

A large, light gray watermark of the USA Swimming logo is centered on the page. The logo features the letters 'USA' in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with 'SWIMMING' written below it in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font. The entire logo is enclosed within a stylized shield-like border. The background of the page is white.

USA Swimming
and Minnesota Swimming

Starter 101

rev Jan 24

XXXXXXXXXXXX

Instructors:

Jack Swanson - N2 Deck Referee

Gail Ann Witzel - N3 Starter



STARTER 101

WELCOME!





STARTER 101

DISCUSSION OVERVIEW

1. Starting: Philosophy and Goals

Role of the Starter

Developing Proficiency - Good Habits from Day One

2. Rules

3. Equipment

4. How To's

Position and Vision

Voice and Verbiage

Inside the Starter

Procedures

5. Situations

6. Additional Skills

7. Training and Certification Requirements

8. Reference Documents



STARTER 101

1. Starting: Philosophy and Goals

a. Role of the Starter

- i. Your Mission: Ensure fair start for ALL Swimmers, every heat
 1. Unique to the Starter among officials: what you do can impact a swimmer's performance. You are their advocate.
- ii. *"You Are the Ninth Swimmer"*
You watch and read the field
 1. The swimmers will tell you when they are ready for the command and when they are ready to start.
 2. You start the field when they are ready.



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1. Starting: Philosophy and Goals

b. Developing Proficiency - Good Habits from Day One

- i. There are many parts to starting.
Work on one or two at a time until you feel comfortable.

Your goal is to build a pocket full of good habits so that you don't need to think about anything but the swimmers.

- ii. Watch words to remember:

- 1. Patience**
- 2. Prepare**
- 3. Practice**
- 4. Poise**
- 5. Professionalism**



STARTER 101

2. Rules

PROFESSIONALISM!

a. 102.12 STARTER

.1 Preparation -- The Starter shall stand on the side of the pool **within approximately five meters** of the starting end of the pool and, upon signal from the Referee, shall **assume control of the swimmers until a fair start has been achieved.**



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2. Rules

b. 101.1.2 The Start

A. At the commencement of each heat, the Referee shall signal to the swimmers by a short series of whistles to remove all clothing except for swimwear, followed by **a long whistle indicating that they should take and maintain their positions on the starting platform, the deck, or in the water.**

In backstroke and medley relay events, at the Referee's first long whistle, **the swimmers shall immediately enter the water and at the second long whistle shall return without undue delay to the starting position.**

B. 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.**



STARTER 101

2. Rules

C. On the Starter's command “take your markS,” 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.**

D. 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.**

E. 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.**



STARTER 101

3. Equipment

PREPARE!

- a. Become familiar with the Starting Equipment at **each venue**, before **every Session**
- b. Confirm the equipment is operating correctly and that you know how to operate them
 - i. **Start Unit**
 1. Verify strobe is working
 2. Verify signal transmits to timing table
 - ii. **Speakers**
 1. Where are they?
 2. Do they all work?
 3. What volume works best for your voice?
 4. Are they equally clear for all lanes?



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3. Equipment





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3. Equipment





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3. Equipment

iii. Microphone handling

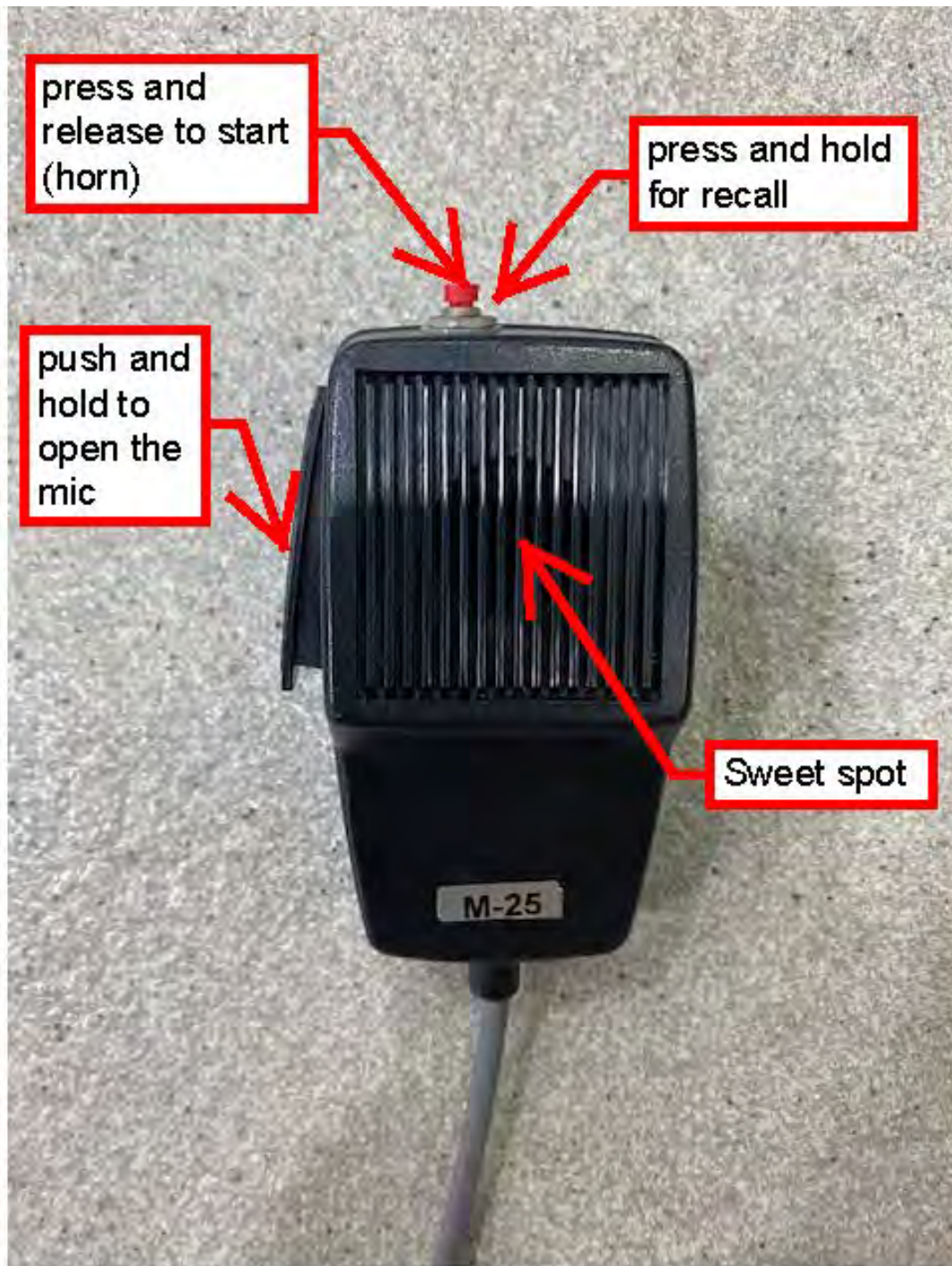
1. Each mic has a “sweet spot”
test until you find it so can put your mouth there every heat
2. Find a way to hold it that works with your hands
3. Check button sensitivity
4. Listen for `feedback' and squawking - change positions, volume or tilt the mic
5. Control and manage the cord



