

Manual Timekeeping

Advice to hand timekeepers

Differences in timekeeping are due to differences in individuals' time to react at the starts as well as at the finishes.

Timekeepers' qualities

Being a timekeeper means not following the events taking place in front of him as a spectator. A fierce battle between athletes must not get him so enthusiastic so as to forget to record the times correctly at the finish.

In particular, the timekeepers must not have any interest in who wins the event or which athletes are placed in the positions for which they have to record the time. The judges at the finish are in charge of that duty.

The timekeeper must remain calm, even if the times announced do not tally with the athletes', the coaches', other officials' or spectators' visual judging and despite the noisy atmosphere which surrounds the finish line, especially after a very good performance.

Timekeepers must have quick reflexes, be attentive and when requested must stop all conversation and, if necessary, invite his colleagues to do so. The timekeeper must have good eyesight and be physically fit. The timekeeper must be conscientious and announce clearly the recorded times, without worrying about those recorded by his colleagues. If the timekeeper is caught unaware at the start or at the finish, for whatever reason, he has the serious duty to announce "time not recorded" by immediately warning the Chief Timekeeper who will act accordingly.

As all officials, the timekeeper must also be punctual. It will make it easier for the Meeting Manager and the Chief Timekeeper to organise the team of officials. Normally he should report for duty half an hour before the start of the meeting.

Rules and Best Practices for Timekeepers

Timekeepers must react to the finish of the athlete being timed. They should not try to anticipate the finish. The watch must be stopped when the timekeeper sees that the athlete has reached the finish line.

No time must be divulged to any other person than the Chief Timekeeper.

Only the Chief Timekeeper can divulge the official times.

The timekeeper nominated as Chief Timekeeper must be able to convert the times. He must be able to do these calculations correctly and quickly.

Organise a progress chart with times recorded lap after lap (for long-distance events).

For the 3000m events and above, also record intermediate times every kilometre.

Team of Officials

The Chief Timekeeper tells his colleagues which athletes they must record (according to the number of timekeepers available).

For a six-lane track, at least 9 timekeepers are required if the time of each athlete is to be taken with three watches.

For an eight-lane track, 12 timekeepers are necessary.

(In both cases it is assumed that the timekeepers are equipped with stopwatches that can record two times).

The Chief Timekeeper is advised, whenever possible, to take only the time of the first which, by liberating the second time, enables him to stand in for any timekeeper at fault.

In this case 10 timekeepers are required for 6 athletes and 13 for 8 athletes.

During a meeting, a timekeeper should always take the same places.

Before the meeting

The Chief Timekeeper verifies the number of timekeepers at his disposal and their respective qualifications.

He must check the stopwatches of each timekeeper and the number of times each of them can record.

He must make sure that the locations of the half-way points, when middle-distance or long-distance races are run, are marked by a small flag. If it has not been done, he must inform the Technical Manager who will take the necessary steps.

He must know the records for the events run during the meeting as well as those for intermediate distances which can be beaten during an event. World Records are recognised for 1500m events and over when performances have been hand-timed.

Consider whether to organise a progress chart with times recorded lap after lap for those long-distance events in which record times or other special performances may be anticipated and such information may be interesting for research, statistical or historical purposes.

Progress chart (example)

This chart enables the Chief Timekeeper to follow the event and to be ready, at the right moment, to place the timekeepers at the right location or record the intermediate times. This chart enables him to see if the race is being run on a pace that may result in a record time. It also enables him, in liaison with the judge in charge of the lap count, to avoid any errors of distance.

Track 400 m – Event 5000 m – Anticipated time: 13:25

100m 16.10 400m 1:04.40

200m 32.20 500m 1:20.50

300m 48.30 1000m 2:41.00

SUMMARY SHEET

(To be filled in by the Chief Timekeeper)

Example of times recorded by digital stopwatches

EVENT: 400m	TIME FROM EACH TIMEKEEPER								FINAL
Finishing Order	Chief	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Official Times
1	47.24	47.28	47.32						47.3
2				47.31	47.35	47.39			47.4
3		48.19					47.98	48.09	48.1
4			47.99	48.08	48.27				48.1
5						49.17	49.04		49.2
6								49.49	49.5

During the meeting

Unless a Fully Automatic Timing System is used, the Chief Timekeeper replies to the call from the Starter after making sure that the Timekeepers, the Judges at the finish and the Chief Photo Finish (or Transponder) Judge are ready.

The Chief Timekeeper takes the time of the first and, in some cases, the time of another athlete.

He establishes the summary list of the times with the help of the information given to him by each timekeeper.

He determines the official times.

He takes the times given by each timekeeper to 0.01, notes them, converts them to 0.1 and determines the time for each athlete.

Short-distance events usually have a very close finish, and it is therefore recommended that each timekeeper should take only one time. (It has been proved that the reflexes of a human being do not enable him to take, with enough precision, the times of two athletes separated by less than 0.2 second).

For long-distance events, the athletes often finish well-spaced and there is therefore a possibility of taking the times of all the athletes finishing with the help of double-timed stopwatches or by successive readings of digital stopwatches. For these events, with often a lot of athletes, the Chief Timekeeper shall organise a team of timekeepers reading the times of all finishing athletes and another team noting them down.

This way of proceeding will enable him to compensate for any possible fault by a timekeeper. For these events, it is important that the Chief Timekeeper and the Chief Judge collaborate closely, as some athletes may be lapped.

The Chief Timekeeper may have a timekeeper at fault replaced. He may check the stopwatches at any time.

After the meeting

He signs the record sheet and has it signed by the timekeepers (hand-timed records). When any of the stopwatches belonging to the meeting organisers, he should make sure that all the timekeepers give them back.