

## READING A PACE CLOCK

One of the main thing that frustrates us coaches is the swimmer's inability to read a pace clock. Please read the following information carefully. Parents you may need to help your swimmers understand this concept. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

The following was taken from a newsletter from Coach Ron of the FAST swim club...

Q. Why do I need to read the Pace Clock

A. Quite simply there is a ceiling on how much you can improve in your swimming if you have no idea how fast you are going or what pace time you are supposed to hold. If you don't know how fast you trained last month, how are you going to know how fast you have to train this month to be faster? If the coach sends you on a certain pace time to train your body at a certain level based on your best time and you can't read the clock to know when you are supposed to leave or how fast you went, how are you going to train effectively? Too often swimmers who don't read the pace clock end up just "taking" rest. This means that for some sets they are on fast pace times, swimmers come in and take what I call their "mandatory" rest between repeats (3-4 seconds regardless if they swam fast enough to warrant it or not). And at other times, swimmers take too little rest at points when the coach wants you to have a certain amount of recovery rest. Both situations take away from maximal training ability.

Q. When do I leave?

A. Look at the clock and know the number you left on. This is the key to being able to read a pace clock. If you never look at the pace clock, then you are leaving out one of the most important parts of your training and there is no way the rest of pace clock work can happen if you don't actually look at the clock. Looking at the pace clock should be the last thing you do when you leave the wall, and the very first thing you do when you arrive back after a repeat. No exceptions. It only takes a moment, and it is tremendously important. If you come in and stare at the gutter for a minute while you catch your breath, you are not helping yourself. Also, some swimmers seem to have swimming become an inconvenience between their social conversations. If the last thing you do when leaving the wall is talking to your friend and the first thing you do when you come back is go immediately back to that conversation, not only are you probably not working hard enough in workout, not focused on what you are supposed to be doing, but there is no way getting any sort of time or being able to hold any sort of pace is going to be possible. So look before and look after.

Q. How fast am I going?

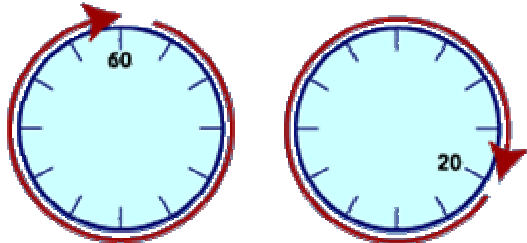
A. Look at the clock and know your approximate pace. Once you become good reading the pace clock, you should be able to do longer sets (say repeat 500's) and actually take splits during your swim without having to slow down to look at the clock and you won't lose count. For example, If you are doing a 500 free and you know you are holding 58's, you re going to look for a 58 after your first 100. If the red hand is here, you know you are on pace, if it's farther up, then you know you are slower and if it's farther down, you are faster. After that, you are going to look for the next spot on the clock where the hand should be in relation to your pace. (58, foes to 56 then down to 54 and so on). You can even do this down to 50 splits once you become proficient. This way you are not wasting time and looking for a moving hand, but looking for a spot on the clock and expect to see the hand there waiting.

Now in simple terms.....

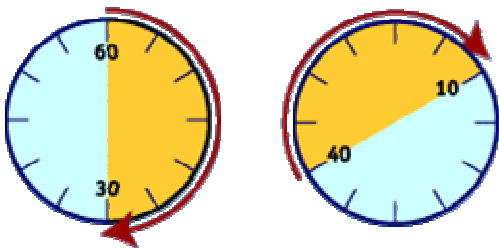
By thinking of the clock face as a pie that has been cut it becomes easier to visualize segments and keep track of your swims and send-off times. Listed on this page are some basic intervals along with an explanation of how to figure your next repeat.

Intervals or pace that is exactly one minute (or two minutes or three minutes, etc.) are easy. Whatever number you leave the first repeat on, it will be this same number for all repeats in the entire set.

For example: If the coach says to leave on the “top”, you leave on the 60, and you leave on the 60 the next time. Or if the coach says to leave on the “bottom”, you leave on the 30 and you leave on the 30 the next time.



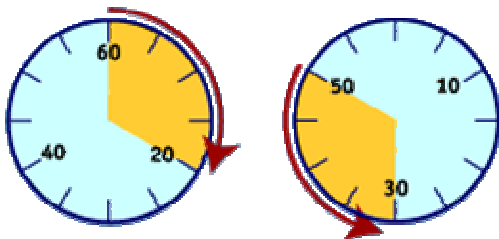
When using intervals or pace that are 30 seconds (or 1:30, 2:30, etc.) you will always leave on one of two numbers. Those numbers will be directly across from one another on the pace clock. For example: If you leave on the 60, the next time you leave on the 30. If you leave on the 15, the next time you leave on the 45, if you leave on the 10, the next time you leave on the 40. And so on.



Intervals of either 20 or 40 seconds slice the pie (pace clock) into thirds. This means you will always leave on one of three numbers. If your interval is 20 seconds (or 1:20, 2:20, etc.) your numbers will rotate clockwise. For example: If you are repeating a set on 1:20. The coach says to go on the top. You push off the wall on the 60. Your next swim will be on 1:20, then 1:40, then the 60, etc...

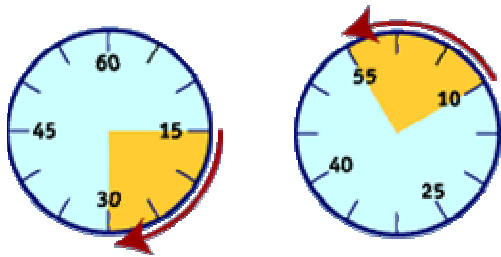
If your interval is 40 seconds (or 1:40, 2:40, etc.) your numbers will rotate counterclockwise. For example: If you are repeating on 1:40. The coach says to go on the top. You push off the wall on 60. You will leave on 1:40, then the 20, then the top.

In both examples look for the pattern 20-40-60.



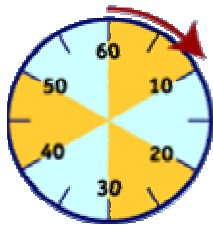
Intervals of either 15 or 45 seconds will split the clock into fourths. Intervals ending in 15 seconds (1:15, 2:15, etc.) will have send-off numbers rotating clockwise. For example: If your interval is 1:15. You push off on the “bottom” (30), you leave on the 45, 60, 15, etc.

Send-off times in 45 second intervals (:45, 1:45, etc.) will have send-off numbers that rotate counter clockwise. In both cases, send-off numbers will alternate ending in 5 and 0. If your repeating a set on :45. The coach says to leave on the bottom. You push off on the 30. You leave on the 15, 60, 45, etc...



Intervals of 10 seconds (1:10, 2:10, 3:10, etc.) and 50 seconds (:50, 1:50, 2:50, etc.) are easy. For 10 second intervals your next send-off always advance in a clockwise rotation. For example: Your interval is 2:10. The coach says leave on the top. You push off on the 60. You leave on the 10, 20, 30, 40, etc...

Send-offs for 50 second intervals always retract in a counterclockwise rotation. For example: Your interval is: 50. The coach says to leave on the top. You push off on the 60. You leave on the 50, 40, 30,20,10,60, etc...



Intervals of 5 seconds (1:05, 2:05, etc.) will advance one number. For example: Your interval is 1:05. The coach says to leave on the bottom. You leave on the 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, etc...

Intervals of 55 seconds (:55, 1:55, 2:55, etc.) will always retract one number. For example: Your interval is 1:55. The coach says to leave on the bottom. You leave on the 30, 25, 20, 15, etc....