Chapter Seven

Flowtime: a form of decimal time

Most people take our time system for granted. If someone asks "What time is it?" there usually isn't a lot of controversy about what system of time is being used. Nearly everyone worldwide uses a common system of time based on 24 hours in a day, 60 minutes per hour, and 60 seconds per minute. The only relativity that enters the picture is that the time is different depending on the time zone. So when it's 8:00 am in New York, for example, it's 1:00 pm in London.

The origins of our 24 hour clock go all the way back to the Egyptians and the Babylonians. The Egyptians divided the time from sunrise to sunset into ten hours of daylight. They also had two hours of twilight and twelve hours of night. This system goes back as far as 1300 B.C. The total is 24 hours per day, which we still have in our time-keeping systems today.

The origin of our minute and second goes back to the Babylonians. The Babylonians did their astronomical calculations in a base 60 system. The first fractional place in this base 60 system we now call a minute. The second fractional place in this system we now call a second.

It is amazing that, after 3300 years, we are still operating on a system of time that was invented long before technology, and 2600 years before the invention of mechanical clocks (around 1300). Today we have many reasons to divide time into smaller and smaller units. Flowtime recognizes this, and it offers a system of time that harmonizes much better with our numbering systems in other areas of life. Most of these are based on the idea of ten. Decimal systems are very intuitive because we have ten fingers, and people find counting to ten on their fingers to be very intuitive.

To see a flowtime clock, go to http://www.flowresearch.com/Flowtime/flowtime.htm

Flowtime: An alternative system based on decimal time

This article proposes an alternative time system based on decimal time. While there are clear advantages to having everyone be on the same time system, there are also some important advantages to a decimal time system. But first, what is the proposal?

The proposal for decimal time is to switch the counting of minutes and seconds from sixty divisions to 100 divisions. This proposal does not include any change in the number of hours per day. It only proposes to increase the number of minutes in one hour from 60 to 100. Likewise, it increases the number of seconds in a minute from 60 to 100.

To easily convert from oldtime to flowtime, take the minutes or seconds in regular time and multiply by 5/3 or 1.67. The result is the minutes or seconds in flowtime. The hour remains the same.

An easy way to make the conversion is as follows: Take the minutes or seconds in regular time and multiply that figure by 2/3. Then add that value to the regular time value, and you have the flowtime value. For example, if it's 1:15, take 2/3 of 15, which is 10. Add 10 to 15, and you have the flowtime of 1:25.

What are the implications of this? It means that, under flowtime, instead of the time being 1:30 pm, it will be 1:50 pm. Instead of 3:45 pm, the time will be 3:75 pm. See the end of this article for a comparison of relative times.

Why change to flowtime?

There are several good reasons for changing to flowtime:

1. **Flowtime divides time up into smaller quantities**. This gives people the potential of accomplishing more in the same period of time. Instead of 60 minutes per hour, there are now 100 minutes. Instead of 1440 minutes per day, there are now 2400 minutes per day. Instead of 3600 seconds in one hour, there are now 10,000 seconds per hour.

2. **The advent of digital time makes the base-60 method of measuring time obsolete.** When the only type of clocks were analog clocks, base-60 type clocks made more sense. With the advent of digital clocks, counting down from one minute 20 seconds to 59 seconds introduces a gap as the time reaches the one-minute mark. It would be more intuitive to go from 101 to 100 to 99 seconds, than to go from 1 minute 1 second to 1 minute 0 seconds to 59 seconds.

3. **Flowtime provides a more fine-grained analysis of time for sporting events.** A basketball or football game played on Flowtime would have that many more time parameters built into it. While it will not literally make the game last longer, the possibilities for additional plays is increased because the unit of time is smaller. The same idea applies in daily life.

4. **The advent of computers and other time-oriented equipment makes it necessary to measure time in every smaller chunks.** Computer time is now measured in nanoseconds. While we don't need to measure our ordinary time in nanoseconds, flowtime gives the option of having a more fine-grained analysis of time.

5. **Many time accounting systems are based on decimal time.** When I was at Commercial Union Insurance Cos. in the early 1980s, I had to fill out a timesheet accounting for every minute of my time. This was done on decimal time. So for example if I worked for 3 hours and 30 minutes on a project, I wrote in 3.5 hours for that project. I always had to make that conversion from flowtime to decimal time in filling out the

timesheet. Flowtime works much better with time accounting systems because it already is decimal time.

