Guidelines for Training New Officials

Illinois Swimming
Officials Committee
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Statement of Purpose

It is not the intention of the Officials Committee to standardize every training session for new officials. We know that each new official is different and each session presents unique challenges and opportunities to each person involved in training. The committee would like to stress that common sense is the most important factor in being a good trainer and mentor – knowing your job, knowing your meet and learning the abilities of your trainee are all part of that common-sense approach.

It is the purpose of this document to give guidance on expectations for trainees and trainers and to put all the parties on the same page. The expectations for training will be incorporated into the curriculum of the clinics, and this gives the trainees the opportunity to think and prepare more going in to a session. Ultimately, it is still up to the meet referees and the trainers to ensure excellent training.

On Being a Good Mentor

Being a mentor is better than being a trainer. Being a trainer implies you are going to teach them a certain set of skills or impart particular information. Being a mentor implies you are going to share experience with someone, even beyond the day you spend on deck with them, and that you carry a responsibility to them beyond that day as well. New officials will go out into the world of officiating with your stamp of approval, for all to see, and their performance is a reflection on you as their mentor.

Take the training session seriously as the teacher – remember when you were first in position and how fast things happened at a meet or how nervous you were the first time you said "take your mark" or blew the whistles. Be positive, encouraging and honest and help teach the next generation of great Illinois officials.

Meet Referee's Guide to Training New Officials

When you are the meet referee at any meet, you are responsible for many things, including overseeing all training which occurs. Here are some items to consider about training as the meet referee:

- We want every meet referee to make training a priority, but not before ensuring training activity does not interfere with the conduct of the meet or penalize swimmers in any way.
- When possible advise coaches your meet will include trainees. This is particularly important when starters and referees are being trained.
- Trainees are told in clinics to contact meet refs up front about the possibility of training. When they do please respond to them.

Requirements for a Training Session to Count:

All training sessions must be two hours in length, measured in actual meet time, and Referee sessions require three hours (first splash to last touch)

Stroke and Turn training session must include all four strokes

Starter trainees must get a minimum of 25 starts of their own

Referee and AO training session must have all four strokes and a minimum of 20 heats

- Please assign trainees to specific, qualified and experienced trainers. By rule an on-deck trainer must be certified in position for at least one year. However, please consider assigning your most experienced (i.e., referees) officials to this task. Referee trainers must have 24 months certified time at referee. At Referee, the 5th or 6th Session needs to be done with an individual on the approved list.
- Ideally, trainers will not work in position while training, but we recognize the difficulty of accomplishing that at most meets.
    - If working in position, trainers are limited to two trainees at any given time, and should be assigned so as not to distract from on deck officiating responsibilities.
    - If not working in an assigned position, a S&T trainer may work with up to four S&T trainees at any one time in a clinic environment, though this is rare and not ideal.
    - At all other positions a trainer may work with a maximum of two trainees at any given time.
- Monitor on deck training activity as necessary and appropriate, helping the trainer to be a good mentor.
- Review training evaluation cards with the trainer, making certain that appropriate ratings have been given, and constructive comments are included.

- Indicate training sessions in OTS (Officials Tracking System) with appropriate designations - XJ, YA, XS, XR. The trainee will send their evaluation cards and Certification Requirements Checklist (scanned/photographed and attached to an email to ilswimofficials@ilswim.org works best) to the Officials Committee for a certification decision.

Current Training Requirements for Certification

Stroke and Turn Judges	Four sessions over three meets with at least two different trainers
Administrative Officials	Three sessions over two meets (one a multi-session meet) with at least two different trainers
Starters	Five sessions over three meets with at least two different trainers
Referees	Six sessions over four meets with at least three different trainers. Either 5th or 6th session must be with an N2 deck referee. All sessions must be with someone who has been a referee for 24 months.

- Work with the trainers. Help them to be good mentors. Assign training pairs to each other as soon as possible, before the meeting if you can. Make sure the trainer knows what your expectations are. Provide them with the position specific pages which are part of this document. Stress the following general guidelines:
    - Help the trainee to become comfortable in their new role. Compliment observations, demeanor, etc. as appropriate and make certain that questions and concerns are voiced. Be positive!
    - Ask your trainee about clinic and other on-deck training experiences. Have they worked at both the start and turn ends? Had the experience to walk stroke? Have questions, or a harder time with a certain stroke? Work to provide opportunities to "fill the gaps."
    - Set specific focus points for the training session.
- Thank the trainer and the trainee for their time and interest in improving officiating and swimming in Illinois.

