

I bought the timer shown in Fig. 5-1 about twenty years ago. Although the price has since risen to somewhere around \$35, it was \$14 when I bought it.[†]

After laying down my hard-earned teacher dollars, I took my new timer to the classroom and gladly retired my old, non-digital timer. What a welcome relief that was.

You see, in my early days of teaching, I had one of those white, circular, spin-the-face, tick-tick-tick-DING! kitchen timers.



FIG. 5-3
An old,
spin-the-
face kitchen
timer.

If you do happen to have one of these analog-type kitchen timers where you twist the circular dial and it ticks away the minutes, here's a suggestion: lose it, hit it with a hammer, or give it to a friend. Better yet, keep it in the kitchen where it works just great. For the classroom, you're going to need something a bit more functional.

Kitchen timers are okay, but they have a couple of drawbacks. For one, it made a loud ticking sound that got to be annoying. (Teachers have told me that they've actually had to put this type of timer in a drawer so that the ticking wouldn't bother their students!)

The other problem, which developed as the timer got older, was that the sound of the "Time's up!" bell got softer. That pathetic, little DING just wasn't loud enough to carry to the back of the room. And while we're at it, I dare you to set a kitchen timer for just one minute. You had to: 1) spin the dial past 5 minutes; and then 2) spin it back to the one minute mark. It was so sadly inaccurate for short time spans that "one minute" could be anywhere from 15 seconds to 115 seconds. You just never knew.

[†] Speaking from personal experience, buying a digital timer was, without a doubt, the best money I've spent in all my years of teaching. Fortunately, they've brought out some new models lately that are more affordable. I'll show you what I think is the best timer available in just a bit. It sells for \$15, and has a few advantages over the original version.