

A photograph of swimmers on starting blocks at a pool. The focus is on the hands of several swimmers gripping the edge of the blocks. The background is blurred, showing other swimmers and pool lanes. There are decorative blue and white diagonal stripes overlaid on the image.

# *STARTER*

Rappahannock Swim League  
Online Training Course



# *REQUIREMENTS*

Rappahannock Swim League requires Starters to be USA Swimming, high school (VHSL), or YMCA certified, or have completed the RSL online training for Starters within the current calendar year. To submit a waiver request, click here: <https://forms.gle/dWE7prGhiCT7E3WN7>

First-Year Starters are encouraged to shadow a starter with at least two years experience for half a meet during which time they should practice forward and backward starts.

Starters who have served in that position in previous seasons may be asked to shadow a more experienced starter at the discretion of the Officials Committee.



# *DUTIES*

RSL RULE 10.5



Under the direction of the Head Referee, the Starter begins every race.



Equipment Needed:

Electronic Starting System  
Clipboard, Pen or Pencil  
Air Horn



The starter shall be located within 10 feet of the starting block at the edge of the pool. The light strobe should be clearly visible to the timers.



Relay Take Off Judge: Starters may also be asked to serve as relay take off judges at the starting edge of the pool.



# PREPARATION

Become familiar with starting device and make sure it's working and fully charged

Works with Referee to know how to handle false starts and other duties

Know:

- order of events
- number of heats
- # of swimmers expected
- When timers change ends
- Who is Head Timer and Runner

Consult Heat Sheet to confirm that all swimmers are present and in their correct lanes



Too fast and you can have false starts and incorrect timing information

Too slow and you can have false starts and you may be there late into the night

*Starters need experience to find a good pace*

The length of the meet is greatly affected by the performance of the Clerk of the Course and the Starter

**STARTERS SET  
THE PACE OF  
THE MEET**



# *THE STARTING SYSTEM*

Teams are responsible for having their own starter systems

Away teams should bring theirs to each meet in case of a home team starter malfunction

Someone on your team is assigned to be responsible for the starter mechanism – usually the Head Starter

This person should make sure it is plugged in for charging 24 hours prior to the meet

This person also sets up the starter equipment at the meet

It is necessary to have an air horn in case both starter mechanisms fail at the meet





# ***BEFORE THE MEET***

Meet with the Referee prior to the start of the meet to see if there are any special-needs swimmers and to see how the Ref plans to run the meet

Discuss how the Ref would like you to announce the heat – event and heat, or just heat?

Refs may not always be standing right beside you to start heats so discuss how to proceed when the Ref is across the pool.

Review and discuss the False Start and Recall protocol

USA Swimming Rules require at least a 4 foot water depth for dives. This means some pools may be required to do in-water starts at the turn end. Ask if this situation applies.



# TEST START

Ensure equipment is in good working order.

Ensure timers are ready and can see the strobe.  
Timers start on strobe NOT sound.

Take note of where strobe is when timers move.  
Can they still see it?

Consider a second test start at 2<sup>nd</sup> half when  
volunteer shift changes.

Know who your head timer is. Ask them to give  
you a thumbs up when timers are ready.



# PROCEDURES

For each event, the Referee blows 4 to 7 short whistles. Next, the Starter clearly states the following:

- Event Number
- Heat Number
- Boys/Girls
- Age
- Distance (Yard/Meter)
- Stroke(s) to be used and order, if applicable
  - Do not abbreviate stroke.
  - Use “Individual Medley” not “IM”, “Freestyle” not “Free”





# ***DURING THE START***

Announce the next event or heat as swimmers from the prior heat exit the pool (the create a natural rhythm) – referee should be blowing shorts whistles as they exit. Younger heats may need to be reminded to exit the pool.

Use the heat sheet to determine how many swimmers should be at the blocks. Use your judgement and communicate with the Clerk of Course, Timers and Referee to determine if you should wait for a swimmer or proceed with the heat.