ISI Policy on Out-Of-LSC Training

No more than 50 percent of the required on-deck training sessions for a position may be done at meets outside of the Illinois Swimming LSC with a certified trainer (one year certified in the trained position) ***from another LSC***.

Training Stroke and Turn Officials

Some general guidelines for training judges:

-Help the trainee become comfortable in their new role. Compliment observations, demeanor, etc. as appropriate and make certain that questions and concerns are voiced. Be positive!

-Ask your trainee about clinic and other on-deck training experiences. Have they worked at both the start and turn ends? Had the experience to walk stroke? Have questions, or a harder time with a certain stroke? Then work with the meet referee to provide opportunities to "fill the gaps."

-Set a specific focus for your training session.

-Review with your trainee the jurisdictional assignments for this meet, and procedures and protocols given at the officials meeting.

-Be the best official you can be; model proper deck protocol, avoid unnecessary conversation while on duty, be focused on the pool during swims, return promptly to position after a break.

-Stress that all questions about calls should be referred to the referee without comment.

-Share your experiences on other decks, pass along what you have learned over time.

Suggested Topics of Focus for Each Session	
Session One *Generally the Trainer makes the calls during this session*	Session Two *Transition from the trainer making the calls to the trainee as you are comfortable with their skills and knowledge.*
-Narrate what you do and how you do it. -Review rules and discuss how to observe swims (feet leave the wall, check body position, apply pull/kick rules, etc.). -Share tips for marking your heat sheet and getting the DQ slip written and delivered to the deck referee. Note that most of what we see is legal and we are looking for exceptions. Discuss the "ugly but legal" examples that you see. -After you make a call discuss what you saw and what rule was violated. Progress to asking them why you made a call first. -Emphasis on fairness and equality of treatment. -Talk about what to do with empty lanes. - Review positioning, and how relief will happen at this meet and others.	- Discuss notating DQs on the heat sheet and being certain you have the correct heat and lane. - Encourage your trainee to begin discussing infractions they see with you to help them get used to saying the rules out loud. - When they make calls act as their CJ, asking all the normal questions – jurisdiction, observation, rule. - Have them write DQ slips but check the slip carefully. - When swimmers are not in your jurisdiction, ask/answer questions and share tips for handling multiple calls. - Review assignment, positioning, jurisdiction and relief procedures, not just of this meet but other meets you have been to. -Share your experiences.

Suggested Topics of Focus for Each Session

Session Three

The trainee will be making the calls for this session.

- Function as the trainee's personal Chief Judge, reviewing what they saw and what rule was broken. Let them focus on the pool, and get used to recording infractions on their heat sheet. Write DQ slips for them if needed.
- Emphasize watching all swimmers in jurisdiction, and covering empty lanes.
- Talk about "seeing what you call, and calling what you see," and importance of the descriptions they give.
-Work on making the translation from what is observed to how to record on the DQ slip.
- Discuss, if not practice, how to talk with a swimmer about a DQ. We notify, but don't coach.
- Discuss disability swims and officiating even if no accommodated swims occur in the session.

Session Four

The trainee will be making the calls for this session. This is the last session – be thorough!

- Cover contents of prior trainings, ensure they have had enough exposure. Go through the training form and ask them what they have seen. Fill in the gaps in their knowledge.
- If possible get a shift as a finish judge (picks), or a relay take-off judge so your trainee can become familiar with these positions as well.
- Discuss what to bring to every meet (creds, clipboard, writing utensils). Review the uniform expectations, other officiating experiences you have, etc.
- Assess what your trainee needs practice with, and emphasize those points.
- Review with them what happens next: test taken? Scan/photograph training cards, fill in Certification Requirements Checklist, and send to ilswimofficials@ilswim.org
- Offer to be a continuing resource for them on deck as they "go solo."

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!

Training Administrative Officials

Some general guidelines for training administrative officials:

- 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 specific goals for your training session.

