



Kentucky Swimming Chief Judge Clinic Information

PHILOSOPHY

Chief Judges are the glue holding things together at a swim meet, the defense for the swimmer, the eyes for the Deck Referee (DR), and mentors to the S/T Officials (S/T) on the deck.

While S/T's focus on swimmers in the water, CJs focus on the S/T Officials on the deck. The good CJ is unflappable on the deck, anticipates the needs of a DR, and always looks out for and supports the S/T's under his/her jurisdiction.

The CJ has the job of planning, processing and strategizing: Keep the flow going on and off the deck. The adept CJ knows the swimming stroke rules thoroughly and as such, is able to quickly process whether a potential call is good and be sent to the DR, should be rejected, or requires more information prior to sending to the DR.

A CJ should be a good interrogator without leading the S/T while gathering the necessary information about a DQ. The professional CJ is flexible and adaptable – swim meets are often fluid, and things happen on deck that require quick responses!

Finally, a good CJ is a positive mentor to the S/T officials in his/her jurisdiction.

Keeping the deck running smoothly and happily – key functions of a good CJ!

1. CJ DUTIES

- **Checking in** officials – sign in sheet and credentials verification
- **Deck Assignment** of officials/posting assignments at venue
- **Deck Protocol** and relief/rotation
- **Stroke Briefing**
- **Radio Protocol** – dispensing radios and running radio check also
- **Paper Work** – heat sheets, relay take offs, order of finish, swimmer change forms, declared false starts, and timer sheets (possibly)
- **Equipment assembled/dispensed.** The Chief Judge is responsible for making sure all necessary equipment is available and in its appropriate place. This includes:
 - Bell for distance events
 - Lap Counters out for distance events
 - Clipboards available (for DR, Starter, OOF, and possibly timers)
 - Radios charged/assembled/dispensed.
 - Any other equipment as assigned by Meet Referee or Deck Referee.
- **Release officials at session end** after cleared from DR that there's no need for swim-off, time trials, etc.
- **MENTOR** officials throughout the meet sessions



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These are most of the duties of a CJ at the LSC level. If utilized by the Meet Referee (MR), the CJ can be essential for the pre-meet/pre-session planning and meet operations, freeing up the Deck Referee (DR) to focus on the deck! At most local meets, you might not know until you arrive that you are assigned as a CJ. If, however, when you sign up you indicate that you want to be a CJ, contact the MR to let them know this in advance. You can then discuss in advance with the MR, CJ duties desired and pre-meet information (assignments, relief & rotation, protocol desired, and if possible, first session assignments).

Checking in officials: make sure the sign-in sheet is available from the meet referee (MR) for that session, correctly filled out, and ready for officials to sign (or for CJ to check off that the official is present). This is a good time to check with officials their intent to work other sessions or if they know they will be absent. This assists with future deck setting/planning.

2. DECK ASSIGNMENT

Setting the deck is an art form! When possible, speak with meet referee in advance to learn how they want the deck set. Areas of concern may include/not limited to:

- Will the 15 m be staffed at all sessions or only at older age groups?
- Will there be walking of strokes or stationary positioning?
- How many lanes assigned to officials at ends of pool?
- Will the officials rotate as relief is provided or do in/out in same position?

Forms for setting the deck are available online at USA Swimming. After signing in, go to >For you>Officials>Training Resources/Forms>Forms for Officials>Deck Organization>then choose deck assignment 8 lane or 10 lane. These forms are set for a national deck so they utilize terminology/positions an LSC will not use – that's ok! One way to set the deck: Use the back of the sign-in sheet to draw up a mock pool, then place the officials around it!

Try to balance the deck with experienced/novice officials! It's not wise to put all your novices at one end of the pool! You can also use experienced S/T officials as mentors to novice ones.

Post the deck assignments around the venue (break room, both ends of pool, at starter area) and make sure your DR and MR have a copy, as well as other CJs. This can help you as well as S/T officials make sure they are in their assigned spots, especially if coming off a long break for a distance event or a freestyle event where corner are assigned. (Attachment: Deck Set forms)



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3. DECK PROTOCOL

Protocol refers to how officials will move into position as whistles are blown or as swimmers enter into their jurisdiction. Protocols vary for many reasons – LSC versus National level, championships vs regular meet, meet referee preference, pool/venue configurations – all can influence what ways officials will move on the deck.

