Guidelines for Training New Officials

Illinois Swimming
Officials Committee
Updated April 2020

Statement of Purpose

It has been five years since the last update to this document, and with the change in teaching protocols for Illinois Swimming, the Committee wanted to update it to reflect the new methods. It remains our belief that each new official is different, and each person learns differently. Likewise, each session presents unique challenges and opportunities to each person involved in training. Common sense is the most important factor in being a good trainer and mentor – knowing your job, knowing your meet and learning the abilities of your trainee remain the essence of mentoring.

The expectations for on deck training are incorporated into the curriculum of the clinics, and this gives the trainees the opportunity to think and prepare more going into a session. It remains up to the meet referees and the trainers to ensure excellent training.

On Being a Good Mentor

Being a mentor is better than being a trainer. Being a trainer implies you are going to teach them a certain set of skills or impart information. Being a mentor implies you are going to share experience with someone, even beyond the day you spend on deck with them, and that you carry a responsibility to them beyond that day as well. New officials will go out into the world of officiating with your stamp of approval, for all to see, and their performance is a reflection on you as their mentor.

Be positive, encouraging and honest and help teach the next generation of great Illinois officials.

Meet Referee's Guide to Training New Officials

As meet referee we know your responsibilities extend to many things, but mentorship needs to place near the top of that list.

Here are some items to consider about training as the meet referee:

- Make training a priority while ensuring training activity does not interfere with the conduct of the meet or adversely affect swimmers.
- When possible, advise coaches the meet will include trainees, particularly when starters and referees are being trained.
- Trainees are told in clinics to contact meet refs up front about the possibility of training. When they do, please respond to them.

Requirements for a Training Session to Count:

All training sessions must be two hours in length, measured in actual meet time (first splash to last touch), except referees which must be three hours

Stroke and Turn, Admin and Referee training session must include all four strokes

Starter trainees must get a minimum of 25 starts of their own

Referee and AO training sessions must have a minimum 20 heats

- Please assign trainees to experienced trainers. While an on-deck trainers have minimum standards, please consider assigning your most experienced (i.e., referees) officials to this task.
- Ideally, trainers will not work in position while training, but we recognize the difficulty of accomplishing that at some meets. If working in position, trainers are limited to two trainees at any given time and should be assigned so as not to distract from on deck officiating responsibilities.
- If not working in an assigned position, a S&T trainer may work with up to four S&T trainees at any one time in a clinic environment, though this is rare and not ideal.
- At all other positions a trainer may work with a maximum of two trainees at any given time.
- Monitor on deck training activity as necessary and appropriate, helping the trainer to be a good mentor.
- Review training evaluation cards with the trainer, making certain that appropriate ratings have been given, and constructive comments are included.
- Indicate training sessions in OTS with appropriate designations - XJ, YA, XS, XR.

Current Training Requirements for Certification	
Stroke and Turn Judge	A total of 5 sessions at no less than 3 sanctioned meets with at least 2 different Trainers who have been certified Stroke and Turn Judges for a minimum of 12 months.
Administrative Official	A total of 3 sessions at no less than 2 sanctioned meets with at least 2 different Trainers who have been certified Administrative Officials for a minimum of 12 months. At least one must be multi-session meet.
Starter	A total of 5 sessions at no less than 3 sanctioned meets with at least 2 different Trainers who have been certified Starters for a minimum of 12 months.
Deck Referee	A total of 6 sessions at no less than 4 sanctioned meets with at least 3 different Trainers who have been certified Referees for a minimum of 24 months. Either 5th or 6th session done with a certified trainer.

- Help trainers to be good mentors. Assign training pairs to each other as soon as possible, before the meeting if you can. Make sure the trainer knows what your expectations are. Provide them with the position specific pages which are part of this document. Stress the following general guidelines:
    - Help trainees become comfortable in their role. Compliment observations, demeanor, etc. as appropriate and make certain that questions and concerns are voiced. Be positive!
    - Ask your trainee about online learning and on-deck training experiences. Have they worked at both the start and turn ends? Had the experience to walk stroke? Have questions, or a harder time with a certain stroke? Work to provide opportunities to "fill the gaps."
    - Set specific focus points for the training session.
- Thank the trainer and the trainee for their time and interest in improving officiating and swimming in Illinois.

ISI Policy on Out-Of-LSC Training

No more than 50 percent of the required on-deck training sessions for a position may be done at meets outside of the Illinois Swimming LSC with a certified trainer (one year certified in the trained position) ***from another LSC***.