# CLOSING THE HEAT

When all of the swimmers and heat have stepped onto the blocks or into the water, the referee fully extends his or her arm towards the starter which then gets control of the heat to the starter.

Once the referee's arm has been fully extended towards the starter, the heat is said to be "closed"

Swimmers stepping onto the blocks or into the pool after this point can miss their event, have a bad or false start, or be disqualified

Waiting a reasonable amount of time to allow for missing swimmers to show up is a good practice.

Common sense should prevail. We prefer that the swimmers swim rather than miss their heats. The bottom line is that unless a swimmer is willfully ignoring the starting signals, or is otherwise involved in extracurricular activities behind the blocks, it is best to let them swim

If you believe that a mistake by an official caused a missed heat, or a bad start, the referee has the authority to re-swim that swimmer.



When all swimmers are at the blocks, check for:

- Safe and conducive starting environment
- Swimmers are prepared and ready to start
- Each swimmer has one foot at front of blocks – for forward starts OR one hand on the wall for in water starts
- Each swimmer has TWO hands on the grips (or wall) if a backward start
- Calmly say “take your marks” in a conversational tone, without cadence
- Swimmers must assume a stationary starting position
- Many swimmers will bend down to grab the block. The swimmer may grab any part of the block, but doesn’t have to grab the block at all.
- As soon as all swimmers have responded and are in place (stationary, not motionless), press the starting signal. Timing is the key to a good start.

# *DURING THE START*



# FORWARD STARTS

Swimmers may choose to start either in or out of the water. In water starts MUST have one hand in contact with the wall. Swimmers out of the water may dive off the deck or the blocks.

Referee	Starter	Referee	Starter	Starter	Starter
<i>One long whistle</i>	Instruct Swimmers "STEP UP"	<i>Holds Arm Out</i>	Instruct swimmers "TAKE YOUR MARKS"	Give swimmer sufficient time to come to starting position with at least one foot at the front edge of the platform or deck, or one hand on the wall (in-water start)	Initiate Starting System (horn and light) when all swimmers are stationary



# BACKWARD STARTS

Referee

First long whistle



Starter

Instruct Swimmers "STEP IN"



Referee

Second long whistle



Referee

Hold Arm Out



Starter

Instruct Swimmers "TAKE YOUR MARKS"



Starter

Give swimmer sufficient time to come to starting position.  
MUST HAVE TWO HANDS IN CONTACT.

Curling toes over the lip of the gutter is not permitted at any time before or after the start.



Starter

Initiate Starting System (horn and light) when all swimmers are stationary



# WHEN SWIMMERS AREN'T READY

If a swimmer is moving around on the blocks or adjusting their goggles, they are not ready. Be Patient. Your job is to ensure each swimmer gets a fair start



If swimmers assume the start position but fail to become stationary, very calmly say “STAND” in a drawn out manner. Ease into the “S” to avoid startling the swimmers.



Give the stand command if:

A swimmer does not respond

A swimmer continues to move

A distraction or malfunction



When ready, you can instruct swimmers to again “TAKE YOUR MARKS”



Do not allow swimmers to become stranded. If the referee is dealing with a situation after the STEP UP command that might take extended time, tell the swimmers to “RELAX” giving them the option to step down or relax on the blocks.





# ***CORRECTING A SWIMMER***

If a swimmer does not respond to “take your marks” command, or otherwise is unprepared to start, you should stand the heat and use the following sequence to provide correction:

- First attempt: stand the heat and restart without further instruction
- Second attempt: stand the heat and provide general correction (ex: “swimmers remember your toes must be below gutter”)
- Third attempt: stand heat and work with coaches to correct the offending swimmer
- If a swimmer is purposefully delaying a start or showing other signs of misconduct, confer with your Referee



***FALSE***



***START***

A False Start is when a swimmer leaves the starting position before the start signal is sounded.

When this happens, all swimmers shall be recalled at once.

The Starter will give a recall signal, as well as the referee who blows the whistle to indicate the false start.



