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## Concept internals

# Timezones

OpenClaw standardizes timestamps so the model sees a **single reference time**.

## Message envelopes (local by default)

Inbound messages are wrapped in an envelope like:

```
[Provider ... 2026-01-05 16:26 PST] message text
```

The timestamp in the envelope is **host-local by default**, with minutes precision.

You can override this with:

```
{
  agents: {
    defaults: {
      envelopeTimezone: "local", // "utc" | "local" | "user" | IANA timezone
      envelopeTimestamp: "on", // "on" | "off"
      envelopeElapsed: "on", // "on" | "off"
    },
  },
}
```



`envelopeTimezone: "utc"` uses UTC.

`envelopeTimezone: "user"` uses `agents.defaults.userTimezone` (falls back to host timezone).

Use an explicit IANA timezone (e.g., `"Europe/Vienna"`) for a fixed offset.

`envelopeTimestamp: "off"` removes absolute timestamps from envelope headers.

`envelopeElapsed: "off"` removes elapsed time suffixes (the `+2m` style).

## Examples

### Local (default):

```
[Signal Alice +1555 2026-01-18 00:19 PST] hello
```

### Fixed timezone:

```
[Signal Alice +1555 2026-01-18 06:19 GMT+1] hello
```

### Elapsed time:

```
[Signal Alice +1555 +2m 2026-01-18T05:19Z] follow-up
```

## Tool payloads (raw provider data + normalized fields)

Tool calls ( `channels.discord.readMessages` , `channels.slack.readMessages` , etc.) return **raw provider timestamps**. We also attach normalized fields for consistency:

`timestampMs` (UTC epoch milliseconds)



`timestampUtc` (ISO 8601 UTC string)

Raw provider fields are preserved.

>

## User timezone for the system prompt

Set `agents.defaults.userTimezone` to tell the model the user's local time zone. If it is unset, OpenClaw resolves the **host timezone at runtime** (no config write).

```
{
  agents: { defaults: { userTimezone: "America/Chicago" } },
}
```

The system prompt includes:

Current Date & Time section with local time and timezone

Time format: 12-hour or 24-hour

You can control the prompt format with `agents.defaults.timeFormat` ( `auto` | `12` | `24` ).

See [here](#) for the full behavior and examples.

< Usage Tracking

Credits >

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