



2017

Illinois Swimming
Starter Training

Illinois Swimming Starter Training Clinic

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Welcome!

Why are we here?

What are we going to do?

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Clinic Outline

Being A Good Starter

Starting Rules and Protocols

Fundamentals of Starting

The False Start

Other Starting Situations

Training and Certification

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General Officiating Philosophy

Officials maintain the fair and equitable conditions of competition to promote uniform conditions ensuring no swimmer has an advantage over another

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What Does This Mean to a Starter?

- Success depends on the integrity, knowledge, concern and regard for the athletes
- One set of rules applies to all swimmers
- Swimmers get the benefit of the doubt
- We do not judge style
- Demonstrate impartiality and professionalism

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Being a Good Starter

What makes a good starter?

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Being a Good Starter



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Being a Good Starter

Do not underestimate how much swimmers react to you outside of the start process. They notice when you are agitated, when you seem distracted, and when you are not paying attention.

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Starting Rules and Protocols

Starting: The Rule (101.1.2)

- A. At the commencement of each heat, the Referee shall signal to the swimmers by a short series of whistles to remove all clothing except for swimwear, followed by a long whistle indicating that they should take and maintain their positions on the starting platform, the deck, or in the water. In backstroke and medley relay events, at the Referee's first long whistle, the swimmers shall immediately enter the water and at the second long whistle shall return without undue delay to the starting position.
- B. When the swimmers and officials are ready, the Referee shall signal with an outstretched arm to the Starter that the swimmers are under the Starter's control.

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Starting Rules and Protocols

Starting: The Rule (101.1.2)

- C. On the Starter's command "take your mark," the swimmers shall immediately assume their starting position, in the forward start, with at least one foot at the front of the starting platform or the deck.
- Swimmers starting in the water must have at least one hand in contact with the wall or starting platform.
 - When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.
- D. When a swimmer does not respond promptly to the command "take your mark," the Starter shall immediately release all swimmers with the command "stand up" upon which the swimmers may stand up or step off the blocks.

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Fundamentals of Starting

Basic Elements of Delivering a Good Start

- It is your responsibility to ensure a fair start for all athletes in a heat.
- Experience is the only teacher.
- Patience at each step is the best tool
- Be willing to admit mistakes
- Expect the unexpected

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Fundamentals of Starting

Basic Elements of Delivering a Good Start

- Understand your equipment and be comfortable with the microphone
- Find your “spot”
- Do not be a robot
- Observe the heat behind the block
- Watch swimmers onto the blocks
- Let swimmers tell you when they are ready for Take Your Mark (TYM)

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Fundamentals of Starting

“Take your mark”

The
Starter’s
Vocabulary

- Three very important words
- Strive for a conversational tone
- Learn to practice the words away from the pool

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Fundamentals of Starting

The
Starter’s
Vocabulary

- Refer to swimmers as “Ladies” and “Gentlemen”; use “Please” and “Thank you”
- If a stand is necessary (both forward and backward starts): “Stand please”
- If asked to step swimmers off blocks: “Ladies/Gentlemen, step down please”
- If asked to clear pool: “Thank you, Ladies/Gentlemen”
 - If more instruction needed: “Ladies/Gentlemen, please clear the pool.”
- ONLY use “Relax please, Ladies/Gentlemen” for a prolonged delay

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Fundamentals of Starting

Understand Your Equipment

- Many different kinds of equipment in use
 - Become familiar with quirks and restrictions
 - Pre-meet check
 - Make friends with your microphone
 - How do you sound, how does the start button feel, how much cord do you have to manage
 - Let it do the amplifying
 - Speak normally and calmly
 - Check the starting blocks
- Always check equipment ahead of a session

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Fundamentals of Starting

- Position yourself on the deck so that all swimmers can be clearly and individually viewed
 - Experiment to be ready for different situations
 - Think *perspective* and *peripheral* vision
 - Within approximately 5m of start end
- You pick first referee adjusts to your position
 - Be sure to be able to see hand



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Fundamentals of Starting

Watching the Next Heat

- Check for swimmers behind each block
- Look for any potential problems
 - Missing swimmers
 - Confused timers
 - Cap or goggle malfunctions
- Be an extra set of eyes for the referee
- Be calm, smile
 - You only *think* they are not looking at you
- Be ready for a long whistle
 - Hold microphone and cord in a relaxed way

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Fundamentals of Starting

Athletes Behind the Blocks

- “What lane am I in?”
- “Who are all these people?”
- “I can’t hear a thing.”
- “Hope the blocks aren’t slippery.”
- “When do I step up?”
- “Will my goggles stay on?”



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Fundamentals of Starting

Watching Athletes onto the Blocks

- Be ready to start at the long whistle
 - Microphone in place
- Stay focused on the field
 - Between two center lanes, with peripheral vision
- Know when you've been given the heat by referee
 - Use your peripheral vision
- Read the athletes
 - Are they ready to swim?
- Take a breath



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Fundamentals of Starting

Athletes on the Blocks

- "Okay, I'm up here"
- "Let me get up here – it's my heat"
- "Wow, these blocks are high – and slippery"
- "Time for a few claps, a goggle check and a deep breath"
- "How DOES Michael Phelps swing his arms like that?"
- "Will I be able to hear?"
- "Mr. Referee, there's a swimmer left in my lane!"
- "Wait, wait – I need to check my goggles"



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Fundamentals of Starting

“Take Your Mark”

- Invite the swimmers into their starting positions
 - Relaxed
 - Conversational
 - No jerks or lalts
 - Save the songs
 - Don't ask, tell
 - Don't yell (you have a microphone!)
- Are they ready to swim?
 - Allow swimmers time to get into their positions
 - At least one foot at front of block
 - Be patient
 - A second or two here will reap dividends down the line

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Starting Rules and Protocols

- A stationary swimmer establishes a vertical plane at the **front** of the block



The Stationary Swimmer

- Breaking that plane (forward or backward, up or down) before the starting signal = false start
- Watch for movement relative to that plane
 - Not twitching muscles, back feet, wiggly butts, etc.
 - Non-disqualifiable motion

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Fundamentals of Starting

Are The
Athletes
Ready?

