

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:

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!