



Random Number System FAQ

Who should use the random number system?

There is no hard and fast rule about who should use the random number system. There are three principles to generally follow:

- Program sites that anticipate serving more than 100 households should use the random number system.
- In program sites where the average client wait time is 10 minutes or less, the random number system is not necessary.
- If you have no covered area for people to wait in line, the random number system makes it easy for people to use an alternate waiting area.

The Basics:

1. Everyone who shows up before the program start time gets a **random number**.
 - a. Coordinators should set aside and shuffle numbers equal to the amount of people they expect to show up BEFORE the program start time.
 - b. Any volunteers wanting to take food should take a number, or take food at the end of the distribution.
2. When the program starts, start calling numbers starting with the number 1, and moving up from there.
3. Anyone who arrives at the program after the program start time will get their numbers in order, starting with the first number that has not been randomized.
 - a. Example: if you randomized numbers 1-35 for early arrivals, this means anybody showing up after the start time should get number 36, then 37, and so on.
 - b. This means anyone who has arrived before the program start time will go before everyone who is late.



What advantages does the system have?

- **Short wait times:** We believe clients shouldn't have to wait in line for hours to get food. Handing out random numbers discourages people from showing up early, keeps average wait times below 15 minutes, and makes sure everyone has equitable access to the program.
- **No line needed:** When clients get a number, that means they don't have to wait in line – they can take a number, wait wherever they want (in their car, inside, under an awning, etc.), and come back at the program start time. No line also means there is no risk of accusations of cutting, no pushing or shoving, and no arguments about the line. This creates a safer environment for everyone.