- No
 - “Stand, please” or “Stand, please, ladies”
 - Take a breath, “TYM”
- Still no?
 - “Stand, please. Ladies (Gentlemen), step down, please”
 - Regroup, “Step up please” (or long whistle)
 - Take a breath, “TYM”
- Still no?
 - “Stand, please. Step down, please”
 - Confer with referee

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Fundamentals of Starting

Are The
Athletes
Ready?

- Yes
 - Launch!
- Follow the field into the water to be certain the start is fair
 - If yes, step out of the immediate starters area and begin preparations for the next heat
 - Talk to the referee ONLY if you have a potential false start
 - Your work is done for that heat; begin to focus on the next behind the blocks
 - If no, recall the race

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Fundamentals of Starting

Back to Some
Basic Ideas

- Use the “stand” command sparingly
- Stay calm
- Trust the swimmers to settle
 - A prompt response is required
 - But not “Come down together”
 - We are not synchronized swimming



Starting Rules and Protocols

Flyover
Starts

- While starts shouldn't change, you may need to adapt your pre-race routine
 - Stay focused on **your** job
 - Have mic ready at the long whistle
 - Take “that breath” as you raise the mic
 - Be ready to start when the heat is handed over to you
 - But, be sure the swimmers are ready



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Fundamentals of Starting

Back Facing Starts

- Find your position
- “Take your mark”
- Read the swimmers
 - They come up, and often need to settle back down
 - Be patient!
 - “Stand, please” or “stand, please, ladies/gentlemen”



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Fundamentals of Starting

Starters are Communicators

- Know your audience
 - Walk in their flip flops
- Know your body language
 - It’s more than three words!
 - Lots of non-verbal stuff going on
- Read the swimmers’ body language
 - Be invited into swimmers’ communication space
- Trust your swimmers
 - They will tell you when they are ready!



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Starting Rules and Protocols

Basic Thoughts of Starting

You are not proactively doing anything.

You are acknowledging when the swimmers are ready for take “your mark”

You are acknowledging when the heat is ready to start

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Starting Video

USA Swimming Starter Video

<http://www.usaswimming.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabId=2775&Alias=Rainbow&Lang=en>

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The False Start

The False
Start, by
the Rules

- The rules state... “When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal” (101.1.2.C) and “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and **confirms** the Starter’s observation” (101.1.3A).

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The False Start

False
Start
Prior to
the Start
Signal

- Before the starting signal
 - Stand the heat, step it down
 - Indicate a lane on your heat sheet
 - Alert referee “I have a potential false start”
 - If dual confirmed, notify the swimmer

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The False Start

False
Start with
the Start
Signal
Given

- After the starting signal
 - Follow the heat into the water to be certain you have a fair start
 - Indicate on your heat sheet the potential lane(s)
 - Circle lane or write lane in margin
 - Notify the referee “I have a potential false start”
 - Referee should walk out of starting area; go to him/her
 - Do NOT say “Did you see/have anything” or carry on extended conversation
 - Compare sheets without discussion
 - If confirmed, DQ is written and swimmer notified
 - If not confirmed, start to prepare for the next heat

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The False Start

Scenario
1

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The starting signal is then given. The race proceeds and, assuming the Starter observed the early start and the Deck Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation, the offending swimmer is disqualified at the conclusion of the race. Rule 101.1.3B applies.

This is a false start.

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The False Start

Scenario 2

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. Starter says absolutely nothing, and the swimmer fails to halt the forward motion and goes into the pool. Rule 101.1.3A applies.

This is a false start.

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The False Start

Scenario 3

Exactly the same facts as #2 above, but this time the Starter says "stand please" after the swimmer leaves the set or stationary position. The seven other swimmers stand or step down from the blocks. The offending swimmer struggles, but once again is unable to halt the forward motion and falls into the pool. Unlike scenario #2 above, here the starter said "stand please", but that does not change the false start result. The rule is clear that the "stand" command is for the benefit of the other swimmers on the starting blocks. When the stand command is issued, the athletes have the option of standing or stepping off the blocks. The offending swimmer did neither. He fell into the pool just like the swimmer in scenario #2. Rule 101.1.3A applies.

This is a false start.

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The False Start

Scenario 4

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, this time when the command “stand please” is issued, the offending swimmer struggles, but is able to stand or step off the blocks. Rule 101.1.3A applies.

This is NOT a false start.

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The False Start

Scenario 5

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, when the Starter gives the “stand please” command, a swimmer(s) other than the offending swimmer instantly bolts from the blocks and enters the water. Rule 101.1.3D applies. The swimmer(s) clearly started in reaction to the “stand” command.

This is NOT a false start.

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The False Start

Scenario 6

The swimmer, upon hearing the command “take your mark” starts down to take a set or stationary position. The swimmer loses his/her balance before coming set and falls into the pool. Rule 101.1.2C applies. The swimmer should be given the opportunity to come to his/her set or stationary position prior to the start. A loss of balance prevented that, and clearly this swimmer never engaged in any starting action.

This is NOT a false start.

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The False Start

Scenario 7

What about the scenario where the Starter gives the "take your mark" command and all the swimmers come down and take a set position. Prior to the starting signal, a swimmer initiates a starting movement which the Starter sees but instead of standing the heat up, the Starter waits just a moment allowing that swimmer to reset prior to the starting signal. Surely this is not what we would like to see in this situation (prefer the Starter to stand the heat up). However, is this still a false start?

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Other Starting Situations

Timer's Meeting

Conduct the timers' meeting

- Carry copy of timers' brief with you
 - Refer to this, don't read it
- Identify head timer, find equipment, know how many watches and buttons, if flyover starts will be used, will timers have responsibilities to ring bells

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Other Starting Situations

Taking Order of Finish

- Ideally, this task will be assigned to the next-up starter
 - Starter should stay focused on "starting"
- Stand toward the finish end of pool, slipping in and out for OOF without disturbing starter getting ready for next start
- Record lanes as they finish
 - Use a designated heat sheet OR Order of Finish form
- If you miss the middle lanes, don't give up – record the last finishing swimmers
 - Table will appreciate any and all data
- Find a system that works for you – watch then write, write while watching, make the lanes a "phone number," etc.