# ***FALSE START RULES***

## **False Starts may be charged when a swimmer:**

- Leaves the blocks before the starting signal is given
- In backstroke or leadoff in the Medley Relay – when a swimmer fails to maintain feet in legal position after being warned

Swimmers can be charged with a false start by the starter only if it was witnessed by a Referee or Assistant Referee.

The Starter shall indicate who is charged with the false start. Referee must concur (dual confirmation).

The Starter shall recall the heat. The referee will determine when heat shall be re-swum.

A Swimmer charged with two false starts shall be disqualified and not permitted to swim that event.

A swimmer who purposely delays the start (e.g. jumps in for fun) can be disqualified immediately for Delay of Meet by the Referee





## RECALLING THE ENTIRE HEAT

### 1. **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).

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.

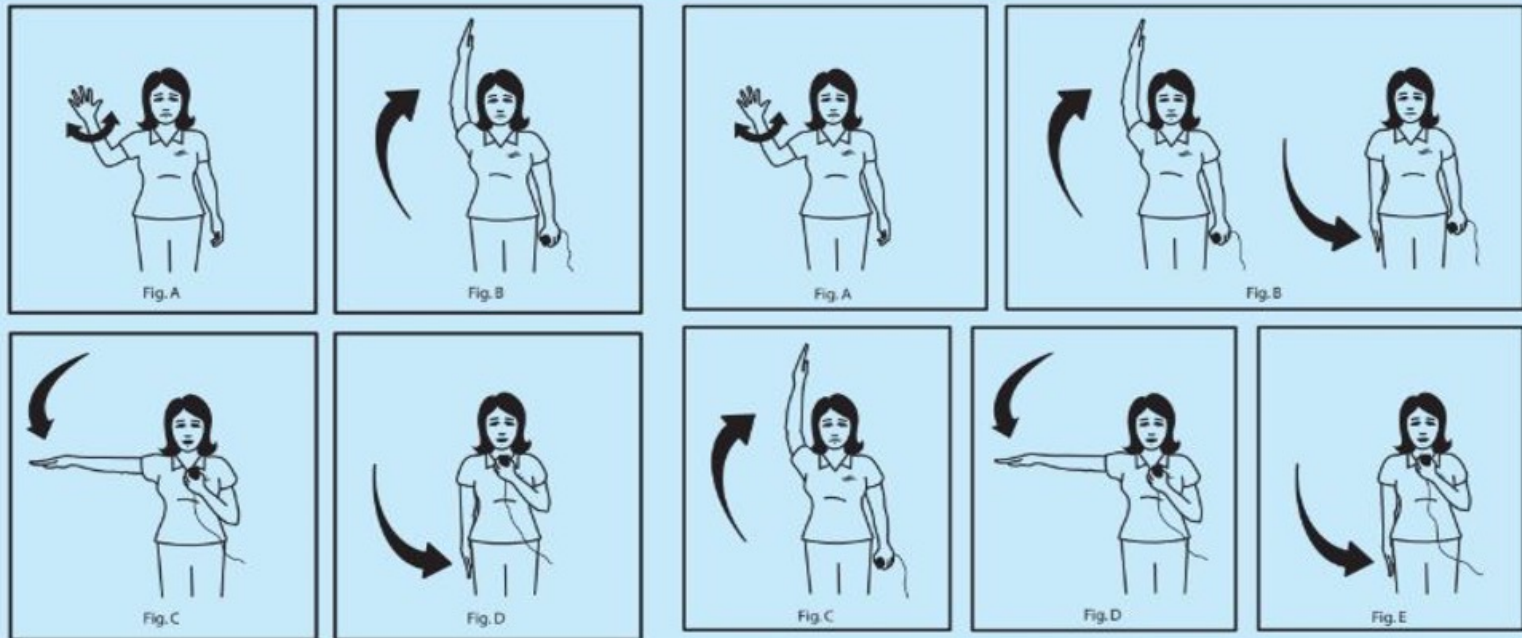
### 2. **Things to consider**

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.



