



IASI OFFICIALS TRAINING

4. Starter

25 April 2023

Version 2.1



Introduction & Agenda

- Instructor
- MAAPP
- Philosophy of Starting
- Starting Rules
- Elements of the Start/Techniques of Starting
- Developing Good Habits and a Routine
- Certification Process
- Resources
- Questions



Safe Sport / Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP)

- Safe Sport applies to any relationship of unequal power.
- Federal Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017 requires any suspected abuse to be reported to appropriate authorities within 24 hours.
- MAAPP applies to all adults in contact with minor (non-related) athletes.
 - All one-on-one interactions must be observable and interruptible.
 - Cannot friend non-related minor athletes on social media.
 - Full MAAPP policy available on USA Swimming website.
- For officials, specific things to think about when working a meet:
 - Avoid locker room unless no other bathroom facilities are available. Never be alone in locker room with a swimmer.
 - Avoid any physical contact with swimmers.
 - No photography behind the blocks at any time.
 - Be careful interacting with your own children on deck. Audience will see you only as an official and a swimmer.

USA Swimming National Officials Committee



Philosophy of Starting

- GOAL: A fair start for all swimmers
- Three main aspects to understand
 - Knowing when the field is ready to assume the starting position
 - Knowing when the field is ready to be sent
 - Knowing when it is necessary to intervene so that the previous two items are realized



The Mindset of a Starter

- The Starter reads the field, to determine when THE FIELD is ready to start—Not the other way around!
 - PATIENCE, PATIENCE, PATIENCE
 - Control your emotions so that the swimmers can control theirs!
 - Project calm, friendly presence: You are there to ensure a fair start, looking out for them.



Starting Rules – 101.1.1, 101.1.2

101.1 STARTS

.1 **Equipment** — A loudspeaker start system conforming to 103.18, with or without an underwater recall device, and an electronic strobe signal visible to all manual timers for forward and backstroke starts, shall be the preferred starting device.

.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.

C On the Starter's command "take your mark," 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.

marks



Starter— 102.12.1, 102.12.2

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.
- .2 **Optional Instructions** — The Starter may:
 - A Announce the event.
 - B Advise the heat when a swimmer will be attempting to achieve a time at an initial distance.
 - C For backstroke starts, give the command, "Place your feet."



Becoming Familiar With Equipment

- Always test the microphone and equipment, they are all different!
 - Volume
 - Sensitivity
 - Lights/Indicators
- Test the volume - be sure you can be heard from all lanes!
 - Alternatives for individual speakers versus one speaker for the pool
 - Indoor versus Outdoor
 - Say "**Take your marks**" while testing; enlist a partner to listen at each lane; do not indicate publicly which lanes may have troublesome speakers.



Where to Stand

- Within about 5 meters from the start end of the pool
- Want to be able to observe the entire field but also distinguish between individual lanes – facing the swimmers
- Starter chooses first, Referee adjusts to Starter
 - Make sure the Referee doesn't interfere with your view.
 - Make sure you can hear the Referee.
 - Make sure the Referee can hear you.



Before Each Heat

- Observe the swimmers behind the blocks.
 - Discuss with the Deck Referee if he/she wants you to notify them of potentially missing swimmers.
 - Any nervousness, swimmers looking for goggles/caps, etc?
- Short whistles
 - Prepare the microphone.
- Long whistle(s)
 - Be in position and ready to go at the final long whistle for the heat.
 - Remember, the swimmers on the blocks dictate the “pace” of the start.



Three Parts of the Start

1. Knowing when the field is ready to assume the starting position
2. Knowing when the field is ready to receive the starting signal
3. Following through heads up



“The First Part of the Start”

- Patience as the swimmers settle into position
- **“Take Your Marks”**
 - Conversational tone
 - Inviting the swimmers to swim
 - Slightly descending tone
 - Statement, not a question
 - Delivered in a relaxed, but confident way
 - “Close the door” “Pass the Salt” “I love you”



“Take Your Mark”

- Forward Start
 - One foot at front of block
 - One foot toward the edge of the deck, if starting on the deck
 - At least one hand of the swimmer touching the wall, if in water
- Backstroke Start
 - Toes not curled over gutter
 - At least one toe of each foot on the pad if using backstroke ledges
 - Hands gripping gutter or backstroke handles on the block
- Once all swimmers are in position, be ready for the starting signal.



“The Second Part of the Start”

- Wait for the swimmers to become stationary.
 - Stationary does NOT necessarily mean motionless.
 - Stationary = Establishes vertical plane at front of block or the back for a backstroke start.
- Send the swimmers once all are stationary *but not too quickly (don't rush)*.
 - *For backstroke starts, wait for the swimmers to settle into position--this can look like a downward slump.*



Starting Rules – 101.1.3

101.1

.3 False Starts

- A 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 violation occurred. Swimmers remaining on the starting blocks shall be relieved from their starting positions with the "stand up" command and may step off the blocks.
- B If the starting signal has been given before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue without recall. If the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation that a violation occurred, the swimmer or swimmers who have false started shall be disqualified upon completion of the race.
- C If the recall signal is activated, no swimmer shall be charged with a false start and the Starter shall restart the race upon signal by the Referee.
- D A swimmer who would otherwise be charged with a false start may be relieved of the charge if the false start was caused by the swimmer's reaction to the "stand up" command.
- E Declared false start: swimmers reporting to the Referee prior to the start of their race and declaring their intent not to compete will be disqualified except as noted in 207.11.6D(1).