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Other Starting Situations

Counting Lengths, Ringing Bells

In distance events (500y and up; 800m and up)

- Track swimmer's laps, much as you would take order of finish
 - Help referee keep counters accurate, watch for timers to stand at finish
- Sound a device (bell, air horn) over the lane of the lead swimmers when there are two laps plus five yards to go (backstroke flags)

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Other Starting Situations

The Starter Referee Team

- Find positions that work for both of you; choreograph if necessary
- Find out how ref would like you to point out empty lanes in next heat, or cap/goggle/suit issues
- Determine when and how deck referee wishes you to speak to swimmers beyond TYM
 - When to clear pool
 - When to step up
 - Many refs will want to ask you to give these commands rather than your initiating them

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Other Starting Situations

Starting Swimmers With Physical Disabilities

- May need more time getting on the blocks
- May need more time assuming starting position
- May start in the water or on deck, or may sit on the starting platform
- May need more time to get out of the pool
- Be patient
- Focus, but don't fixate
- Try not to create situations where the heat should be stood
- Hold the same expectations

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Other Starting Situations

Starting Blind Swimmers

- May need help getting to the blocks, getting up on the blocks
- May want to be in a lane closer to the speaker to hear the start
- May need an assistant to let them know when to start

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Other Starting Situations

Starting Deaf Swimmers

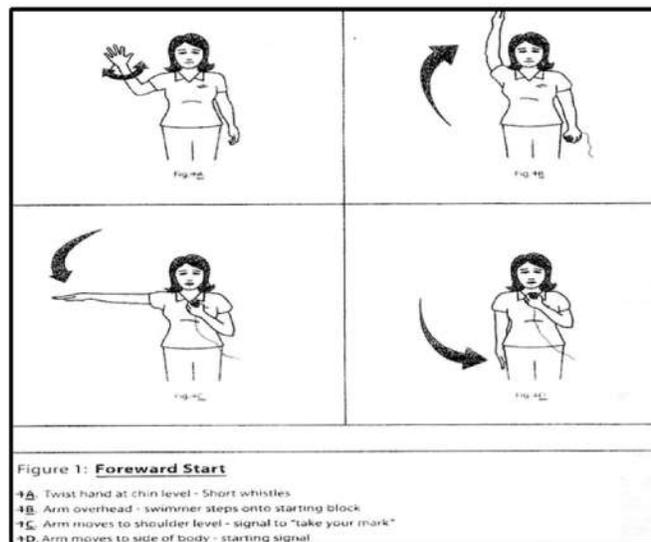
- May want to change lanes to see strobe better
- Starter shall use hand signals (See Rule 105)
 - May have coach or assistant using signals on other side of pool or behind blocks
- Referee should be positioned close to starter for better communication

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Other Starting Situations

Hand Signals for Forward Starts

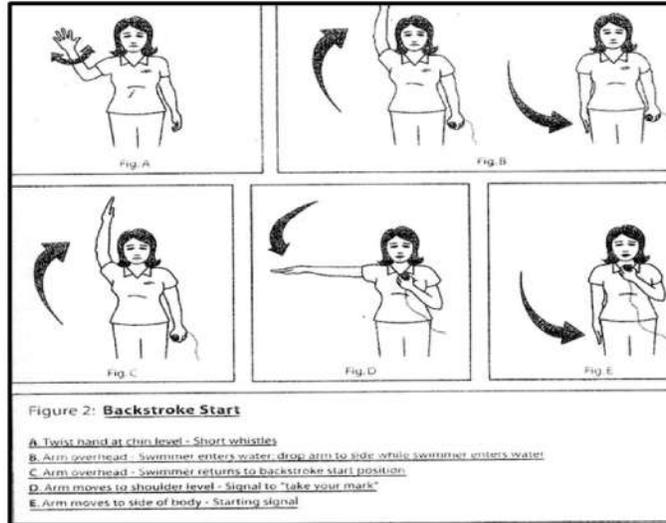


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Other Starting Situations

Hand
Signals for
Forward
Starts



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Some
Great
Advice
for
Starters

“There is a lesson to be learned from every start.....Learn the lesson – forget about the start.”

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Other Starting Situations

Timelines and Starters

Deck Referees are responsible for managing the timeline for a session

- Starters can help by being ready, patient
 - Adapt pre-race routine to be ready
- Forcing the starts does not speed up the meet
 - ***Every start should be calm, inviting, unrushed***
- Starter could suggest the referee whistle swimmers up earlier
 - The kids tell us when they are ready (do not force starts)

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Training and Certification

Online Test

Testing will require the current USA Swimming rulebook

Your mini rulebook will work

Consult the full rulebook .pdf for Masters

Swimming questions (and answers)

This is available on the USAS website

Consider printing the entire test and taking it offline

The test will be the same when you log in to your OTS account

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Training and Certification

Online Test

- The USA-S online testing system is not available from April 15 - May 1 (generally) each year for updating
- Testing after May 1 will require the current year USA Swimming rulebook, prior to April 15 the prior year.

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Training and Certification

On Deck Training

- Five on-deck training sessions
 - At three different meets
 - With at least two different trainers
- NOTE:
 - Sessions must be at least **two hours** (swim event time), include **all strokes** and have **at least 25 heats**
 - All on-deck trainers must be **certified** in the position at least 12 months
- Be aware of policy regarding out-of-LSC training
 - See website

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Training and Certification

For your training sessions...

