

# HOW TO BE A TIMER AT A SWIM MEET



Nearly every swim team requires parents to help out. One of the most common positions is being a timer at a meet. Some people think the position is too stressful, but honestly it is as easy paying attention to the meet and pressing a button for each race. Okay it is slightly more complicated than that, but honestly if you can pay attention and press buttons you can learn to time a meet in just a few minutes.

**Timers' Meeting** Before every meet there will be a Timers' Meeting, usually during warm-ups. At the meeting an official, meet director, or someone else in authority will go over what is expected of you. Be sure to show up, pay attention, and ask any questions you might have. You will already know your lane assignments and you will receive your tools (stop watches, clip board, timer's sheets or cards, and pen/pencil). Check your stop watch at the meeting. Make sure it is working and make sure you understand how to operate it. We bring our stop watches wherever we go.

**Where will you be?** At our meets each lane will have 3 timers and 1 recorder. Timers will stand behind and on either side of the swimmer to start. As the swimmer is about half way finished, the 3 timers will move to the very end (lip) of the pool. Please keep in mind that we also share this area with Stroke and Turn Officials. It could get a little crowded.



## **What should you do?**

- For our meets you'll need to make sure the swimmer getting ready to swim matches who you have on your timer's sheet. Pro-tip, do not ask them if their name is (fill in the blank). Rather ask them what their name is. With little kids you could ask Grace if her name is Bob, and she is likely to say yes, just because she is nervous and will agree with whatever you say.
- The kids will get near the starting area (lip of the pool). The starter will tell them to take their mark then a long beep/STROBE FLASH starts the race. When you see the STROBE, this is when you start your watch-check to make sure your watch started.
- Make sure you know the length of your swimmer's race (it will tell you on your timer's sheet) and how many laps they will do. 25s are one length, and 50s are 2 lengths.
- When the swimmer in your lane is ready to complete his/her final length get ready to press your stop watch. Press the buttons when any part of their body touches the wall...hand, head, shoulder etc... it is not your job to determine if the finish is legal you are just concerned with the timing of the finish. The officials will determine if it was legal.
- Give your time to the RECORDER by reading each number, left to right. Speak clearly and make sure the number written down by the recorder is the exact number on your stopwatch. I ran a meet once where times wrote down things like 26 seconds....26-WHAT?? There is a huge difference between a 26.00 and a 26.96, the tenths and hundredths are extremely important in swimming.

**Continue this process for each race**

## Timer FAQs:

**What if the 2 watch times in the same lane don't match?** Most of the time they will not, don't worry just write down what your watches say.

**What if I miss the start of a race?** That is what the back-up timers are for! Raise your hand and we will switch watches with you so you have one which was started properly to finish the race with.

**What if I need a break?** Again, that is what back-up timers are for. Just don't wander off too long. Just raise your hand.

**What if the wrong kid is in my lane?** Do your best to try and correct it by finding the correct swimmer behind your block. If there continues to be confusion quickly get the attention of the starter to pause the meet briefly to correct the mistake. If the wrong kid swims in your lane anyway, time as usual and write down their name on a blank card from your clipboard. The scoring table will sort out the cards. But VERY important...

**DO NOT EVER** use another swimmer's card, scratch out the name, and use it for the wrong swimmer in your lane. ALWAYS use a blank card. If you don't have any blank cards, ask the Head Timer for more. The scoring table accounts for every swimmer card, even, if the swim was a scratch. Repurposing a printed card with one swimmer's name for another causes a huge mess. Please don't!

**While it may sound complicated being a timer is really not that hard and everyone involved greatly appreciates it!**