- Be patient and expect questions. It's perfectly fine for "watching only" during busy/stressful times, but return with explanations and pointers when things calm down and involve trainee as much as possible throughout. The more they do, the better.

- AO training sessions ***are not "Meet Manager how-tos"***. If your trainee isn't overly familiar with MM, make them aware of capabilities and suggest they find access to the software from their club or the online demo version to learn and practice on their own on top of their training.

- Always be willing to discuss common mistakes, things you have seen or things you have messed up before.

- These are guidelines. Common sense, flexibility and creativity should apply to your specific training session. Your physical set-up and number of computers will impact the design of your training session.

Suggested Topics of Focus for Each Session

Session One

- Trainees should get an understanding of the flow of the table during a meet from getting times to Meet Manager to results. Most attention should be spent on how to make good timing adjustments. Exposure to other parts of the table process is good, but should not be overwhelming.
- Talk with the trainee about the different ways that paper can flow from the deck and timing console to the scoring computer.
- To avoid slowing the meet down with "live" timing adjustment discussions, try this approach: if you have heats requiring investigation/potential adjustment, print the CALC screen report then follow your normal process to make adjustments and generate results. Turn the CALC sheets and supporting data over to your trainee. Ask them to investigate/process adjustments and make a recommendation on paper. During a slow time at the desk, you can review these and compare to what you did.
- Giving the trainee the opportunity to work through the adjustment data without the pressure of getting results out is a very good thing, and will give them good practice and instill good habits while keeping your meet moving.
- When your trainee is comfortable with this oversee the trainee's live calculation of adjusted times, letting them take the lead to determine whether an adjustment needs to be made. Check and sign-off on the adjustment before it is processed.
- Share your system for collating all supporting data for an event and filing it, while continually stressing the need for documentation of all changes made to times, results, etc.

Suggested Topics of Focus for Each Session

Session Two

- Trainees should get a more global view of the meet – where information comes from and how we use it.
- Reinforce their ability to do timing adjustments while increasing understanding of minimizing bad inputs (pads, buttons, timers) and managing the paper flow at the table.
- Talk about best practices for importing times into Meet Manager – the need to check for a pattern of bad buttons or pads and make appropriate changes with equipment manager or head timer. Include discussion about the need for an operator to record race numbers, and demonstrate how those might be used in the course of a session.
- Discuss the handling of DQ slips – when/how to input into MM, how DQ codes are organized, what system is being used to notify swimmers, how are they filed, etc. This is a good time to discuss the AO's interaction with the Meet Referee. Also discuss DQ log options, if used.
- Share your practices for reviewing meet results – do DQs, NSs and DFSs match what Deck Referee has? Do the times seem reasonable (no world records for 8&unders due to a missed touch at a turn, etc.)? Stress the importance of consistent use of best practices for checking results every time.
- Discuss good table practices: files for event results, keeping a DQ log, a detailed paper trail.
- If the situation presents itself, cover the handling of late/deck entries into a heat: central person to decide, how to notify deck ref, timers of the add.

Session Three

- Focus on managing entries and deck paperwork in this session, especially if you can determine that the trainee is comfortable with timing adjustments.
- If it is a positive check-in meet have your trainee report early to the table. Let the trainee help with check-in procedures, and discuss methods teams use to handle entry scratches.
- Talk about different methods of producing heat sheets quickly so that the meet can begin. (seed and produce heat sheets and limited lane timer sheets before running big print jobs.) Advise of key people who need heat sheets immediately (deck referee, starter, timing system operator) so a meet can begin.
- Cover how late/deck entries will be handled and by whom.
- Assess what your trainee still needs practice with, and emphasize those points.
- Use your trainee as an active assistant, making timing adjustments, getting times from the deck, gathering DQ slips for entry, filing paperwork. Help them get comfortable with the process of working the table "solo."
- Offer to be a continuing resource for them on deck as they "go solo."

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!

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:

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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!

Training Referees

General Guidelines for Training Referees:

- Always remember that refereeing is an art more than a science. Things you know you learned, and probably not from the training clinic. They may have worked with referees who did things differently. Be patient and always explain when asking them to do something new.

- 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?