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3. Equipment





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3. Equipment

LEFT HAND
index finger on start,
thumb on open lever





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3. Equipment

RIGHT HAND
index finger on start,
fingers on open lever



RIGHT HAND
thumb on start,
fingers on open lever



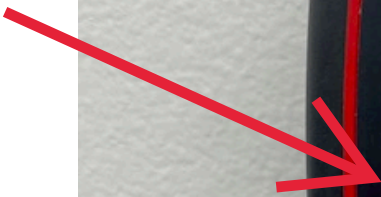


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3. Equipment

The Omega Mic

Light when system is reset





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3. Equipment

Press and release to activate voice



Press to start





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3. Equipment



iv. Start End and Blocks

1. Verify that all starting platforms are secure, check ledges and wedges
2. Review Timers' seating locations so you can see the field
3. Watch for loose pads and wires in the water



STARTER 101

4. How To's

PREPARE!

a. Position and Vision

i. Start Area cooperation and coordination

1. The Starter picks the spot.

What are your preferences for each pool, event and session?

2. The Referee should adjust to you.

a. Can you see the arm signal while being focused on the swimmers?

b. Can you hear the Referee if she has additional instructions?

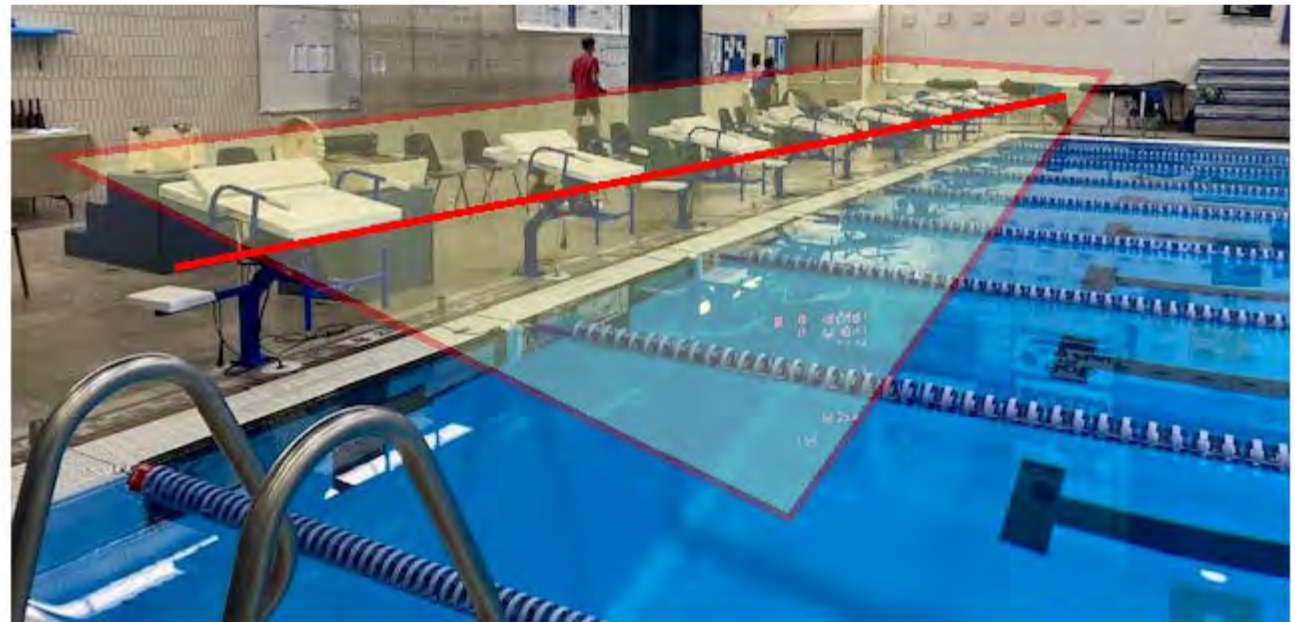


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4. How To's

- ii. Optimum alignment for your view of the field
(during practice starts, set yourself up)
 1. Goal is to be able to observe all swimmers' bodies
(feet, hands, back and heads)
 2. Stand as far back as possible to increase vertical view angle
 3. Stand along side of pool for best horizontal angle

