



# Starter Training

UPDATED FOR THE 2023 SEASON

# USA Swimming Certification?

- ▶ If you are a USA Swimming Certified Starter (with current certification), you do not need to take this class
- ▶ Instead, contact [Christy@GRALva.com](mailto:Christy@GRALva.com)

# Agenda

- ▶ GRAL Handbook
  - ▶ Starter Description
  - ▶ Training and Recertification
  - ▶ Trainee requirements
- ▶ Main Responsibilities
- ▶ Equipment
- ▶ Types of Starts
- ▶ Calling the Starts
- ▶ Order of Finish
- ▶ False Starts, Delays & Misconduct
- ▶ Relay take offs

# GRAL HANDBOOK



# Section XIII of GRAL Handbook – Starter Description

- ▶ See USA Swimming Handbook for duties.
- ▶ The Starter is in control of the meet from the Referee's signal until a successful start is completed.
- ▶ There will be a certified Starter at each meet.
- ▶ Electronic Starters will be used at all GRAL meets.
- ▶ The visiting team shall bring their electronic starter to the meet in case of a malfunction with the home team's starter.
- ▶ Starters are required to have concussion training (either provided by the CDC or NFHS and linked on the GRAL website).

# Section XIII of the Handbook – Training and Recertification

- ▶ Training:
  - ▶ The Starter must complete the GRAL approved training course and pass the written test during the first year of service OR if certification is NOT continuously maintained.
  - ▶ New Starter shall walk one full meet (beginning half – either first or second – in observing the trained Starter, and final half – either first or second, the opposite of the beginning half – in acting as Starter with a trained Starter in observation) prior to completing the League training requirements.
  - ▶ A shadowing Starter must not be in his or her first year of certification.
- ▶ Recertification:
  - ▶ Work a minimum of two halves per year (or take the class again)
  - ▶ Pass GRAL written test every other year
  - ▶ If you lose certification, you do not need to walk again unless it has been more than 5 years since last certified

# Responsibilities of the Trainee

- ▶ Take this class from a certified GRAL trainer
- ▶ The test is now included in the class
- ▶ You can walk at either a home meet or an away meet
  - ▶ Walk (shadow a certified starter) one full meet
  - ▶ You can walk a first half at one meet and second half at another meet, but you cannot walk two first halves or two second halves
  - ▶ For your second half (or even earlier), you should be the one doing the actual starting with active feedback from the trained Starter and perhaps the Referee
- ▶ Print a "card" or even just a piece of paper as a record (see the website)
  - ▶ Get the back of your card initialed by the Referee
  - ▶ This is your responsibility
- ▶ Make sure your name is on the cover sheet
  - ▶ The cover sheets are posted on the GRAL Web site shortly after the meet. It is your responsibility to make sure you are on it. If not, contact [officials@gralva.com](mailto:officials@gralva.com) as soon as possible!

# When Walking a Position . . .

Model

Watch the experienced worker in the position. Ask questions when you can. (1<sup>st</sup> half)



Practice

Work the position yourself with the experienced worker monitoring. (2<sup>nd</sup> half)



Feedback

Get feedback (both positive and constructive) on how you did from the experienced worker. Then start the process again. (2<sup>nd</sup> half)



# GRAL Officials Facebook Group

- ▶ GRAL has a Facebook group for officials!
- ▶ All GRAL officials, trainees and coaches are invited and encouraged to participate
- ▶ Group discussion can include:
  - ▶ Questions on rules or rule interpretations
  - ▶ Share lessons learned and observations
- ▶ Intent is to promote consistency among GRAL officials
- ▶ Discussion on FB group does not constitute official guidance on rules
- ▶ To join:
  - ▶ Search GRAL Officials on Facebook and answer the questions about your role (starter) and club

# MAIN RESPONSIBILTIES



# As Starter . . .

- ▶ Your job is to get the swimmers on to the starting block (or in the water) and start each heat of each event

**Your main objective/purpose is to provide a fair start for all swimmers**

- ▶ As always, the benefit of any doubt should go to the swimmer
- ▶ Refer to the USA Swimming Rule Book
  - ▶ Can be found online or check with your team's Head Referee

# Key Things to Remember

- ▶ Announce the event and/or heat
- ▶ Check that:
  - ▶ All swimmers for the heat are on blocks (or in water)
  - ▶ Environment is safe and conducive to a sound start
  - ▶ Swimmers are prepared and ready to go (minimal wiggling)
- ▶ Ensure each swimmer has one foot at the front of the block (or one hand in contact with the wall for in-water starts)
- ▶ Say “take your marks” in a conversational tone, without cadence and without raising tone of your voice at end
- ▶ As soon as all swimmers have responded and locked in place, press the starting signal. Timing is the key to a good start.
- ▶ Recall if false start
  - ▶ Don't recall on second false start from same swimmer