Common Meet Protocol:

- **Start end:** Stand beside chair if seated upon short whistles; Long whistle move up to just behind/beside block. At the start/entry into the water, quickly move to edge of pool to observe swimmers at the start, return to seat or standing area once swimmer out of jurisdiction.
- **Turn end:** Stand as swimmer enters jurisdiction and quickly walk to edge of pool to observe turn. Return to seat/standing area once swimmer out of jurisdiction.
- **Corners:** Stand until swimmer passes through the turn, then be seated if chair available. For most distance events that are less than 400 yd/meters, officials will stand for entire race. For longer distance events, meet referee preference prevails whether officials will stand when swimmers enter jurisdiction or remain seated after first pass.
- **15 M:** Stand with short whistles; move to position at long whistle. Observe swimmers through the 15 m jurisdiction, then be seated if not walking stroke.
- **Walking stroke:** Lead/lag often the preferred method with 2 officials. Meet referees often have specific ways they want stroke officials to move so discuss it in advance! Remember: use one side walker if 2 or less swimmers in jurisdiction.

Rotation refers to how officials will change positions on the deck (will they move around during a session, or, will they stay in assigned positions and be given in/out relief). Meet referee preference.

Relief refers to how officials take breaks and for how long! Try to have 1 relief.



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Kentucky Swimming Deck Protocol for Stroke & Turn Judges *Open to being amended by Meet Referee at any meet*

Pre-meet

- Know meet attire (white top over khaki slacks/shorts/skirt/skort. White Shoes. Often long pants desired for championship finals if prelim/finals meet.
- Arrive 1 hour before the session assigned to work.
- Report to meet referee/deck referee or designee and sign in. Bring certification card or have Deck Pass ready to show certification.

Once Meet Starts

- Be at your appointed position 5-10 minutes ahead of session start time unless DR tells you otherwise.
- Know your lane jurisdiction and stand accordingly. If at start or turn end, know how many lanes you are watching and stand in the center of that jurisdiction. If conditions, however, present obstacles, position yourself with the best view of all your assigned lanes – check with CJ!
- Look professional – don't talk with timers/swimmers while a heat is underway – even if the swimmer hasn't entered your jurisdiction or if you don't have a swimmer! If there is a situation where you must talk, keep your focus on the pool and your jurisdiction, and speak with the person who needs to get information from you OR share information with you by leaning toward them.
- If you are sitting at the start of the race, stand beside your chair at long whistle. At the start sound, quickly move to the edge of the pool to observe the race.
- When the swimmer enters your jurisdiction, move to the edge of the pool, standing comfortably with one foot slightly forward at or just over the edge of the pool. You should be able to lean only slightly to view the swimmer as they touch/turn. Try to avoid leaning over in an awkward/unsafe manner! It also looks like you're "inspecting" rather than "observing" the race. Have your arms at your side or behind your back if possible.
- When the swimmer(s) leaves your jurisdiction, step back to the original position (seated or standing).
- If you see a stroke violation, promptly raise your hand with arm extended overhead – remember it's a call, not a pledge! Keep it up until acknowledged by the CJ or DR.



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Kentucky Swimming Deck Protocol for Stroke & Turn Judges

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1. **Backstroke:** Turn or Stroke/Turn judges closest to the outside lanes at the start end wrap around to the corners/sides of pool (prior to start of race) to view feet placement after the start. Some referee may, however, have you step up to the edge of the pool, observe for placement of feet if using the backstroke ledge, then step back as confirmation that the feet are in correct position. It's the STARTERS call before the start if the feet are incorrectly placed. If AFTER the start the swimmer uses top/top edge of gutter to propel self forward then it is a S/T official's call. Once swimmer leaves the wall, go back to original position. Come to the edge of the pool for turns and finish. Once swimmers are out of jurisdiction, return to original position (sitting/standing).
2. **Breaststroke:** Immediately after the start, step up to the pool edge to observe the start of the race. At the conclusion of the second arm pull and heads are up, return to original position (sitting/standing). When swimmer(s) enters jurisdiction, usually flags in to turn/finish, watch them into the Turn or the Finish, again, standing at the edge of the pool. Return to original position once race completed.
3. **Butterfly:** Immediately after the start, step up to the edge of the pool to observe for proper kicking and arm pull to bring swimmer to surface. When the head breaks the water surface, return to original position (sitting/standing). Whenever swimmer(s) enter jurisdiction, usually flags in to turn/finish, step to edge of pool to observe. Return to original position once race completed.
4. **Freestyle:** The DR or MR will typically give specific minimum coverage assignments (corners, 15 m). Often this is done with S/T official diagonally across from each other at the corners to watch for touches. There may also be a S/T at the 15 m mark for the start of the race. For 50 yd/m freestyle races, typically the start end officials remain seated or have a break. There is nothing to observe at the start and often the DR wants the start end "clean" of officials. For 100 yd/m freestyle races, the start end officials may take turns watching the intermediate turns (eg: lanes 1 and 8 officials watch the turns, then 2 and 7 watch turns, then 3 and 4 watch turns). The Turn end officials will remain in place to watch turns, stepping to the edge of the pool once swimmer(s) enter their jurisdiction (flags in to the turn), returning to original position once swimmers leave jurisdiction.

