

Starter Notes

Less is more. Be consistent, in control and deliberate. Your goal is to briefly calm the pool before a race to allow athletes to focus on the task at hand. You want to set a situation that is optimal for all athletes who are playing fair.

Commanding Swimmers Behind the Blocks

Heat 1 for each event. As soon as all swimmers in the previous heat touch the wall:

- Call event, call event description, call heat number - **behind** the blocks. i.e. "Event 23, Boys 9-10 50 yards freestyle. Heat 1 **behind** the blocks."
- Try to avoid saying "to the blocks" as that tends to cause swimmers to prematurely stand on the blocks.

Heats 2 and later. As soon as all swimmers in the previous heat touch the wall:

- Only call heat number - behind the blocks. i.e. "Heat 2 behind the blocks." There is no reason to announce the event and the event description again.
- For backstroke events, you will need to ask the previous heat to hop out of the water.
- Call missing swimmers 2 times. i.e. "Lane 3, Johnny Jones." Do not call more than that.
- Calling swimmers behind the blocks allows you and the referee to ensure the pool is clear from previous race and that you have a swimmer in each lane as set forth in the meet sheets.
- Referee makes sure all is ok and blows the whistle turning jurisdiction and control of the pool over to the starter.

Commanding Swimmers to "Step Up."

- Ask the Swimmers to "step up."
- If it is a big race, it is ok to wait a while before you call "Take Your Mark". Allow coaches, parents and fans to yell encouragement and then let things settle.
- For backstroke events, ask the swimmers to jump into the water. "Place your feet. Take Your Mark - Bang"

Commanding Swimmers to "Take Your Mark."

- Tell the Swimmers to "take your mark" - Bang. Tone slightly dropping on each word. Goal is to calm the pool to allow athletes to focus on the task at hand. You want to set a situation that is optimal for all athletes.
- Do not hurry. A slight pause (but not long) before the Bang is ok. Bang when all swimmers are set and holding still. No "rolling" starts.
- If swimmers don't come down together, call "stand".
- If there is a twitch, or something is not right, call "stand".

- If you call “stand”, briefly explain what you want the kids to do, for example, “Swimmers, please all come down together.” Do not point out the individual swimmer. However, if there is a second “stand”, point out the lane number that is making the mistake. At the next “Take your Mark”, do not wait for the individual swimmer (if they are still making the mistake) to get set.

Fly Over Starts

- Some leagues or meets will have fly over starts for swimmers 11/12 years old and up.
- Ask the swimmers to stay in the water and hug the wall, staying close to the wall, making little to no movements. The swimmers do not exit the pool until the swimmers on the blocks enter the water at the start of the race.

False Starts and Call Backs

- All false starts must have dual confirmation by starter and referee.
- All forward starts – all swimmers must have at least one front forward to the end of the starting platform or the deck. No “running” starts.
- Swimmers starting in the water (for backstroke or a swimmer who has elected to start from the wall) must have one hand in contact with the wall or starting platform.
- Swimmers may “step” to the end of the starting platform or deck edge during relays as the previous swimmer approaches the wall.
- Some leagues or meets will have call backs for swimmers 9/10 years old or younger. If a call back is necessary because of a false start hit and **hold** the start button to ensure all swimmers hear the call back.
- After a false start allow the next heat to proceed if possible. This will allow the swimmers in the previous heat to relax and get composed. Be sure you tell all swimmers which heat is next and ask the swimmers from the previous heat to wait behind the blocks.

Miscellaneous Issues

You are in charge. If the deck is too loud for the start ask for quiet on the deck.

As for assistance from the stroke and turn judges to ensure swimmers toes are in correct starting position for backstroke. Not over the edge of the pool or gutter. Get a “thumbs up” from the judge after you give the place your feet command.

Communicate with the referee, you are a team.

Enjoy Starting and have fun!