

Starter's Clinic

A. EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

1 Officials Clinic Certification Forms:

Have attendees fill in the name and address, club affiliation. As the clinic instructor, send into the provincial section office at the completion of the clinic.

Officials Certification Cards:

The official taking the Starter's Clinic will most likely already have his/her own card. Sign-off a new one (for the starter clinic) if that official has forgotten his/her original card.

2. Starter Pistol, shells, ear plugs, electronic starting devices if available.
3. Access to use of a horn, start amplifier.
4. It is ideal if this clinic can be conducted at a pool with use of the starting equipment, starting blocks, and demonstration swimmers.
5. Swimmers can be used to demonstrate different start positions, and some typical false starts.

B. STARTER'S ROLE & POOL POSITION

1. The Role

- a) The Starter position is critical in the running of a successful meet.
- b) The Starter and the Referee must function as an effective team to ensure that fair starts are achieved consistently throughout the session.
- c) The central point of the starter's role is to ensure a fair start for all swimmers. **See Rule: SW 2.2.3**
- d) To exercise your function as a Starter, you:
 1. must have a good working knowledge of the rules;
 2. must be **consistent** and exercise good judgement;
 3. must earn the confidence of the swimmers; and
 4. must respect the swimmers and enjoy the sport.
- e) Only by practice, can a Starter achieve these goals.
- f) Many people are initially nervous about starting.

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It is recommended that the new starter begin at a club time trial and other low-pressure meets. Encourage starters to keep trying higher level meets as their confidence and enjoyment of the experience increases.

2. The Position

SW 2.2.4 When starting an event, the starter shall stand on the side of the pool within approximately five meters of the starting edge of the pool where the Timekeepers can see and hear the starting signal and the swimmers can hear the signal.

C. PERFORMANCE OF THE POSITION

1. Before The Meet

- a) Arrive early – at least one hour before the start.
- b) Check the starting equipment and become familiar with the pool layout.
 1. Is a gun or electronic starting equipment to be used?
 2. Have the electronics been set up and operating? **TEST** the equipment.
 3. Are all loudspeakers, horns, and strobe lights working?
 4. Set and test the volume levels.
 5. Is there a standby gun and ammunition available? If so check the operation of the gun, ammunition supply, ear plugs.
- c) Are any races to be started from the turn end of the pool?
 1. If so, is the starting equipment to be moved and how?
 2. Or is there equipment set up at both ends? **TEST** all equipment.
- d) Check the Starter's Platform
 1. Is it in the correct position / location? Adjust to suit your location, preference or style.
- e) Briefing with the Referee
 1. The meet shall be run under FINA start rules.
 2. Check out what type of meet it is: Age Group, Masters, SWAD.
Ensure you have reviewed and checked out the appropriate rules.
 3. Be aware of any duties the Referee may like you to perform besides being the Starter.
 4. Discuss with the referee whistle protocol. (SW 2.1.5)
 5. Process to handle equipment problems, or movement of equipment.
 6. Are there different Starters (and referees) for male & female? or only one Starter for all?
 7. How have other sessions gone in regards to starting? any DQ's or other problems?

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f) Establish the Procedure for Normal Starts

1. Does the Referee want you “to advise swimmers” to adjust their position on the blocks or in the water? (ie: toes below the water line, asking swimmers to stay in or to leave the pool when the races finish, etc.)
2. Will the Starter be announcing the event number and heats during the sessions?

g) Establish the Procedure for False Starts

1. Referee and Starter to confer & agree on any false starts before any disqualifications are made. Ensure rules, tolerances etc. are understood to ensure consistency. If the Referee and the Starter can not agree on the swimmer that caused the false start, (one says lane 3, “late coming down”, the other says lane 4, “movement before the starting signal”), you should not disqualify anyone when there is doubt.

h) Watch Check

1. Find out who the Chief Timekeeper is. Confirm when and where a watch check will occur?

i) Meet Flow

1. Discuss any time problems and solutions (need to speed up or slow the meet down).

j) False Start Rope

1. Who will operate it?
2. How is it operated?
3. Who will move it for 50 meter races?

k) Distance Events

1. Are bells being used?
2. Will you be expected to count or track the lead swimmers laps, to ensure a bell is rung or a starting device is sounded at the correct time? Note: You may be asked to remind the Lane Timerkeepers to ring the bell for the bell lap and may have to provide a pistol shot if there are no bells.