GENERALLY, JURISDICTION OF THE TURN JUDGE AFTER THE START IS UNTIL THE SWIMMERS' HEAD BREAKS THE SURFACE OF THE WATER.

At the turn, the official has from the initiation of the turning action for backstroke or the last stroke into the wall, the touch, the turning action and until the swimmers' head breaks the surface of the water after the turn.

STROKE OFFICIALS have "wall to wall" jurisdiction except they have the last kick into the wall. At the finish, jurisdiction is the last stroke into the wall and the touch. It is too difficult to fairly judge a non-simultaneous or one hand touch when observing four lanes. If there are not enough officials to use stroke officials, the jurisdiction for turn officials will be half way out (or as far as can reasonably see).



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5. **Medley Relay:** Turn officials remain in place, unless given the assignment to be a relay take-off official.
6. **Freestyle Relay:** Turn officials at start end, dependent upon distances being swum, may be relieved or given duty of relay take-off official – usually can watch corners.
7. **Relay take-off official:** If given this assignment, you will observe the exchange between swimmers, making sure swimmer doesn't leave the platform or wall until the previous swimmer touches.
 - a. Observe the foot of the swimmer leaving the platform, then look down to see the touch of the incoming swimmer. Swimmer on block is allowed to be in motion. With the movable backplate, Rule 101.7.4.H states "A Swimmer must have at least part of one foot in contact with the starting platform in front of the adjustable backplate during a relay exchange".
 - b. May have jurisdiction over 1 or more lanes (side or center).
 - c. Independently record exchanges as good (circle) or bad (x).
 - d. Do not raise hand if observe an early take-off. CJ will approach you for your slip. Dual confirmation needed.

As a general rule, do not leave your assigned position until the DR or CJ has dismissed you, unless otherwise informed. If during the meet you need to leave the deck - RAISE your hand and let the CJ know why you need to step off the deck and if possible, for how long you might need to be off.

4. STROKE BRIEFING

The CJ presents the stroke rules (briefing) for the meet session(s). If possible, check with your meet referee in advance whether the briefing will be given at every session, or, just at the meet start. At the LSC level, do not assume that all S/T officials are certified beyond the LSC level (N2 or N3). Use the most recent USA Swimming approved stroke briefing. It can be downloaded from USA Swimming after signing in, go to Officials>Officials Training Resources>Officials clinic and briefing resources>Officials Briefing. Use the language approved by USA Swimming, review the current stroke rules. Be brief – it's called that for a reason. Avoid making molehills into mountains by over-emphasizing a rule. If the meet is multi-session, and no new officials have signed in at later sessions, the briefing may be cut short, or eliminated if approved by the meet referee. (See Attachment: USA Swimming Current briefing)

Some referees prefer to not have a briefing – there is a rise in DQs as strokes are reviewed prior to sessions starting.



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5. RADIO PROTOCOL

Pre-meet

- Check radios to ensure they are charged, working properly and have necessary parts.
- Dispense radios to officials needing them (CJ/Deck Referee/Meet Referee/Admin Official).
- Prior to meet start, perform a radio check with the officials using radios – confirming being heard clearly prior to start of meet makes things easy!
- makes things easy!

During Meet

- **CALLING IN A POTENTIAL DISQUALIFICATION**
- Walk toward the official who is raising his/her hand.
- **WHILE WALKING TOWARD THE OFFICIAL**, radio the following statement to the DR: *“I have a possible disqualification in (pool/start or turn end of pool) at the Turn/Start end lanes (give assigned lanes for that official). OR “I have a possible disqualification in (pool/stroke side) lanes (give assigned lanes for that official).*
- When you reach the official, **radio in lane**, then ask: **What is the rule violation?** Now ask the S/T judge to describe what they saw.
- Take notes on your heat sheet so that you can answer questions.
- If you don't clearly understand the call, ask questions but let the DR know.
- If you understand the call, radio the DR and state: *The official in (give position) observed the swimmer in Event___Heat__Lane__ - now give the rule infraction. I recommend accept the disqualification.*
- If you are satisfied that there is no call to be made, or if the official rescinds their call upon further evaluation/discussion with the CJ, state: *No call in the (pool location, lane assignment).*
- If you need further discussion with the DR on the call prior to your decision, state: *I need further discussion on the call (pool location, lane assignment).*
- After you recommend the call, the DR will say: *“I accept the call, write it up”*. Quickly write the DQ slip, get to the DR or to a runner to take to DR.
- If a relief S&T official is used, have them step in so that they observe swimmers while you discuss with S&T official making the call.
- Avoid leading the official who is making the call. Doubt goes to the swimmer - if the official cannot clearly describe the rules violation, do not recommend the call.
- Use non-recommended calls as an opportunity to mentor the official – when possible, give brief explanations of why the call was not recommended.



