

Timekeeper Guidelines from a Timekeeper

1. PAY ATTENTION! Not necessarily to the trial, but to the TIME. Forget to put up a time card and you can severely hurt the attorneys' case; they could go into something they don't have time for.
2. PAY ATTENTION to the objections. Miss stopping for the objections and you cut valuable time for your team. Same with forgetting to start the time back up.
3. If you don't follow rules 1 & 2, you will need the help of the timekeeper next to you. Always sit next to the other timekeeper and don't be afraid to ask for help. Most of the time you BOTH will mess up at least once during trial.
4. Know how long directs and crosses are. 25 minutes and 20 minutes. It's simple – put up the right time card.
5. Put up the right time card for longer than a second. Attorneys will not always see the card as soon as it's been put up. Give them some leeway. (I put it up 5 sec before the time and keep it up for 5 sec after.)
6. Start the time AFTER “may it please the court, your honor, opposing counsel, members of the jury...” and when they start talking again. If they pause start the time when they start talking. This causes the largest time differences between timekeepers and time differences are NOT good – especially when you have a losing REALLY close to time.
7. After an objection, do NOT start the time until the attorney starts talking again. They're allowed a pause.
8. If any attorney asks for up to a minute for a rebuttal, give him just that! Give him up to a minute. You don't start counting from 4 – count down from 5 and any time left will be used for a rebuttal. Also, they do NOT get more than a minute. If a judge asks you to count down from 4, correct the judge in that you are to count down from 5.
9. Which brings me to #9 – **The decisions of the presiding judge regarding the resolution of timing disputes are final.**
10. Make sure you write down the times after each of the witnesses are done. If you forget to do this, once again, don't be afraid to ask the timekeeper next to you.
11. For closings, openings and witnesses: DO NOT be afraid to say “TIME” when their time is up. If they go over then there will have to be a point deduction, something neither team wants.
12. This is being a bit more advanced but when timing closings, it's often a newbie mistake to clear the prosecution/plaintiff time piece when the defense closing begins. Remember there is a rebuttal and if they have less than one minute left, then you can keep the time for the prosecution/plaintiff. If they have more than a minute left, then simply clear it and start counting down from a minute.
13. Make sure you have your time cards put together ahead of time. It's really distracting to be fumbling for a time card – or worse to forget a card...to not even bring it up to the jury box!
14. Turn your cell phone off.
15. NEVER EVER get the prosecution/plaintiff and defense time pieces mixed up. If you do...once again, ask the person next to you for help. This is one of the worst things you could do. Take a sharpie and label them!