



Swiss Time

“WHERE WATCHMAKERS WORK”

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Tachy – What???! Unscrambling the Tachymeter Mystery

Most watches that feature a chronograph movement (automatic or quartz) also have a tachymeter (or tachymetre). Ask someone who wears a watch with a tachymeter how the function works and you'll often see a blank stare in response. Swiss Time wants to crush the mystery once and for all, behind the function that can be helpful when it comes to precision timing.

A tachymeter (tah-kim-e-ter) is a tool used to measure average speed over a given distance. One caveat is that you must know the distance you are traveling in advance, such as one mile or one kilometer. You must also take into account that a tachymeter will give a more accurate average speed reading if you hit the beginning line (or marker) in motion, at the given speed, versus from a stand still position.

Let's say that you are at Dover International Speedway in Delaware, a track known to be exactly one mile in length from start to finish. (Hence the nickname the “Monster Mile.”) You are sitting in the grand stands on Sunday watch a NASCAR race and you are within eyes view of the Start/Finish line. You see the #8 racecar, Dale Earnhardt, Jr., quickly approaching the start/finish line and as soon as his front fender breaks the plane, you hit the start button on your chronograph... *tick, tick, tick...*

When Dale Jr. laps the track and hits the start/finish line, breaking the plane again, hit the stop button. The chronograph second-hand will point to a number on the tachymeter on your other dial or bezel, which tells you his average speed for that lap. If it took Dale Jr. 60 seconds to complete one mile, his average speed would be 60 mph. If it took Dale Jr. 45 seconds his average speed would be 80 mph. If one mile took him 30 seconds, his average speed would be 120 mph, and so on.

The same rings true if you are measuring in kilometers over a given distance. If it takes a car 60 seconds to complete one kilometer, the cars average speed is 60 kph, with 45 seconds an average speed of 80 kph, and 30 seconds gives an average speed of 120 kph.

