

RSL False Start Guidelines

False Start

A false start occurs when a swimmer is set for the start and then begins their starting motion prior to the sound of the starting signal. Any swimmer (not the field) charged with two false starts in an event must be disqualified from the event. See RSL Rules Section 5.1.2

False Start Rules

- False starts may be charged when a swimmer leaves the blocks before the starting signal has been given, twitches or rocks on the blocks after swimmers are stationary, or in backstroke when a swimmer fails to maintain their feet in a legal position after being warned.
- Keep in mind that not all movement is a false start – it is only if the swimmer was stationary and then begins their starting motion prior to starting signal
 - a. A false start can occur whether or not the swimmer enters the water. An early starting motion of one swimmer may cause another swimmer to begin to move. Mark all swimmers that moved and wait for starter to initiate conference about which swimmer shall be charged with a false start.
 - b. A swimmer accidentally falling off the blocks prior to the “take your marks” command should not be penalized with a false start
 - c. False starts must be called by the Starter and confirmed by the Referee. Only the referee may disqualify a swimmer.
 - d. Immediately upon observing a false start, record this information on your heat sheet (lane/lanes). If the starter believes there was a false start, they should initiate conversation about this and you as the Ref provide dual confirmation.
 - e. Compare records with the Starter, and, upon confirming both have observed the same violation, instruct the Starter to recall the event.
 - f. Recalls can be tricky depending on the age of the swimmer, the event being swum and the distance of the event. Younger swimmers will sometime require a coach to enter the water to retrieve them.

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- g. Determine if you wish to reset the heat and swim immediately, or if you wish to give the swimmers a chance to recover before swimming again. This determination is made depending on the age of the swimmers, and how far they made it down the pool before stopping.
- h. Once the heat is recalled, they will return to the blocks and you will repeat the full starter protocol.
- i. RSL allows one false start per swimmer (per heat) without disqualification.
- j. Upon the second false start of the same swimmer (observed by both the Starter and Referee), the Referee will write the card to disqualify the swimmer. Once confirming the second false start, the referee will determine whether they want another recall of the event, or if they wish to allow the heat to proceed. If the ref feels that the false start did not adversely affect the start of the other swimmers, they may allow the heat to continue. The premise here is that the majority of swimmers who have NOT committed a starting violation should not be penalized from taking advantage of their best start by the illegal action of another swimmer. If the heat is recalled, the referee will notify the swimmer of the second false start and the swimmer will be removed from the blocks and will not be allowed to compete.
- k. A false start from the whole field does not count towards an individual's false start count
- l. A Swimmer who delayed the start by entering the water "just for the fun of it" can be disqualified for "delay of meet". This is not the same as a false start, and it does not require two instances for it to be a disqualification. For example, if the referee determines this is a case of "showing off", and not a legitimate fall start the swimmer may be immediately disqualified.

Recalling the Entire Heat

- When the start is such that the Starter and/or Ref is not satisfied the race was properly begun, it is always permissible for the starter and/or referee to recall the entire heat.
- It is not necessary to charge any swimmer with a false start under these conditions (although that may also occur).

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- Things that negatively affect the start (such as a loud noise or photographic strobe flash just as the starting signal is given that affects more than one swimmer) should be part of any starter's awareness when commencing a race.
- RSL rules require dual confirmation from the referee of a false start to disqualify a swimmer, if the starter believes that an error they made, or an external event caused swimmers to false start, they can begin the recall process while at the same time conferring with you, the referee.

Things to Consider

- Keep in mind that the first start is generally the best start.
- However, swimmers should not be penalized from taking advantage of their best start by external events out of their control and a recall may be necessary.