



STARTER REFERENCE GUIDE

The Starter is responsible for starting the race once it's turned over from the referee, and ensuring a fair start for all swimmers.

Prior to the Session Start

Briefing

- Arrive before warm-up to check in with the Referee and test your equipment.
- Confirm hand signals (step down, relax, clear pool), start infractions, and para swimmer procedures.
- On our deck, the referee and starter stand on the same side, test your positioning.
- Discuss whether a watch check is required.
- Attend the initial briefing to meet other officials.
- Pre-fill DQ slips for SW 4.4 – initiated start before the signal was given.

Test your Equipment

- Test microphone, start sound, and recall signal. Activate recall by pressing the start button a second time after the initial start.
- Check speakers at each block and coordinate with electronics or safety marshal.
- Test recall rope (cannot be tested with swimmers in the pool).

During your Session

Record Keeping

- Record start time for each heat (using our digital wall clock or your personal watch).
- Note step downs, relaxes, scratches, and no-shows.
- Take sweeps if possible; backstroke and relays prioritize clearing the pool after the first three finishers.

Start Infractions

Report infractions to the Referee. Ideally both agree, but can be issued if observed by either the Starter or Referee. Complete DQ slip and give it to Referee.

- C.2.3.2.1 – Misconduct at the Start includes:
 - Spitting, spouting, or blowing nose in the pool or on deck before the start
 - Kicking or striking the starting platform (including backplate)
 - Unsafe or uncontrolled entry (must be controlled, feet-first)
- Until the end of 2025, coaches receive a WARNING; repeated infractions may result in disqualification.
 - Use DQ slip, label “WARNING”. The Competition Coordinator or Meet Manager will provide the coach with a warning, verbally.
 - If the Referee observes but Starter does not, a warning is still issued (no disqualification).

Starts

- Speak clearly and calmly. Ensure that you speak directly into the microphone.
- Command: "Take Your Marks (Pause) ". All swimmers should be still after you give the command. If not, Step them down or pause.
- Press the start button when swimmers are all set and still.
- Step down or relax (backstroke) swimmers as necessary.
- Watch for start infractions.
- Recall the start using the recall signal if the start is unfair, and/or signaled by the referee.
- Be careful at the beginning of the race to avoid accidentally setting off the recall signal. The recall button is sensitive and can be easily triggered by a bump.
- Ensure the clock on the scoreboard is running.
- Provide a second set of eyes on the pool and provide support to the referee, as needed.
- Watch for slow swimmers that might be missed!
- Assist in judging takeovers during relays.

After your Session

- Sign heat sheets and return them to the officials table.
- Debrief with the referee, as needed.