Training Stroke and Turn Officials

Some General Hints
• Help trainees become comfortable in the role. Be thorough yet positive! • Ask your trainee about their training experiences. Have they worked at both ends?   Walked stroke? Have questions, or a harder time with a certain stroke? • Work with the meet referee to provide opportunities to "fill the gaps." • Set a specific focus for your training session. • Be the best official you can be by modeling proper deck protocol. • Stress that all questions about calls should be go to the referee without comment. • Share your experiences on other decks, pass along what you have learned.
First Session
• Generally, the trainer makes the calls in this session and the trainee observes. • Remember that with online clinics they no longer get a pool session. • Narrate what you do and how you do it; explain watching empty lanes • Review rules and discuss how to observe swims (sequence of looks, etc.). • Note that most of what we see is legal and we are looking for exceptions. Discuss the "ugly but legal" examples that you see. • After you make a call discuss what you saw and what rule was violated, progress to asking if they know why you made a call first. • Emphasis on fairness and equality of treatment. • Review positioning, and how relief will happen at this meet and others.
Second Session
• Transition from trainer to trainee making calls as appropriate. • Discuss writing DQ slips and heat sheet notes; have write for you but check the slip. • Encourage discussion of infractions to get them in the practice of describing calls. • If they make calls, act as a CJ would – ask jurisdiction, observation, rule. • Make sure to encourage questions and share tips for handling multiple calls. • Share you experiences at other meets.
Third Session
• The trainee should be ready to make calls by this session. • Have them focus on the pool and act as their personal CJ – writing slips and vetting calls. • Make sure you observe the swims to see that they are not missing things. • Explain the importance of "seeing what you call and calling what you see."

• Work on translating observations into descriptions and then DQ slip writing. • Ask about their experience with disability rules and discuss.
Fourth Session
• Trainees should be making calls. • You should observe swims to verify their calls and help with missed calls. • Go over prior trainings and determine what they have not experienced or seen. • Talk through relays if they have not observed them yet.
Fifth Session
• Trainees need to make calls and you need to polish them. • Help them identify weak spots in their experience and advise on ways to continue learning. • See if they have any questions on what to do to become certified. Offer guidance!

Completing a Training Card:

Please use the main portion of the card to give constructive advice for improvement. Praise what was done well and offer advice on what to try to focus on in future trainings. There is no expectation that newer trainees are completely proficient.

At the bottom, circle Y or N for advancement. N means the training session will not be counted; Y means they are proficient enough for their relative level of training. Only use N when a trainee does not show proper learning for their training status.

After the Session:

Review the card with the meet referee and give it to the trainee. Provide some feedback about your comments and answer any questions they may have. Remind them they must submit their training cards via email when all training is done. BE POSITIVE ABOUT OFFICIATING!

Training Administrative Officials

Some General Hints

- These are guidelines. Common sense, flexibility and creativity should apply to your specific training session. Your physical set-up and number of computers will impact the design of your training session.
- Help trainees become comfortable in the role. Be thorough yet positive!
- Ask your trainee about their training experiences. Have they worked the computer? Done check-in? Printed all the reports?
- Work with the meet referee to provide opportunities to "fill the gaps."
- Set a specific focus for your training session.
- Be the best official you can be by modeling proper deck protocol.
- It is OK to have them observe during stressful or busy times.
- Share your experiences at other meets, pass along what you have learned.

First Session

- Remember – training to this point has not been a Meet Manager how-to, they have seen pictures, but they know more about the rules than the operations.
- Trainees should get an understanding of the flow of the table during a meet from getting times to Meet Manager to results. Share your system for collating all supporting data for an event and filing it, while continually stressing the need for documentation of all changes made to times, results, etc.
- Most attention should be spent on how to make good timing adjustments, but don't overwhelm.
- To avoid slowing the meet down with "live" timing adjustment discussions, try this: if you have heats requiring investigation/potential adjustment, print the CALC screen report then follow your normal process to adjust times and generate results. Turn the CALC sheets and supporting data over to your trainee. Ask them to investigate/process adjustments and make a recommendation on paper. Review these later.
- Giving the trainee the opportunity to work through the adjustment data without the pressure of getting results out is a very good thing
- When your trainee is comfortable with this, oversee their live calculation of times, letting them take the lead to determine whether an adjustment needs to be made. Check and sign-off on the adjustment before it is processed.

Second Session

- Present a more global view of the meet – where information comes from and how it is used.
- Reinforce timing adjustments while increasing understanding of minimizing bad inputs (pads, buttons, timers) and managing the paper flow at the table.
- Talk about best practice of checking patterns of bad buttons or pads and how to fix.
- Discuss handling DQ slips – when/how to input into MM, how DQ codes are organized, what system is being used to notify swimmers, how are they filed, etc.
- Share your practices for reviewing meet results – do DQs, NSs and DFSs match what Deck Referee has? Do the times seem reasonable?
- Discuss best practices: files for event results, detailed paper trails.
- \- If the situation presents itself, cover the handling of late/deck entries into a heat: central person to decide, how to notify deck ref, timers of the add.

