



**NORTH
CAROLINA
SWIMMING**

Starter Clinic Handbook

Clinician (Referee): _____

Email/Phone: _____ **Date:** _____

Location: _____



**NORTH
CAROLINA
SWIMMING**

NCS Starter Clinic Agenda

I. Welcome

Overview

- Introduction to becoming a USA-S/NCS Starter
- The Art of Starting
- Keys to Success

II. The Starter

- Philosophy & Protocols for Starting
- Duties and Responsibilities
- False Starts/Recalls/Late Swimmer-Delay of Meet
- USA-S Rulebook

III. Apprenticeship-Starter

- NCS Requirements
- Starter On-Deck Apprenticeship Record
- Expectations with the Starter Program

IV. Resources

- USA-S Officials Swimming Manual Chapter 3
- The Starter Philosophy and Protocol
- Situations & Resolutions Starter/Referee
- Professional Starter

Introduction to becoming a USA-S/NCS Starter

Continuing your USA-S/NCS official's qualifications and becoming a Starter can be exciting, rewarding and very challenging. Moments before any action of competition takes place in a pool, all of a Starter's preparation, proficiency and professionalism create a mindset for the understanding for what occurs in a very short period of time during the start. Some of the philosophy and protocols:

- At any level, is to *ensure all swimmers receive a fair and equitable start.*
- Each competitor is given the opportunity to achieve the best start possible.
- Allow the swimmer's to show the Starter *when they are ready to start*
- *Patience, Patience, Patience*
- Inviting conversational commands

A clear understanding of the position of Starter can be developed through hours of practice, patience, observing, accepting regular feedback and evaluation. Becoming an experience or proficient Starter is complex, will take many hours and require absorbing a lot of information. The NCS Officials Committee developed this curriculum to allow our training and evaluation practices to be flexible and achieve a common standard for starter apprentices. The NCS Officials Committee looks forward to your active participation and it's your responsibility to be fully familiar with the current NCS Starter Certification Program. Only experience will allow you to think of most, if not all of what must be done on each and every start. The NCS Starter program will prepare each apprentice with the knowledge and experience to become proficient and comfortable with all aspects of starting. Your apprenticeship really starts once you complete NCS' Starter certification process and your confronted with a new situation that will test your knowledge and judgment. The NCS Officials Committee looks forward to your feedback to help enhance the Starter Apprentice training program.

The Art of Starting

- Starting is an art that can be perfected as long as someone is willing to accept and understand the philosophy and protocol of the position based on current practices and standards.
- Understanding the position of Starter is a clear skill developed over time, observing other starters and determining what occurs in just a few seconds.
- Those occurrences can have an impact on the outcome of a race, an event, or a final score.
- Experience at all levels is a necessity, becoming a starter at the novice level and progress upward.
- Proficiency comes with experience. All starters make mistakes, don't dwell on them, learn from them and move on.
- Expect the unexpected. Be proactive – not reactive. Being able to adjust before a potential problem occurs. Endless learning experience.
- Understand philosophies of starting change periodically.
- Patience is a virtue. Be professional, confident and relaxed.
- Know the rules governing starting procedures and understanding how to apply them and their consequences.

Keys to Success

- Definition of an experienced starter is complex:
- Being able to absorb all the available information, experience and proficiency, applying lengthy philosophy with protocols that can change periodically, into to a mindset that preforms an action occurring in a time frame of only a few seconds
- Keys to Success:
- Ensure a fair and equitable start for all competitors
- Each competitor is given the opportunity to achieve the best start possible
- Patience, proficiently, professionalism, consistency, knowledge of the rules, team player
- Endless learning experience

The Starter

- ▶ Officiating as a Starter:
 - Can be exciting, rewarding, but it can also be very challenging
 - Other than an Announcer, the Starter is normally the only other person using a public address system to communicate with swimmers during a competition.
 - It's extremely important too *always* use the same conversational tone and manner, whenever using microphone to announce commands, provide information or addressing individual(s).

Announcing:

Event and heat.....relaxed, calm, conversational tone
Attempted split time.....relaxed, calm, conversational tone
“TYM” commandrelaxed, calm, conversational tone
“Stand” commandrelaxed, calm, conversational tone
“Clear the pool”relaxed, clam, conversational tone
“Lane __ , toes”relaxed, calm, conversational tone

Using a professional, conversational tone whenever using the microphone sets the attitude and atmosphere for meet.