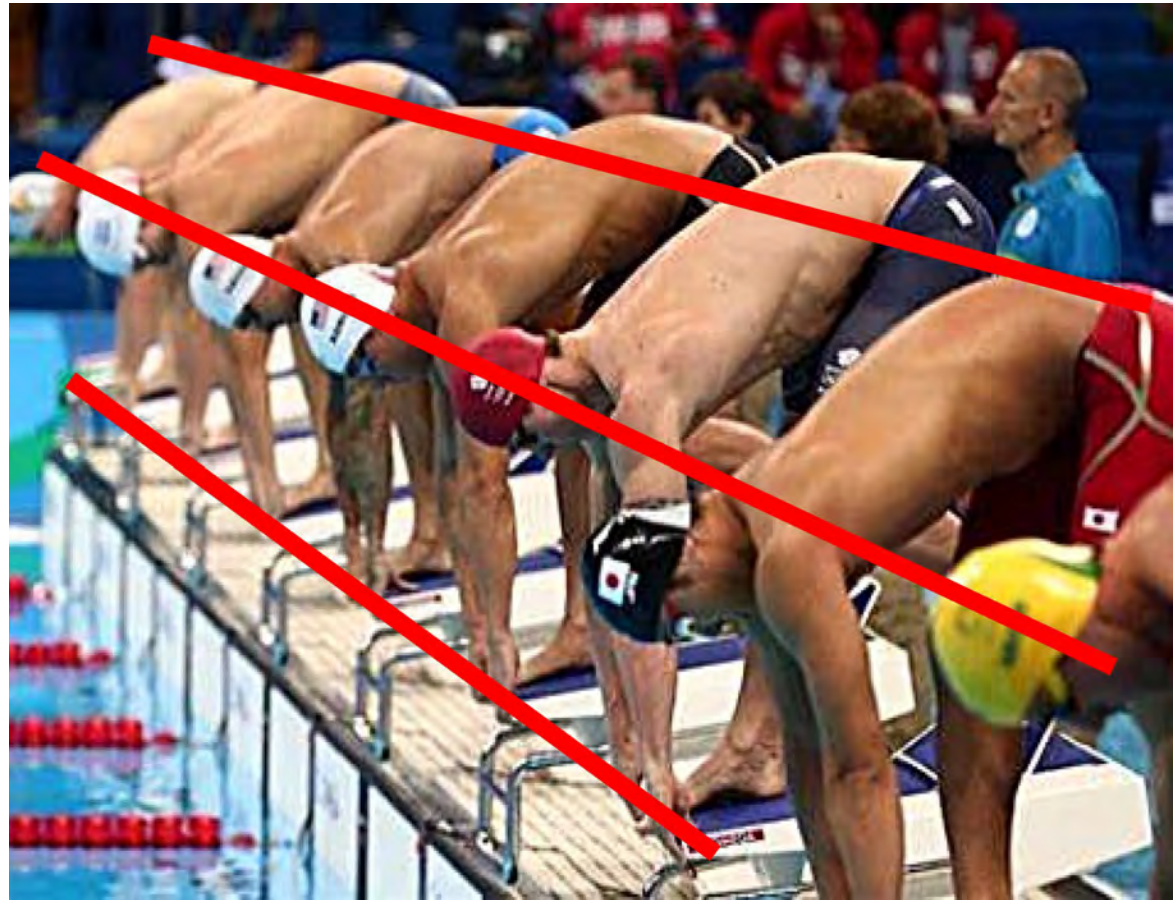




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4. How To's



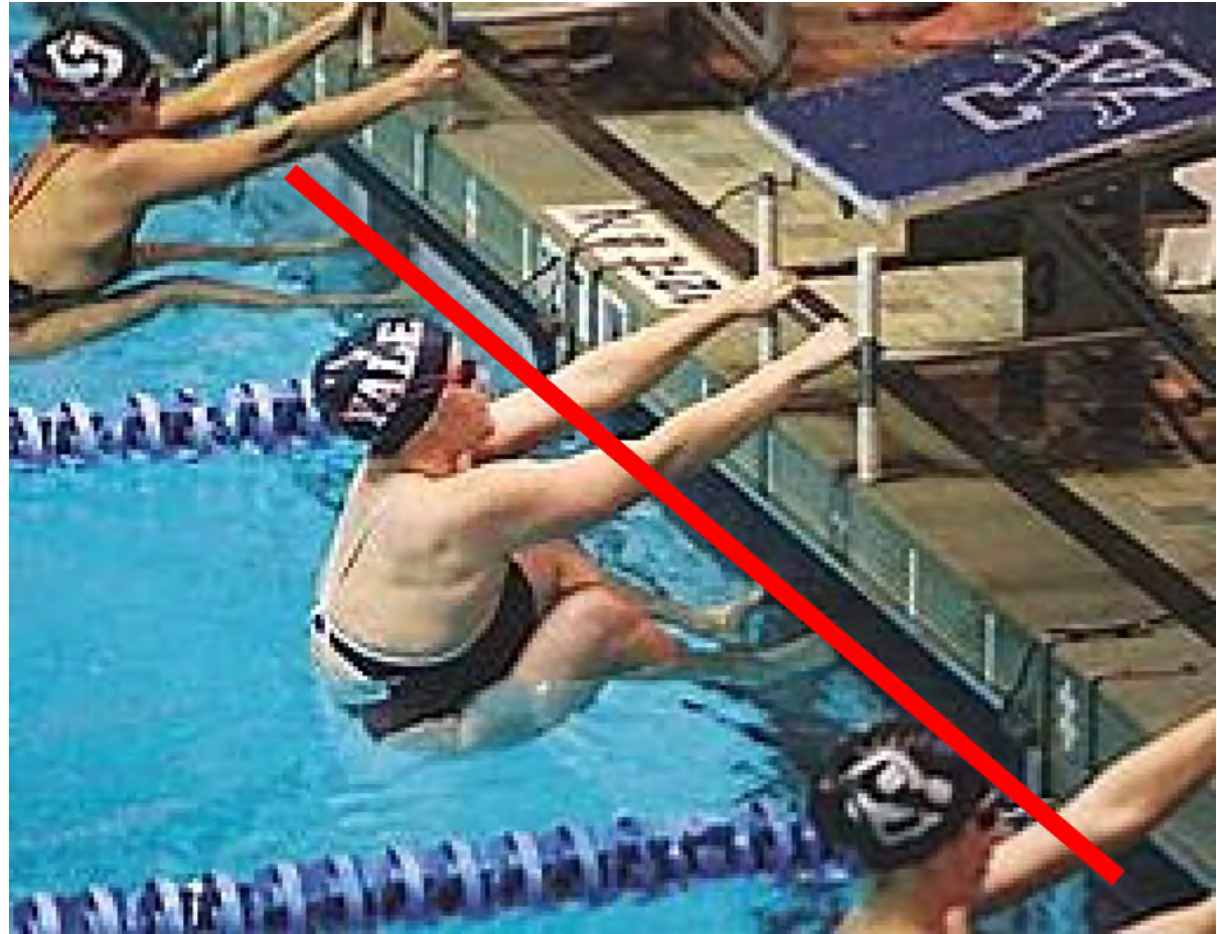
4. Set your eyes and head position for broadest view
5. Turn your body to match your face alignment to reduce body stress - not 4-square



