

# Mentoring an Apprentice



## **The Goal of Mentoring:**

To teach officials to perform at a consistent, high level of swimming officiating.

## **Before a Meet**

1. Prepare for each meet
  - a) Read the Meet Announcement
  - b) Know when to be arrive, and what to wear.
  - c) Review the applicable “Professional Official” document for your position as found on USA Swimming website under, “Member Resources”, “Officials”, “Education & Training”, “Education & Training Resources”. Or just use the Search feature for “Professional Official”.
2. Mentors should be on the same page as the Meet Referee. Discuss expectations prior to the start of the meet.

## **During the Meet**

1. Teach the official using established criteria in the “Professional Official” document. Please avoid using your own standards.
2. You may need to teach that other meets use different protocols, and make them aware of how those other protocols might be used.
3. Always explain the reason –the logic --for any suggestion. (e.g. Benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer.)
4. Try not to overload the official with suggestions. Focus on refining only one skill or concept at a time.
5. Be patient and avoid a rush to judgment. Allow time for counsel.
6. Be reassuring. Anxiety and insecurity prevent many officials from learning new skills. Mentors should encourage officials to believe any anxiety they feel is misplaced. They have the “right stuff;” the mentor is just helping guide their talent in a new and different direction.
7. Listening provides an opportunity to understand the official’s desires and concerns. Let the official finish communicating. Interruption is a sign that you aren’t listening. Repeat the main points in your own words for clarification. Ask questions if you don’t understand their main point
8. Ask Empowering Questions, for instance, questions that facilitate thinking and helping the official discover their own answers. (hypothetical situations)
9. Use a blend of compassion, tact and diplomacy to both encourage and critique protégé officials

## **After the Meet**

1. Self-evaluate on what went well, and what could have been improved or done better.

## **Final Thoughts**

1. The process of mentoring is primarily an educational one and is intended to be a positive experience that will allow officials to grow in knowledge, experience and enjoyment of swim officiating
2. Recognizing improvements by an official may be the best way to support and motivate the official to continue growth and improvement