

Flight Manager/Timer FM-0e

Description

This device provides timed throttle signals to an Electronic Speed Control (ESC) that powers an electric motor for control-line flight. Although not restricted to ½A airplanes, its simple operation (full throttle and a fixed flight time) are traditionally associated with the smallest airplanes, while still utilizing the advantages of electrical power: low noise, no clean-up, power reproducibility, and known flight time.

Connection

The FM-0e is powered through the middle (+5 volt) wire and the ground wire (one of the two outer wires) of the 3-wire connection to the ESC. The other outer wire carries the throttle information from the FM-0e to the ESC. (The ESC you use must include a BEC [Battery Eliminator Circuit] to provide this 5 volts, as most do.)

The **ground** wire from the ESC (brown or black wire) **must** be connected to the pin labeled by the “G” mark. If the connection is switched so that the other outer wire is connected to this pin, no damage will occur but the motor will not start. However, if you should accidentally connect just two leads to the three-pin connector, it is possible to reverse the power connections and destroy the timer.

Operation

When the battery is connected to the ESC and the ESC is connected to the FM-0e, the FM-0e sends a “throttle off” signal to the ESC and the ESC responds with (typically) a long beep and then short beeps corresponding to the number of LiPo cells detected, plus possibly additional information (melody?). After three seconds or more, the **Start** pushbutton on the FM-0e may be *momentarily* depressed, starting the timing sequence for flight.

To confirm for you that the timing sequence has begun, the FM-0e **blips** the motor one second after the button push. After seven (7) more seconds, the FM-0e increases the throttle signal to nearly full and the programmed flight time of 3.0 minutes begins.

During the flight, the throttle is further advanced, to full throttle by the end, to compensate for the normal decrease in battery voltage during the flight.

If the power *decreases* during the flight time, despite the full throttle, the probable cause is that the ESC has detected a minimum voltage for the battery pack (normally set to 3.0 volts/cell or 9.0 volts for a 3S LiPo battery) and it is trying to save your battery from being depleted too much, thereby reducing its useful lifetime. This could happen, for example, if the battery wasn't fully charged at the beginning, if the propeller has too much diameter or pitch, or if the proper propeller was used but the plane wasn't allowed to fly (the propeller loads up in a static situation because the angle of attack of the blades is so high).

End of flight time warning: When the flight time of three (3) minutes is reached, the power is reduced for one (1) second as a warning, power is returned to full for five (5) seconds, and then the power is shut off for landing.

Safety features

During the programmed “flight” time, you may **stop** the motor at any time by momentarily depressing the Start button. This is useful when testing the power unit in a new plane. It is also important to remember to do this if the propeller should try to cultivate some grass—but only the ESC can actually detect and automatically shut down the motor under this condition, hopefully by detecting a current overload or the motor overheating. (Let the motor and ESC cool down before attempting a restart.)

Thirty seconds after the power is shut off for landing, the signal to the ESC is changed from “throttle off” to zero volts, an additional insurance that the motor will not restart accidentally. In any case, plan to disconnect the battery from the ESC soon after landing, to minimize unnecessary current consumption.

If your battery is capable of providing two flights without drawing down more than **80%** of its mAh capacity (based on the charge you put back into it), you may make a second flight with the same battery but you will have to momentarily remove the connection to the battery to allow the FM-0e's processor to reboot, leading then to a repeat of the beeps from the ESC.

Mounting

Two good ways to attach the FM-0e to the fuselage are to use (a) hook and loop material (e.g., Velcro®) or (b) #2 wood screws.