On Deck Training

- Try to contact the Meet Referee in advance to see if good training can be accomplished
- Always carry your Officials Certification Card
 - Printed from Officials Tracking System
 - You will be asked to show this to the Meet Referee
- Seek excellent, experienced deck mentors
- Get feedback! Always try to improve
- Bring a copy of the on deck training card with you to each training session
- Bring your previously completed cards so your trainer can see what you have done or what needs work

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Training and Certification

Some Thoughts on Training

On Deck Training

- Do not expect “P” as your grade right out of the box. We grow into officiating, and the jobs are iterative – doing them over and over is what makes us good.
- Your session will count as long as your trainer doesn’t indicate it should not for some reason, regardless of the “P” “I” “N” marks
- Ask as many questions as you can of your trainers.
- It is not uncommon for referees to need more than 6 training sessions

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Training and Certification

Submitting
Paperwork

1. When you are finished with your training sessions, scan (or photograph) your complete set of cards.
2. Complete the Certification Requirements Checklist. Send scan along with scans of training cards to
ilswimofficials@ilswim.org
Do not send to the ISI Office!
3. All forms available on the Illinois Swimming website in the officials section.

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Training and Certification

Renewing your certification

- Renew membership with ISI and USA Swimming each year
 - Calendar year
 - Athlete Protection Training every two years
- Keep Level II Background Check current
 - Good for two years from date of submission
- Take on-line recertification tests in even years
 - Or, go to a recertification clinic
- Work a minimum of 10 sanctioned meet sessions every year to recertify
 - Your training sessions will count
 - Calendar year

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Training and Certification

Go to as many meets as you can, work away from home!

Notify the meet referee you are coming if you can
(Meet Packets or pre-meet emails)

Feel free to walk in

Just bring your card and be in uniform!

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Training and Certification

- Things seem to be happening very quickly when you are learning
- Being a good starter takes practice:
 - The more you do it the easier it becomes
 - It seems to “slow down”
 - Work on different decks – away meets, Regionals, State Championships

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Training and Certification

- Illinois Swimming Inc. website: www.ilswim.org
 - Officials Page
 - Training forms
- USA Swimming website: www.usaswimming.org
 - Officials Tracking System (OTS)
 - Testing
 - Education and Certification
 - Situations and Resolutions and rule interpretations
 - Forms
 - Rule book (for Masters questions on test)
 - NEW VIDEOS!

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Training and Certification

Ask Anything!

- Use all resources available
 - Other officials
 - Referees
 - Area Officials Reps
 - Officials Chair and Officials Committee
 - ilswimofficials@ilswim.org

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ISI Officials Committee

Committee Chair	Brett Cumberland bdcumberland@comcast.net
Training/Instruction	Jack Yetter yetter96@gmail.com
Clinic Operations	Mike Parker mikeparker33@gmail.com
Communications	Darren Christian decwin@live.com
Championship Meets	Ann Widdowson widsona@gmail.com
Advancement/Retention/Recruitment	Dave Johnson Johnson_dmj@hotmail.com
Certification/Registration	Rome Yount rbyount@comcast.net

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Area Reps

Area	Description	Representative & Contact Info	Area Teams
1	South of IL-17	Scott Penland (BNY) scottpenland5077@comcast.net (H) 309-663-6470 (M) 309-826-3061	BNSC, BNY, DDST, DOCS, DRGN, DSC, FFSC, HEAT, JAXY, LYNX, OCS, QFY, PAWW, RED, SBD, SPY, SST, SUSA, UOFI
2	South Suburban	Tim Lehman (BBSC) tbonelehman@yahoo.com 815-370-6780	BBSC, BSA, CSAT, CSSC, CWAC, EASC, GILS, HFSC, HWSA, JAMS, JETS, JPD, LHSC, LPD, LWSA, NAC, OFSA, OLSA, PASS, POSA, RASC, TPT
3	Chicago/ Collar Suburbs	Mark Daniel (EST) mwdaniel@sbcglobal.net	CHMP, CLSC, CPD, GSC, EST, EXPR, HOSC, HSC, IGSC, KNAC, LACS, LTIL, LYON, MANN, MDWY, RBSC, TOPS, TST, UICA, ULT, WEST, WAY, WYAC
4	West Suburban/ Fox Valley	Dan Clasen (WCS) dan.clasen@sbcglobal.net 630-881-1772	ACAD, BRRY, DLTA, ECST, ELY, FOX, HTSW, MAVS, NAPY, SCST, WCS, WHTN, WSCS
5	Northwest IL	Becky Menso (PALA) menso2000@yahoo.com	AA, BLFN, BSC, BTS, DCST, DUND, EMSC, FAST, MBLM, MIMAC, MSSC, ORCA, PALA, PPD, RMSC, SAGE, SPD, SSSC, WDST
6	Northeast IL	Marcia Srivastava (NTSC) marcia.srivastava@gmail.com	BDSC, BLUE, CATS, COHO, DPRC, GA, GTAC, HPAC, LATT, LEAN, LFSC, MMSC, MYST, NTSC, NU, PAC, SCT, SWAQ, WILD, WOSO, YWFF

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Starter On Deck Training Certification Card

TRAINEE NAME: _____ CLUB: _____ DATE: _____
 MEET: _____ MEET SESSION # _____ TRAINING SESSION #: _____
 Rating System: P= Proficient to perform unsupervised; I = Improved during session but still needs more training and experience, x= Failed to satisfactorily perform necessary functions; N/A = Not observed or not applicable.

SKILL OBSERVED	RATING	COMMENTS
Deck position		
Calm, conversational "Take your mark"		
Ability to "read" (i.e., take cues from and respond to) swimmers		
Patience, poise, confidence		
Can identify a false start and follow protocols for dual confirmation		
Understands and uses other commands appropriately (e.g., Stand, please)		
Professional manner and team work		
In position prior to each heat; comfortable holding mic and cord		
Ability to handle fly-over and/or chase starts		
Can take an accurate order of finish		
Checks equipment pre-meet and pre-session		
Understands guidelines for starting disabled swimmers		
Conducts effective timers meeting.		

Should this session count toward the training requirement? YES or NO (Circle One) If no, please add another session to training

What can you tell the committee about this session and the work done by the trainee, and what should the trainee focus on going forward?