# Starters Set the Pace of the Meet

- ▶ 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
- ▶ Use flyover starts for swimmers in non-backstroke events who are 9 and older to help make meets go faster

# Timers briefing

- ▶ At many pools, Referee will ask the Starter to brief timers before the meet begins.
- ▶ Content of timers briefing may include:
  - ▶ How to use stop watches (or other timing equipment)
  - ▶ Start watches on strobe light, not sound
  - ▶ Use of multiple watches (required by GRAL)
  - ▶ Interaction with head timer
  - ▶ How to observe the finish
  - ▶ Recording of times
  - ▶ Assisting swimmers and clerk of course
  - ▶ Other location-specific items
- ▶ There is a handout on the GRAL Web site to help you (or whoever is doing the briefing) with this. [www.gralva.com/officials](http://www.gralva.com/officials)

EQUIPMENT



# The Starter Mechanism

- ▶ Teams are responsible for having their own starter mechanisms
  - ▶ 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 a starter pistol and/or whistle in case both starter mechanisms fail at the meet



# TYPES OF STARTS



# In Water Starts

- ▶ GRAL requires certification by a coach of all swimmers before they can dive in the water at practice or at a meet
- ▶ All swimmers who are not certified to dive will be marked with a “X” on their shoulders on the side facing the Starter
- ▶ If you see a swimmer with a “X” on his/her shoulder who is attempting to dive in, stop the heat and request that s/he get in the water
- ▶ Anyone is allowed to start in the water, even if s/he is certified to dive
- ▶ In water starts must have one hand in contact with wall
- ▶ There may be special needs swimmers who will start in the water or have other accommodations; the Referee will alert you of these situations prior to the meet.

# Out of Water Starts

- ▶ Some swimmers may be certified to dive off the deck but not off the blocks - their shoulders will be marked with an “O” to indicate side certification
- ▶ If you see a swimmer with an “O” on his/her shoulder who is attempting to dive off the block, stop the heat and request that s/he dive from the deck
- ▶ Other swimmers may also choose to dive off the deck instead of the blocks

# Backstroke Starts

- ▶ All backstroke events will start in the water
- ▶ Ask swimmers from prior heat to exit the pool, and if necessary, remind new swimmers to enter the water
- ▶ Note that Medley Relays also begin with the backstroke
- ▶ In backstroke, the swimmer is not allowed to put his or her toes over the lip of the gutter or pool
  - ▶ If a Starter sees this, he should correct the swimmer
  - ▶ If a swimmer's toes go over the lip after the start, the S&T judges (not Starter) may suggest disqualification

# Flyover Starts

- ▶ With flyover starts, the swimmers from the previous heat stay in the water, and the swimmers in the next heat dive over
- ▶ It is important that the in-water swimmers stay close to the edge for safety reasons
- ▶ Timers can remind swimmers to stay in the water and coaches will discuss it at practice
- ▶ If there is a delay between events, you may ask swimmers to exit the water
- ▶ Do not use flyover starts during or following 8&U events
- ▶ Do not use flyover starts with backwards start (backstroke and medley relay)
- ▶ Do not use flyover starts during relays