# MODIFICATIONS



## FIGURE 1: FORWARD START

- A. Twist hand at chin level — short whistles
- B. Arm overhead — swimmer steps onto starting block
- C. Arm moves to shoulder level — signal to "take your mark"
- D. Arm moves to side of body — starting signal

## FIGURE 2: BACKSTROKE START

- A. Twist hand at chin level — short whistles
- B. Arm overhead — swimmer enters water; drop arm to side while swimmer enters water
- C. Arm overhead — swimmer returns to backstroke start position
- D. Arm moves to shoulder level — signal to "take your mark"
- E. Arm moves to side of body — starting signal

The Referee may reassign lanes within the swimmer's heat so that the strobe light or Starter's arm signal can be more readily seen by the deaf or hard of hearing.

For Backward starts, the light should be positioned so that swimmers don't have to turn their heads to look backwards.



# TAKE OFF JUDGE



The Starter and Referee may serve as relay take-off judges at the starting end of the pool.

The Starter should look:

First- at the departing swimmer's feet to leave the starting block

Next- the incoming swimmer's touch

Referees can provide additional guidance on properly judging relay take-offs.

WATCH FEET THEN LOOK DOWN FOR TOUCH



# *TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL STARTERS*



Work with the Referee and Clerk of Course to ensure a steady flow of swimmers

Speak in a conversational, but clear, tone. “Take Your Marks” should be said with the same emphasis as “Shut the Door”

Invite swimmers to swim, do not command them

When swimmers are stationary, give the starting signal. Stationary does not mean motionless

Do not attempt to “catch” swimmers on their starts

Benefit of the doubt always goes to the swimmer





# *ORDER OF FINISH*

While not required, It is recommended that you document order of finish for each race.  
This is a back-up for the timing/data system should something go wrong.

This is not a difficult task, but it may take some time to get used to doing it accurately. Simply write down the lane numbers of the swimmers in the order they finish (e.g. 3 4 1 6 5 2)

Write it directly onto your heat sheet in case the Data Table needs the information.





## *TIPS ON START POSITIONS*

- For the Forward start, feet can be anywhere on the block at “STEP UP” but after “TAKE YOUR MARKS” one foot must be at the front of the block
- For the Forward start, swimmers can be on the block, deck, or in the water. At least one hand must touch the wall when starting in the water.
- For Backstroke start, BOTH hands must be placed on the gutter or on the starting grips
- For Backstroke start, the toes must not be over the lip of the gutter before or after the start
- Before the start, you are responsible for the toes not being over the lip. After the start, the Stroke and Turn Judge is responsible.



# TIPS ON DIFFICULT HEATS

01

If one or more swimmers are slow to take their marks, or are otherwise unstable, say “STAND” or “RELAX” and allow the swimmers to regroup

03

If the heat is stood up a third time for the same problem, warn the individual swimmer if it is the same person, for example “lane 3, please...”

02

If the heat is stood up again for the same problem, issue a generic warning such as “Please respond promptly to my command and remain stationary for the start”

04

Additional problems with the same swimmer may result in a delay of Meet DQ



# *THE STARTER*



The majority of teams in the RSL use the Colorado Timing Infinity Starter System. Be sure to familiarize yourself with your team's starter before the first meet.

The Infinity connection panel has a battery life indicator LED. The LED will shine green when the battery is fully charged. It will turn yellow when the battery has 5-6 hours of use remaining. It is best to recharge the battery when the indicator turns yellow. The battery indicator will turn red when only 1-2 hours of battery power remain. While the Infinity is plugged in and charging, the LED flashes green, and turns solid green when charged. Be sure the Infinity is turned off while charging.

Your Infinity will not operate while plugged into AC power for charging. It is therefore important that you make sure the battery is fully charged before each meet.



# THE STARTER

To turn on your Infinity start system, flip the power switch to the On position.

To adjust the PA volume, turn on the Infinity, and adjust the volume knob on the connector panel. Test the volume level by speaking into the microphone. The volume control affects only the PA volume—start and recall tones always function at maximum volume.

The Infinity has one built-in speaker. At the start impulse, this speaker amplifies the start tone. One optional external speaker can be added. When using an external speaker, connect it to the External Speaker jack on the connector panel.

