



STARTER INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

I. INTRODUCTION AND OPENING REMARKS

A. Introduction & sharing information

1. Introduce yourself - - Share contact information
2. Share Clinic documents.
3. Review the process that the apprentice will need to go through.
4. Share important Web sites;
USA Swimming Website: www.usaswimming.org

North Carolina Swimming Website: www.ncswim.org
5. USA Starters DVD (view after your apprenticeship) make sure you download the handout to go with it.
6. The Rules - from the USA swimming Rule Book

101.1 STARTS

102.14 STARTER

ARTICLE 105 GUIDELINES FOR OFFICIATING SWIMMERS WITH A DISABILITY

II. THE STARTER

- A. Purpose of the starter at any level is to ensure a fair start for all competitors.
- B. Requires undivided attention to performance
- C. Should be brief, poised, calm, professional, conversational and assertive.
- D. Invites the swimmers to swim rather than ordering them to do so

III. STARTING PROTOCOL

A. The basics

1. Referee signals swimmers to prepare to swim with a series of short whistles

- a) In order to move the meet along, it is appropriate for the Starter to announce "Heat x" after the short series of whistles, but before the Referee signals the swimmers to Step Up/In.
2. When the Referee is ready to start the next heat, he/she signals swimmers to step up on blocks or into the water with one long whistle blast
 - a) For backstroke, a second long whistle signals swimmers to return to the wall and place their feet.

If swimmers do not respond in a reasonable period of time, the Referee may indicate by arm motion to step up/in, or the Starter may announce "Step Up/In Please."

3. The Referee signals to the Starter with an outstretched arm that swimmers and officials are ready. The outstretched arm is maintained throughout the start. Once the Starter has control of the heat, there should be a pause.

Comment: The pause allows both the swimmers and the Starter to settle and the crowd noise to subside. The Starter raises his microphone at the "long whistle" as the heat steps up on the block, and "keys the microphone". This gives the starter plenty of time to prepare, relax and take a breath and quietly exhale prior to the Referee extending his/her arm. This will prevent the starter from proceeding too quickly with the start. When the microphone is keyed as the swimmers step up, the "click" of the key is not audible. The Starter must be careful not to "huff and puff" into the 'mike' since it is now "live."

4. The Starter waits until swimmers are settled, then requests that swimmers take their starting position with the phrase "Take your mark." No other words are spoken (this is the goal). This should be done in a conversational tone and manner. One should try to talk the swimmers down with one's voice in a conversational tone. A slight drop in pitch of your voice is all that is needed. Think of the phrase "close the door" or "pass the salt". "Singsong" instructions have been shown to have an adverse effect on swimmers and cause swimmers to bounce up and down or be more difficult to settle. Quick commands often cause swimmers to react faster than usual causing them to miss or lose their grasp of the block, Resulting in a false or poor start.

Be conversational – don't hurry the command...keep it relaxed!

5. When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter gives the starting signal.
6. After the start, rotate your head and/or body to observe the swimmers enter the water and as they surface, lower the microphone. The Starter must be certain that a fair start has occurred, and be prepared to take action if a recall of the heat is necessary. This motion should be natural and not robotic.

B. Pool session – practice

IV. OTHER COMMANDS AND PROTOCOLS

A. You're not comfortable with what is occurring after the starting command: say "Stand Up" Or "Stand Down" for backstroke. Be conversational and calm.

1. Swimmers taking too much time to assume starting positions
2. Swimmers do not settle into stationary positions relatively quickly
3. Loud noise, flash or other disturbance occurs
4. Swimmer loses his/her grip on the block
5. Be patient with swimmers; do not use this command too often.

B. After the first "Stand Up," pause to let the swimmers get readjusted. Then repeat the command "take your mark."

C. If you stand the heat up twice, give the command to "Step down" or "Stand down." and with the Referee's concurrence, approach the swimmer in question and instruct him/her. Avoid singling out a particular swimmer on the blocks and admonishing him or her. Let swimmers relax while off the blocks, the Referee should blow a

“long whistle” for the swimmers to step up once again.