TRAINER: _____ CLUB: _____ EMAIL or PHONE: _____

MEET REFEREE NAME: _____ SESSION START/FINISH TIME: _____/_____/_____

(Training must be done over 5 sessions at 3 meets with at least 2 different trainers, each who have at least 12 months certification as Starter)



Certification Requirements Checklist

Complete and email with scans/pictures of all on deck training cards to ilswimofficials@ilswim.org

Official's Name:		Club:	
Official's Email Address:			

I am applying for certification at the following level:

<input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Official	<input type="checkbox"/> Starter
<input type="checkbox"/> Stroke and Turn Judge	<input type="checkbox"/> Referee

Online Test Results:

	Test Name	Date Taken (mm/dd/yy)	Test Score (%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Certification – Administrative Official		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Certification – Stroke & Turn/Timer		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Certification – Starter		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Certification - Referee		

For Administrative Officials who took the earlier (Timer/Timing Judge/Clerk of Course) test series:

	Test Name	Date Taken	Test Score
<input type="checkbox"/>	Certification – Clerk of Course		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Certification – Timer		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Certification – Timing Judge		

Summary of On Deck Evaluations:

#*	Date (mm/dd/yy)	Meet	Meet Session # of # Total (x/y)	Trainer	Start Time	Finish Time
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

*Session requirements:

- ✓ Training sessions at all levels must be at least two (2) hours in length, have all four strokes contested (IM counts as four strokes) and have a minimum of 20 heats.
 - *Administrative Official:* Three (3) training sessions required from 2 meets, one at a multi-session meet, with at least 2 different trainers.
 - *Stroke and Turn Judge:* Four (4) training sessions required from 3 meets with at least 2 different trainers.
 - *Starter:* Five (5) training sessions required from 3 meets with at least 2 trainers, with 25 starts minimum at each session
 - *Referee:* Six (6) training sessions required from 4 meets with at least 3 trainers.
- ✓ Training sessions done outside of our LSC with a certified trainer from another LSC shall not exceed 50% of evaluations.
- ✓ All trainers must have a minimum of 12 months certified in the position being trained (time as a trainee does not count), except referee trainers who must have been certified in position for 24 months. One of 5th or 6th DR training session done with individual on the approved list on the ISI website.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR TIMERS

- Timing is one of the most important positions at the meet. Your input is always needed to determine a swimmer's Official Time. Watch times are used more than you think. When there is a bad touch, the computer acts up or there is some other problem, the Administrative Official uses the watch times to verify the accuracy of the pad or the buttons, and to make decisions about whether a time needs adjustment.
- You are an Official of the meet. *Do not text or use cell phones during the meet.* Ask the Chief Timer for relief if you need to do so. No cameras, cell phone cameras, or other recording devices are allowed behind the blocks at any time. *If you observe camera use behind the blocks,* notify the Chief Timer or the nearest Official, who then will notify the Deck Referee.
- You may operate a button/plunger and/or a watch, but may never operate two buttons/plungers or two watches at the same time for the same lane.
- Become familiar with the watch you will be using at the meet. In particular, know which button starts, stops and clears (resets) the watch. Start and stop the watch with the same finger, preferably your index finger.
- The Chief Timer will assign each timer to a specific lane and designate one timer per lane as the Heat Lane Timer/Recorder.
- The Head Lane Timer should check-in each swimmer, preferably by asking for the swimmer's name. For relays, the team and the order in which the swimmers compete should be checked.
- Be respectful of the swimmer's preparation for a race and do not engage in unnecessary conversation.
- Prior to the race you should be sitting or standing (if no chairs are provided) far enough back so you will not distract the starter or competing swimmers.
- A short set of whistles means that the current heat is finishing, and that the next heat of swimmers should be behind the blocks and ready to swim. Swimmers will step up onto the blocks on the long whistle. Please allow them to do so.
- At the start, focus on the starting device (strobe light) and start your watch on that flash, rather than the sound.
- Buttons/plungers are not pushed at the start of the race.
- Once each heat has started, check to be sure your watch is running. If it is not or you think you started it late, signal the Chief Timer by raising your hand with the watch showing.
- Be at the edge of the pool at the finish. You must be looking down over the forward edge to see an underwater touch. Expect to get wet. Stop your watch and push your button/plunger when any part of the swimmer's body touches the wall. You are not concerned with whether the finish was legal.
- Always push the same button/plunger at the finish.
- For fly-over starts, remind your finishing swimmer to stay in the water until the start of the next race.
- Please do not help a swimmer get out of the water by pulling on his/her arms.
- You may have to share space at the edge of the pool with an official who is judging the race. Work out positions so everyone can do their job. Have any extra swimmers step back from the edge of the pool.
- Times should always be recorded to the hundredths of a second (two decimal places, no rounding), and in the same order for each heat. If there is no one in the lane, record "No Swimmer" as N/S.
- If you don't get a time on your watch, draw a line. Do not make up a time or record the time from the scoreboard.
- Stay focused on your duties, particularly during the start and finish, so that you will get an accurate time for the race.

Training Starters

General guidelines for training starters:

- Help the trainee become comfortable in his/her new role. Compliment observations, demeanor, etc. as appropriate and make certain that questions and concerns are voiced.
- Ask your trainee about clinic and other on-deck training experiences. Review what training session this is. What were the positive takeaways from the last session? What were the development needs? What would they like to focus on? What do you as the trainer want to achieve?
- Set a specific focus goal or two for your training session.
- Work on one thing at a time, offering short, focused comments and suggestions. Consider not commenting on every start; it will take several for your trainee to assimilate your suggestions.
- Be patient! We learn to start by doing. Do not comment after every start – let the trainee learn to self-critique and improve. Debrief when a set is completed. DO NOT make the inflection of TYM or cord control your number one focus early on. Work on patience, and reading swimmers for readiness to hear TYM and stationary positions before the beep.
- Give your trainee some space. Observe him/her from the other side of the pool or even from the stands. Some people find it difficult to work under continual close scrutiny.
- These are guidelines. Common sense, flexibility and creativity should apply to your specific training session.