- You are always being heard...by someone:
 - Swimmers on the starting platforms or in the water
 - Swimmers behind the starting platforms preparing to swim
 - Swimmers getting ready to swim the next event
 - Coaches, Officials, Timers, Parents and Spectators
- A lot of people are listening:
 - Use the microphone **only** for the task at hand.
 - Consistency, impartiality and respect for the competitive interest of the athletes
 - Ensure a fair and equitable start for all competitors
- **“Stay in your box”**. Focus on your assignment as a Starter, nothing else matters.
- **Act as if you are always on camera, because you are always being watched...by someone**

“The Start”

- At the commencement of each heat:
 - The Referee shall signal the Starter before each race that all officials are in position, the course is clear, and that the competition can begin.
 - (**Short whistles**) The Referee shall signal to the swimmers by a short series of whistles to remove all clothing except swimwear, *
 - (**Long whistle**) followed by a long whistle indicating that they should take and maintain their positions on the starting platform, the deck, or in the water.
 - (**Second long whistle**) In backstroke and medley relay events, the Referee’s first long whistle, the swimmers shall immediately enter the water and at the second long whistle shall return without undue delay to the starting position.

* Starter maybe asked to announce the Event and/or Heat after the short whistles, the Referee will determine the protocols in place for a specific competition.

- ▶ Starter’s Task
 - One recommended technique: (forward start)
 - During the short whistles (if the Starter is not announcing event/heat), relax, be patient, hold the microphone at your side or across your chest
- ▶ (just prior to the Referee’s long whistle)
 - Bring the starting the starting microphone up to it’s proper position to speak
 - Relax, be patient
- (After the Referee’s long whistle)
 - ▶ When the swimmers and officials are ready, the Referee shall signal with an outstretched arm to the Starter that the swimmers are under the Starter’s control

The pool and the start of the event is now the Starter's

- ▶ Relax, take a long breath, be patient, create a pause before you speak
 - (This pause allows the swimmers, the Starter to settle and the crowd noise to subside. Motive is for the noise level to come down to point where the swimmers can hear the start.)
 - Wait for the swimmers to settle
 - Allow the swimmers to show the Starter, their "ready" to swim
 - On the Starter's command "take your mark", the swimmers shall immediately assume their starting position.
 - **The "TAKE YOUR MARK" command**
 - It is extremely important how this is done.
 - ▶ Conversational tone and manner
 - ▶ Try to talk the swimmers down
 - ▶ Slight natural drop in the pitch is all that is needed
 - Invite the swimmers to "Take Your Mark."
 - ▶ Be brief, poised, professional, assertive, inviting the swimmers to swim, try not to order them to do so
 - ▶ It takes practice to become consistent
 - ▶ Try *not* to be quick or sing-song or speed up the command

When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the start signal.

▶ Backstroke Starts

- (After all swimmers have surfaced after entering the water)
- A Referee's second long whistle- indicating that all swimmers shall return to the starting position.
 - When the swimmers and officials are ready, the Referee shall signal with an outstretched arm to the Starter that the swimmers are under the Starter's control
- Once all swimmers have placed their feet and grasp the grips.**
 - The "Take Your Mark" command is given.

When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the start signal.

**Any corrections for foot placement need to occur

Speak *directly* to the lane: "lane__toes, please", "lane__ feet down"

“Stand Up”, “Stand please”, ”Relax” commands

- ▶ Recommended stand up or other commands depends on the protocol of the competition.
- ▶ This is a command that can keep *bad* things from happening at the start.
- ▶ If the Starter is not comfortable with what is occurring after the starting command, the Starter shall release all swimmers with the command:
 - “Stand”, “Stand up”, “Stand please”, ”Relax”
 - There will be times when the swimmers are not stationary, a loud noise, flash, swimmer may lose their grip on the platform, swimmer(s) are slow to getting set or another disturbance occurs .
 - At this point, the Starter can ask them to “Stand, please.”
 - Swimmers may stand up or step off the starting platform
 - Pause and allow the swimmers to get readjusted.
 - Start the process all over, the pool is still in Starter’s control.
 - Wait for the swimmers to settle, be patient
 - Allow the swimmers to show the Starter, their “ready” to swim***
 - Invite them to “Take Your Mark”, again.
 - On the Starter’s command ”take your mark”, the swimmers shall immediately assume their starting position.
 - ***In place of a generic verbal commands, the Referee *may* choose to blow a second whistle to have the swimmers get on the starting platform or place their feet as the established protocol for the particular competition.

