Time Drops® Quickstart

<mark>BEFORE YOU BEGIN - PLEASE READ. IT WILL SAVE YOU A LOT OF TIME!</mark>

A word about Wi-Fi: Wi-Fi is an integral part of the Time Drops system, without it the system cannot function. We do not include a Wi-Fi router with the system, as each team's situation and requirements are different. You have to provide the Wi-Fi yourself.

However not all Wi-Fi installations are created equal. For Time Drops it is necessary that all the different components of the system (controller, tablet, Windows laptop and any scoreboards) can communicate freely with each other. Some Wi-Fi networks, by their design or configuration will prevent this from happening due to security considerations.

Therefore any type of 'public' Wi-Fi will most likely **not** work for Time Drops. Examples of such public Wi-Fi's are: Schools, Businesses, Country Clubs, Hotels, Gyms or other commercial Wi-Fi installations. You will need some kind of 'private' Wi-Fi such as: traditional 'Home' Wi-Fi routers, personal hotspots or a mobile phone in hotspot mode (with extended compatibility enabled).
When using 4G hotspots, make sure to set the connection to 'Metered Connection' in Windows so that it will not download updates which may use up your data plan!
In most cases, a personal hotspot will be the easiest solution, or you can use a 'home' Wi-Fi router which is wired into an internet uplink. We do not generally recommend to use 'Mesh' Wi-Fi systems or Range extenders, as such systems are sometimes difficult to configure and may cause intermittent issues if not done correctly. And remember: **The system runs on 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi only, as 2.4 GHz provides better range than 5GHz. The system will not work on the 5GHz frequency band which is optimized for speed rather than range!**

And there is one last aspect to consider: You as the timing operator should be *in control of the Wi-Fi*. Rule of thumb: if you have to ask someone else for the password, do not use it. If you can change the password yourself, go ahead.

If you don't have a router or experience difficulties with your router, we can recommend the [GL.iNet SFT-1200 travel router](#), which is known to work with the system, and can bridge to your existing Wi-Fi-provider (even if it is a 'public' one) or mobile phone. It is a very cost-effective solution which may save you a lot of Wi-Fi related headaches.
▶ **How to Setup GL.iNet Routers for the First Time**

If you plan on running mission-critical meets, invitationals and similar events, we recommend that you use an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) for your Wi-Fi router. The Time drops system will run on batteries, but your router may not! The Gl.iNET router can run on a portable USB-C battery, so this may be another reason to get it.
<mark>**Another great fallback solution is to have a mobile phone hotspot set up with the same SSID and password as the primary Wi-Fi. If there is any problem, you can switch on the hotspot on the phone and the timing system will switch over seamlessly!**</mark>

TIME DROPS SETUP

Step 1: Configure the Android Tablet: Follow the Android setup wizard to connect to Wi-Fi and log in with a Google account. (If you do not have a tablet yet, please check our [tablet guide](#)) Important: Do not use your private email address for the account - use a shared team email address, unless you are the only user of this tablet. Ideally, disable the Android Lock Screen under Settings/Security/Screen Lock - set it to 'None" (no PIN, Password or Face Unlock)

If you are creating a new account for your tablet, be aware that whoever purchased the system has already created a team account for your team as part of the purchase. When you set up your new account, **please join this existing team rather than creating a new team** since the subscription license is already linked to the existing team account.
Please go to https://time-drops.com/account and then request to join the team through the web site. You will need to have the email address of the person who made the purchase to do that. Should you encounter any difficulties during this step, please contact support@time-drops.com.

Important: If you are using an Amazon Fire tablet, make sure you are creating your user account using 'Sign in with email', not 'Sign in with Google' as this is not supported by Amazon tablets.

Step 2: Download the Time Drops console app from the Play Store (open the Play Store, and search for '[Time Drops](#)'. For Amazon tablets, the app can be found in the [Amazon App Store.](#) **Do not sideload the Google Play version on Amazon Kindle tablets, some functionality will be limited if you do**)

Hint: Most newer tablets are configured with gesture navigation; Time Drops will be easier to use if you switch to 3-button navigation under Settings/Display/System navigation

Step 3: Turn on the STC-1 Controller, and transfer the Wi-Fi credentials to the controller. Go to 'Controller Setup' in the console menu, and click 'Transfer to Controller'. Enter the Wi-Fi password. Wait until the face turns into a smile. See this video:
▶ How to use the Time Drops controller
Should you encounter any problems connecting the controller, please check https://time-drops.com/troubleshooting.html. The controller will remember your Wi-Fi settings and will reconnect to the last used Wi-Fi automatically next time.

The 'Controller Setup' screen is only needed for the initial setup, or when you want to use a different Wi-Fi. If at a later time the controller does not connect to the tablet when there was no change in SSID or password, check if the red Wi-Fi LED on the controller single-flashes or double-flashes. If it double-flashes, the problem is with the tablet and you should restart the tablet first before consulting the [troubleshooting guide](#).
The USB-C cable is only used to charge the controller from any USB port or USB charger. The USB port is not used to transfer any data.

