

What to Expect as a New Volunteer Timer at NJ USA Swimming Meets

Before the Meet: The Timer Meeting

You will attend a **timer briefing** approximately **15–20 minutes before warm-ups end**. During this meeting, the Chief Timer or Head Timer will explain:

- **How the timing equipment works:** touchpads, plungers/buttons, and stopwatches.
- **Your responsibilities for each race.**
- **How to record times on timing slips** (if the meet uses paper).
- **What to do if equipment fails.**
- **Signals from officials** and how to respond.

This is your chance to ask questions. Don't hesitate—everyone was new once!

How the Timing System Works

1. Primary Timing: The Touchpad

- The swimmer touches the pad at the end of the lane, and the system records the time automatically.
- If it works properly, the touchpad time is usually the **official time**.

2. Secondary Timing: Buttons (Plungers)

- Each timer holds a button connected to the timing system.
- Press the button **as soon as the swimmer touches the wall**.
- These times serve as backups if the touchpad does not register correctly.

3. Manual Timing: Stopwatches

- Some meets also require timers to run a stopwatch for each race.
- Start the watch when the starting signal (horn/light) goes off.
- Stop it when the swimmer finishes.
- If the touchpad and button fail, the stopwatch time may be used as the official backup.

Timers may have:

- One button + one stopwatch
- Two buttons + one stopwatch
- Or, depending on the meet, no stopwatch if the system has sufficient backups

The timer briefing will clarify.

Paperwork and Recording Times

Depending on the meet format, you may need to fill out a **lane slip** or **timer sheet** each heat. This typically includes:

- Swimmer's name and event/heat number
- Time recorded on your stopwatch
- Confirmation that the swimmer was in the correct lane
- Noting any issues (e.g., "late start," "equipment malfunction," "no show")

If both the pad and button fail, your stopwatch time becomes critical—so write it clearly!

A **runner** may collect sheets after each race, or you may hold them until the heat is complete.

During the Meet

- Encourage swimmers with a smile—timers help set a supportive environment.
- Stay alert: events move fast.
- Check that the **lane number** on your timer sheet matches your physical lane.
- Communicate with your **lane partner** to ensure both of you record clean, accurate data.
- If a swimmer has a problem (goggles fall off, missed touch, etc.), timers **do not judge**—just record the time and let officials determine rules.