Third Session

• Use your trainee as an active assistant, making timing adjustments, getting times from the deck, gathering DQ slips for entry, filing paperwork. Help them get comfortable with the process of working the table "solo."
• Assess what your trainee still needs practice with and emphasize those points.
• Cover how late/deck entries will be handled and by whom.
• If it is a positive check-in meet have your trainee report early to the table. Let the trainee help with check-in procedures, and discuss methods teams use to handle entry scratches.
• Make sure they are comfortable making timing adjustments, then focus on managing other issues:
    o Positive check-in, creating session paperwork
    o How to be "quick"
    o How to know a session is ready to go.

Completing a Training Card:

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At the bottom, circle Y or N for advancement. N means the training session will not be counted; Y means they are proficient enough for their relative level of training. Only use N when a trainee does not show proper learning for their training status.

After the Session:

Review the card with the meet referee and give it to the trainee. Provide some feedback about your comments and answer any questions they may have. Remind them they must submit their training cards via email when all training is done. BE POSITIVE ABOUT OFFICIATING!

Training Starters

Some General Hints

- Help trainees become comfortable in the role. Be thorough yet positive!
- Be patient, we learn by doing. Work on one thing at a time while offering short, focused comments. Don't fixate on inflection or cord management when they can't "see" what athletes are doing on the blocks.
- Work with the meet referee to provide opportunities to "fill the gaps."
- Set a specific focus for your training session.
- Be the best official you can be by modeling proper deck protocol.
- It is OK to have them observe you, or other starters, while talking through starts.
- Share your experiences at other meets, pass along what you have learned.
- Give your trainee some space. Observe him/her from the other side of the pool or even from the stands. Some people find it difficult to work under continual scrutiny.

First Session

- Teach by example, possibly even start an early set. Work with the others in starter/ref teams to establish an environment and rotation that will serve your trainee and make sure your trainee will get at least 20 starts.
- During warm-ups, get them hands-on experience with the system. They should practice saying "take your mark" with emphasis on volume and tone of voice.
- Encourage your new starter to be conversational and calming; the swimmers should not be alarmed nor put on alert.
- Have a pre-meet conversation with the deck referee to review starting procedures and pace, and how false starts will be handled. Work with the trainee before the session on false start protocol and remind them the starter initiates the conversation.
- Stand near the trainee, ready to prompt with a whispered "stand them up," etc.
- Discuss how to tell when swimmers are ready and when to use the "stand" command.
- Talk through reading the athletes, about holding swimmers too long on the blocks, or not giving them enough time to get set.

Second Session

- Discuss the false start scenarios.
- Add in more starter responsibility - observe swimmers behind the blocks and order of finish.
- Watch a timers meeting
- Have them shadow you in discussions with other starters and referees on "box" protocols.
- Review after each set, give one thing to work on next set. Focus should still be on patience and reading the swimmers and basics such as posture and developing a routine.
- If voice tenor or cadence is a problem (not volume) give feedback about it when you are certain they are comfortable with the start process.

Third Session

- The trainee should lead the timer's meeting and all aspects of checking equipment, etc.
- By this session they should have developed a pre-start routine for themselves. Your job should be to help them refine it, reminding them that their movements are watched by the swimmers.
- If the command and responsiveness is appropriate, work on the voice cadence and tenor.

• Give feedback after sets based on trends you see – too fast, too slow, etc.
Fourth Session
• Focus pre-meet discussion on patience and how to read swimmers • Have them perform all pre-meet duties and you shadow. • Patience, routine, posture, position, and voice are the keys. • Observing them from the other side of the pool. • Trainees should do Order of Finish for at least a few sets. • Remember - appreciative but honest review, they are near flying solo, so do not leave things for the next person to catch.
Fifth Session
• Ask trainee about the keys they have learned and try to quickly assess what the greatest weaknesses are. • Discuss what they look for from the field before TYM, make sure they understand the need for patience both before and after the TYM command. • Have them do all pre-meet discussions with referees, do a timers meeting, and check the equipment with you only as a shadow. • Review after each set: Voice, Position, Patience, Routine, with patience being the most important thing. • Remind yourself that if you pass them, next time there is not a safety net as they fly solo. If you are not comfortable with that thought, there is nothing wrong with suggesting another training session.

Completing a Training Card:

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After the Session:

Review the card with the meet referee and give it to the trainee. Provide some feedback about your comments and answer any questions they may have. Remind them they must submit their training cards via email when all training is done. BE POSITIVE ABOUT OFFICIATING!