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4. How To's



6. Revise your location for backstroke to where you can see gutters on all lanes.



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4. How To's

PRACTICE!

b. Voice and Verbiage

“Your first TYM should never be inflicted on a swimmer”

i. General

1. Practice your voice before the session.
2. Practice your voice with the mic during warmups.
3. Breathe through your TYM to reduce stressors in your voice.
4. Smile to make your voice sound warm and inviting.



STARTER 101

4. How To's

PROFESSIONALISM!

ii. How to address the Field - what to say

1. *Take your markS*
2. *Relax, please* (before TYM)
3. *Stand, please* (after TYM)
4. *Swimmers, take your mark* (after a pause)
5. *Swimmers, place your feet.* (after a pause)
6. *Swimmers, step up please*
- when directed by Referee
7. *Thank you, swimmers*
- when directed by Referee

Never gesture at the swimmers



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4. How To's

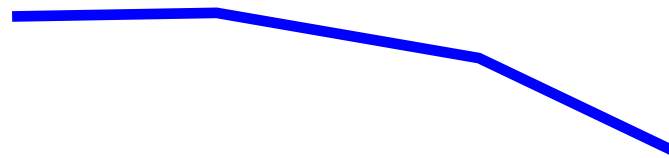


POISE!

iii. How to address the Field - how to say it

1. Have a **conversational** tone and volume
2. **Invite** the swimmers to assume the starting position
3. Speak in a **relaxed, confident** manner
4. Slightly descending tone with no accentuated words or jerky rhythm

TAKE YOUR **MARKS**



I love you, be my guest, please be seated....



STARTER 101

4. How To's



PATIENCE! POISE!

c. Inside the Starter

i. Forward Starts

1. Observe the swimmers behind the blocks: watch for issues and demeanor
2. Watch the swimmers mount the blocks: watch for discomfort, balance, equipment issues
3. Watch for swimmers to settle in: are they ready for the command?
4. Watch the response to the command: do they come down, balanced and comfortable? toes appropriately placed?
5. Watch them relax into their start position.
6. Sound the tone. Hold the mic open until you observe all swimmers surface.
7. Mark your Program - any open lanes?



STARTER 101

4. How To's



ii. Backstroke starts

1. Observe the swimmers behind the blocks:
watch for issues and demeanor
2. Watch the swimmers enter the water and place their feet:
watch for discomfort, balance, equipment issues
3. Watch for swimmers to settle in:
are toes and hands appropriately placed?
are they ready for the command?
4. Watch the response to the command:
do they come up, are they balanced and comfortable?
5. Watch them relax into their start position.
6. Sound the tone. Hold the mic open until you observe all swimmers surface.
7. Mark your Program - any open lanes?



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4. How To's

d. Procedures

i. General

1. The Referee signals with a series of short whistles that the next heat should be ready.
2. The Announcer immediately announces the Event and/or Heat.
3. The Referee signals with a single long whistle for the swimmers to step on the platforms or into the water.
4. With backstroke, a second long whistle signals the swimmers to return to the wall.



STARTER 101

4. How To's

5. The Referee places the swimmers under the Starter's control with an extended arm.
 - a. Should be immediate upon all swimmers stepping on to blocks.
 - b. Does not “close the heat”.
 - c. The Referee's arm signal is NOT a command to say “Take Your Marks”



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4. How To's

PATIENCE!

6. When the swimmers are ready, the Starter says "Take Your MarkS"



7. When the swimmers are ready, each having assumed a stationary starting position, the Starter sounds the starting signal.





STARTER 101

4. How To's

ii. False Start Observation and Recommendation

1. After the start and the microphone is replaced, mark the Starter heat sheet to indicate which heat and lane.
2. Any mark can be used
(note, since this is a blind dual confirmation, mark something on your sheet every heat.)
3. Approach the Referee and verbally indicate a false start was observed. *"I have an observation"*
4. The Deck Referee may say she cannot confirm.
Done.

OR

The Deck Referee shows the Starter his/her marked heat
AND the Starter shows the marked Starter's heat sheet to the Deck Referee

Under no circumstance should a false start confirmation be based on discussion.



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4. How To's

a. A False Start is a Swimmer Starting Early



- i. Motion (leaving the stationary position) is not necessarily a False Start.
Motion may or may not be a False Start.
- ii. Incidental motion such as adjusting goggles is not a False Start.
- iii. Resetting is not a False start.
- iv. Rocking back is not a False start.



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- b. Entering the water
 - i. Is a False Start if due to a starting motion.



- ii. If not due to starting motion, such as losing balance, it is not a False Start.

He wasn't going anywhere



4. How To's



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4. How To's

c. Use the Stand command to give all swimmers a chance to regroup.

i. If you use the Stand command because you see a starting motion:

1. It is a False Start if the observed swimmer enters the water.

2. The swimmer who does not enter the water was saved for another opportunity to swim.

He wasn't going anywhere





STARTER 101

4. How To's

d. When / Why to use the RECALL (don't be shy!)

i. The Starter may choose to activate the RECALL signal any time it is apparent there was **an unfair start**.

examples:

- a distracting noise
- flash photography
- a swimmer does not respond to the tone
- a 'tick' in the mic

ii. The Deck Referee may also direct a RECALL.

iii. As the mic is held open until swimmers surface, the Starter should hold down the start button to provide the repetitive RECALL tones. Hold the button down until all swimmers have stopped.