The False Start

- A Swimmer **STARTING** early—breaking his/her stationary position before the start
 - Breaking the front vertical plane
- Record violation by noting on heat sheet.
- Dual confirmation procedures
 - Starter initiates.
 - Deck Referee responds.



If Things Don't Go As Planned.... (For ANY Reason!)

- “Stand, please”
- To be delivered softly and extremely calmly
- PATIENCE to allow swimmers to refocus before giving the command again
 - If a swimmer steps off the blocks, there is a long pause between the Stand command and next Take Your Mark, or a swimmer leaves the wall (if in water), the Deck Referee should blow another long whistle.



The Third Part of the Start

- Once The Heat Has Started....
 - Hold microphone open and in position until heads surface, in case it is necessary to recall.
 - Starter can recall a heat for any reason that caused swimmers **to not have a fair start.**
 - Recall = No Swimmers Charged with False Start
- Mark any empty lanes in starter program.
 - Always “attend” to the starter program so there is no indication that you are marking a potential false start.
- Move out of the starting area and prepare for next duty.
 - Lap counting
 - OOF
 - Next heat



Some Scenarios (1-Q)

- In the 50 yard freestyle, the Starter gives the “Take your marks” command. The swimmer in lane 1 establishes a stationary position, jolts forward, and then re-establishes stationary position, prior to the starting signal. Should the swimmer be disqualified for a false start?



Some Scenarios (1-A)

- In the 50 yard freestyle, the Starter gives the “Take your marks” command. The swimmer in lane 1 establishes a stationary position, jolts forward, and then re-establishes stationary position, prior to the starting signal. Should the swimmer be disqualified for a false start?
- No, the swimmer should not be disqualified for a false start. The swimmer was stationary when the starting signal was given, and, therefore, the swimmer did not start before the starting signal, and should not be charged with a false start.

The starter should consider standing the heat, to allow everyone to settle in again, if lane 1's movement and returning to stationary position takes a while.



Some Scenarios (2-Q)

- Just prior to the starting signal, and after the “Take your marks” command is given, the swimmer in lane 4 twitches his right knee but does not leave his stationary starting position. Reacting to this movement, the swimmer in lane 5 dives into the pool. No starting signal has been given. How should the situation be handled?



Some Scenarios (2-A)

- Just prior to the starting signal, and after the “Take your marks” command is given, the swimmer in lane 4 twitches his right knee but does not leave his stationary starting position. Reacting to this movement, the swimmer in lane 5 dives into the pool. No starting signal has been given. How should the situation be handled?
- If possible, the Starter should stand the heat. If it is observed by the Starter and independently observed and confirmed by the Referee that the swimmer in lane 5 started before the starting signal, the swimmer in lane 5 should be disqualified for a false start. If the Starter is able to stand the heat, this swimmer should be removed from the heat; if not, the race shall continue without recall. As the swimmer in lane 4 did not leave his stationary starting position, the knee twitch is not considered to be a starting motion, and the swimmer should not be disqualified. The fact that the false start in lane 5 may have been in reaction to the movement of the swimmer in lane 4 has no bearing on the disqualification.



Some Scenarios (3-Q)

- Just prior to the starting signal, and after the “Take your marks” command is given, the swimmer in lane 6 twitches his right knee, leaving his stationary starting position and diving into the pool. Reacting to this movement, the swimmer in lane 7 leaves his stationary starting position and dives into the pool. No starting signal has been given. How should the situation be handled?



Some Scenarios (3-A)

- Just prior to the starting signal, and after the “Take your marks” command is given, the swimmer in lane 6 twitches his right knee, leaving his stationary starting position and diving into the pool. Reacting to this movement, the swimmer in lane 7 leaves his stationary starting position and dives into the pool. No starting signal has been given. How should the situation be handled?
- If possible, the Starter should stand the heat. If it is observed by the Starter and independently observed and confirmed by the Referee that both swimmers started before the starting signal, both swimmers should be disqualified for false starts. If the Starter is able to stand the heat, the swimmers should be removed from the heat; if not, the race shall continue without recall. The fact that the false start in lane 7 may have been in reaction to the false start in lane 6 has no bearing on the disqualification.



Some Scenarios (4-Q)

- The Starter gives the “Take your marks” command, and the swimmers become stationary. The swimmer in lane 7 leaves her stationary position prior to the starting signal. Upon realizing the early starting motion, the swimmer attempts to stop this motion, trying to remain on the block. The Starter gives the “Stand, please” command, and the swimmer in lane 7 remains on the block and stands up. Is this a false start?