To use the starter's microphone for public address, press the push-to-talk switch located on the top left side of the microphone and speak into the grille on the front of the microphone. **YOU MUST HOLD THE MICROPHONE VERY CLOSE TO YOUR MOUTH.** You may want to bring wipes to clean in between meets/starters.

To start a race, hold down the push-to-talk switch and press the start button on the top left side of the microphone. Continue holding the push-to-talk button until you are sure you do not need to recall the heat.

To recall a false start, hold down the push-to-talk switch and hold down the start button a second time. The recall must be made within five (5) seconds of the start pulse.

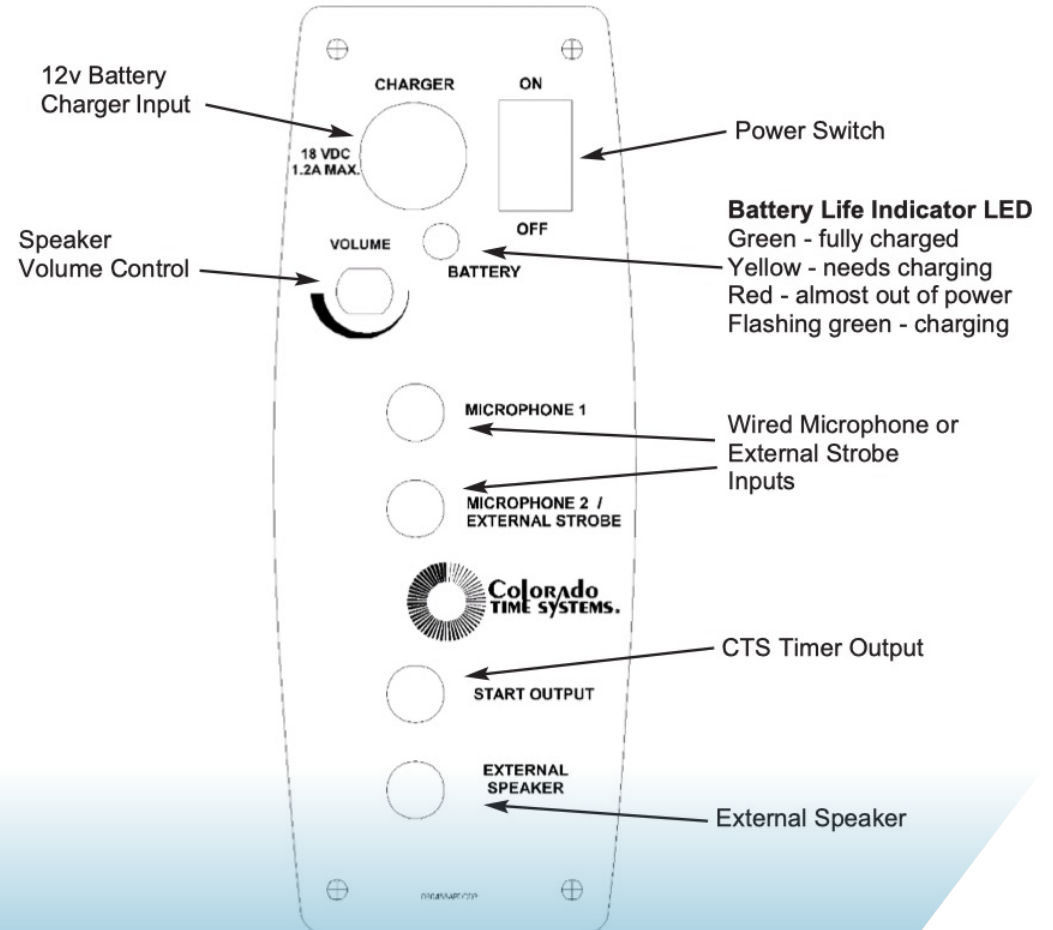


Figure B: Infinity Connection Panel



# *USING THE STARTER*





## TIPS FROM AN EXPERIENCED STARTER

### 1. Preparation.

Starter shall ensure starting device is charged and fully operational PRIOR to the meet day. It helps to have another spare microphone cord as they are usually the piece that fails during a meet.