Step 4: Once the controller connects for the first time, you will be prompted to log into your account. You can log in using the account you have configured for the tablet owner, but please make sure that this account is linked to your team (you can link it on the account page if not). **This step is required to properly activate the controller. If after logging in, you see a message that your license is expired, you may have to restart the console app to refresh the license.**

Step 5: configure the buttons and start adapter. Select 'Buttons…' from the menu, then press and hold each button and drag the highlighted button into the position which matches the label on the lanyard. **Don't forget to hit SAVE every now and then!**
To turn on the start adapter, plug in the starter cable and close the circuit between the two banana plugs with a metallic object such as a key or screwdriver (the start adapter will normally be turned on automatically by the starter). The start adapter goes into position 'Starter A'. If you do not have a starter, move the START button in the 'Starter A' position. See this video:
▶ How to configure Time Drops buttons .
If you purchased the Mini-Starter instead of the start adapter, turn it on by inserting the microphone cable into the K-style plug and press the small button on top of the microphone, then drag the Mini-Starter icon into the 'Starter A' position.
The system can be started from any device set up in the 'Starter' row, but you will see a message 'NO STARTER' or "BACKUP STARTER" unless there is a device configured and connected in the 'Starter A' column. This position is considered the primary start device.

Step 6: Configure your Meet Management System: Go to Settings, scroll down, and tap Meet Management. Select either Meet Manager or Meet Maestro. Here you can also configure other basic settings, such as the number of lanes and buttons in use, and other preferences.

Step 7: Go to your Meet Management laptop (Windows), and download the MM-Link app from the Microsoft Store: Microsoft Apps - Time Drops MM-Link. Please make sure to enable access through the Windows firewall for both 'private' and 'public' networks when prompted.

Step 8: create a data exchange folder (e.g. C:\TimeDrops) and select this folder in MM-Link.
NOTE: it is a good practice to start with an empty folder for each meet to avoid confusion (e.g. C:\TimeDrops\MeetOne, C:\TimeDrops\MeetTwo etc.). Either create a new folder, or move the contents of the existing folder to an archive location such as OneDrive, Google Drive, Dropbox or similar. It is also possible to use a folder on a cloud drive in the first place, which will automatically back up your meet files to the cloud.

The next steps depend on your specific Meet Management product. Please refer to either one of these videos:

Meet Maestro: ▶ Meet Maestro and Time Drops
Important: When you use Meet Maestro, you need to download the desktop version of Maestro, which is currently only available for Microsoft Windows computers. The web interface does not support timing system integration.

Meet Manager: ▶ Hy-Tek Meet Manager and Time Drops
Important: Meet Manager users need to purchase the Timing Console Interface license which is not part of the basic Meet Manager license.

Now you should be able to run your first meet!

This video will give you important information on how to set up the system and Wi-Fi at your pool: ▶ How to set up Wi-Fi for Time Drops
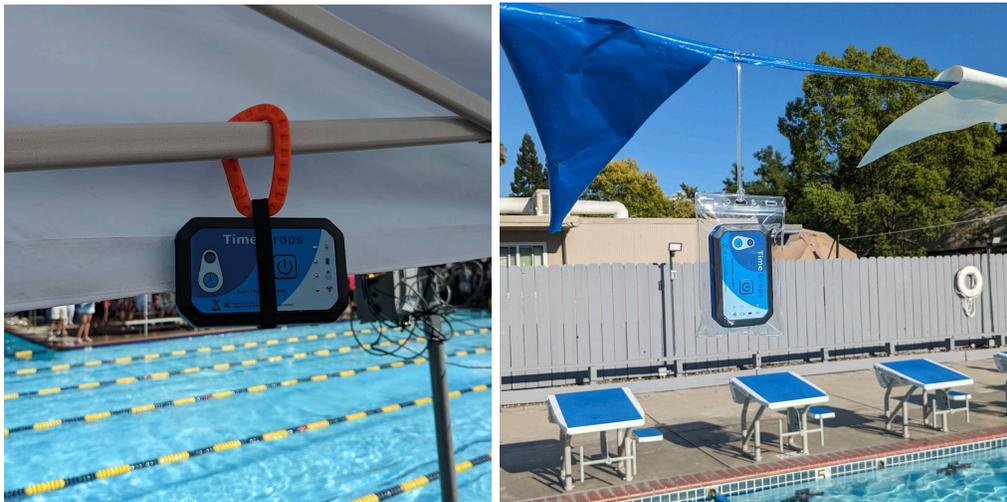This video will teach you the basics of how to use the Time Drops system:
 ▶ How to use Time Drops during a Meet

This link will take you to the complete user manual. It also has the instructions for the SBA-1 Legacy Scoreboard Adapter::
https://time-drops.com/manual

Here is a handy pre-meet checklist to make sure you don't forget anything when you are running a meet: https://time-drops.com/checklist.pdf

Hint: for best performance during a swim meet, we recommend to place the controller in an elevated position, **slightly away from metal**, with a clear line of sight to the timers. If there are significant obstructions (such as crowds of people) in the signal path, the system will still function but it may take occasionally longer for the results to arrive at the tablet. Please refer to the pictures below:

One more request: If you are happy with your Time Drops timing system, please consider adding a link to https://time-drops.com on your team web site. And, please don't forget to leave positive reviews in the App Store and on Google Play. It helps us spread the word about Time Drops.