Suggested Topics of Focus for Each Session

Session One

- Teach by example here, possibly even starting an early set. Work with the other members of the starter/ref team to establish an environment and rotation that will serve your trainee well. Be sure your trainee will get at least 25 starts.
- During warm-ups, get trainees hands-on experience with the starting device and sound system. The starter should practice saying “take your mark” with particular emphasis on volume and tone of voice. Encourage your new starter to be conversational and calming; the swimmers should not be alarmed nor put on alert.
- Have a pre-meet conversation with the deck referee to review starting procedures and pace, and how false starts will be handled. Work with the trainee before the session on false start protocol and remind them the starter initiates the conversation.
- Carefully select the first starts for your new starter. Choose longer races and experienced (or at least older) swimmers for the first starts when possible. Give close guidance for the first several starts. Stand immediately behind the trainee, ready to prompt him or her with a whispered “stand them up” or “check lane two’s feet.”
- Discuss your observations about how to tell swimmers are ready and when to use the “stand” command. Talk about reading the athletes, about holding swimmers too long on the blocks, or not giving them enough time to get set. Remind the trainee that his/her job is to provide fair starts by making and keeping the swimmers as relaxed as possible.
- Be supportive and offer focused comments. Praise what the new starter does correctly.

Session Two

- Discuss the false start scenarios and try to come up with examples for them to think about.
- Add in more starter responsibility - observing swimmers behind the blocks, order of finish, rotation and backup work. Watch a timers meeting
- Have them shadow you in discussions with other starters and referees on “box” protocols.
- Review after each set, give one thing to work on next set. Focus should still be on patience and reading the swimmers and basics such as posture and developing a routine.
- Take notes on your separate heat sheet for each start if possible

- If voice tenor or cadence is a problem (not volume) give feedback about it when you are certain they are comfortable with the start process. It is even OK to have it be a homework assignment.
- Give an appreciative, but honest review. Tell them it takes a lot of starts to be really good, encourage to keep working and give them things to work on in the next session.

Session Three

- The trainee should do the timer's meeting and should handle (with your oversight) all aspects of checking equipment, etc. pre-session.
- By this session they should have developed a pre-start routine for themselves. Your job should be to help them take the edges off of the routine, reminding them that their movements are watched by the swimmers and should be calm throughout. If they do not have a routine make sure they have one by the end of this session.
- If the command and responsiveness is to an appropriate level, you can work with them more on the voice cadence and tenor. Help them learn to say TYM conversationally.
- Give feedback after sets based on trends you see – too fast, too slow, etc.

Session Four

- Focus pre-meet discussion on patience and how to read swimmers
- Have them perform all pre-meet duties and you shadow, but support and help
- Patience, routine, posture, position, and voice are the keys, work through each from the point of most help needed to least help needed, consider observing them from the other side of the pool
- Trainees should do Order of Finish for at least a few sets.
- During review give them homework thoughts
- Remember - appreciative but honest review, they are about to fly solo, do not leave things hanging for the next person to catch or notate their forms on what you think needs extra work and tell them to bring their forms to the next session.

Session Five

- Ask trainee about the keys they have learned, and try to quickly assess what the greatest weaknesses are.
- Discuss what they look for from the field before TYM, make sure they understand the need for patience both before and after the TYM command.
- Have them do all pre-meet discussions with referees, do a timers meeting, and check the equipment with you only as a shadow.
- Review after each set: Voice, Position, Patience, Routine, with patience being the most important thing.
- Remind yourself that if you pass them, next time there is not a safety net as they fly solo. If you are not comfortable with that thought there is nothing wrong with suggesting another training session.

Completing a Training Card:

Please use the main portion of the card to give constructive advice for improvement. Praise what was done well and offer advice on what to try to focus on in future trainings. There is no expectation that newer trainees are completely proficient.

At the bottom, circle Y or N for advancement. N means the training session will not be counted, Y means they are proficient enough for their relative level of training. Only use N when a trainee does not show proper learning for their training status.

After the Session:

Review the card with the meet referee, and give it to the trainee. Provide some feedback about your comments and answer any questions they may have. Remind them they must submit their training cards via email when all training is done. BE POSITIVE ABOUT OFFICIATING!

WHAT IS A FALSE START?

The rules state... “When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal” (101.1.2.c) and “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation” (101.1.3A).

So what constitutes a false start? These scenarios should help you paint the picture.

FALSE START SCENARIO #1

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The starting signal is then given. The race proceeds and, assuming the Starter observed the early start and the Deck Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation, the offending swimmer is disqualified at the conclusion of the race. Rule 101.1.3B applies. **This is a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #2

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. Starter says absolutely nothing, and the swimmer fails to halt the forward motion and goes into the pool. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #3

Exactly the same facts as #2 above, but this time the Starter says “stand please” after the swimmer leaves the set or stationary position. The seven other swimmers stand or step down from the blocks. The offending swimmer struggles, but once again is unable to halt the forward motion and falls into the pool. Unlike scenario #2 above, here the starter said “stand please”, but that does not change the false start result. The rule is clear that the “stand” command is for the benefit of the other swimmers on the starting blocks. When the stand command is issued, the athletes have the option of standing or stepping off the blocks. The offending swimmer did neither. He fell into the pool just like the swimmer in scenario #2. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #4

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, this time when the command “stand please” is issued, the offending swimmer struggles, but is able to stand or step off the blocks. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is NOT a false start.** Why? Because the swimmer remained on the blocks or deck like everyone else in the heat, and no starting signal ever sounded.

FALSE START SCENARIO #5

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, when the Starter gives the “stand please” command a swimmer(s) other than the offending swimmer instantly bolts from the blocks and enters the water. Rule 101.1.3D applies. The swimmer(s) clearly started in reaction to the “stand” command. **This is NOT a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #6

The swimmer, upon hearing the command “take your mark” starts down to take a set or stationary position. The swimmer loses his/her balance before coming set and falls into the pool. Rule 101.1.2C applies. The swimmer should be given the opportunity to come to his/her set or stationary position prior to the start. A loss of balance prevented that, and clearly this swimmer never engaged in any starting action. **This is NOT a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #7 (added August 2012)

What about the scenario where the Starter gives the "take your mark" command and all the swimmers come down and take a set position. Prior to the starting signal, a swimmer initiates a starting movement which the Starter sees but instead of standing the heat up, the Starter waits just a moment allowing that swimmer to reset prior to the starting signal. Surely this is not what we would like to see in this situation (prefer the Starter to stand the heat up). However, is this still a false start?

