

SUBURBAN SWIM LEAGUE: *STARTER TIPS – 2024*

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.
The events are Medley Relay, Individual Medley, Freestyle, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, Freestyle Relay.

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 or lip of the pool.*
- **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 **who is facing away from the pool**; **heels 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 and 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