

STARTER

The starter has the responsibility to ensure that all swimmers receive a fair and equitable start. It is important that each swimmer be given the opportunity to achieve the best start possible within the confines of the rules. The Starter must know the rules governing starting procedures.

Starters are charged with a great amount of responsibility. This position requires concentration, quick reactions and fair decisions. It takes practice to become a good starter.

Starts: Procedure

Starting the Heat

The commencement of each heat should be announced once confirmation that the swimmers for the heat appear to be present. Assessing for late or no-show swimmers is the responsibility of the Meet Director, not the Starter, although he/she may assist via an announcement.

1. For the first heat, the Starter announces the event number, gender, distance, stroke, and heat; for subsequent heats in the same event, just the heat number is announced.
2. This is followed by the command "Step up please" or "In the water, please," when needed, indicating swimmers should take and maintain their positions.
3. If possible, resolve any issues (absent swimmers, late swimmers, etc.) before this command.
4. The Meet Director determines that everyone on deck is ready and signals the starter.
5. The Starter determines when the swimmers are ready to start. The Starter should say "Stand please" if any swimmers appear to be jumpy, not in the starting position, distracted (i.e. fiddling with goggles), etc.
6. On the Starter's command "Take your mark", the swimmers shall immediately assume their starting position. When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall sound the starting signal.
7. When a swimmer does not respond promptly to the command "take your mark", the Starter should tell the swimmers to "Stand Up" upon which the swimmers may stand up or relax, if in backstroke.

"Take Your Mark:" Tone and Volume

The voice of a good starter will lead the swimmers into their starting positions, but not break their concentration with unexpected pitch or remarks. Starters should avoid rapid instructions, shouting, or sharp commands. The Starter shall be PATIENT when allowing all swimmers to position themselves before the start. Watch to see the swimmers' feet are in the final chosen position. The swimmers will show the Starter when they're ready to hear the "Take Your Mark" instruction.

- A good Starter shall deliver the "Take Your Mark" instruction in a calm, conversational tone using a cadence that is inviting with a slight falling of pitch at the end.
- Speak loud enough for the swimmers to hear over any possible crowd noise, but not so loud the instruction sounds like a shouted command.

The Signal

1. Starters should neither wait too long nor not long enough after the TYM command before hitting the signal.
 - a) This will avoid the dreaded result of an unfair start. After stating "TYM," it may help to develop a mental phrase to ensure the signal is not pressed too quickly. I.e., after TYM, the Starter may think to him/herself, "Swimmers stationary?" or "One-one-thousand," etc.
 - b) Never push the signal if any swimmer is in the midst of taking their start position, regardless of whether the others are already in position.
2. Young and inexperienced swimmers may require a bit more time to assume their position, adjust goggles, etc. after the TYM command.
3. The Starter shall not rush the signal if the meet is running long; this creates unfair conditions.

False Starts

Only the Starter may call false starts.

1. A false start is called when a swimmer starts (leaves the wall or deck) before the starting signal is given. Swimmers remaining on the starting deck/wall shall be relieved from their starting positions with the "stand up" command and may step back from the deck. Swimmers inadvertently entering the water shall be recalled with the recall signal (or with coaches, if necessary).
2. If the swimmers are unable to be stopped from completing the race despite signals, the race shall be re-swum after the swimmers have a few heats to recover.
3. When it becomes apparent, because of uneven motion or delay of the swimmers in assuming their positions after the command, that a fair start will be difficult to achieve, the Starter should give the command "stand up" or for backstroke starts, "relax."