6. **Here's an analogy that will help explain the value of flowtime.** When I make coffee, I use a coffeepot that has markings for 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 cups. I usually make 5 cups. I have often wished that the coffeepot had marking for 3, 5, 7, and 9 cups, since I have to estimate what is halfway between 4 and 6. Flowtime is like a coffeepot with extra markings -- it enables you to measure time to a higher degree of precision.

Also imagine measuring with a ruler that only has the 1/4 inch and 1/2 inch markings on it. If you want to measure something that is 4 3/8 inches, you will have to estimate the halfway point between 4 1/4 and 4 1/2. If you then switch to a ruler that has the 1/8 and 1/16th points marked off, you can make a more precise measurement. Flowtime is like a ruler of time that gives you more precision than our current time system.

7. **Where's the payoff in this switch to flowtime?** Why does it matter what time system we use as long as everyone has the same one? **The payoff in switching to flowtime is that when you switch to flowtime, you will almost immediately become more productive.** The reason is quite simple. You have more minutes at your disposal. Let's say you have a group of tasks to do, like making three phone calls and writing two letters. Under regular time, you might give yourself 45 minutes to do these five tasks. Under flowtime, you have 75 minutes to work with. So you can allocate 20 minutes to the phone calls and 40 minutes to the letters, giving you a total of 60 flowtime minutes. You've saved 15 flowtime minutes, which is the same as 9 regular time minutes. Of course, the duration of 45 regular time minutes is the same as the duration of 75 flowtime minutes, but **psychologically you will work faster if you compress the amount of time you allow yourself to do a project**. Flowtime allows you to compress time because you have 100 minutes to work with while previously you had only 60.

How to convert to flowtime

You can begin the switch to flowtime by using the flowtime clock on this page and on the homepage of Flow Research at www.flowresearch.com. Begin to think in terms of 100-minute hours and 100 second minutes. You will be amazed at how much you can accomplish. Flowtime is here, and it is only a matter of time until it is widely adopted by those who understand its advantages!

You will also find it to be a valuable mental exercise to calculate flowtime in your head. In our age of calculators, we have too few occasions to exercise our mathematical skills. Computing flowtime in your head gives you a good way to build up your mathematical skills. Give yourself at least a week to make the mental shift over to flowtime.

Here are some useful links in case you want to read more about decimal time:

http://sergeizaytsev.com/dime/

http://www.bobulous.net/udt/

http://www.geocities.com/peacecrusader888/decimaltime.htm

http://www.sizes.com/time/decimal_time_units.htm

http://www.sagant.freeserve.co.uk/decimal1.htm

Note: If you look at these links, you will see that other proposals for decimal time also try to institute 10 hour or 20 hour days. It is my belief that this will not work, while using decimal time for minutes and seconds works very well. I am not aware of anyone else who has made this particular proposal.

The following table provides a minute by minute conversion from regular time to flowtime, using the 2:00 hour as an example.

In the table below, Flowtime is rounded off to the nearest minute. The same conversion can be used for any other hour.

See Flowtime Timetable as a standalone page (formatted to print on one page)

Regular Time	Flowtime	Regular Time	Flowtime
2:00	2:00	2:31	2:52
2:01	2:02	2:32	2:53
2:02	2:03	2:33	2:55
2:03	2:05	2:34	2:57
2:04	2:07	2:35	2:58
2:05	2:08	2:36	2:60
2:06	2:10	2:37	2:62
2:07	2:12	2:38	2:63
2:08	2:13	2:39	2:65
2:09	2:15	2:40	2:67
2:10	2:17	2:41	2:68
2:11	2:18	2:42	2:70
2:12	2:20	2:43	2:72
2:13	2:22	2:44	2:73
2:14	2:23	2:45	2:75
2:15	2:25	2:46	2:77
2:16	2:27	2:47	2:78
2:17	2:28	2:48	2:80
2:18	2:30	2:49	2:82
2:19	2:32	2:50	2:83
2:20	2:33	2:51	2:85

2:21	2:35	2:52	2:87
2:22	2:37	2:53	2:88
2:23	2:38	2:54	2:90
2:24	2:40	2:55	2:92
2:25	2:42	2:56	2:92
2:26	2:43	2:57	2:95
2:27	2:45	2:58	2:97
2:28	2:47	2:59	2:98
2:29	2:48	3:00	3:00
2:30	2:50	3:01	3:02

What do you think of flowtime? Would you like to make the switch from oldtime to flowtime? Let us know! Send an email to jesse@flowresearch.com, or use our Feedback Form.