

RVAA Starter Guide

A Starter is responsible for ensuring a fair start for all swimmers, for every race.

Starter duties include:

- Briefing Timers prior to the start of the meet
- Coordinating with Clerk of Course to give adequate time for swimmers to report to the Clerk/blocks
- Calling for next heat/event, stepping up next heat
- Coordinating with Referee to accommodate special needs swimmers.
- Setting the pace for the meet
- With Referee, checking for “Early Takeoffs” during relays
- Coordinating with Clerk to offer “open” qualifying swims in the 5th and 6th regular season meets

Timers Briefing:

- Ask announcer to give several calls for Timers meeting. Choose a spot that is away from other activities to limit distraction
- Ensure that adequate number of Timers are present to run the meet (2 Timers/lane and 1 Head Timer)
- Introduce yourself and indicate your positioning on deck relative to the blocks.
- Explain use of the stop watch and where/how times are written on timing cards
- Explain the start cadence and how the Timers should look for the strobe at the start.
- Explain why positioning (looking straight down the wall at the finish) is optimal for good times at the finish. Remind the Timers they are looking for a body part touching the wall, NOT evaluating the stroke or technical rules!
- Introduce the Head Timer and define where the HT will be relative to the Timers, and how the Timers call the HT when a timing issue occurs.
- Ask the Timers to check all names by asking “What is your name?” and comparing to the time card. Ask Timers to check both name and heat and lane on the time card! ***In the case of 25m races, Timers need to check the name against the card as the swimmer leaves the water!***
- Explain to Timers that judges may request the time cards to write up disqualifications and return to Timers. Request that Timers write DNF on time cards for swimmers that do not finish the race.
- Confirm with Timers how runners will pick up time cards after each race.
- Assign Timers to the available lanes.

Starter tips for a good meet:

- Always use a calm monotone voice over the PA. If you sound calm, the swimmers will be more calm

- Limit talking to a minimum.
 - Announce Event, Heat, # lengths of the pool (for 10&under) After heat 1, do not announce the event again, but simply “heat # ...”
 - Calmly ask next heat to step up; repeat if necessary
 - CHECK THAT ALL SWIMMERS HAVE PROPER FEET POSITIONING BEFORE THE START – AT LEAST ONE FOOT MUST BE AT THE FRONT OF THE BLOCK! THIS IS A SAFETY CONCERN.
 - When swimmers are on the blocks and swimmers look ready, say “take your mark” in a conversational tone. **Do not sing or raise your voice into the microphone!**
 - In the event that one or more swimmers have left the blocks before the buzzer, a recall should be initiated. To do so, depress the start button a 2nd time and hold while the mic button is simultaneously depressed. Do NOT release the mic button after the start until you are sure that a recall is not necessary!

- Look behind the blocks for issues prior to that heat being called. Are the swimmers lined up behind the blocks? Are the Timers engaged?

- Rely on your head timer for cues for whether the Timers are ready for the next heat. This is critical during 25m events! Coordinate with the HT before the meet on how information is relayed.

- If there is a long delay after the swimmers are on the blocks, you may ask them to step down. If it is only a slight delay, calmly say “swimmers” over the microphone before beginning your “take your mark” cadence. This will regain their attention.

- In the case of younger swimmers (8&Under) it is difficult to have stationary starts. A “stand, please” command can be used if some in the field are not getting set with the other swimmers. Typically, it is better to pause as the swimmers stand on the blocks before beginning the “take your mark” cadence. Usually the swimmers will calm down enough for you to begin your start.

- In the case of the older swimmers, do not unnecessarily delay after “take your mark”. It is an uncomfortable position and many swimmers have difficulty maintaining a stationary position!

- BE FLEXIBLE! This is summer league swimming meant to be fun, social, and family friendly. Ultimately it is our wish that every swimmer that wants to swim be offered the opportunity to do so.