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5. Situations

a. BEHIND THE BLOCKS:

i. Swimmer does not appear for heat

1. Referee determines status and any action required.

ii. Swimmer does not respond to long whistle to step up

1. Referee MAY direct Starter to suggest "*swimmers, step up please*"

iii. Swimmer runs up to the blocks from somewhere

1. Before the command, "Relax, please". The swimmer has appeared for the initial call of the heat.
2. After the command, stand the heat, refer to Referee for Delay of Meet call.
3. At or after the tone, determine if affected adjacent swimmers. (recall if causes an unfair start)
4. Referee should investigate cause thoroughly before penalizing swimmer.



STARTER 101

5. Situations

b. ON THE BLOCKS:

PATIENCE!

i. Swimmer does not find balance on the block

1. Starter waits patiently until resolved. If difficulty is extended *"Relax, please"*, allow for swimmer to gather herself.

Wait for Referee's direction or whistle to step up.

ii. Swimmer does not respond to the command

1. Starter stands the heat. Wait for swimmer to gather herself. Check other swimmers.

Repeat command.

(Any delay may require addressing the heat, *"Swimmers... take your marks."*)

iii. Swimmer cannot find / hold stationary position

1. Starter stands the heat. Wait for swimmer to gather herself. Check other swimmers.

Repeat command.

(Any delay may require addressing the heat, *"Swimmers...take your marks."*)



STARTER 101

5. Situations

iv. Swimmer loses balance and / or leaves blocks on 'stand' command

1. Allow swimmer to exit the water and gather herself.
2. Allow rest of heat to refocus.

v. Swimmer leaves blocks due to distraction or other unfair start.

1. Starter stands the heat.
2. Allow swimmer to exit the water and gather herself.
3. Allow rest of heat to refocus.



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6. Additional Skills

1. Additional Skills

- a. Timers' meeting
- b. Lap recording and bell - flags in, flags out
- c. Order of finish
 - i. When there are multiple starters, rotate this job.
 - ii. When you are alone, see if other staff can do this.
- d. Announcing the heat
- e. Special Needs Swimmers
 - i. Deaf signals
 - ii. In-water starts and deck starts
 - iii. Special pool exiting accommodations
 - iv. Para Swimmers
- f. You may be asked by the Referee to mark time or no shows.

While this is not the starter's job, you may politely suggest to the Referee that you would prefer to focus on starting, but follow her preference.



STARTER 101

7. Training and Certification Requirements

7. Training and Certification Requirements

- a. For L2 - Five shadow sessions required, at least one at an away meet.
- b. Apprentice Application Forms
- c. Test should be taken prior to certification and once every two years for your highest certified position.
- d. Once certified, must officiate ten sessions per year in any position.



STARTER 101

8. Reference Documents

8. Reference Documents

a. *STARTER APPRENTICESHIP FORM*

b. “Conducting Timers Meetings” - G. Witzel, 2005

c. “The ‘Professional’ Starter -or- It's more than three short words!”
- USA Swimming Officials Committee, 2020

A large, light gray watermark of the USA Swimming logo is centered in the background. The logo consists of a shield with a white star at the top, the word "USA" in red, and the word "SWIMMING" in blue. The shield has a blue border and a blue base with red and white stripes. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the bottom right of the shield.

QUESTIONS?

Jack Swanson jswanson1519@gmail.com

Gail Ann Witzel gailannwitz@gmail.com

STARTER APPRENTICESHIP FORM

Name: _____ Club: _____

Email: _____

Although being a Starter may seem a bit intimidating at first, experienced Referees will work with you over the course of five shadow sessions to cover everything you need to know to become a USA Swimming Starter – use this form as a guide through the process.

To ensure the best possible educational experience at your shadow sessions, we ask that you complete at least one shadow session at an away meet, at least one shadow session at a 12 and under session, and at least one shadow session at a 13 and over session. **Note:** Additional copies of this form can be downloaded from the www.mnswim.org under the “Officials” tab.

When complete, mail or e-mail a photo of this form to:

Jack Swanson: JSwanson1519@gmail.com and mnswimofficialschair@gmail.com

SHADOW SESSION LOG

Session 1: Understand the Basics of Starting

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overview of Responsibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Holding the Microphone | <input type="checkbox"/> “Home” Meet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Short and Long Whistle Protocol | <input type="checkbox"/> Where to Stand | <input type="checkbox"/> “Away” Meet |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> “Take Your Mark” | <input type="checkbox"/> 12&U Session |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Start a few races | <input type="checkbox"/> 13&O Session |

Referee: _____ Date: _____

- Referees: The bulleted tasks are suggested items to cover, actual items can vary. Please check off items as completed.

Session 2: Starting More Races – Developing a Consistent Cadence

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Review of Responsibilities & Whistles | <input type="checkbox"/> Recording a False Start on the program | <input type="checkbox"/> 12&U Session |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Starting Backstroke races | <input type="checkbox"/> “Home” Meet | <input type="checkbox"/> 13&O Session |
| <input type="checkbox"/> False Start Basics | <input type="checkbox"/> “Away” Meet | |

Referee: _____ Date: _____

Session 3: False Starts and Distance Races

- | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understand all six False Start scenarios | <input type="checkbox"/> Counting Laps in Distance Races | <input type="checkbox"/> “Home” Meet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing a False Start DQ Slip | <input type="checkbox"/> Starting 10 & Under Swimmers | <input type="checkbox"/> “Away” Meet |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> 12&U Session |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> 13&O Session |

Referee: _____ Date: _____

Session 4: Order of Finish and Timers Meeting

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice Order of Finish when not starting | <input type="checkbox"/> Counting Laps in Distance Races & Bell | <input type="checkbox"/> “Home” Meet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Record Order of Finish when starting | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend the Timers Meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> “Away” Meet |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> 12&U Session |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> 13&O Session |

Referee: _____ Date: _____

Session 5: Final Evaluation and Sign-off (Additional shadow sessions ok if needed)

- Stands in an appropriate location, handles the microphone appropriately
- Uses a consistent cadence with good volume
- Good Start timing – neither too slow or too fast
- Calls 'Stand Please' appropriately and when necessary
- Backstroke starts including 'Toes, Lane x' and 'Stand Please'
- Understands all six False Start Scenarios
- Records and presents False Starts observations correctly; write the False Start DQ slip
- Able to record Order of Finish while starting
- Distance races – accurately count laps and knows when to ring the bell
- Practiced at starting both younger and older swimmers
- Knows how to conduct a Timers Briefing
- "Home" Meet 12&U Session
- "Away" Meet 13&O Session

Final Certification

Date: _____

Meet Referee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Starter Exam Completed

Date: _____

When complete, mail or e-mail a photo of this form to:

Jack Swanson: JSwanson1519@gmail.com and mnswimofficialschair@gmail.com

WHAT IS A FALSE START?