3. During the Meet

- a). Preparing for the start of the race. At the commencement of each event the Referee shall signal the swimmers to the blocks. When the swimmers and officials are ready for the start, the Referee shall signal such with an outstretched arm. This indicates that the swimmers are now under the Starter's control. (SW 2.1.5)
- b) **SW 2.2.1** *The Starter shall have full control of the swimmers from the time the Referee turns the swimmers over to him until the race has commenced. The start shall be given in accordance with SW 4.*
 1. Ensure that all Timekeepers can see the starting device. (gun or flash).
Note: You should have confirmed this during the watch check.
 2. Comply with all the rules for "the Start" as stated in SW 4.
 3. May serve as a Turn Judge if requested by the Referee.
(Part of your pre-meet briefing with the Referee.)
 4. Give the command "**Take Your Marks**" in a **Slow, Steady, non-military voice**.
A starter must establish an **even, consistent cadence** with his/her starting commands
 5. Shall activate the starting device when all competitors are **stationary** and complying with the starting rules. (SW 4.1 & SW 4.2)
 6. It is a good practice for the Starter to keep the heat sheets of the session just worked for a reasonable amount of time in case any questions arise later.
- c) **SW 2.2.2** *The Starter shall report a swimmer to the Referee for delaying the start, for willfully disobeying an order or for any other misconduct taking place at the start, but only the Referee may disqualify a swimmer for such delay, willful disobedience or misconduct. Such disqualification shall not be counted as a false start.*
 1. **The Starter can not disqualify a swimmer for undue delay of the start.** If, for example, an swimmer suddenly mounts the blocks in an empty lane after the race has been turned over to the Starter, or if a swimmer who has no intention of holding on the start and dives into the water, the Starter shall ask the swimmers to "Step Back" and then confer with the Referee. It must be the Referee who makes the disqualification
- d) **SW 2.2.3** *The Starter shall have the power to decide whether the start is fair, subject only to the decision of the Referee.*

False Start Exceptions:

- < Loud noises or camera flashes from other parts of the building affected the start;
- < If the Starter held the swimmers for an unreasonable amount of time while waiting for all swimmers to come down and hold, causing a ragged and unfair start;

Then: The race should be recalled and another fair start attempted with no DQ's assigned

- < Prior to each subsequent attempt to start, the race shall revert back to the Referee who shall again signal the swimmers to the blocks, and with an outstretched arm pass the race over to the starter with the command “Take your marks”.
- < Do not call back a race on an official’s error and also disqualify a swimmer for starting early (GR 8.6)

4. The Start

a) **SW 4.1** *The start in Freestyle, Breaststroke, Butterfly, and the Individual Medley race shall be with a dive. On the **long whistle** (SW 2.1.5) from the Referee the swimmers shall step onto the starting platform and remain there. On the starter’s command “take your marks”, they shall immediately take up the starting position with at least one foot at the front of the starting platforms. The position of the hands is not relevant. When all swimmers are stationary the starter shall give the starting signal.*

1. **All swimmers must be STATIONARY before the Starter gives the starting signal.**
This is the only FINA statement on “false starts”. If any swimmers are moving, the Starter must not give the starting signal. If swimmers are moving and the Starter gives the signal, causing a “ragged” start, the race is recalled with no disqualifications, due to the Starter’s error in giving the signal while swimmers were not stationary. If all are stationary, and somebody “jumps the gun”, that swimmer is disqualified after the race.
2. There is no definition in the rulebook which states what constitutes what we know as a “false start”. The only thing stated is that starting before the signal is given results in a disqualification at the start.
3. The starter shall not start the race until **all swimmers are stationary.**
 - < Some swimmers will fidget until the referee turns the race over to the starter; (this is OK)
 - < The position of the feet is not defined in rule SW 4.1, so swimmers may stand wherever they wish on the starting platform prior to the starter’s command “take your marks”.
 - < Swimmers may also take the starting position with both hands gripping the starting blocks prior to the command.
4. The swimmers are turned over to the Starter by the Referee’s outstretched arm pointing down the pool.

