

Tony's Guide to Rally Timing

Introduction

Rallies are usually run over a combination of private tracks, and public roads. A strict set of timing rules is enforced that is intended to allow the competing cars to drive along the rally route without speeding on the public road sections, and strict penalties are applied to cars arriving early at the end of those sections.

On special stages there are no speeding laws, and accurate timing is used to determine how quickly each car completes the stages. The finishing order of a rally is a combination of the special stage times plus any penalties. The crew that completes all of the stages in the shortest time including any penalties is the rally winner.

Target Timing

Each part of the rally has a "Target Time" determined in advance by the organizers.

For every road section (and every service halt) you will find a target time (service time) clearly printed in the Road Book, on the Time Card, and on the Rally Schedule. Sometimes the target time is changed before the rally begins, so check the official notice board! If a change is made while the rally is in progress, a marshal will notify each crew as they arrive at his or her control, and you will be asked to sign an acknowledgement. If there is a change make sure you understand it and adjust your schedule as needed.

Target Times can also be known by other names:

- Target Time – The minimum time the car should take to complete a road section without incurring a penalty for early arrival.
- Service Time – The scheduled minimum time the car should take between entering and leaving a service area.
- Stage Bogey Time – The minimum time that even the fastest car is expected to take to complete a particular special stage.
- Stage Target Time – The slowest time that will be recorded for a given special stage (you will also incur penalties for time taken beyond this time).

While it's good to know about each of the above, Target Time and Service Time are the most common, and the most important to fully understand to avoid incurring penalties.

At the first time control (MTC1 IN), each car will have a scheduled MTC1 IN arrival time set by the organizers. A list of cars and times will be available for you to check. When you see the cars lining up, make sure you get in line behind the car listed ahead of you. You should check the current "rally time" on the marshal's clock, and you should arrive and present your time card a second or two after your MTC1 arrival time. The marshal will note down your arrival time on your time card (hours and minutes), and will give you a MTC1 OUT time and will also write that time in the appropriate box on your time card.

Note that some rallies will combine MTC1 IN and MTC1 OUT using a single marshal.

Before you leave all Time Controls; check that the times are correctly entered, initialed if necessary, and that your car number is correctly identified.

You can drive away from the time control when the marshal's clock shows your MTC1 OUT or departure time has passed. While you are waiting, you should calculate the time that you are expected to arrive at the next time control. To do this, simply add the "Target Time" for the road section to your MTC1 OUT time. You are not allowed to mark the time card, so make a note of this "Due Time" in the Road Book at the page containing the instructions to the next control (most likely to be the Arrival Time Control of Special Stage 1, or ATC1).

Special Stage Arrival and Start Procedure

At the end of the road section you will arrive at the first Special Stage. You will first see a yellow warning sign (see below). You should not drive beyond this sign until your "Due Time" has passed. You are permitted to walk into the time control if there is a line of cars preventing you from driving into the control zone, but you must wait until your "Due Time" before handing the marshal your time card. The time you hand over your card will be recorded as your arrival time. Once you have booked in, you're considered to be in "dead time", and you simply move forwards one car at a time until it is your turn to move to the Stage Start Line. Don't be concerned if there is a delay because you cannot incur lateness penalties while waiting in the control zone.

Don't line up too close to the car in front of you as he starts the stage. This will protect your car from being hit by flying stones and mud!!

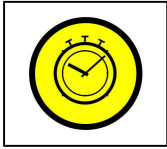
When the car in front of you sets off into the stage, you should move up to the Stage Start Line. *You are allowed to position the car anywhere so long as the car is behind the start line.*

The marshal will give you a stage start time (normally rallies run at one minute or two minute intervals between cars). You are allowed to request a later time and the marshal may or may not decide to give you that time. You should now be fully prepared to tackle the stage.

The marshal may count you down, or you may be shown a time clock. You should wait until the exact moment of your start time, and set off into the stage. Do not leave early as you will be penalized for a jump-start!

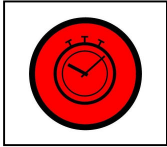
The following page shows the signs used at Special Stage Arrival and Start controls.

Special Stage Arrival and Start – Signs



Warning – Arrival Control Ahead

25 meters or 100 feet



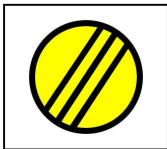
Arrival Control

50 meters or 200 feet



Special Stage Start Line

25 meters or 100 feet



End of Control Zone

Special Stage Flying Finish Procedure

At the end of each Special Stage, you will arrive at the Flying Finish. You should only slow down after the red Flying Finish sign, however the position of some Flying Finishes will require you to slow down sooner due to a hazard or bend after the finish line, so your pace-notes should take this into account.

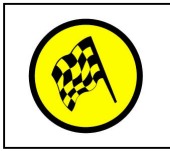
Depending on the distance between the Flying Finish and the Time Control you may see 3-2-1 countdown signs but these are not always displayed. Regardless of the signage, the hazards, or the distance, your driver must slow down and be able to stop at the Time Control.

The marshal will record the time that your car crossed the Flying Finish line (Hours, Minutes, Seconds). This time will also be the start of the next section (just the Hours and Minutes). So if the next section is a road section, your next Due Time can be calculated by adding the road section Target Time to your special stage finish time (ignoring the seconds).

You will now continue onto the next control.

The following page shows the signs used at Special Stage Finish controls.

Special Stage Flying Finish and Time Control - Signs



Warning – Flying Finish Ahead

100 meters or 100 feet



Flying Finish



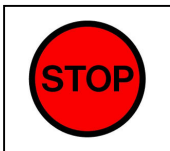
300m or 0.3 miles to TC*



200m or 0.3 miles to TC*

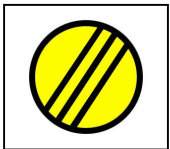


100m or 0.1 miles to TC*



Time Control

50 meters or 100 feet



End of Control Zone

- **Note: The 3-2-1 Countdown is not always used, but there must be at least 100 meters between the Flying Finish and the Time Control.**

International Timing

International Timing varies slightly from Target Timing. Instead of a target time for a road section, a single time is given for the rally car to traverse both a special stage and a road section. Therefore the faster that a crew can complete the special stage, the longer they must take on the following road section.

Penalties

All rallies have penalties for early arrival at the end of road sections or for leaving service halts too soon. Typically you will receive a one-minute penalty for early arrival or departure. If you are late, you may or may not be penalized (typically 10 seconds per minute late) however the actual late time in minutes and seconds will also be deducted from your "Maximum Permitted Lateness" (MPL) time. Each rally will specify the MPL time, however this is usually between 15 and 30 minutes.

Note that you will also incur "lateness" on special stages if you exceed the Stage Target Time. If your total lateness exceeds the MPL, you will be excluded from the rally. On some rallies the MPL will be reset at the start of each leg. Reading the Supplementary Regulations is the best way to find out about a particular rally's rules.

A quick word about servicing in time controls is needed here. As mentioned above, there are very well defined time control zones on a rally, and servicing the car is generally not allowed in these areas. There are exceptions (depending on the governing rules), so for example a crew may be allowed to ask a marshal for permission to change a wheel, and be granted a five minute maximum time to complete this. Once again, reading the Supplementary Regulations is the best way to find out about this.

Please email me if you find any obvious mistakes!

Tony Holden Updated 12 June 2010