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- CJ at the start end will notify the swimmer/coach of the DQ violation; once done notify the DR via radio.
- Chief Judges frequently are positioned at the corners and in the center lanes during relays to easily check RTO slips for dual confirmation. If there is dual confirmation, then radio it in like a usual DQ – identify offending take-off swimmer in the call with Event/Heat/Lane.

6. PAPERWORK – Slips and more Slips

Pre-Meet

- Chief Judge may be asked to assist with sign-in of officials, checking credentials of officials, assembling relay take-off slips, and any other duties as assigned by the Meet Referee or Deck Referee.
- Posting of assignments around the pool and in hospitality/break room.
- Distributing heat sheets to the Deck Referee/Starter/CJs/Stroke& Turn officials. Making sure order of finish heat sheet is available for Starter(s).
- Have swimmer change slips, declared false start slips, no-show slips, etc. readily available for Deck Referee.

During Meet

1. DQ Slip

Chief Judges often complete the DQ slips for the Deck Referee(s). Be familiar with the DQ slip and its component parts. Clearly complete the slip with event, heat, lane numbers; swimmer name/relay name(s); team abbreviation. **Mark with an X** on the event. “Other” is used for non-stroke violations. For regular stroke events, place an X when in the swim the infraction was observed (start, swim, turn, or finish).

2. **Start** – from the start of the race until the head breaks the surface.
3. **Swim** – from the head breaking the surface until the beginning of the last full stroke into the turn/finish.
4. **Turn**- from the beginning of the last full stroke into the wall until the head breaks the surface.
5. **Finish** – from the beginning of the last full stroke into the wall to the touch at the end of the prescribed distance.

It is important in the description of the infraction that WHEN it occurred be communicated clearly! The Chief Judge has the S&T official clearly print his/her name in the area for “judge”. The **CJ should also initial the DQ slip next to the judge**. As quickly as possible, get the DQ slip to the Deck Referee; it’s ok to use a runner to get the slip quickly to the DR. It’s also prudent to make notes on your CJ heat sheet about the infraction communicated by the S&T official. It’s ok to make corrections on your DQ slip – but make sure that the DR can understand them! If you are using carbonized DQ slips, start over! The DR may after reviewing the DQ slip/signing it have the CJ communicate the DQ to the swimmer and to the coach. (Attachment: DQ)



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PROFESSIONAL CJ/MENTOR

One important part of the CJ is to be a mentor to the S&T officials on the deck. We all continue to learn as we go through different sessions and meets, stroke briefings, and trainings. We all began at the S&T level at some point! CJs should be helping the S&T officials to understand what they should be seeing with each stroke. If an official has several calls that are not accepted, use this as a teaching opportunity – but do it positively and when possible, privately. It might be that how they position themselves is a factor, that they are not familiar with the rules as well as they should be, or that they need more observation of proper stroke performance. Be kind and positive when giving instruction.

Remember – if it cannot be clearly explained to the CJ, it most likely cannot be clearly explained to the DR or coach. It takes tact to help the official work through what they saw. Help the S&T to understand that “ugly” isn’t always a violation! A S&T official should know the “right” swim – it will make the “wrong” swim stand out! As one trainer said – if it walks, talks, and quacks like a duck then it’s a duck! Often S&T officials make calls not in their jurisdiction – this is often a mistake of a novice official. Kindly remind the official of their assigned jurisdiction, where they should stand to be able to easily see that jurisdiction. (Attachment: The Professional Chief Judge – from USA Swimming).

Always remember – benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer! This isn’t about the official – it’s about the kids in the caps and goggles.

Championship meets are not the only time to utilize Chief Judges. They are a vital part of a smoothly running meet at any level of competition. They are the eyes/legs for the Deck Referee and Meet Referee, the mentor/trainer for the Stroke & Turn official, and the defense attorney for the swimmer!