

VPSU DECK REFEREE & STARTER GUIDELINES¹

1. Starters should find their respective positions on deck for both forward and backstroke starts.
2. Deck Referee then positions himself or herself on either the right or left of the Starter, but always where the Starter has visual contact with the Deck Referee.
3. The starting cadence is a series of short crisp whistles to signal the next event or heat is about to start. A long whistle follows this, which is the signal for the swimmers to step up on the block or into the water.
4. When the Referee is comfortable that the heat or race is ready to begin, they will extend an arm to turn the swimmers over to the starter. It is at this point and this point only that the heat is closed.
5. The Starter should raise the mic when that first hear the long whistle and be ready for the extended arm.
6. The Starter and Deck Referee need to develop a working natural rhythm and pace as a team.
7. When the swimmers are turned over to the Starter and when the Starter is ready, the Starter simply says, "take your mark" in a calm, collected and conversational tone, dropping his/her voice at the end.
8. With the start of the race the Deck Referee should step away from the Starter and direct themselves towards the swimmers in the water and so that they observe the entire pool. The Starter should follow the swimmers in the water until their heads come up or until they are comfortable that all received a good start and a fair race has begun.
9. With the start of the race, the Starter should slowly begin to lower the mic.
10. No heat of swimmers should be left on the blocks or in the water for any extended length of time due to circumstances beyond their control.
11. If there is a need for the "stand" command the Starter should use the terms "stand please". If the stand command is used twice, the heat should be asked to step down by saying "ladies or gentlemen step down please". Then there should be a simple silent pause and then the Starter should say, "ladies or gentlemen step up please". Remember, once the Deck Referee has extended their arm to the Starter, the swimmers are in the Starter's Jurisdiction and remain there until the race is started. There may be circumstances where the Deck Referee will need to use the I long whistle again to signal for the swimmers to step back up on the block.
12. No commands should be given to single out a swimmer or to address movement on the starting platform. If an athlete needs to be spoken with the Starter addresses the Deck Referee who in turn goes to the block and speaks with the swimmer
13. If the Starter observes anything that may impact the start of a race such as a loud noise or flash, the swimmers should be stepped down and the Deck Referee addressed as to the reason. If something occurs after the starting signal that impacts the race, the heat or the swimmers, the Starter may recall the race and the second attempt starts again with the I long whistle.
14. If a Starter or Deck Referee observes a false start, the heat must be recalled and the race swum again. The Starter and Deck Referee should confer as to the purported false start and if both confirm it, a false start shall be attributed to the swimmer(s) in the particular lane(s) where it occurred and the Starter shall, before the re-swim of the race, announce that "A false start has been attributed to Lane(s) No(s). ___." If a false start is not dually confirmed, no false start shall be attributed to a swimmer. If the swimmer(s) false starting false start a second time, the race shall be recalled, the swimmer(s) disqualified and the race reswum without the disqualified swimmer(s). The Deck Referee should notify the swimmer(s) of the second false start and disqualification.
15. Across the board finishes will be taken by the two appointed Sweep Judges from opposite sides of the pool. The finishes must be written down on VPSU sweep judge finish forms that will be delivered with timer cards for each race to the scorekeeper. At the end of each session these forms are turned in to the Referee.
16. The Deck Referee shall make sure that all is ready to start the races at the meet. This includes running the timers meeting, which may be done by the Starter, and making sure that the blocks are

¹ Taken from the Virginia Swimming Deck Referee & Starter Guidelines dated August 3, 2002, and modified for VPSU Competitive Rules.

tight, the watches operational, the backstroke flags in proper placement, the volume of starting speakers is checked and that a test start is conducted prior to the beginning of meet. This is all BEFORE and in time to start the events of the session ON TIME. NOT early, not late, but ON TIME.

17. Starters and Deck Referees must stay focused on their role and their role only! They should not try to wear all hats at the meet. Let the Meet Director, Meet referee, if there is one, Chief Judge and parent volunteers do their jobs. If you are paying attention to everyone else the you are not adequately focused on Starting or the running of the deck.
18. Starters should practice PATIENCE, PATIENCE AND MORE PATIENCE when starting and should never rush a start or feel rushed by the Deck Referee, or Meet Referee. Yes, you must keep a time line, but you never, ever rush a start for anyone.

VPSU GUIDELINES FOR EVENT/HEAT ANNOUNCING¹

For the first heat of an event:

Referee: 4-5 whistle blasts.

Announcer: "Event (*number*), (*gender*), (*distance*), (*stroke*). Heat 1."

Referee: 1 long whistle blast. Additional long whistle blast if backstroke or medley relay.

Starter: "Take your mark." Starting signal.
Swimmers swim...

For subsequent heats of the same event:

Referee: 4-5 whistle blasts.

Announcer:

"Heat (*number*)."
(Starting with heat 2, only the heat # is announced. Do not announce gender, distance, or stroke.)

Referee: 1 long whistle blast. Additional long whistle blast if backstroke or medley relay.

Starter: "Take your mark." Starting signal.
Swimmers swim....

Continue in this pattern until all heats of this event have been swum.

After all heats of a given heat have been swum, recycle back to the first heat of the next event.

NOTES

The announcement of event #, gender, distance, and stroke should immediately follow the 4-5 whistle blast.

Use the singular for distance (yard, not yards; meter, not meters).

Use the complete event name, not an abbreviation (Individual Medley, not IM; Freestyle, not Free; Breaststroke, not Breast; Backstroke, not Back; Butterfly, not Fly or Butter).

¹ Adapted from Virginia Swimming Announcing Guidelines

VPSU TIPS FOR STARTERS¹

1. Before meet, set up and **test starting equipment** and **check stability of blocks**.
2. Very often, referees will assign starters the task of doing the **timer briefing**. Be prepared to do this.
3. Speak slowly, clearly, and loudly into the microphone—*practice beforehand to get the feel for the microphone and volume levels*.
4. Limit speaking over the microphone to essential commands. Do not add introductory language such as "Swimmers" before your commands.
5. Always ensure fair starts for all swimmers.
6. If too much noise at the start, wait or ask for quiet.
7. Starter should stand reasonably close to the end of pool, but where s/he can see all swimmers at once.
8. Watch the whole field, rather than focusing on specific swimmers.
9. If a start is recalled because of a "false start," advise the swimmer by indicating that "a false start has been charged to the swimmer in Lane ____."
10. Each swimmer is responsible for his or her own start so if Swimmer B leaves his mark in reaction to Swimmer A's false start, Swimmer B must also be charged with a false start by the starter/referee.
11. If a swimmer leaves his mark in response to "Stand up" command, starter/referee may relieve the swimmer of the false start.
12. If you stand a heat up because a swimmer is moving, and that swimmer's movement takes him into the pool, generally that swimmer should be charged with a "false start."
13. If a heat is stood up a second time, usually it is best to ask swimmers to consider stepping the swimmers off the blocks, wait a few seconds, then try again.
14. If you make a mistake or some external factor interferes with a fair start, recall the race and do not disqualify anybody.
15. With starter/referee permission, swimmers may do a forward start from within the water (at least one hand in contact with starting platform/end wall).
16. A swimmer who fails to report for the initial start of his heat is disqualified.

¹ Adapted from Virginia High School League Tips for Starters.