When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the start signal.

After the start signal:

- After every start, continue to observe all the swimmers into the water, until all swimmers have surfaced, (while holding the starting microphone). Once the race has started fairly, and no need to recall the start, replace the starting microphone and prepare the counter sheet, OOF, or for the next race.

Duties and Responsibilities

▶ Preparation

- Before the meet:
 - Notify the Meet Referee, ahead of time, that you plan on officiating at their upcoming swim meet and request an opportunity to work as a Starter. (Apprentice: this helps the Meet Referee assign you to an experience mentor that you will shadow during the session/meet.
 - Look-up the Meet Announcement on NCS' website (ncswim.org). Email/call Meet Referee
 - Report to the pool an hour to an hour-fifteen (1:00- 1:15) before the session starts. (Apprentice: sign-in, find the Meet Referee, have your Judge On-Deck Apprentice Record available.)

▶ Before arriving:

- Review the rules, protocols, procedures and philosophies for being a Starter
- Know your responsibilities, be prepared: counter sheets, bell, dressed appropriately
- Be flexible and adapt to any procedures made by a Meet Referee or Head Starter (if applicable)
 - Assignments, rotations and invigilating
 - Types of starts: conventional, flyover

▶ Arrive early and checkout the venue

- Deck orientation:
 - Starting Area: it's location, start strobe's location, microphone's location and length of available cord, obstructions, pool lighting and visibility, traffic flow routed around the starting area
- Type and condition of timing systems
 - Pads, speaker(s), how many buttons (plungers), how many watches, clipboards and supplies

- Start End:
 - Starting platforms secure/condition, speakers quantity & locations, lane lines, lane and pool markings, backstroke flags, available deck space, possible obstructions
- Turn End:
 - Backstroke flags, lane lines, lane and pool markings, lighting and visibility, available deck space and possible obstructions
- ▶ Meet all Team Members:
 - Referee(s), other Starter(s), CJ(s), Announcer, Timing-system Operator, Administrative Official or Admin Referee, any runner(s)
 - Determine and coordinate the optimum position on deck for forward and backward starts with the referee's position
 - Discuss and confirm procedures and protocols with Referee:
 - No Shows, Declared False Starts, un-expected open lanes, OOF
 - Disability or special need swimmers
 - False Start procedures, Recalls, Delay of Meet or late swimmers
- ▶ Test your equipment
 - Start System
 - Become Familiar with type of equipment
 - Starting system's condition, charged and working properly
 - Microphone's condition, length of available cord, where your voice sounds the best, start signal clearly audible to all swimmers
 - Number of speakers their placement, operation and clearly audible to all starting positions (including backstroke)
 - Strobe light clearly visible to all swimmers and timers (including backstroke events).
 - Starter's podium (if available) location, clipboard, supplies

Timers Meeting

▶ Meetings Location

- Quiet area, conducted with adequate time prior to the beginning of the session (recommendation: a minimum of 30 minutes prior)
- May include an AO (if available) to meeting, all information collected has a direct relationship to duties of an AO or AR.
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Welcome & Thank You-we're **all** are part of the same team

- Experience level(s)
 - Explain expectations and responsibilities
 - Explanation of whistle signals:
 - a. Series of short whistles
 - b. Long whistle (second long whistle)
 - Type of Starts
 - a. Conventional
 - b. Flyover
-
- Responsibilities prior to the start
 - Opportunity to check swimmer's name, order of swimmers for a relay
 - Operation of watch(s), buttons (plungers)
 - Timer's positioned correctly remaining un-obstructive at the start
 - Responsibilities at the start
 - Watch for the start on the strobe
 - Check the watch is operating properly, if not, signal head timer
 - Missing swimmer write down "No Show" (NS), if one shows up late, get the name at the end of the heat.
 - Responsibilities at the finish
 - At the finish, move to the edge to observe the touch,(any part of the body).
 - Pressing the button (plunger) and watch at the same time
 - Write down all times on the lane timer sheets (recorded in hundredths 0.00), write clearly as possible
 - Marking if a swimmer missed pad on first touch