RESPONSE:

In the scenario you pose no false start occurs. As long as all of the swimmers, including the one who initiated a starting movement, are in a stationary position immediately prior to the starting signal, the start is legal. Often it is preferable for the starter to wait patiently for a swimmer to reset after an aborted starting attempt rather than immediately issuing a "stand" command. If the pause to reset is only momentary, the slight delay may be less disruptive than standing the swimmers and starting over again.

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The “Professional” Starter - or - It’s more than three short words!

The “Professional” Starter should:

1. **Know the Rules** and the protocols, procedures and philosophies for being a successful starter
2. **Be on time for each session and officials’ briefings, and dress appropriately in a professional manner**
3. **Be flexible and adaptable to all procedures made by a Meet Referee or Head Starter that may differ from the suggested guidelines offered in this document**
4. **Confirm assignments, rotations and invigilating schedule with the Head Starter:**
 - Be aware how heats will run – fly-overs, cleared pool, etc.
 - Be aware of any event flighting or events or heats alternating by gender that affect starting rotations
 - Confirm the meet procedures for Starters that may include additional responsibilities, including:
 - timer instruction: be aware of timing system (number of buttons and watches or cameras) and provide instruction to timers at the designated time established by meet director
 - a rotation involving stroke or turn judging, taking order-of-finish, distance counting, ringing the bell for the lead swimmer in a distance heat, relay take-off judging or head timer responsibilities
 - Be aware of swimmers with disabilities who may require special starting accommodations. *Know the rules and procedures*
5. **Confirm meet protocol and procedures for the Starter-Deck Referee (DR) teams and with the individual Deck Referees with whom you are teamed:**
 - Be aware when jurisdiction will be turned over to Starter, indicated by Deck Referee’s out-stretched arm
 - Confirm how Starter will be notified of “No Shows” and “Declared False Starts” prior to event start
 - Confirm how to make Deck Referees aware of next-up swimmers behind the blocks affected by suit malfunctions, cap or goggle issues or unexpected empty lanes
6. **Pre-Meet and Pre-Session:**
 - Become familiar with the starting system by checking the equipment during the session warm-up period
 - There are a variety of microphones in use. Practice with the mike during warm-ups to feel comfortable with the device
 - Some microphones display a green light when the timing system is ready for the next start. When outdoors, confirm you can clearly see the green light and be prepared to notify the DR when the green light has not been displayed
 - Check your voice level in the microphone with another Starter monitoring the audio level in all lane speakers
 - Perform a test start to get a feel for how sensitive the starting button may be
 - Find your optimum deck positions for both forward and back starts so that all swimmers can be clearly and individually viewed
 - Find out where the Deck Referee will stand adjacent to your position. Ask him or her to extend their arm so that it can be seen in your peripheral vision, without blocking your view of the swimmers. Make sure you and the DR are standing close enough that you can converse quietly. It may be about swimmer issues, green lights, step down requests, etc.
 - Be prepared with a master starter heat sheet if you have been asked to use one for marking all false starts, no shows, declared false starts, and any other notes. Also acquire an OOF (Order Of Finish) heat sheet, if the meet’s procedures call for the off-duty starter to take OOF
7. **During the Start:**
 - Assume your deck position to start the upcoming heat prior to the finish of the current heat. In some cases, the previous event’s results are scrolled on the scoreboard, allowing for a bit more time to take position
 - Show that you are relaxed and confident in your starting ability with your body language
 - On the long whistle when the swimmers are stepping up (second long whistle for the back start), show that you are prepared for starting by having the microphone in a “ready” position
 - Make sure the microphone can’t fall in the water or someone doesn’t trip over the cord and unplug it from the starting unit either by holding the cord with your free hand or stepping on the cord
 - When all swimmers have stepped on the blocks the Deck Referee will turn over jurisdiction to the Starter
 - BE PATIENT when allowing all swimmers to assume the position on the blocks they want to use for the start. Watch to see their feet are in the final chosen position. The swimmers will then show you when they’re ready to hear the “Take Your Mark” instruction
 - If “track style” starting platforms are used, swimmers may require a bit more time to assume their position
 - If “backstroke ledges” are used, ensure each swimmer’s toes are in direct contact with the end wall or timing pad prior to the start, but curled over the top of the pad, gutter or end wall
 - Deliver the “Take Your Mark” instruction in a calm, conversational tone that’s loud enough for the swimmers to hear over any possible crowd noise, but not so loud the instruction sounds like a shouted command. Use a cadence that is inviting with a slight falling in pitch

- ❑ *SWIMMERS START THE HEATS – NOT THE STARTER!* BE PATIENT - when allowing the swimmers to show you they are ready for the starting signal
- ❑ When that “sweet spot” moment is achieved and the swimmers are stationary, push the starting button
- ❑ After the start keep the microphone in a “ready” position in case the heat needs to be recalled
- ❑ Watch the swimmers until all heads have surfaced. Then replace the microphone to a position where it can’t be bumped and the cord isn’t in a traffic zone that could cause tripping
- ❑ Step out of the starting area to allow more room for Deck Referee, Chief Judge and Stroke Judge
 - Avoid conversing with the Deck Referee unless it involves a possible false start or another timely matter
- ❑ Using the Starter’s heat sheet, confirm the next heat’s swimmers are reporting to the assigned lanes. Note on the heat sheet any “no shows”, “declared false starts”, false starts or other matters for which there should be a record
- ❑ Begin preparations to start the next heat

8. Use the False Start Protocol:

Remember the definition of a false start: *Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation that a false start occurred.*