A starter must know the sequence of events for the meet. Even though the Scorekeeper will provide the starter with a copy of the heat sheet (Events, Number of Heats and Swimmers in each heat), the starter will need to make sure the timers know when to switch from shallow to deep end of the pool in order to keep the meet running smoothly.

Print off a copy of the Starter Event list and have it laminated to keep with you. This will help you remember when to have the timers switch locations.

### 2. Actions During the Meet.

Starter is responsible for ensuring a fair start for all swimmers. A starter should speak clearly and slowly and adjust the microphone volume so as to have the clearest sound possible for the swimmers and officials - indoors, it sometimes helps to turn the volume down a bit. It helps to have a coworker stand on the other side of the pool and let you know about the sound prior to the meet.

Let the Head Timer do their job! Most meets have the starter yelling into the microphone asking each lane if they are ready, etc. That is the Head Timers job . The fastest and most efficient way to run a meet is to say, “Head timer, give me a thumbs-up when your timers are ready.” This way, they take ownership of their timers and the starter can focus on preparing for the next round of swimmers.

Younger Kids Need More Time. Summer swim is about having fun, making sure the kids (and swim parents...) have a good time at the meet while still following the rules. Don't expect a 5/6 year-old to obey and understand all commands given by the starter. Take more time with them. Many times, the younger kids are delayed or confused at the blocks, may be on the wrong lane, etc. Follow the rules, BUT, understand that this one race (the 25Y Freestyle for example) may be the only race this 5/6 year old is swimming and when they miss it—both the exhausted family working on the pool deck and the swimmer will be very upset. Make up the time with the older kids:)



# DOCUMENTS

## RSL STARTER PROTOCOL – CHEAT SHEET

### FORWARD STARTS

- REFEREE: Blows series of short whistles to alert timers/swimmers to get ready
- STARTER: Announces Event Number, Event Name and Heat Number**  
Subsequent Heats, announce only the Heat Number
- REFEREE: Blows long whistle which directs swimmers to step onto the blocks
- STARTER: "Step Up"**
- REFEREE: Turns heat over to Starter with an outstretched arm
- STARTER: "Take your Marks" – said conversationally even pitch**  
[BEEP] – given only after all swimmers are stationary

### BACKWARD STARTS

- REFEREE: Blows series of short whistles to alert timers/swimmers to get ready
- STARTER: Announces Event Number, Event Name and Heat Number**  
Subsequent Heats, announce only the Heat Number
- REFEREE: Blows long whistle which directs swimmers to enter the water
- STARTER: "Step In"**
- REFEREE: Blows long whistle, turns heat over to Starter with an outstretched arm
- STARTER: "Take your Marks" – said conversationally even pitch**  
[BEEP] – given only after all swimmers are stationary

### Look For:

- Forward start:
  - Swimmers must assume a stationary starting position
  - Swimmers must have one foot at the front of the block
  - In-water start: Swimmers must have one hand in contact with the wall
- Backward start:
  - Swimmers must assume a stationary starting position
  - Swimmers must NOT have toes over the lip of the gutter/edge of pool
  - Swimmers must have BOTH hands in contact with the wall/starting block grips
- False Start
  - Watch for movement after "take your marks" command is given
  - 1<sup>st</sup> False start is not a DQ
  - After confirming false start with Referee, recall the heat.

