

2025 DSA DECK REFEREE, STARTER & CJ GUIDELINES

In an effort to bring a consistent deck to all of our meets, especially for those inexperienced in officiating meets, we hope these guidelines will allow our meets to run smoother, faster and help prepare our athletes for our end-of-year championship meet. Please refer to common USA Swimming alignments for placing officials on deck. Stroke and turn judges should only be responsible for half of the pool (at the referee's discretion) and preferably no more than 3 lanes, if possible. A minimum officials crew for most DSA pools should be a Referee, Starter, and 4 S&Ts, each with jurisdiction over half the length of the pool and half of the lanes at each end.

If you have an adequate number of officials, please try to utilize Chief Judges whenever possible. They should ideally be more experienced officials who can verify disqualifications, answer questions, and write DQ slips if needed. They should also be able to fill in as Starter, Referee or stroke and turn, if needed.

The Deck Referee is in charge of the meet and the pool. They should be the most experienced official on the deck. They have final decision on all matters and should be very familiar with the USA Swimming Rulebook. The Referee does not necessarily have to be the host team's person, but the discussion of who referees and who starts should be agreeable to the host team. The starter should be a person with a calm, inviting voice who understands this important role in providing a fair start for all swimmers. Both the Referee and the Starter must be familiar with the process for, and capable of, determining false starts. Prior to the meet, the Referee and Starter should discuss positioning (Starter's choice) as well as protocols for false start determination and order of finish.

Procedure:

The Referee will begin by blowing five (5) quick whistles informing the swimmers to get ready to swim. The Starter announces the first event, for example, "Event #1 Girls 6 and under 25-yard backstroke", and then announce "Heat 1." There is no need to say how many heats. After the announcement of the heat, the Referee will blow a long whistle for the swimmers to step up.

If there are multiple heats, the Starter will announce the next heat after the Referee blows the five (5) quick whistles. These 5 whistles should come as the last swimmer completes his/her swim on 25 yard/meter races, or after the last swimmer passes under the backstroke flags near the conclusion of 50 yard/meter races. The Starter will simply say "heat two", not "Heat 2 of 6", which is followed by a long whistle from the Referee for swimmers to step up to the blocks. The long whistle should NOT be given until all 10 & unders swimming 25-yard events have completely exited the pool. For 50-yard events, fly-over starts are acceptable, if agreed to by the coaches ahead of time. IM flyovers are at the discretion of the Referee for 10 and unders,

but should probably be avoided. You may need to remind new swimmers to stay still, quiet, and close to the wall during the start of the next race. This procedure will continue until the last heat has been completed. When the last swimmer in the last heat of the current event is about to complete their race, the Referee will blow the 5 whistles as noted above and the Starter will announce the next event, "Event #2 Boys 6 and under 25-yard backstroke." You should follow the above procedure for the remainder of the meet.

The Referee and the Starter should work together to ensure a fair and equitable start for all swimmers. Upon seeing a false start, the Starter should circle the number of the lane of the swimmer on his/her program and show it to the Referee for "dual confirmation" of the false start. There should be no verbal communication or discussion related to the false start. If that occurs, the false start cannot be accepted. If the false start is dual confirmed by both, the Starter should write the DQ slip and sign as the official. The Referee signs on his/her line.

STARTER:

1. The Starter has priority in their deck positioning which affords an optimal view to see the entire starting field. The Referee should then find an appropriate place to stand so as not to interfere with the Starter, but can also see the entire starting line.
2. Announces the event and heat 1 OR the heat number after the Referee's five short whistles. As swimmers approach the blocks, they assist in verifying the starting field for correct number of athletes in proper lanes.
3. Raises microphone upon hearing long whistle and **awaits Deck Referee's extended arm.**
4. When the starting field is ready, the Starter says "Take Your Marks" in a calm, invitational voice.
5. Presses the button on the mic to sound the horn to complete the start, only after all swimmers have assumed an observable **stationary** position. "Stationary does not necessarily mean motionless."
6. Circles any false starts on the program, then approaches the Deck Referee about any possible false starts he may have observed. (See False Start Procedures below.)
7. Keeps track of the order of finish (OOF) as best as possible on their program, in the event of a timing error.
8. If the swimmers cannot settle for the start in a reasonably short amount of time, the Starter should then say "Stand," allow them to settle, and then begin the procedure again

with “Take Your Marks.” In the event of the necessity to stand them again, the Starter **MUST** say “step down please.” If the Referee needs to warn the swimmers on becoming **stationary**, he/she should do so before he/she blows the long whistle for the swimmers to step up again and start the sequence again. For swimmers in the backstroke, the command is still “stand,” but for DSA purposes, you may use “relax please.” These commands still should be done in a calm, conversational voice. To keep swimmers from jumping into the pool on the “stand” command, it is often recommended to hiss the “S”, such as “SSSSssssstand” to soften the sound and not frighten the swimmer into jumping.