Some Scenarios (4-A)

- The Starter gives the “Take your marks” command, and the swimmers become stationary. The swimmer in lane 7 leaves her stationary position prior to the starting signal. Upon realizing the early starting motion, the swimmer attempts to stop this motion, trying to remain on the block. The Starter gives the “Stand, please” command, and the swimmer in lane 7 remains on the block and stands up. Is this a false start?
- No, this is not a false start. The swimmer successfully responded to the “Stand, please” command and remained on the block with the other swimmers in the heat.



Other Things to Say (And Not To Say!)

- Refer to the swimmers as “Swimmers” (Iowa) or “Ladies” and “Gentlemen” (National)
- NEVER deviate from the language of “Take your marks” and “Stand, please”
 - “Relax, please” or “Swimmers, relax” only for prolonged delays
- “Lane __, toes, please,” if necessary to lower or raise toes in backstroke
- “Thank you, ladies (gentlemen) (swimmers),” to clear the pool
- Additional instructions only as directed by Referee



Swimmers with Disabilities

- Notate the events and heats on your copy of the program, indicating that you will have a swimmer with a disability, so you won't rush the start and to give him/her more time to get in the water or get set on the block or edge of the pool.
- Practice the arm signals for a swimmer who is deaf or hard of hearing. It is sometimes awkward to hold the microphone and execute the signals.
- Refer to section 105.3 for instructions

Swimmers with Disabilities (2)

105.3 DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING



FIGURE 1: FORWARD START

- A. Twist hand at chin level — short whistle
- B. Arm overhead — "long whistle" — swimmer steps onto starting block
- C. Arm moves to shoulder level — signal to "take your mark"
- D. Arm moves to side of body — starting signal
- E. Arm raised overhead with palm up (at any time after C. ["take your mark"] and prior to D. [starting signal] — swimmer released from "take your mark" command)

FIGURE 2: BACKSTROKE START

- A. Twist hand at chin level — short whistle
- B. Arm overhead — "long whistle" — swimmer enters water, drop arm to side while swimmer enters water
- C. Arm overhead — swimmer returns to backstroke start position
- D. Arm moves to shoulder level — signal to "take your mark"
- E. Arm moves to side of body — starting signal
- F. Arm raised overhead with palm up (at any time after D. ["take your mark"] and prior to E. [starting signal] — swimmer released from "take your mark" command)



Starting Rules – 101.1.4, 101.1.5

101.1

- .4 **Warning Signal** — With the exception of relays, in events 500 yards or longer, the Starter or a designee shall sound a warning signal over the water at the finish end of the lane of the leading swimmer when that swimmer has two lengths plus five yards or five meters to swim. As an alternative, a bell warning signal may be given over each lane by a lane judge or timer for that lane.
- .5 **Deliberate Delay or Misconduct**
 - A The Starter shall report a swimmer to the Referee for delaying the start, for willfully disobeying an order or for any other misconduct taking place at the start, but only the Referee may disqualify a swimmer for such delay, willful disobedience or misconduct.
 - B The Referee shall disqualify a swimmer who fails to appear at the starting platform ready to swim in time for the initial start of his/her heat.
 - C Such disqualification shall not be charged as a false start.



Other Possible Responsibilities of the Starter

- Timers' Briefing
 - Follow the standard Timers' Briefing template but adapt for local conditions.
 - No cell phone usage behind the blocks
- Invigilating – What, When, How?
- Sound warning signal for distance events.
- Tracking laps for long distance (500 Y Free and above)
- Order of Finish



Summary

- USA Swimming [Starter Video](#) (Note: this is a 30 minute video)
 - Starter Video [Discussion](#)
- Pro Series [Start](#)
 - Patience, Patience, Patience
 1. Knowing when the field is ready to assume the starting position
 2. Knowing when the field is ready to receive the starting signal
 3. Following through heads up
- Practice, Practice, Practice!
 - The more experience you gain, the more comfortable you will be!



Certification Process

The requirements to be a certified IASI Starter are:

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- Attend a Starter Clinic taught by a Certified Clinic Instructor;
- Achieve at least 80% on the current USA Swimming Starter online exam;
- Prior to your apprenticeship, have completed six sessions as a certified Stroke & Turn Judge;
- Complete a minimum of five apprenticeships as a Starter, with at least two different mentors, with at least 120 starts (including at least 20 backstroke starts).
- At your final apprenticeship, have a satisfactory evaluation from an N2 or N3 Certified Starter mentor.

After the final apprenticeship, submit your completed apprentice form to the IASI Official's Chair for final approval and certification.



Resources

Documents

- Starter Apprentice Form
- The “Professional” Starter Document
- Starter and Deck Referee Situations and Resolutions Document

Current Versions of Documents can be found on the Iowa Swimming Officials website and USA Swimming website.



Questions

- Remember the resources available to you.
- The best way to learn is to practice – at meets!

Thank you for your participation!