## Common Additional Starter Commands

- "Stand" - used when swimmers do not promptly assume a legal starting position
- "Step down" – used to avoid swimmers standing on the blocks for too long
- "Please respond promptly to this command" – used when swimmer is slow in assuming a starting position
- "Please hold your position motionless" – used to correct excessive motion
- "Your toes must be below the lip of the gutter/edge of the pool" – on backstroke starts
- "You must have at least one foot at the front of the block" – used to correct starting position if both feet are back
- "Lane \_\_\_\_, please \_\_\_\_" – used to correct the action of a single swimmer should only be used after the entire field has been corrected and the swimmer repeats the action

### Starter Meet Reminders:

- Night before: Charge timing system and print off all necessary paperwork (Order of finish and Relay Takeoff Slips)
- Meet day: arrive early to allow time for all procedures
- Set-up timing system and perform a test start. May also perform strobe check with timers once in place
- Check that starting blockers are properly/securely fastened
- Introduce yourself to Ref and discuss conduct of meet, Stroke and Turn judge placement, relay take-off positions, how many heats of each event, discuss any swimmers that need special accommodations (alternate starts)
- Keep track of order of finish for all events. Write down any false starts. Cross off any NS swims (athlete does not report to blocks). Document any combined heats. Document any articles of clothing or medical equipment.
- After completion of each set of 9-10 year old events, instruct the timers to switch to the deep end of the pool after they have finished recording their times (refer to Starter Event List).
- After completion of 15-18 events, instruct timers to switch to the shallow end of the pool after they have finished recording their times (refer to Starter Event List).
- Move starter to shallow end of the pool to start Event #65/66 - Medley Relay (starts off the wall in the shallow end)
- Move the starter back to the Deep End of the Pool to start the Graduated Relay, however, timers remain in place in the shallow end as the race starts in deep end (blocks) and ends in shallow end (wall).

## RSL Dual Meet Event List – Starter Cheat Sheet

Event	Age	Event
Timers at Deep end of the pool / Starter at Deep End		
1 / 2	12 & Under	Junior 100 Freestyle
3 / 4	13-18	Senior 100 Freestyle
5 / 6	8 & Under	100 Freestyle Relay
7 / 8	9 – 10	100 Freestyle Relay
9 / 10	11 – 12	100 Freestyle Relay
11 / 12	13 – 14	100 Freestyle Relay
13 / 14	15 - 18	100 Freestyle Relay
Move Timers to Shallow end of the pool / Starter at Deep End		
15 / 16	6 & Under	25 Freestyle
17 / 18	8 & Under	25 Freestyle
19 / 20	9 – 10	25 Freestyle
Move Timers to Deep end of the pool / Starter at Deep End		
21 / 22	11 – 12	50 Freestyle
23 / 24	13 – 14	50 Freestyle
25 / 26	15 – 18	50 Freestyle
Move Timers to Shallow end of the pool / Starter at Deep End		
27 / 28	8 & Under	25 Butterfly
29 / 30	9 – 10	25 Butterfly
Move Timers to Deep end of the pool / Starter at Deep End		
31 / 32	11 – 12	50 Butterfly
33 / 34	13 – 14	50 Butterfly
35 / 36	15 – 18	50 Butterfly
Move Timers to Shallow end of the pool / Starter at Deep End		
37 / 38	6 & Under	25 Backstroke
39 / 40	8 & Under	25 Backstroke
41 / 42	9 – 10	25 Backstroke
Move Timers to Deep end of the pool / Starter at Deep End		
43 / 44	11 – 12	50 Backstroke
45 / 46	13 – 14	50 Backstroke
47 / 48	15 – 18	50 Backstroke
Move Timers to Shallow end of the pool / Starter at Deep End		
49 / 50	8 & Under	25 Breaststroke
51 / 52	9 – 10	25 Breaststroke
Move Timers to Deep end of the pool / Starter at Deep End		
53 / 54	11 – 12	50 Breaststroke
55 / 56	13 – 14	50 Breaststroke
57 / 58	15 – 18	50 Breaststroke
Move Timers to Shallow end of the pool / Starter at Shallow End *Move starter*		
59 / 60	12 & Under	Junior 100 Individual Medley
61 / 62	13-18	Senior 100 Individual Medley
63 / 64	12 & Under	Junior 100 Individual Medley Relay
65 / 66	13-18	Senior 100 Individual Medley Relay
Timers stay at Shallow end of the pool / Starter at Deep End *Move Starter*		
67 / 68	All Ages	Graduated 125 Freestyle Relay