The rules state... “When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal” (101.1.2.c) and “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation” (101.1.3A).

So what constitutes a false start? These scenarios should help you paint the picture.

FALSE START SCENARIO #1

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The starting signal is then given. The race proceeds and, assuming the Starter observed the early start and the Deck Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation, the offending swimmer is disqualified at the conclusion of the race. Rule 101.1.3B applies. **This is a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #2

Swimmer leaves the set or stationary position prior to the starting signal. The swimmer upon realizing the early starting motion attempts to catch himself/herself. Starter says absolutely nothing, and the swimmer fails to halt the forward motion and goes into the pool. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #3

Exactly the same facts as #2 above, but this time the Starter says “stand please” after the swimmer leaves the set or stationary position. The seven other swimmers stand or step down from the blocks. The offending swimmer struggles, but once again is unable to halt the forward motion and falls into the pool. Unlike scenario #2 above, here the starter said “stand please”, but that does not change the false start result. The rule is clear that the “stand” command is for the benefit of the other swimmers on the starting blocks. When the stand command is issued, the athletes have the option of standing or stepping off the blocks. The offending swimmer did neither. He fell into the pool just like the swimmer in scenario #2. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #4

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, this time when the command “stand please” is issued, the offending swimmer struggles, but is able to stand or step off the blocks. Rule 101.1.3A applies. **This is NOT a false start.** Why? Because the swimmer remained on the blocks or deck like everyone else in the heat, and no starting signal ever sounded.

FALSE START SCENARIO #5

Exactly the same facts as scenarios #2 and #3 above. However, when the Starter gives the “stand please” command a swimmer(s) other than the offending swimmer instantly bolts from the blocks and enters the water. Rule 101.1.3D applies. The swimmer(s) clearly started in reaction to the “stand” command. **This is NOT a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #6

The swimmer, upon hearing the command “take your mark” starts down to take a set or stationary position. The swimmer loses his/her balance before coming set and falls into the pool. Rule 101.1.2C applies. The swimmer should be given the opportunity to come to his/her set or stationary position prior to the start. A loss of balance prevented that, and clearly this swimmer never engaged in any starting action. **This is NOT a false start.**

FALSE START SCENARIO #7 (added August 2012)

What about the scenario where the Starter gives the "take your mark" command and all the swimmers come down and take a set position. Prior to the starting signal, a swimmer initiates a starting movement which the Starter sees but instead of standing the heat up, the Starter waits just a moment allowing that swimmer to reset prior to the starting signal. Surely this is not what we would like to see in this situation (prefer the Starter to stand the heat up). However, is this still a false start?

RESPONSE:

In the scenario you pose no false start occurs. As long as all of the swimmers, including the one who initiated a starting movement, are in a stationary position immediately prior to the starting signal, the start is legal. Often it is preferable for the starter to wait patiently for a swimmer to reset after an aborted starting attempt rather than immediately issuing a "stand" command. If the pause to reset is only momentary, the slight delay may be less disruptive than standing the swimmers and starting over again.

Reprinted from USA Swimming Officials Newsletter, April 5, 2012 and August, 2012.

CONDUCTING TIMERS MEETINGS (revised 10/23)

STARTER'S APPROACH

Timers are volunteers and some may have never been on a competition deck. The Starter should make the Timers feel comfortable, competent, appreciated and vital to the On-deck Team and overall success of the meet.

The Starter should participate in the Timers' Meeting before every session even if the faces are familiar from previous sessions. There are always questions and new timers joining the Team. It is also a good time to thank and compliment those familiar faces on a job well done.

<u>GOALS FOR MEETING</u>	Why the job is important	What is expected
	How to do it	Make it enjoyable
	Build confidence and competence	Encourage teamwork with Starter
	Express appreciation of volunteers	

WHAT TO FIND OUT BEFORE THE MEETING

- How many timers, watches and buttons per lane? (Primary and back-up timing systems)
- What is the scheduled heat interval?
- Is there a runner to pick up Event sheets?
- Will there be "fly-overs", awards or other issues affecting the session schedule?
- Are there any combined heats/events?
- Any late adds, scratches?
- Will timers be required to count and ring bells on distance events?
- Will timers be required to check-in relays?
- Where are Adult Restroom facilities

WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE MEETING

- Determine that lanes will have proper supplies: watches, clipboards, pencils, chairs, lane sheets, bells...
- Identify and meet with the Head Timer to review those duties and protocols:
 - Assignment and Management of Timers as overall Team leader
 - Instructing proper operation of watches
 - Schedule for breaks and refreshments
 - How to run Head Timer back-up watches
 - How to fill out lane sheets
 - How to count and ring bells on distance events
 - How to check-in relays
 - How to communicate with the Starter and Referee during the meet

HOW TO PRESENT THE INFORMATION

A Starter must communicate that Timers are an important part of the deck Team. The actions of the Timers can affect the ability of the Starter to provide fair starts throughout the meet. Timers are on deck to help provide the best environment for Swimmers and should be encouraged to enjoy this responsibility.

- Be conversational - use simple, direct language.
- Be relaxed - help them relax. Smile.
- Invite them to be part of a Team
- Use Humor.
- Give examples.
- Explain how the complementary timing system parts work.