Place Judge-Order of Finish (OOF) Responsibility

- ▶ The Starter or Off Starter may be assigned the responsibility as the Place Judge
 - Shall be positioned on the side of the course near the finish and shall judge the order of finish of all swimmers.
 - Judging results shall be used only in accordance with 102.24.5C in determining the order of finish.
- ▶ The Starter is documenting the OOF in which swimmers have finished a heat.
 - An Admin Referee or Administrative Official to determine and validate a possible timing malfunction, error or issue may need the OOF.
 - It's your choice to find the most comfortable way to accomplish this. There is no right way, but there is a right answer.

After the Session

- Hand-in the Starter's heat sheet and Order of Finish sheet to Admin Referee or Administrative Official for record keeping.
 - Assist in organizing or storing all starting equipment, leave it like you would like to find it.
- ▶ Talk to Team Members (Deck Referee and Starters)
 - What could be done different/better from both sides.

Leave it at the pool

- Don't discuss false starts, bad starts, recalls, disqualifications with anyone but the Deck Referee. Refer all questions to the Deck Referee for clarification.

False Starts/Recalls/Late Swimmer-Delay of Meet

- ▶ Starter Jurisdiction
 - Limited compared to a Stroke & Turn Judge, no jurisdiction for the technical rules for any stroke(s) for a swimmer during a swimming event, when operating strictly as a Starter.
 - Potential False Starts are the usual violations observed and enforcing the correct starting position.
- ▶ What is a False Start?
 - The rules state...“When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal” (101.1.2.C) and “Any swimmer starting before the start signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter’s observation that a violation occurred. (101.1.3A)
- ▶ False Start violation protocol.
 - ▶ After observing a potential false start:
 - Starter should allow the race to proceed, watching the swimmers until all heads have surfaced, replace the microphone, calmly mark the Starter’s heat sheet to indicate which heat and lane the false start was observed. Double-check for accuracy, (circle the lane, underline, dot) any type of mark maybe used.
 - Approach the Deck Referee and state “I have a potential false start...” or implement the procedure discussed prior to the start of the meet.
 - The Deck Referee may state that he/she did not have one or the Deck Referee should show his/her marked heat sheet or indicating mark method of a potential false start. With an accurate match of heat and lane or “Dual Confirmation,” the false start disqualification is recorded (DQ slip).
 - The swimmer or swimmers who have false started shall be disqualified upon completion of the race.
- ▶ **MUST** have a “Dual Confirmation” for a false start to be a disqualification.

- No Dual Confirmation.....NO False Start
- No accurate match.....NO False Start
- Under NO circumstance should a false start confirmation be based solely on discussion

Recalls

- False Starts = No Recall Starting Procedure
 - Since swimmers best effort generally on their first start. They should not be penalized for a good start by having a race recalled due to someone else false starting. The penalty for the false start will be imposed to the offender after the completion of the swim.
- The requirement for “Recalling” a heat:
 - The Starter or the Deck Referee may initiate “recalling” heat for an irregularity.
 - Unusual circumstances:
 - Any thing affect the fair conduct of a race
 - Sudden noise interfering with the start signal
 - Equipment failure; lane line break, backstroke flags break, bulkhead break loose
 - Bad start: accidentally starting a race prior to any swimmers being set
- No False Start can be charged if a heat is accidentally or instinctively recalled by the Starter, and the heat shall be restarted.

Late Swimmer

- Late swimmer steps up after the “TYM” command or after the start signal sounds, hops up on the starting block and dives in to join the race:
 - Protocol should have been discussed prior to the start of the session

Investigate: benefit to the swimmer

possible swimmer/timer
confusion

Scoreboard confusion

Re-seeding or unusual
seeding of the event
confusion

Crowded/limited deck
space

Goggles/swim suit failure

- If the swimmer is in error, the penalty is a “NO Show”

Delay of Meet

- Having to “Stand” a heat for a second time for the same swimmer that is slow or not responding to the “TYM” command, step the heat down, recommend to the Referee that the swimmer be disqualified for Delay of Meet.