PAUSE, then give the “take your mark” command.

D. If you have to stand the heat up again for the same swimmer, step them down and recommend to the Referee that the swimmer be disqualified for delay of meet.

E. False starts – No Recall procedures

1. If a false start occurs, the Starter allows the race to proceed and writes down (or circles the lane number on a heat sheet) the lane or lanes that false started. The Referee independently writes down the lane he/she observed to false start. The race is ***not*** recalled but the Starter initiates the false start process by asking if the Referee has a possible false start. They then compare notes without discussion. If they concur, a false start is charged, the disqualification form written, and the swimmer is notified at the conclusion of the race by the Referee (or designated official). Without dual confirmation...there is no false start.
2. If a swimmer leaves his/her mark prior to the start signal and the Starter has time to give the “Stand Up” command, no starting signal shall be given and the offending swimmer is disqualified by the Referee after confirming the lane with the Starter.
3. The Starter may recall a heat for unusual circumstances, such as a lane line break, sudden noise interfering with the start signal, or anything that may affect fair conduct of the race.
4. If a race is instinctively or accidentally recalled by the Starter, no false start can be charged and the heat shall be restarted.

F. Starting Swimmers with Disabilities

See Article 105.

G. Miscellaneous

1. All doubts and questions go in favor of the swimmer.
2. Be very patient. Treat all heats and all events with the same courtesy and professionalism. Once the swimmers are on the blocks, forget the time line. Be calm and consistent with each heat.
3. Maintain good deck perspective – you are the Referee’s second set of eyes and ears.

4. Don't be critical of other officials or their decisions at any time, on or off the deck.
5. Do not discuss false starts, recalls or DQs with coaches, parents or swimmers. Direct all questions, complaints and problems to your deck Referee.
6. Focus and concentrate on your events. Watch and observe other starters as an educational observation for yourself.
7. Before every session, check the blocks, flags, starting system, speakers, recall rope, Review Heat Sheet and know if there are any breaks or if Timers are moving or if you will have any handicapped swimmers. etc.
8. Wear a professional looking uniform, check with meet referee for appropriate attire.

Comment: Every starter should have a pre-meet checklist.

INSTRUCTOR ADMINISTRATION:

- Notify Head of Starter Apprentice program via e-mail of who took the clinic, the date of the clinic, Instructor's name, any comments you may want to make.

V. SITUATIONS

- A. After the Starter gives the starting command, there is a delay because one swimmer does not become motionless.
- B. One swimmer is not motionless when the starting device is activated. The starter does not record the Lane as false starting. The referee observed the motion.
- C. A swimmer steps up on the starting block and:
 - 1. Places both feet at the back of the starting platform.
 - 2. Assumes a track start position, with one foot placed at the front end of the starting block.
- D. Following the command “take your mark,” one swimmer remains standing upright on the starting platform.
- E. Following the starting signal, one swimmer remains on the starting platform.
- F. A swimmer requests permission to start in the water for an event requiring the forward start.
- G. At “take your mark,” a swimmer waits until everyone is down before beginning to assume the starting position.
- H. At “take your mark,” the swimmer in Lane 2 intentionally slaps the side of the starting platform and the swimmer in Lane 3 rolls and enters the water.
- I. In the backstroke, after the command, “Stand please,” a swimmer slowly swims a few strokes before returning to the starting end, delaying the start.

VI. TRAINING/RECERTIFICATION

- A. Required additional reading:
 - 1. “The Starter - Protocol and Philosophy”, can be accessed at USA Swimming website under Volunteers/Officials/Training Resources.
- B. Apprenticeship Sessions and Recertification
(Refer to the NCS website for the officials’ certification guidelines)

NOTE: Make training an on-going experience by talking with experienced officials, officiating at sessions other than your child’s, attend Championship meets, etc.