Use physical (whole body) demonstrations of what you are describing.

(Like a high back stroke touch, how to alternate watches and how to look down the pool endwall)

ITEMS TO COVER IN THE MEETING

How many Timers, watches and buttons per lane?

- which Timer is recorder and which is watch?
- who does button(s)?

Checking in your Swimmers – explain what to do when these occur.

- what about no-shows?
- what about swimmer equipment issues?
- what about adds?
- what about swimmers with missed heats?
- what about relay order?

Whistle Protocol - what does it mean?

- what does the swimmer do?
- what does the Timer do?

During the Start:

Step back / sit down and be motionless and quiet

Start watches on the Strobe flash – not sound (do not start the buttons)

Watching finishes:

What to look for (any body part touching the wall)

How to look down the wall (get wet!)

Assisting with “fly-overs” – staying in the water

Recording times and restarting watches

- stepping back from the blocks / sit down
- alternating watches on fly-over sessions

Any special issues in the session program

- Finals, parades, etc.

Safe Sport items

- Location of Adult Restrooms
- Use of cell phones behind the blocks is prohibited.

SUGGESTIONS

Let the Head Timer assemble the Timers, assign the lanes and initiate the meeting. Have the Head Timer instruct how to run the watches, fill out the Lane Sheets, check-in relays and other issues. Let the Head Timer handle individual questions and details after your part of the briefing.

If a Timer needs a reminder about protocol during the meet, call on the Head Timer to give suggestions to the person.

For a smoothly running blocks area, position the chairs where timers can get to the blocks easily, keeping the swimmers behind them. Remind timers to put the next heat in front of them promptly to assist the SR / DR in observing the swimmers behind the blocks.

To help with visibility for the SR and DR, ask Timers to immediately sit down after taking the finish, especially if using Fly-overs. Paperwork can happen during the next race.

The “Professional” Starter -or- It’s more than three short words!

The “Professional” Starter should:

- **Know the Rules** and the protocols, procedures, and philosophies for being a successful starter
- **Be on time for each session and officials’ briefing, dressed appropriately in a professional manner**
- **Be flexible and adaptable to all procedures made by the Meet Referee or Head Starter that may differ from the suggested guidelines offered in this document**
- **Confirm assignments, rotations, and invigilating schedule with the Head Starter:**
 - Be aware how heats will run – fly-overs, cleared pool, flighting, or events or heats alternating by gender
 - Confirm the meet procedures for Starters that may include additional responsibilities, including:
 - timer instruction - be aware of timing system (number of buttons and watches or cameras) and provide instruction to timers at the designated time established by meet director
 - a rotation involving stroke or turn judging, taking order-of-finish, distance counting, ringing the bell for the lead swimmer in a distance heat, relay take-off judging or head timer responsibilities
 - Be aware of swimmers with disabilities who may require special starting accommodations and know the rules and procedures
- **Confirm meet protocol and procedures for the Starter-Deck Referee (DR) teams and with the individual Deck Referees with whom you are teamed:**
 - Work as a team with the Deck Referees and Chief Judges
 - Be aware when jurisdiction will be turned over to Starter, indicated by Deck Referee’s out-stretched arm
 - Confirm how to make Deck Referees aware of next-up swimmers behind the blocks affected by suit malfunctions, cap or goggle issues or unexpected empty lanes
- **Pre-Meet and Pre-Session:**
 - Become familiar with the starting system by checking the equipment during the session warm-up period
 - There are a variety of microphones in use. Practice with the mic during warm-ups to feel comfortable with the device
 - Omega microphones display a green light when the timing system is ready for the next start. When outdoors, confirm you can clearly see the green light and be prepared to notify the DR when the green light has not been displayed
 - Check your voice level in the microphone with another Starter monitoring the audio level in all lane speakers
 - After confirming with the equipment staff, perform a test start to get a feel for how sensitive the starting button may be
 - Find your optimum deck positions for both forward and back starts so that all swimmers can be clearly and individually viewed
 - Find out where the Deck Referee will stand adjacent to your position. Ask him or her to extend their arm so that it can be seen in your peripheral vision, without blocking your view of the swimmers. Make sure you and the DR are standing close enough that you can converse quietly. It may be about swimmer issues, green lights, step down requests, etc.
 - Be prepared with a master starter heat sheet if you have been asked to use one for marking all false starts, no shows, declared false starts, and any other notes. Also acquire an OOF (Order Of Finish) heat sheet, if the meet’s procedures call for the off-duty starter to take OOF
- **During the Start:**
 - Assume your deck position to start the upcoming heat prior to the finish of the current heat. In some cases, the previous event’s results are scrolled on the scoreboard, allowing for a bit more time to take position
 - Your body language should convey that you are relaxed and confident
 - On the long whistle (second long whistle for the back start), have the microphone in a “ready” position
 - Secure the cord by holding it with your free hand
 - When all swimmers have stepped on the blocks the Deck Referee will turn over jurisdiction to the Starter