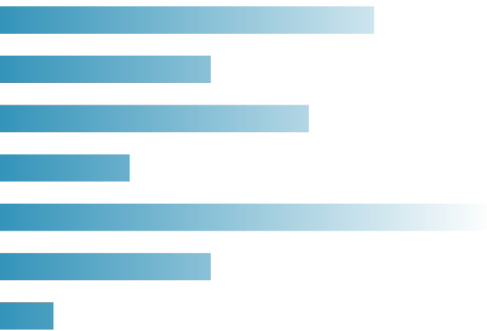


## Watch the US Swimming Starter Training Video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-0rZ10SyBk>



# WANT TO KNOW MORE?



Starters play a vital role towards a fair and equitable competition. Recognizing the importance of this position, Starters may want to review this 30 minute USA Swimming video.



*RSL*



*RULES*

RSL Rules are reviewed annually. Section 10.5 applies to the Starter.

Once updated they are posted on the RSL website here: <https://rsl.swimtopia.com/training>

You should download and PRINT off a copy of the Rules

It is expected that you have reviewed and are familiar with these rules.

It is STRONGLY encouraged to keep a copy of these rules in your starter clipboard.

You should also have a copy of the most recent USA Swimming rules as current USA Swimming rules and regulations apply exceptions noted in section 5. General Competition Rules and Conduct



# SEMI-AUTOMATIC TIMING DEVICES



Semi-automatic timing systems are now approved for use in the RSL. If your team is using one, you will need to plug the device into your starter and work with the data table to confirm the devices start prior to meet.

A semi-automatic timing system for swimming is activated automatically by the starting device and stopped manually at the finish by the timers.



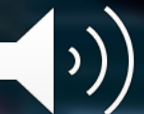
# *CONGRATULATIONS*

You have completed the RSL Annual Online Training Course for Starter.

Thank you for volunteering to help the RSL and for everything you do for your teams and your swimmers.

RSL Rules Section 10.5 defines the rules and responsibilities of the Starter. RSL Rules Section 10.8 defines the rules and responsibilities of the Relay Take Off Judge. Given any discrepancy between the RSL Rules and this document, the RSL Rules shall take precedence.

Suggestions for improvement to this course should be directed to: [rslofficialsinfo@gmail.com](mailto:rslofficialsinfo@gmail.com)



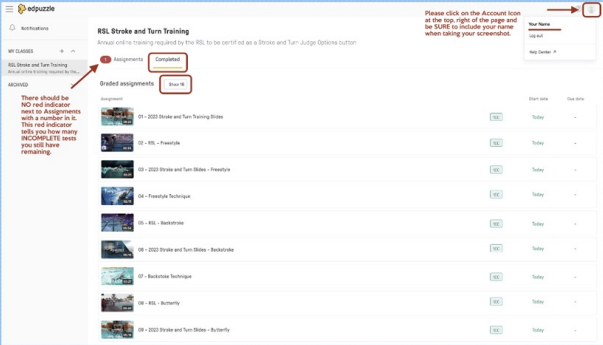
# FINAL STEPS

### Officials Certification Request

After completing RSL training, please complete and submit the Officials Training form to be considered for certification. Please note, submitting this form does NOT mean you are certified. It is a request to the RSL Officials Committee that you be considered. They will VERIFY your submitted information and then approve your request. You should check with your team's RSL Rep if you have any questions about your verification.

Before submitting this form, be sure you have your screenshots with all requested information showing.

**For EdPuzzle:**



**CLICK TO SUBMIT YOUR RSL OFFICIALS TRAINING VERIFICATION REQUEST**

After you have completed ALL assignments in the classroom, be sure to visit the RSL Website and complete the training verification request to be reviewed by the training committee. Closely follow the instructions for uploading the screenshot of all completed assignments. [RSL.swimtopia.com/training](https://RSL.swimtopia.com/training)

If you are training for multiple positions, you can wait and register for all at the same time. Any questions, please contact [rslofficialsinfo@gmail.com](mailto:rslofficialsinfo@gmail.com)