- b) **SW 4.2** *The start in the Backstroke and Medley races shall be from the water. At the Referee's first long whistle (SW 2.1.5) the swimmers shall immediately enter the water. At the Referee's second long whistle the swimmers shall return without undue delay to the starting position (SW 6.1). When all swimmers have assumed their starting positions, the Starter shall give the command "take your marks". When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.*
- < Even when the swimmers have entered feet first and are all in position on the wall, a second whistle is still required for the purpose of consistency for the swimmers. (It may confuse and distract swimmers to hear the command "take your marks" after the first whistle sometimes, and after the second whistle at other times)
- c) **SW 6.1** *Prior to the starting signal, the swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands holding the starting grips. The feet, including the toes, shall be under the surface of the water. Standing in or on the gutter or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter is prohibited.*
- < The Starter has the only communication system with the swimmers. After the race has been turned over to him, if he observes a swimmer move his toes above the water line, he should advise the swimmer at fault to keep his toes below the water line and then proceed with the start. (unless other officials have this assignment)
- d) **One-Start Rule: SW 4.4** *Any swimmer starting before the starting signal has been given, shall be disqualified. If the starting signal sounds before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue and the swimmer or swimmers shall be disqualified upon the completion of the race.*
- < A race may be **recalled with no "false start"** declared:
 1. When a fair start has not been achieved;
 2. When there is outside interference at the start;
 3. When there is an official's error.
 - < If a swimmer false starts and the starting signal was given, the disqualification is done after the race.
 - < A recall for a DQ under the one-start rule is an official's error. This error nullifies the DQ. (GR 8.6)

SW 4.4 (cont)

If the disqualification is declared before the starting signal, the signal shall not be given, but the remaining swimmers shall be called back and start again. (or asked to step down).

1. Control of the swimmers will revert back to the Referee, and a fair start shall be attempted again.
2. The “rule-of-thumb” for the one-start rule is: “If the gun goes; the race goes” (This applies, of course, only if a fair start was achieved and there was no official’s error or outside interference at the start)
3. If there is a protest by a coach on the start, the swimmer is still not allowed to swim in the race under protest. If the protest is upheld by a Jury of Appeal, the swimmer swims on his/her own later. (CSW 4.4.1)

Common Sense Applications:

- , If one swimmer “jumps the gun” because of the movement of another swimmer (drawn-in), and commits a false start, DQ only the swimmer causing the false start.
- ◆ If one swimmer, or more than one swimmer, moves just before the starting signal is given, and the starter cannot avoid activating the starting signal, DQ after the race.
 - < At the crucial moment of pressing the starting button (or firing the gun) the starter must be very attentive. If movement takes place, do not start the race. If one or more swimmers initiate movement a fraction before the starting signal “sounded”, any and all who moved must be disqualified after the race.
 - < Swimmers can only be disqualified when there is no official’s error.
- , If the Starter errs and starts the race before all the swimmers are stationary:
 - Recall the race and advise the Referee that it was your error.
 - There can be no DQ’s in this situation.
- ◆ If the Referee and Starter cannot agree on which swimmer false started: (ex: one saying it was lane 4 and the other saying it was Lane 3).
 - The benefit of the doubt is given to the swimmers and no false start is declared.
- ◆ If you are working an age group meet with many novice swimmers, be lenient, as they are just learning the start position.
 - you might just advise the swimmers to step back and go over to talk with the offending swimmer, this may be the best (positive) solution.
- ◆ Be alert when swimmers use the “track start”.
 - Some will roll backward after grabbing the blocks. A momentary pause before rolling backward is permitted..

1. After The Meet

- A. Attend a debriefing with the Referee or Management Committee. Comment on both strengths and areas of improvement for the next session.
- B. Ensure that the equipment used is secured.
 - Starter's electronic equipment is shut down.
 - Guns and shells are safely put away.
 - False start rope is secured.
 - Clip board is returned to the officials' room.
- C. Check the Officials' schedule for the next session that you work.

