



Guide to Becoming a USA Swimming Starter in Niagara LSC

Thank you for your interest in becoming a USA Swimming Starter Official. Without volunteers like you, we would not be able to run the high-quality meets that we do. Outlined below are the steps to become a Niagara LSC Starter.

If at any time you have questions or need help along the way, please don't hesitate to reach out to the Niagara Swimming Officials Chair at Officials@Niagaraswim.org. Again, thank you. We look forward to you advancing and seeing you on deck in your new role!

Gain an Understanding of USA Swimming Deck Protocols

Becoming a Starter is a step forward in responsibility and should not be taken lightly. To be considered for a Starter you must first meet some prerequisites. These are intended for the achievement of experience and understanding of the flow of a meet. These are:

Have held the Stroke and Turn Certification within Niagara LSC for a minimum of one (1) Year.

Work a minimum of twenty (20) sessions at Stroke and Turn (or Chief Judge).

These sessions must include working under at least three (3) different Meet Referees.

Eight (8) of the sessions must be away from your own team's home Pool and Meet Referee.

Four (4) of these sessions must be in a "Prelim/Final" format meet. (and preferably both prelim and finals)

Have Your OTS Record Reviewed and Get Approval to Begin the Process

Once you believe you have met the above prerequisite requirements (or are very close) send an email to the Officials Chair at Officials@Niagaraswim.org with a request for OTS review and the OK to begin the process of advancement. If all the prerequisites have been met, the Officials Chair will give you the "go-head" to begin the process.

If the prerequisites are not met, or not showing in OTS there may be some additional steps needed to get started, but the Officials Chair will guide that for you.

You will have six (6) months to complete the next two steps from the date you either begin the exams or attend the clinic.

Attend a Starter Clinic

Starter Clinics are available periodically throughout the year. A clinic is always offered at spring and fall House of Delegates meeting. To find a clinic near you, ask your team's official's contact, look on the Niagaraswim.org website, or the "Events" tab of Niagara Officials Team App.

Take the Exams

Take the Certification exams (not re-certification) for "Timing Judge", "Clerk of Course," "Starter" and the "Re-Certification Stroke and Turn/Timer" Exam. You must pass each with at least 85% score. NOTE: You are RE-Certifying your Stroke and Turn Certification while adding the Starter Certification so that all your certifications expire at the same time once Starter is added to your record. Follow the testing instructions found here: <https://www.usaswimming.org/utility/landing-pages/officials/officials-online-testing>. It is recommended to follow the instructions about printing the test out and completing offline. The test does ask you to reference the rulebook often. There is a link to the rulebook on the exam instructions page.

Notify Officials Chair You Are Ready to Shadow

As soon as you have passed the exams and attended a clinic, send an e-mail to the Officials Chair at officials@niagaraswim.org requesting your Apprentice (AP) Certification deck pass. The Officials Chair will verify completion of all the exams and clinic attendance in OTS, then issue an "AP-Starter" Certification that is valid for six (6) Months. You then have those six (6) months to complete the shadow process.

Print your Membership Card

If everything is in order you will receive an email with a link to print your Membership Card (Deck Pass) with your new AP-Starter Certification listed. This allows you to begin on-deck (shadow) training. Bring it with you to every session you attend. This can also be found on the "Deck Pass" Tab of the USA Swimming website on the left side click the "Membership Card" button.

Complete a Minimum of Five (5) Apprentice Sessions

Attend sessions (see the minimum requirements for shadow sessions); work with experienced Starters to gain live, in the meet experience. Starters must have at least one (1) year of experience at the Starter position to be eligible to mentor you. You should request the Meet Referee only assign you to eligible Starters. While doing your shadow sessions, please remember that the final step to be advanced to Starter is getting two (2) Letters of Recommendation of which at least one (1) MUST be from someone not on your Team (or if Unattached from two (2) different teams) You must complete your shadow sessions within six months of getting the AP Certification.

Request Two (2) Letters of Recommendation

Have two (2) Letters of Recommendation sent to the Officials Chair. The two Letters of Recommendation should be from the Starters you shadowed at your last two sessions of shadowing. Those are the two sessions that will have you essentially being observed for all, or most of the session and represent your skills as needed to be a Starter. Working with an experienced Starter to gain live, in the meet experience includes taking advice in an open and cooperative fashion. Your Mentor is trying to help, do not take recommendations or critique personally! The Starter position is much more than saying "take your mark" as you will be learning. You must complete your shadow sessions within six (6) months of getting the AP Certification.

Notify Officials Chair Apprentice Session Complete

Verify that the sessions you shadowed are listed in the Officials Tracking System (OTS) on the USA Swimming Website. If sessions are not showing, contact the meet referee of any session not showing a week after the session is complete. This allows time to get the meet entered into OTS. Once verified, send an e-mail to Officials@niagaraswim.org that you have completed your Apprentice Sessions and asking to be Qualified. Include the names of the two people that will be sending your letters of recommendation.

Receive and Print Certification Card

Once the Officials Chair receives your letters of recommendation and everything else is documented in OTS, the LSC Official's Chair will add the Starter "Qualified" (Q) Certification. You will receive link to your new "deck Pass" Membership card. Print your Deck Pass Member Card or Bookmark your Deck Pass Page of the USA Swimming website on your smartphone.

Congratulations!

You made it! Put your new skills to work! Hope to see you on deck soon!