



# Technique Tips: Forward Starts

Even though we are out of the water, we can all be thinking about the keys to good forward starts! This sheet has tips from your coaches along with links to training videos that you can watch to learn even more. **DO NOT practice starts in your home or neighborhood pool!!!** Use these tips to visualize and think about your form so when we return to practice you can work on your starts safely under coach supervision.

## Behind the blocks

It can be SUPER noisy behind the blocks, which may interfere with your ability to hear the starter and have the best start possible. Be sure to take time during previous heats to listen to the starter. Note:

- How quiet/loud the speakers and beeps are.
- How fast/slow the starter asks swimmers to take their marks and then start the beep.

If there is a wedge on your starting block, make sure it is adjusted to the proper position for you BEFORE stepping up. The official will blow a series of short whistles as the previous heat finishes. This is your cue to be near the block.

When the previous heat is done, the official will blow one long whistle. That's your signal to step up.

Before you step up, have your cap, goggles, and suit already adjusted. You don't want to have to make changes while on the blocks and listening for the start.

## Stepping up and getting set

Get your feet set. They should be a hand's width apart front to back and side to side.

- Front foot with toes curled over the front edge of the block.
- If there is a wedge, your ball and toes of your back foot should be centered on it. Your heel should be in the air.

Bend down in a relaxed position, arms dangling by the front of the block, hips high. Eyes should be looking down at your front foot.

Focus on listening to the starter's commands. When the starter gives the "take your mark" command, get into the start position:

- Grasp the front of the block with all four fingers. Thumbs should be in line with your index finger, NOT resting on the block. Hands should be shoulder width apart, wrists straight, palms off the block.
- Load your arms: pull yourself slightly into the block, elbows pointing behind you. Flatten your back if it was more rounded when you were bending down relaxed.
- Keep your hips high and your weight evenly distributed on the balls of both feet. Concentrate on your hips because the power comes from your center of gravity to move you OUT over the water, rather than up.



## GO!

After you hear the beep:

- Push with both legs as hard as you can, making sure to squeeze your glutes, hamstrings, and calves, and point your toes. Remember the power comes from your center of gravity (hips).
- Shoot your hands forward in a straight line and into a tight streamline position, with your head squeezed under your arms, between your biceps.
- Execute your entry so that your entire body goes through the same imaginary "hole" in the water. Don't go too deep!
- Once you enter the water, flatten your entry angle by bending at the hips to achieve a flat forward-motion position. Start your underwater dolphin kicks or pullout.

## Videos: Putting it all together

Dave Durden (Cal Head Men's Coach) on starts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7b8Z88YsCOK>

3 steps to learn a competitive start: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z65Tr-nWoEs>

Starts - flatten Your back: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytBLiPeFRpg>

Improve sprint freestyle starts with two Olympic medalists! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8XBLq8cN5Y>

Dressel & Schooling in slow motion (2016 NCAA championships): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kW-wUUEkSVs>