DECK REFEREE:

1. Signals “prepare to swim” with the series of 5 short whistles.
2. Checks starting field for correct number of swimmers in proper lanes.
3. Sounds long whistle indicating swimmers should take a position on the blocks, deck, or in the pool. During the backstroke events, 2 long whistles are sounded. The first for the swimmers to enter the water, and the second for the swimmers to place their feet. This second long whistle is often sounded when the last backstroke swimmer’s head has broken the surface after jumping in.
4. Once any issues have been resolved, the Referee turns control of the swimmers over to the Starter with an extended arm.
5. Circles any false starts on the program, but waits for the Starter to approach in a non-verbal manner about any possible false starts they may have observed. (See False Start Procedures below.)
6. The Referee should note all DQ slips that are accepted on their meet program in the event a coach questions a DQ. That way, they can refer to the program without always having to go back to the S&T official. The Referee signs all DQ slips and sends them to the official table. No DQ will be accepted by the table without both the S&T judge and the referee’s signatures.
7. The Referee, when possible, should also try to write down the order of finish on his/her program.

FALSE START PROCEDURE:

1. If the Starter observes that a swimmer has false started before the starting signal, the race shall continue without recall and lane(s) of the offending athlete(s) shall be noted in writing.

2. The starter should advise the Deck Referee of a possible false start by showing the Ref their program with the lane number of the swimmer who false started circled. ALL Referees and Starters should be familiar with what constitutes a False Start by reading Section 101.2. 101.2.C specifically says, "When all swimmers are **STATIONARY**, the Starter shall give the starting signal."
3. The deck referee should review the lane circled by the starter and independently confirm, or deny, they witnessed the same potential infraction, without discussion.
4. When there is agreement on the noted lane(s) by the Deck Referee and the Starter, the Deck Referee shall confirm the false start and implement the meet protocol for handling DQs. The Starter should write the DQ slip for the false start. If there is a chief judge in the area, they can write it for them, as is done at larger meets.
5. If a swimmer false starts and the starting signal is not given, the Starter should release the rest of the field by saying "stand please," note the lane that started, and follow 2, 3 and 4 above. It is up to the discretion of the Referee whether to disqualify a swimmer or still allow them to swim in this case. We are a summer recreational league. If a swimmer falls in before the start, in this league, it is quite acceptable to still allow them to swim their race. Use common sense, know the rules.

For more information on what constitutes a false start, there is a great resource on the USA-S website of Referee/Starter Situations and Resolutions. Check out:

https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/officialsdocuments/officials-training-resources/situations-and-resolutions/situations-and-resolutions-starter-and-deck-referee.pdf?sfvrsn=79282b32_11

CHIEF JUDGE:

The Chief Judge is the stroke and turn officials' mentor. This person is one of the keys to a swim meet running smoothly. Please try to utilize CJs whenever possible based on number of available officials. The Chief Judge position may be combined with another stroke and turn assignment, if necessary.

The Chief Judges are placed inconspicuously at the pool corners. During the free-style events, they may be seated as long as they can still view their officials watching the turns. The Chief Judge's focus is on the officials in his/her jurisdiction. When noticing an infraction, the official shall raise a hand immediately at which time the CJ will walk over to the official and ask:

1. Where did the infraction occur? (Lane? Which turn, if more than one time at that end?)

2. What did you see?
3. What is the rule?

After the Chief Judge hears the answers from the official and agrees with the call, the Chief Judge fills out the disqualification slip and verifies that all the information is correct. The official who made the call signs the DQ form, the CJ initials next to the S&T judge's signature and then the CJ submits the slip to the Deck Referee for the Deck Referee's verification and signature.

If the S&Ts are writing their own DQ slips, the CJ should verify it is a good call. If necessary, they may step in for the S&T while they step away from the pool edge to concentrate on completing the DQ slip. The CJ will still initial next to the S&Ts signature after verifying the slip is properly written and get it to the Referee as quickly as possible.

DQ slips should be forwarded to the Referee as quickly as possible for him to close out the event and allow the table to complete the event's paperwork.

SUMMARY:

As a Referee, Starter, and a CJ, you should be familiar with many situations and the implementation of the USA Swimming Rulebook. It may be beneficial to all officials to review this information on resolutions and solutions for stroke and turn officials. See:

<https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/officialsdocuments/officials-training-resources/situations-and-resolutions/situations-and-resolutions-stroke-and-turn.pdf>

Officials should work as a team. We are all here for the swimmers. Always remember, "See what you call and call what you see!"

Benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer! Stroke and turn judges should always raise their hand immediately if they see a possible infraction, high over their head. CJs can help them determine if what they see is correct. Remember that raising your hand is not automatically making a call, but rather starting a conversation about what you saw, what the rule is, and what constitutes a violation. Then comes the confirmation of a valid DQ. We want our swimmers and coaches to have confidence in our knowledge and ability to make the correct call. Thank you again for your willingness to volunteer and make sure our meets run smoothly and successfully!