Training Referees

Some General Hints

- Always remember that refereeing is an art more than a science. You learned what you know, and probably not from the training clinic. They may have worked with referees who did things differently. Be patient and always explain the "why" when asking them to do something new.
- Help the trainee become comfortable in his/her new role. Compliment observations, demeanor, etc. as appropriate and make certain that questions and concerns are voiced.
- Ask your trainee about clinic and other on-deck training experiences. Review what training session this is. What were the positive takeaways from the last session? What were the development needs? What would they like to focus on? What do you as the trainer want to achieve?
- Review procedures and protocols given at the officials meeting, privately by the meet ref or in discussions with other members of the starter/ref team.
- Emphasize fairness and equality of treatment. Stress the importance of consistency and respect for the athletes and coaches. Remind your trainee to ***apply common sense and to keep a sense of humor.***
- Be patient! We learn by doing. Have a goal or two for each session and focus on that.

First Session

- The focus of this session should be deck refereeing events and working with the table.
- Have a pre-meet discussion of deck referee protocol. Review whistle starts, and how to pace them; how to handle false starts. Talk about the importance of having "pool sense," with knowledge of everything going on in the pool, including officials in position, timers, activity behind the blocks, etc.
- Help them develop a routine surrounding each start: from the whistles to heads up, making sure they are focused at each step on the most important points and not distracted by things going on around them.
- Work with the table to determine the paper flow of DQ and no-show slips, timer lane sheets/cards, etc. Talk about the importance of having "pool sense," with knowledge of everything going on in the pool, including officials in position, timers, activity behind the blocks, etc.

Second Session

- If possible, involve the trainee in pre-meet routines. Have them participate in the meeting, work with admin and have pre-session meetings with starters. Help them through this by asking questions and getting their thoughts.
- Further emphasis on the deck referee's job and responsibility to each event.
- Add the element of timeline management. Discuss why the whistles are where they are, what we are effectuating with those choices. Talk about alternatives and situations where you would want a meet to run faster or slower, and the duty to stay near the timeline for the benefit of the swimmers.
- Discuss backup and support for referee team and how the referees, admin, starters and officials are one unit mutually supporting each other.

Third Session

- Add more pre-session responsibility. Have the trainee do assignments or the stroke briefing. Have them direct the starter/ref meeting to determine protocols, teams and event responsibility.
- Talk to them about being a good referee for your starter – letting your starter start, not trying to control the starts with the whistles or the hands-up, discussing starts only between sets and then only if needed.
- They should have a good grasp of the basics of deck refereeing by this session. Now is a good time to talk to them about the rules for sessions (4 hrs., etc). Try to get a feel for where they are going – does their club need a meet referee in 6 weeks or are they going to have good support to learn after the training is over? This can allow you to teach more to their needs – meet referee versus deck referee and the differences between.
- Have them sit with admin for a few events and have them assessed or do so yourself.

Fourth Session

- Work with the meet referee to have the trainee do more of the pre-session work such as assignments or the meeting or both.

- The trainee should be more comfortable working on the SR/DR team now and should be able to handle all the pre-session discussion with you only as a shadow.
- If there are challenges or protests, have the trainee shadow or participate with a shadow even if it is not their event. Discuss the importance of working with coaches and other officials and talk about types of challenges to calls and what can be done – when do you accept and when do you overturn?
- This is a good session to have a talk about the philosophies of refereeing – you are the ultimate enforcer of benefit of the doubt, and the types of things you can do to support the athletes. When are re-swims a good idea, etc.

Fifth Session

- With two more sessions, this is a good time to have the trainee shadow the meet referee and discuss the different responsibilities of that position. If your trainee intends to be a meet referee talk to them about the importance of being mentored in that job specifically. A meet referee's job starts weeks in advance of the meet.
- Discuss disabled swimming and the different types of accommodations for different disabilities. They should know the rules for starts and how to judge these swims but talk about the different things you have seen.
- Discuss working with the table and the MR on late adds and scratches and explain how penalty swims work.

Sixth Session

- The focus of this session should be to assess what your trainee needs practice with and emphasize those points.
- Observe them as a deck ref and make sure their mechanics are good (consistent length of whistles, crisp short whistles, consistent placement). Observe and correct any problems with working with the starter.
- Have them do as much of the pre-session work on their own as possible while you shadow.
- Discuss the rules as best you can during the session. Point out resources such as the interpretations from USA Swimming and the importance of keeping up with the rules.
- Offer to mentor or help mentor them through becoming effective meet referees.
- They are going to flying solo after this, be comfortable with passing them. Extra sessions are OK if you identify areas of need.
- Remind them refereeing is a process, and that they still must keep learning and growing in the position. None of us are finished products.

Completing a Training Card:

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After the Session:

Review the card with the meet referee and give it to the trainee. Provide some feedback about your comments and answer any questions they may have. Remind them they must submit their training cards via email when all training is done. BE POSITIVE ABOUT OFFICIATING!