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- Be patient when allowing all swimmers to assume the position on the blocks they want to use for the start. Watch to see their feet are in the final chosen position. The swimmers will then show you when they’re ready to hear the “Take Your Mark” instruction
 - If “track style” starting platforms are used, swimmers may require a bit more time to assume their position
 - If “backstroke ledges” are used, ensure at least one toe from each foot is in direct contact with the end wall or timing pad prior to the start, but not curled over the top of the pad, gutter or end wall or above them
- Deliver the “Take Your Mark” instruction in a calm, conversational tone that’s loud enough for the swimmers to hear over any possible crowd noise, but not so loud the instruction sounds like a shouted command. Use a cadence that is inviting with a slight falling in pitch
- Swimmers start the heats – not the starter! Be patient - the swimmers will show you through their body language when they are ready to hear “Take Your Mark” and for the starting signal
- When that “sweet spot” moment is achieved, and the swimmers are stationary, push the starting button
- After the start be ready to take the mic in the event the heat needs to be recalled
- The microphone should be to a position where it can’t be bumped, and the cord isn’t in a traffic zone that could cause tripping
- Step out of the starting area to allow more room for Deck Referee, Chief Judge and Stroke Judge
 - Avoid conversing with the DR unless it involves a possible false start or another timely matter
- Using the Starter’s heat sheet, confirm the next heat’s swimmers are reporting to the assigned lanes. Note on the heat sheet any “no shows”, “declared false starts”, false starts or other matters for which there should be a record
- Begin preparations to start the next heat
- **Use the False Start Protocol:**
 - Remember the definition of a false start: *Any swimmer **starting** before the starting signal is given, shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation that a false start occurred.*
 - After the start and the microphone is replaced, calmly mark the Starter heat sheet to indicate which heat and lane the false start was observed. Double-check that mark for accuracy of heat and lane
 - Any mark can be used as long as the Deck Referee can tell a particular heat and lane has been indicated, whether it’s circling the lane number, underlining the lane number and name, placing a visible dot next to the lane, etc.
 - Show the marked heat sheet to the Deck Referee and implement the procedure discussed prior to the start of the meet. It should include pointing out the heat and lane, as well as verbally indicating a false start was observed. The Deck Referee should also show the Starter his/her marked heat sheet as confirmation of a false start. Under no circumstance should a false start confirmation be based solely on a discussion.
 - When a Chief Judge is available, they will fill out the disqualification form and hand it to the Starter for signature. Double check the event, heat, lane and, possibly the name and team, have been correctly noted and the false start box was checked before signing and handing the form back to the Chief Judge
 - When a Chief Judge is not available, the Starter completes and signs the disqualification form before handing it to the Referee for final sign-off
 - If necessary, note any peculiarities to the false start on the heat sheet for later reference; possibly when advising a coach or swimmer of the observed action
 - Don’t hesitate to use the recall option if you feel an external noise (ex. coach’s whistle) or motion (activity around the starting blocks) has interfered with a swimmer’s ability to achieve a fair start
- **When Using Other Commands;**
 - To address the athletes with the microphone, refer to the swimmers as “Ladies” and “Gentlemen”
 - Remember to use “Please” and “Thank you”

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- If it is necessary to stand the field after the TYM instruction, for both forward and back starts, say, “Stand please”
- If the Deck Referee asks for the swimmers to step off the blocks, say, “Ladies (Gentlemen), step down carefully please”
- The Deck Ref may request you clear pool by saying “Thank you Ladies/Gentlemen.” If more instruction is needed, say, “Ladies/Gentlemen, please clear the pool”
- Use of the “Relax please Ladies/Gentlemen” instruction means it will be a prolonged period before the starting sequence will begin. The “Relax” instruction should not be used in place of a “Stand Please” instruction for backstroke starts
- If a swimmer’s toes are curled over the top of the pad, or not in contact with the pad when ledges are used prior to the start of the backstroke, address the swimmer by saying, “Lane 7, toes please”

N2 Starter - Prerequisites for requesting an Evaluation:

- LSC-certified Starter for 16 sessions
- Certified as N2 Stroke & Turn Judge
- Must work at least 4 sessions at the OQM, with at least 3 evaluation sessions as a Starter

N2 Starter - Performance Requirements for an Advancing Evaluation:

- Know the rules for starting
- Understands basic starting protocols and procedures (distance counting, OOF, etc.)
- Understands how to start swimmers with disabilities
- Demonstrates the Start for a hearing impaired swimmer
- Understands how the starting system operates
- Establishes a comfortable starting position on deck for both forward and back starts
- Prepared and in position prior to each heat; comfortable holding microphone and cord
- Delivers TYM calmly and with necessary volume
- Shows PATIENCE before delivering TYM and starting signal
- Understands the use of other commands
- Understands and practices the False Start Protocol
- If the evaluation is satisfactory and all other requirements are met, submit a “National Certification Application” using the OTS

N3 initial Starter Evaluation (this is not a certification level) – Prerequisites for requesting an evaluation:

- N2 Starter certification and N3 Stroke and Turn certification
- Active as an official in the LSC at all levels of meets
- At least 8 sessions* as a Starter, recorded in OTS, since N2 certification

N3 initial Starter Evaluation - Performance Requirements for a recommendation to proceed to an N3 final Evaluation:

- Understands how the starting system operates; tests it during warm-ups without guidance
- Observes, without scrutinizing, next-up swimmers
- Shows preparedness when the heat is turned over by the Deck Referee
- Is comfortable with starting deck position and microphone
- Uses PATIENCE before delivering the TYM, and does so calmly with necessary volume
- Uses the proper TYM cadence that includes a slight falling in pitch
- Shows how to start swimmers with disabilities
- Repeatedly demonstrates Starts for hearing impaired swimmer with minimal prompting

The “Professional” Starter -or- It’s more than three short words!

- Shows awareness of external noises or motions that may affect swimmers’ start and properly reacts
- Follows proper deck positioning before, during and after starts
- Correctly uses other commands, without over-use (e.g. standing swimmers)
- Correctly follows false start protocols
- Shows consistency in delivery, positioning, awareness and demeanor

N3 final Starter Evaluation – Prerequisites for requesting an evaluation:

- Worked at least eight (8) sessions* as a Starter, recorded in OTS, after receiving a “recommendation” N3 initial Starter evaluation

N3 final Starter Evaluation - Performance Requirements for Certification:

- Arrives on-time, prepared with necessary personal equipment, and properly/professionally attired
- Knows and consistently follows all the pre-meet/pre-session duties
- Consistently delivers starting instructions showing ideal PATIENCE, timing, cadence and awareness
- Consistently and properly uses other commands
- Consistently follows False Start protocols
- Consistently demonstrates proper starts for swimmers with disabilities
- Consistently demonstrates Starts for hearing impaired swimmer with no prompting
- Consistently self-critiques with a determination to improve his/her starting talent
- Consistently shows a starting demeanor that is calm, comfortable and assured

**Sessions should be completed at invites approaching Sectional meet protocol or prelim/final meets.*

If your evaluation is satisfactory, and all other requirements are met, you will need to submit a “National Certification Application” using the OTS.