USA-S Rulebook

▶ USA-S Rulebook

• 102.12 Starter

- **Preparation** — The Starter shall stand on the side of the pool within approximately five meters of the starting end of the pool and, upon signal from the Referee, shall assume control of the swimmers until a fair start has been achieved.
- **Optional Instructions** — The Starter may:
 - Announce the event.
 - B) Advise the heat when a swimmer will be attempting to achieve a time at an initial distance.
 - C) For backstroke starts, give the command, "Place your feet."

Apprenticeship-Starter

▶ Requirements to become a Starter: Prerequisite

- Be at least 19 years of age
- Must be a USA certified Stroke & Turn Judge for a minimum of (1) year and have worked a minimum of (18) sessions at a USA Swimming sanctioned or approved meet.
- Recommendation letter from a NCS starter or referee in good standing.
- Must make application to the NCS starter training coordinator on the current application form to startertrainingcoordinator@ncswim.org.
- Once the starter training coordinator has verified the individual has met all requirements satisfactorily, approval to enter the starter apprenticeship program will be given.
- The starter coordinator along with the apprentice will select a mentor who will assist the apprentice during the apprenticeship process.

▶ Education

Attend an approved NCS starter clinic

- Currently scheduled clinics are posted on the NCS website: ncswim.org.

Complete an Online/Open book Test:

- Satisfactorily complete the USA Swimming Starter certification test (not the Re-certification) with a score of 80% or better, prior to completing the apprenticeship.

▶ Training

- All certifications must be completed within 12 months of the starter clinic date.
- Work a minimum of 6 sessions at no less than 3 USA sanctioned or approved swim meets with at least 2 different mentors (assigned by the Meet Referee)
- Each session shall include a minimum of 30 starts
- Of the 6 sessions, a minimum of 2 sessions must be at a novice or developmental meet.

- After each session, the meet referee and/or mentor shall conduct a review of the session with the apprentice and discuss the ratings and/or comments provided on the On Deck Apprenticeship Record
- Each session must be documented on the On Deck Apprenticeship Record and signed by the mentor and meet referee.
- After all 6 sessions in the apprenticeship are completed, the apprentice and NCS starter training coordinator will arrange for an on-deck evaluation for a minimum of one session with a NCS starter training coordinator designee. The apprentice must receive a satisfactory observation prior to completing the apprenticeship. Those individuals not receiving a satisfactory evaluation may need to have additional mentoring as determined by the NCS starter training coordinator.
- After all apprentice sessions and the satisfactory evaluation is completed, the apprentice will email a copy of their On Deck Apprenticeship Record(s) to StarterTrainingCoordinator@ncswim.org.
- Once the NCS starter-training coordinator verifies that the apprentice has met all requirements satisfactorily, including the reviews and evaluation, he/she will enter the official into OTS as a certified starter. The NCS certification card will be available at www.usaswimming.org.
- The NCS Starter Training coordinator will notify the apprentice that he/she has completed the apprenticeship and is certified.
- NCS Starter On-Deck Apprenticeship Record, link:
- <http://www.swimnc.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Officials-Starter-Certification-Program-Policy.pdf>

Expectations with the Starter Program

- Complete all the prerequisites and education requirements, first, before starting the on-deck training requirements.
- This develops the philosophy and protocols associated with the on-deck training requirements of the program.
- Plan to inform the Meet Referee ahead of time, that you plan on apprenticing at their upcoming meet. This will help the Meet Referee assign you to an experience mentor that you will shadow during the session/meet.
- Important to bring your Starter On-Deck Apprenticeship Record to every session during your apprenticeship and present it to the Meet Referee.
- Plan to apprentice the entire session, when apprenticing prelim/final meets, plan to work both the prelim and final sessions for that day.
- Follow the Special Purpose On-Deck Training (SPOTS) mentor program.
- Ask questions, remember there is no bad questions. This should be a learning experience.
- NCS Officials Committee looks forward to your feedback to help enhance the Starter Apprentice training program.

Resources

▶ Recommended Reading:

- The following resources are highly recommended reading and will provide clear guidelines for someone interested in becoming a starter or improving upon their skill as a practicing starter:

1. Chapter 3 USA-S Guide to Officiating- Starter
2. The Starter Philosophy and Protocol
3. Situations & Resolutions Starter/Referee
4. Professional Starter