

SUBURBAN SWIM LEAGUE: *STARTER TIPS - 2014*

1. PREPARATION

- Review Rules: USA Swimming and SSL
- Check equipment: Gun (or electronic), Starting blanks, Whistle, Rulebook, Attire (hat, sunglasses, etc.)
- Decide on starting position – must be able to see all lanes

2. INSTRUCTIONS

If the Referee & Starter are separate officials, the Referee will blow the whistle. The Starter will give commands.

- Make sure ALL swimmers can hear your instructions; ask for QUIET, or stand swimmers down, if necessary.
- Use conversational tone; speak calmly; Avoid giving ‘commands’; talk as if inviting swimmers to swim.
- Avoid unnecessary inflections – keep tone even.
- Give precise instructions – use language in the Rules; Avoid unnecessary words; keeps instructions brief.

3. FORWARD STARTS

- Check that Head Timer is ready. Verify that any empty lanes are supposed to be empty.
- Referee blows whistle; swimmers step up to starting line, with at least one foot at edge of pool.
- Announce event – stroke and distance.
- When swimmers are ready: “*Take your mark.*” Don’t rush. (Say it like “shut the door”.)
- Allow swimmers to assume any starting position; must keep at least one foot at edge of pool. When all swimmers are ‘stationary’ – give Starting signal. (Swimmers must have stopped their downward movement.)
- Swimmers may NOT use towels, unless for ‘safety’ reasons. Advise both Teams.
- Younger swimmers may never become ‘motionless’. Be aware of swimmers who ‘rock back’ into ‘track’ start.
- Start should be FAIR to ALL swimmers.
- If a swimmer loses balance or enters water, direct other swimmers to ‘Stand’.

4. BACKSTROKE STARTS

- Ask swimmers to ‘*step into*’ the water. (Swimmers who dive should NOT be disqualified, but should be advised of the rule and may be given one false start.)
- Check that Head Timer is ready. Verify that any empty lanes are supposed to be empty.
- **Blow whistle** when swimmers are **in the water and standing at the wall**. Swimmers should then assume a legal starting position. *Toes MAY be above the water surface, but cannot be above or curl over the gutter.*
- **Give Instructions:** event – stroke and distance. (NO “*place your feet*”.)
- “**Take your mark**” - when feet are properly placed and swimmers are ready.
- Give **Starting signal** - when all swimmers are ‘stationary’.
- If swimmer leaves mark, or swimmers can’t become stationary, direct swimmers to ‘**Stand down.**’
- Swimmers may use a towel, placed over edge and along wall, which must be removed after the start.
- Swimmers may hold legs below knees of a swimmer on deck; feet may not extend over edge of pool. One swimmer only – no chaining.

5. FALSE STARTS

- **Single confirmation by the starter is used to call a False Start.** A swimmer who has assumed a starting position and then enters the water **by initiating a starting action** before the ‘starting signal’ should be charged with a False Start. **If the swimmer simply loses their balance - that is NOT a False Start.** Do NOT fire gun.
- No false start for a swimmer who enters water as reaction to ‘stand’ command, or the movement of another swimmer.
- A swimmer who has obtained an advantage (i.e., is in a forward, starting motion) when the ‘starting signal’ is given, should be charged with a False Start.
- Race must be recalled with 1 (or 2) pistol shots. (Whistles help.) Make sure you have at least one extra blank.
- Deliberate delay or disregard of Starter’s commands can be basis for a False Start.
- A Swimmer, who is not in the Starting Area and delays the start of a race, *should be charged with one False Start.*
- Backstroke – a Swimmer who fails to assume a proper Starting position after being warned should be charged with a False Start.
- A Swimmer charged with TWO False Starts must be disqualified. If both Coaches agree, the swimmer may be allowed to swim as ‘Exhibition’, at discretion of the Referee.

6. GUN POSITION

- Pull hammer back on pistol before raising above head. Raise starting pistol prior to saying ‘Take your mark.’
- Hold gun so Timers can see the ‘flash’.
- Remain motionless during and immediately after the Start. Don’t distract Swimmers.

7. OTHER

- Prepare for and give appropriate instructions for any swimmers with special needs. Use hand signals for swimmers with hearing difficulties. Discuss procedures with Coach, before start of Meet.
- Concentrate. If a ‘bad’ start, forget about it. Make next Start a ‘good’ one.