Situations for Discussion

How would a Starter handle each of the following situations:

1. Following the command "take your marks", the swimmers assume a starting position, and a swimmer begins to move before the start signal: (SW 4)

Signal not given - "Step Swimmers Down"; DQ offending swimmer; Re-start.
Signal given - Race continues and DQ after the race (SW 4.4)

2. If a swimmer does not respond to the command "take your marks" and does not take his starting position on the referee's whistle with one or both feet at the front of the blocks:
 - As a Starter do not activate the starting signal.
 - Instruct the swimmers to step down.
 - Discuss with the Referee; (did the swimmer hear the command, etc?.) The Referee may disqualify the swimmer if it is agreed the swimmer was at fault in not obeying the command.
 - If disqualified, the DQ'd swimmer's lane shall remain empty. This would not be a false start but a "delay of meet" call, after which the race reverts back to the referee.(SW 2.2.2)
3. On the SECOND attempt at starting the same race, a swimmer resumes his starting position and then topples from the blocks before the starting signal is given.
 - the other swimmers are instructed to "step back "
 - Did the swimmer slip because of a slippery block? If there is any doubt, the benefit of that doubt would go to the swimmer, and the swimmer shall not be DQ'd.
 - the race shall then revert back to the Referee

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If it is judged that the swimmer did not hold his mark. (SW 4.4)

- The swimmers are instructed to step back.
- The offending swimmer shall be DQ'd.
- The race is turned back over to the Referee.
- The race shall be started again, with the lane empty.

4. On the THIRD attempt at starting the same race, one swimmer “jumps the gun”:
 - a. The starting signal had not been activated.
 - the swimmers will be instructed to “step down”
 - the offending swimmer shall be disqualified
 - the race shall be turned back over to the Referee
 - the race shall be started again with the lane empty.
 - b. The starting signal had been activated.
 - the swimmers shall not be recalled, the race shall continue.
 - the offending swimmer shall be DQ'd upon the completion of the race.
5. The swimmers come down in a very uneven disorganized fashion as they take their marks.
 - ask the swimmers to “step down “, but this is not a false start.
 - the race should revert back to the Referee for another start attempt.
 - < Ragged starts are often caused by a referee turning a race over to the starter before the swimmers are ready. In this situation the starter may wait until he feels a fair start can be achieved or instruct the swimmers to “step down
6. The swimmer in lane 6 comes down “too slowly” to his mark and lane 7 topples into water.
 - c This is a subjective judgement call. There is nothing in the rules regulating the how fast a swimmer must take his mark. As long as a swimmer is moving in an attempt to take his mark after the starter’s command, he/she should not be called for an infraction.
 - a) Did lane 7 come down very quickly and could not hold his mark? If so, DQ.
 - b) Was there undue delay in obeying the start command by the swimmer in lane 6?
 - < If YES, this might indicate that lane 6 “caused” lane 7 to false start. Instruct the swimmers to “step down” and only disqualify the swimmer in lane 6 for “delay of meet”. (SW 2.2.2)
 - < If NO, instruct the swimmers to “step down” and disqualify the swimmer in lane 7 for starting before the starting signal. (SW4.4)
 - c) A Starter always has the option to stepping the swimmers down without declaring a false start if he/she feels a fair start might be difficult to achieved.

7. While taking the starting position, the swimmer in lane 3 doesn't come to a complete stop, but takes his mark and leaves the block in a continuous motion, as the starting signal is given.

a) The race shall be recalled:

- The Starter should have waited until all swimmers were stationary before activating the starting device. (SW 4.1 & SW 4.2)
- An error by an official (activating the starting signal when swimmers were not stationary) after a fault by a swimmer (not holding his mark) expunges the fault by the swimmer. (GR 8.6)
- The race reverts back to the referee with no disqualification.

Advice: Before every meet where you are a starter, review swimming rules SW 2.2 (Starter) and SW 4 (The Start)

STARTER ANSWER SHEET

Please circle the true statement(s) or fill in the appropriate answer(s). There may be more than one true statement for each question.

1. a b c
2. a b c
3. a b c
4. a b c d e f g h i j k
5. a b c d e
6. a b
7. a b c d e
8. a b c d e f
9. a b c d e
10. a b c d e f g
11. a b
12. a b c d e
13. a b c d
14. a b c d
15. a b e f g h
16. a b c d e f g h i j
17. a b c d