

SUBURBAN SWIM LEAGUE: *STARTER TIPS – 2023*

1. PREPARATION

- Review Rules: USA Swimming and SSL
- Check equipment: **Starting system**, Whistle or Electronic Whistle, Rulebook, Attire (hat, sunglasses, etc.)
Know how to operate the starting system and to recall a race.
- 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 “barking” at swimmers; talk as if inviting swimmers to swim.
- Avoid unnecessary voice inflections – keep tone/pitch even.
- Give precise instructions – use language in the Rules; Avoid unnecessary words; keep instructions brief.

3. FORWARD STARTS

- Check that the Head Timer is ready. *Verify that any empty lanes are supposed to be empty.*
- **Blow or sound the whistle** - swimmers step up to starting line, with at least one foot at edge of pool.
- **Announce event** – stroke and distance.
- **“Take your marks”** - when swimmers are ready. Don’t rush wording. (as if saying “shut the door”.)
- Allow swimmers to assume any starting position; must keep at least one foot at edge of pool.
- Give **Starting signal** - when all swimmers are ‘stationary’. (Must have stopped their downward movement.)
- Swimmers may NOT use towels, unless for ‘safety’ reasons. Advise both Teams.

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 or sound the whistle** when swimmers are **in the water and standing at the wall**. Swimmers should assume a legal starting position. *Toes MAY be above the water surface, but cannot be above or curl over the gutter.*
- **Announce event** – stroke and distance.
- **“Take your marks”** - when feet are properly placed and swimmers are ready. Don’t rush wording.
- Give **Starting signal** - when all swimmers are ‘stationary’.
- 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 *enters the water by initiating a starting action* before the ‘starting signal’ - False Start.
- A swimmer *is in a starting motion when the ‘starting signal’ is given* - a False Start.
- Race must be recalled with multiple beeps. (Whistles help.) Recall signal while the swimmers are in the air is more effective than when the swimmers are in the water.
- No false start for a swimmer who simply loses their balance & falls in. Do NOT give the starting signal.
- No false start for a swimmer who enters water as reaction to ‘stand’ command, or the movement of another swimmer.
- Note: Younger swimmers might be moving, but not attempting to start. Some swimmers delay, or ‘rock back’ into ‘track’ start.
- Direct swimmers to **‘Stand’** if swimmers do not become stationary, or a swimmer loses balance or enters water, or a swimmer leaves the mark before the starting signal.

- *A swimmer may be charged with one False Start for deliberate delaying a start, disregarding the Starter's commands, or reporting late for an event and causing a delay.*
- *A swimmer may be charged with one False Start for failing to assume a proper starting position after being warned.*
- *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. **POSITION OF THE STARTER and STARTING SYSTEM**

- The Starter should be in the best position to observe all swimmers to ensure a fair start.
- The Starter and the Starting System should be positioned so the timers can see the "flash", if the starting system has a visible light signal.
- Remain motionless during and immediately after the Start. Don't distract Swimmers.
- Maintain the Starting System so that a race can be recalled, even after the swimmers are in the water.

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.
- Outwardly appear to be calm, cool, and collected. Inwardly, be focused.
- Polaski's 3 P's of starting: Pace, Practice, Patience