

A large, light-colored watermark of the USA Swimming logo is centered in the background. It features a shield with the letters 'USA' in a large, stylized font at the top, and the word 'SWIMMING' in a smaller, bold font below it. A registered trademark symbol (®) is visible to the right of the shield.

USA Swimming
and Allegheny Mountain Swimming

Starter Clinic

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Presentation AMENDED from original
Prepared by USA Swimming National
Officials Committee

Clinic Overview

- Introduction
- Philosophy of Starting
- Starting Rules
- Elements of the Start/Techniques of Starting
- Developing Good Habits and a Routine
- Questions

Philosophy of Starting

- GOAL: A fair start for all swimmers
- Three main aspects to understand
 - Knowing when the field is ready to assume the starting position
 - Knowing when the field is ready to be sent
 - Knowing when it is necessary to intervene so that these two goals may be realized

The Mindset of a Starter

- The STARTER reads the field, to determine when THE FIELD is ready to start—Not the other way around!
- PATIENCE, PATIENCE, PATIENCE
- Control your emotions so that the swimmers can control theirs!

Starting Rules

- From Section 101.2 of the USA Swimming Rulebook
 - 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.
 - 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.

Starting Rules

- From Section 101.2 of the USA Swimming Rulebook
 - 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.
 - A swimmer shall not be disqualified for an illegal starting position at the start if the race is permitted to proceed. Enforcement of the correct starting position is the responsibility of the Starter.

Two Parts of the Start

- Knowing when the field is ready to assume the starting position
- Knowing when the field is ready to receive the starting signal

Before Each Heat

- Looking at swimmers behind the blocks
- Short whistles
- Long whistle(s)
- Be in position and ready to go at long whistle

On the Microphone

- Moderate your tone and speaking pace
- At most (local) meets you will announce the events and heats
- Short whistles

Event _____ Womens 400 IM Heat number _____
and subsequently Heat number _____

“The First Part of the Start”

- Patience as the swimmers settle into position
- Forward Start—One foot at front of block
- Backstroke Start—Toes not curled over gutter
- Once all swimmers are in position, ready for the command
- Avoid visible routines

“Take Your Mark”

- Conversational tone
- Pace of Speaking
- *Inviting* the swimmers to swim
- Slightly descending tone
- Statement, not a question
- Delivered in a relaxed, but confident way
- “Close the door” “Pass the Salt” “I love you”

“The Second Part of the Start”

- Wait for the swimmers to become stationary
- Stationary does NOT necessarily mean motionless
- Stationary = Establishes vertical plane at front of block
- Send the swimmers once all are stationary®

If Things Don't Go As Planned....(For ANY Reason!)

- “Stand, please”
- To be delivered more softly and extremely calmly
- PATIENCE to allow swimmers to refocus before giving the command again

Once The Heat Has Started....

- Hold microphone open and in position until heads surface, in case necessary to recall
- Starter can recall a heat for any reason that caused swimmers to not have a fair start
- Recall = No Swimmers Charged with False Start
- Mark any empty lanes in starter program
- Mark start times on heat sheet

The False Start

- A Swimmer **STARTING** early—breaking his/her stationary position before the start
- Record violation by notating on heat sheet
- Dual confirmation procedures

Where to Stand

- Within approximately 5 meters from start of pool
- Want to be able to observe entire field but also distinguish between individual lanes
- Starter chooses first, referee adjusts to starter

Becoming Familiar With Equipment

- Always test microphone, they are all different!
- Test volume, be sure you can be heard from all lanes!

Other Things to Say (And Not To Say!)

- Refer to the swimmers as “ladies” and “gentlemen”
- NEVER deviate the language of “Take your mark,” and “Stand, please”
- “Relax, please” or “Swimmers, relax”. Step down for prolonged delay
- “Lane __, toes, please,” if necessary to lower toes in backstroke
- “Thank you, ladies (gentlemen),” to clear pool
- Additional instructions only as directed by referee
- Never use the microphone to reprimand

Other Possible Responsibilities of the Starter

- Timers Briefing
- Hand Signals
- Pre Check
- Sound warning signal for distance events
- Notify Referee if a swimmer has been lapped in a distance event, or if you see a swimmer in distress, etc. Eyes and Ears of Referee
- Verify that timers are in place when start or change ends of the pool
- Initial distance attempt

Practice, Practice, Practice!

- The more experience you gain, the more comfortable you will be!
- You are still a stroke and turn judge!
- At some local meets, you may have lane responsibility. Maintain composure.
- Starting is very different. It requires practice to be effective.



QUESTIONS?

USA Swimming National Officials
Committee