- Review procedures and protocols given at the officials meeting, privately by the meet ref or in discussions with other members of the starter/ref team.

- Emphasize fairness and equality of treatment. Stress the importance of consistency and respect for the athletes and coaches. Remind your trainee to ***apply common sense and to keep a sense of humor.***

- Be patient! We learn by doing. Have a goal or two for each session and focus on that.

Suggested Topics of Focus for Each Session

Session One

- The focus of this session should be deck refereeing events and working with the table.
- Have a pre-meet discussion of deck referee protocol. Review whistle starts, and how to pace them; how to handle false starts. Talk about the importance of having "pool sense," with knowledge of everything going on in the pool, including officials in position, timers, activity behind the blocks, etc.
- Help them develop a routine surrounding each start: from the whistles to heads up, making sure they are focused at each step on the most important points and not distracted by all the things going on around them.
- Work with the table to determine the paper flow of DQ and no show slips, timer lane sheets/cards, etc. Talk about the importance of having "pool sense," with knowledge of everything going on in the pool, including officials in position, timers, activity behind the blocks, etc.

Session Two

- If possible involve the trainee in pre-meet routines. Have them participate in the meeting, work with admin and have pre-session meetings with starters. Help them through this by asking questions and getting their thoughts.
- Further emphasis on the deck referee's job and responsibility to each event.
- Add the element of timeline management. Discuss why the whistles are where they are, what we are effectuating with those choices. Talk about alternatives and situations where you would want a meet to run faster or slower, and the duty to stay near the timeline for the benefit of the swimmers.
-Discuss backup and support for referee team and how the referees, admin, starters and officials are one unit mutually supporting each other.

Session Three

- Add more pre-session responsibility. Have the trainee do assignments or the stroke briefing. Have them direct the starter/ref meeting to determine protocols, teams and event responsibility.
- Talk to them about being a good referee for your starter – letting your starter start, not trying to control the starts with the whistles or the hands-up, discussing starts only between sets and then only if needed.
- They should have a good grasp of the basics of deck refereeing by this session. Now is a good time to talk to them about the rules for sessions (4 hrs, etc). Try to get a feel for where they are going – does their club

need a meet referee in 6 weeks or are they going to have good support to learn after the training is over? This can allow you to teach more to their needs – meet referee versus deck referee and the differences between.
- Have them sit with admin for a few events and have them assessed or do so yourself.

Session Four

- Work with the meet referee to have the trainee do more of the pre-session work such as assignments or the meeting or both.
- The trainee should be more comfortable working on the SR/DR team now and should be able to handle all the pre-session discussion with you only as a shadow.
- If there are challenges or protests, have the trainee shadow or participate with a shadow even if it is not their event. Discuss the importance of working with coaches and other officials and talk about types of challenges to calls and what can be done – when do you accept and when do you overturn?
- This is a good session to have a talk about the philosophies of refereeing – you are the ultimate enforcer of benefit of the doubt, and the types of things you can do to support the athletes. When are re-swims a good idea, etc.

Session Five

-With two more sessions, this is a good time to have the trainee shadow the meet referee and discuss the different responsibilities of that position. If your trainee intends to be a meet referee talk to them about the importance of being mentored in that job specifically. A meet referee's job starts weeks in advance of the meet.
- Discuss disabled swimming and the different types of accommodations for different disabilities. They should know the rules for starts and how to judge these swims, but talk about the different things you have seen.
- Discuss working with the table and the MR on late adds and scratches, and explain how penalty swims work.

Session Six

-The focus of this session should be to assess what your trainee needs practice with, and emphasize those points.
-Observe them as a deck ref and make sure their mechanics are good (consistent length of whistles, crisp short whistles, consistent placement). Observe and correct any problems with working with the starter.
- Have them do as much of the pre-session work on their own as possible while you shadow.
- Discuss the rules as best you can during the session. Point out resources such as the interpretations from USA Swimming and the importance of keeping up with the rules.
- Offer to mentor, or help mentor them through becoming effective meet referees.
- They are going to flying solo after this, be comfortable with passing them. Extra sessions are OK if you identify areas of need.
- Remind them refereeing is a process, and that they still have to keep learning and growing in the position. None of us are finished products.

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. Cards without comments will not be accepted by the committee. **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!