

## Time Signals

Giving time signals for the first time can be daunting, so here is a quick how-to that will hopefully help you prepare for the big moment.

Several competition events are based on creating a speech on the spot. Because students have never spoken these speeches before, they rely on time signals to meet the time specifications of the event. For other events, students want time signals to confirm they have the right pacing, or if they have time to milk that one line for all it's worth. Regardless of the reason, all competitors are entitled to time signals if they want them.

The main thing to understand is that time signals represent how much time a student *has left to speak*. Time signals countdown to when time expires. The fingers you hold up indicate to the student how long is remaining before the time limit is met.

Step One: Confirm the length of the event you are watching/judging. Most events have a time limit of 10 minutes, while some have 7, and still others are 5. Knowing for certain is key.

Step Two: Ask the student what they would like in terms of time signals. Most students ask for "3 down", or something similar. They are asking for signals to start counting down when they have 3 minutes left. So, in a 10 minute event, when your stopwatch says '7 minutes' on it, you're holding up 3 fingers, because that is how much time is left. At 8 minutes on your stopwatch you will hold up 2 fingers, at 9 minutes you will hold up 1 finger, at 9:30 you hold up a 'C', and at 10 minutes you hold up a fist. Here are guides for the basic times:

10 Minute Speech			7 minute speech	
Stopwatch Reads	Fingers held Up		Stopwatch Reads	Fingers held Up
5	5		2	5
6	4		3	4
7	3		4	3
8	2		5	2
9	1		6	1
9:30	A "C"		6:30	A "C"
10	A fist		7	A fist

Students get no time signals during grace periods.

**FAQs about time signals**

Q: What happens if I Miss one?

A: First off, breath. It happens. We're writing comments or wrapped up in a speech and sometimes are aren't glued to the stopwatch. This is OK. If it's just a few seconds past the time, just do it anyway (eg. at 2:10 in a 7 minute speech, you can still just put up the '5'). If its way past, just wait for the next one. If a student's timing is off, and you feel responsible, you can take that into consideration when ranking. But, that is a personal choice at your discretion.

Q: What do you mean a 'C'?

A: When students have half a minute left, they are told this most typically by the judging holding up their hand in the shape of a 'C.' That often looks like this:



Q: I'm supposed to give a fist at the end of their speech?

A: Yes, this indicates to the students that they have exceeded their time allotted and are now into their grade period. We hold up a hand like this:



5 minutes Remaining	4 minutes Remaining	3 minutes Remaining	2 minutes Remaining	1 minute Remaining
				