- ❑ After the start and the microphone is replaced, calmly mark the Starter heat sheet to indicate which heat and lane the false start was observed. Double-check that mark for accuracy of heat and lane
 - Any mark can be used as long as the Deck Referee can tell a particular heat and lane has been indicated, whether it’s circling the lane number, underlining the lane number and name, placing a visible dot next to the lane, etc.
- ❑ Show the marked heat sheet to the Deck Referee and implement the procedure discussed prior to the start of the meet. It may include pointing out the heat and lane, as well as verbally indicating a false start was observed. The Deck Referee should also show the Starter his/her marked heat sheet as confirmation of a false start. Under no circumstance should a false start confirmation be based solely on a discussion
- ❑ When a Chief Judge is available, they will fill out the disqualification form and hand it to the Starter for signature. Double check the event, heat, lane and, possibly the name and team, have been correctly noted and the false start box was checked before signing and handing the form back to the Chief Judge
- ❑ When a Chief Judge is not available, the Starter completes and signs the disqualification form before handing it to the Referee for final sign-off
- ❑ If necessary, note any peculiarities to the false start on the heat sheet for later reference; possibly when advising a coach or swimmer of the observed action

9. When Using Other Commands;

- ❑ To address the athletes with the microphone, refer to the swimmers as “Ladies” and “Gentlemen”
- ❑ Remember to use “Please” and “Thank you”
- ❑ If it is necessary to stand the field after the TYM instruction, for both forward and backward starts, say, “Stand please”
- ❑ If the Deck Referee asks for the swimmers to step off the blocks, say, “Ladies (Gentlemen), step down please”
- ❑ If the swimmers are taking a prolonged amount of time to leave the pool after their swim (before or after the next start) say, “Thank you Ladies/Gentlemen.” If more instruction is needed, say, “Ladies/Gentlemen, please clear the pool”
- ❑ Use of the “Relax please Ladies/Gentlemen” instruction means it will be a prolonged period before the starting sequence will begin. The “Relax” instruction should not be used in place of a “Stand Please” instruction for backstroke starts
- ❑ If a swimmer’s toes are curled over the top of the pad prior to the start of the backstroke, address the swimmer by saying, “Lane 7, toes please”

Tips and Tricks

- Don’t hesitate to use the recall option if you feel an external noise (ex. coach’s whistle) or motion (activity around the starting blocks) has interfered with a swimmer’s ability to achieve a fair start
- All officials make mistakes. Don’t allow an inadvertent mistake to inhibit your performance. When mistakes occur, intervene, if possible. Take responsibility for your mistakes, learn from them, forgive yourself, and move on
- The Starter displays confidence (and not over-confidence) in his/her ability to start well anywhere, anytime, anyplace
- It is not unusual for Starters at high level meets to feel a certain level of anxiety or nervousness. While a certain amount of nervousness has been shown to enhance performance, public displays of anxiety can interfere with the ability to act (addressing swimmers on the microphone, asking heats to stand please, etc.) and may generate increased anxiety in others on the deck, including the swimmers. Championship starters have learned to use their anxiety to aide deck performance
- BE CONFIDENT AND RELAXED. There are (too) many opinions about starting, even at the highest levels. The Championship Starter has learned when to listen to opinions, suggestions and feedback, and when to ignore them
- Work as a teammate with the Deck Referees and Chief Judges. Confirm the Referee has her/his whistle and the Chief Judge has a pen

Checklist for Starter Advancement Evaluation

(Refer to the N2 and N3 National Evaluation & Certification Requirements¹) Attachment A

N2 Starter - Prerequisites² for requesting an Evaluation:

- LSC-certified Starter for 16 sessions
- N2 Stroke & Turn Judge certification
- Can work at least 4 sessions at the OQM, with at least 3 evaluation sessions as a Starter

N2 Starter - Performance Requirements for an Advancing Evaluation

- Know the rules for starting
- Understands basic starting protocols and procedures (distance counting, OOF, etc.)
- Understands how to start swimmers with disabilities
- Understands how the starting system operates
- Establishes a comfortable starting position on deck for both forward and back starts
- Prepared and in position prior to each heat; comfortable holding microphone and cord
- Delivers TYM calmly and with necessary volume
- Shows PATIENCE before delivering TYM and starting signal
- Understands the use of Other Commands
- Understands and practices the False Start Protocol

N3 initial Starter Evaluation (this is not a certification level) – Prerequisites² for requesting an evaluation:

- N2 Starter certification and N3 Stroke & Turn certification
- Active as an official in the LSC at all levels of meets
- At least 8 sessions as a Starter, recorded in OTS, since N2

N3 initial Starter Evaluation - Performance Requirements for a recommendation to proceed to an N3 final Evaluation

- Understands how the starting system operates; tests it during warm-ups without guidance
- Observes, without scrutinizing, next-up swimmers
- Shows preparedness when the heat is turned over by the Deck Referee
- Comfortable with starting deck position and microphone
- Uses PATIENCE before delivering the TYM, and does so calmly with necessary volume
- Uses the proper TYM cadence that includes a slight falling in pitch
- Shows awareness of external noises or motions that may affect swimmers' start and properly reacts
- Follows proper deck positioning before, during and after starts
- Correctly uses Other Commands, without over-use (eg. standing swimmers)
- Correctly follows false start protocols
- Shows consistency in delivery, positioning, awareness and demeanor

N3 final Starter Evaluation – Prerequisites² for requesting an evaluation:

- Worked at least eight (8) sessions as a Starter, recorded in OTS, after receiving a “recommendation” N3 initial Starter evaluation

N3 final Starter Evaluation - Performance Requirements for Certification

- Arrives on-time, prepared with necessary personal equipment, and properly/professionally attired
- Knows and consistently follows all the pre-meet/pre-session duties
- Consistently delivers starting instructions showing ideal PATIENCE, timing, cadence and awareness
- Consistently and properly uses Other Commands
- Consistently follows False Start protocols
- Consistently self-critiques with a determination to improve his/her starting talent
- Consistently shows a starting demeanor that is Calm, Comfortable and Assured

¹ There are other requirements that need to be met before an application for National Certification can be submitted and approved.

² Do not ask to be evaluated before the prerequisites have been satisfied.