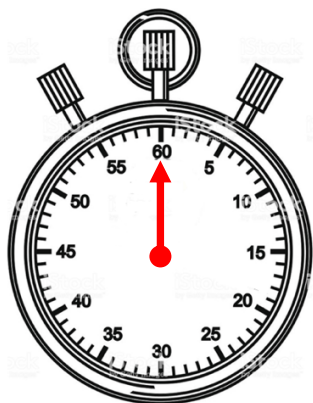
3rd 100 starts on 10



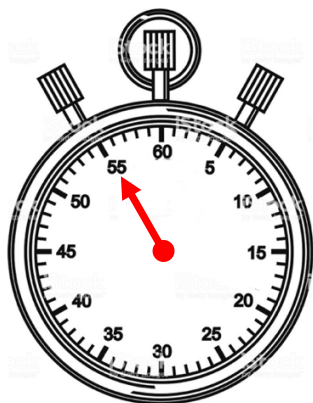
4th 100 starts on 15

Swimming 100's on 1'55:

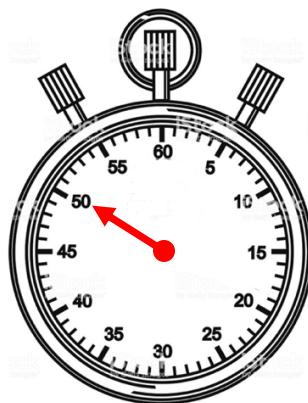
In this case, simply subtract five seconds from the previous start. E.g., you start your first 100 on 60 (or 00), the second 100 on 55, the next 100 on 50, the next 100 on 45, etc.



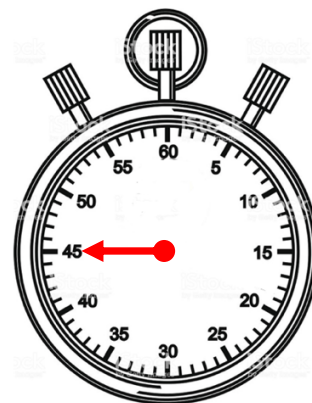
1st 100 starts on 60



2nd 100 starts on 55



3rd 100 starts on 50



4th 100 starts on 45

Descending send-off intervals:

This means that your send-off interval decreases during the set.

Example: 4 x 100 on 2'00 / 1'55 / 1'50 / 1'45

In this example, the first 100 is swum on a 2 minutes send-off interval, the second 100 on a 1 minute and 55 seconds (1'55) send-off interval, the third 100 on 1 and 50 seconds (1'50) send-off interval and the fourth 100 on 1 minute and 45 seconds (1'45) send-off interval.

See the details below:

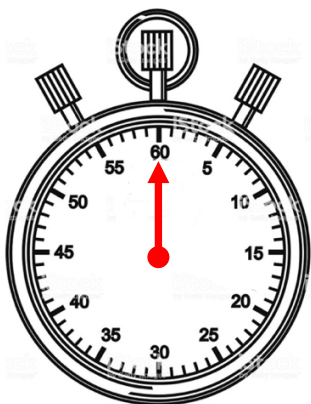
1st 100: Start the first 100 when the **hand is on 60** (or 00),

2nd 100: Start the 2nd 100 when the hand is on 60 (or 00) as the first 100 as on 2'00 send-off

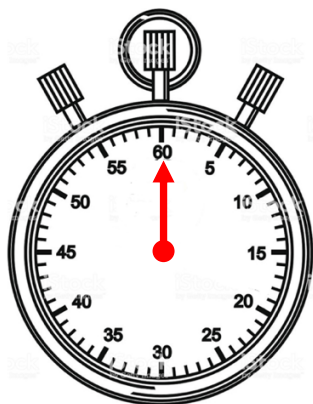
3rd 100: Start the 3rd 100 when the **hand is on 55**. Subtract 5 as the second 100 is on 1'55 (2'00 – 1'55 = 5")

4th 100: Start the 4th 100 when the **hand is on 45**. Subtract 10 as the third 100 is on 1'50 (2'00 – 1'50 = 10")

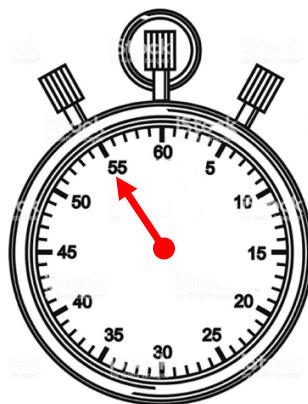
If there was a fifth 100, you would then start it when the hand is on 30 (as on 1'45 send-off)



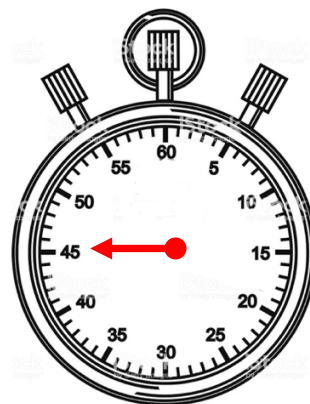
1st 100 starts on 60



2nd 100 starts on 60



3rd 100 starts on 55



4th 100 starts on 45

There are different ways to do this set:

Option 1: Descending send-off intervals and descending times

In this option, you swim each 100 five seconds faster than the previous ones so you get the same amount of rest each time.

Example:

1st 100 on 2'00 send-off interval at 1'50 pace = you get 10 seconds rest

2nd 100 on 1'55 send-off interval at 1'45 pace = you still get 10 seconds rest

3rd 100 on 1'50 send-off interval at 1'40 pace = you still get 10 seconds rest

4th 100 on 1'45 send-off interval at 1'35 pace = you still get 10 seconds rest if you were continuing the set.

Start on 60, arrive on 50 (1'50 pace)
You get **10 seconds rest** as the send-off is on 2'00

Start on 60, arrive on 45 (1'45 pace)
You get **10 seconds rest** as the send-off is on 1'55

Start on 55, arrive on 35 (1'40 pace)
You get **10 seconds rest** as the send-off is on 1'50

Start on 45, arrive on 20 (pace 1'35)
You get **10 seconds rest** if continuing the set.

First 100 Second 100 Third 100 Fourth 100

Option 2: Descending send-off intervals with a fixed pace

From the above example, you swim each 100 with a fixed pace, e.g., 1'40 (1 minute and 40 seconds) and get progressively less rest throughout the set.

Example:

1st 100 on 2'00 send-off interval at 1'40 pace = you get **20 seconds rest**

2nd 100 on 1'55 send-off interval at 1'40 pace = you get **15 seconds rest**

3rd 100 on 1'50 send-off interval at 1'40 pace = you get **10 seconds rest**

4th 100 on 1'45 send-off interval at 1'40 pace = you get **5 seconds rest** if you were continuing the set.