SAFETY IS  
TOP  
CONCERN

# Order of Events

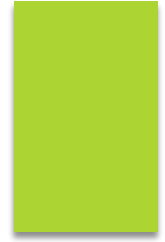
## Weeks 1, 3, and 5

Event #	Event Name	Event #	Event Name
1	Mixed 8 & Under 100 Freestyle Relay	28	Girls 8 & Under 25 Freestyle
2	Girls 9-10 100 Freestyle	29	Boys 8 & Under 25 Freestyle
3	Boys 9-10 100 Freestyle	30	Girls 13-14 100 Breaststroke
4	Girls 11-12 100 Freestyle	31	Boys 13-14 100 Breaststroke
5	Boys 11-12 100 Freestyle	32	Girls 15-18 100 Breaststroke
6	Girls 8 & Under 50 Freestyle	33	Boys 15-18 100 Breaststroke
7	Boys 8 & Under 50 Freestyle	34	Girls 8 & Under 25 Butterfly
8	Girls 13-14 100 Freestyle	35	Boys 8 & Under 25 Butterfly
9	Boys 13-14 100 Freestyle	36	Girls 9-10 50 Butterfly
10	Girls 15-18 100 Freestyle	37	Boys 9-10 50 Butterfly
11	Boys 15-18 100 Freestyle	38	Girls 11-12 50 Butterfly
12	Girls 8 & Under 25 Backstroke	39	Boys 11-12 50 Butterfly
13	Boys 8 & Under 25 Backstroke	40	Girls 13-14 50 Butterfly
14	Girls 9-10 50 Backstroke	41	Boys 13-14 50 Butterfly
15	Boys 9-10 50 Backstroke	42	Girls 15-18 50 Butterfly
16	Girls 11-12 50 Backstroke	43	Boys 15-18 50 Butterfly
17	Boys 11-12 50 Backstroke	44	Girls 9-10 50 Freestyle
18	Girls 13-14 50 Backstroke	45	Boys 9-10 50 Freestyle
19	Boys 13-14 50 Backstroke	46	Girls 11-12 50 Freestyle
20	Girls 15-18 50 Backstroke	47	Boys 11-12 50 Freestyle
21	Boys 15-18 50 Backstroke	48	Girls 13-14 50 Freestyle
22	Girls 8 & Under 25 Breaststroke	49	Boys 13-14 50 Freestyle
23	Boys 8 & Under 25 Breaststroke	50	Girls 15-18 50 Freestyle
24	Girls 9-10 50 Breaststroke	51	Boys 15-18 50 Freestyle
25	Boys 9-10 50 Breaststroke	52	Mixed 9-10 200 Freestyle Relay
26	Girls 11-12 50 Breaststroke	53	Mixed 11-12 200 Freestyle Relay
27	Boys 11-12 50 Breaststroke	54	Mixed 13-14 200 Freestyle Relay
		55	Mixed 15-18 200 Freestyle Relay

# Starts and Water Depth

- ▶ USA Swimming rules dictate that no swimmer shall dive into water that is less than four feet (4') deep
- ▶ Both ends are measured by the Referee or his/her designee at the beginning of the meet to ensure that they meet the standard
- ▶ Many pools will require that starts at the turn end will be from in the water
  - ▶ This only effects the 8&Under relays
  - ▶ Some pools may start the 8&unders at the other end (if both ends are 4') to keep the timers in the same place

# CALLING THE STARTS





# Conferring with the Referee

- ▶ Meet with the Referee prior to the start of the meet to see if there are any special-needs swimmers and also to see how the Ref plans to run the meet
- ▶ Some Refs will leave the start of each heat to the Starter and some will blow a whistle to indicate the start
  - ▶ Even if the Referee doesn't use a whistle start, the Starter should remain in contact with the Ref and start the heats at the Referee's discretion

# Working with Timers

- ▶ Before starting each heat, it is a good idea to make sure the timers are ready
  - ▶ If the timers are taking too long, the Referee may need to talk to the Head Timer so that it doesn't slow the meet.
  - ▶ Remember they have two watches so that they can keep the time on one watch and write it down after the start of the next heat/event
- ▶ The timers will need to see the light of the starter mechanism since they will start their watches on the blink of the light rather than the sound of the horn that starts the swimmers
  - ▶ Take note of where the light is when timers move. Can they still see it?

# Preparing for the Start

- ▶ Announce the event or heat
  - ▶ Announce the next event or heat as swimmers from prior heat approach the finish
- ▶ Use the meet program to determine how many swimmers should be at the block
- ▶ Use your judgment, and communication with Clerk, Timers and Referee to determine if you should wait for a swimmer or proceed with the heat
- ▶ Referee may direct you to wait or proceed

# The Meet Program

GRAL A

HY-TEK's MEET MANAGER 3.0 - 2:34 PM 4/2/2013 Page 1

2012\_W2\_Kings\_Charter\_at\_Pebble\_Creek - 6/20/2012

Meet Program

Event Number and Name

#2 Girls 9-10 100 SC Meter IM

Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
<b>Heat 1 of 2 Finals</b>				
1	DOISE, RAEGAN J	10	KC	
2	MACDOUGALL, CALLE	9	KC	
3	BENSON, WENDY C	9	KC	
4	HARDING, CARRIE R	10	PC	
5	DENI			
6	PRO			
7	EVANS			
8	HALEY, MADELINE R	9	KC	

Number of Heats

Heat 2 of 2 Finals

1	OWENS, RAYNE L	9	PC	
2	WILLIS, JOY K	10	KC	
3	PEPPER, JESSIE A	10	KC	
4	SHAVER, SAVANNAH	9	PC	
5	MISTER, AVA C	10	PC	
6	SANTELLI, SUMMER A	10	PC	
7	ULM, CHLOE E	9	PC	
8	MAAS, NICOLE E	10	KC	

#3 Boys 9-10 100 SC Meter IM

Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
<b>Heat 1 of 2 Finals</b>				
1				
2				
3	BURTON, NICK J	10	PC	
4	PATTERSON, SAM B	10	PC	

Heat 2 of 2 Finals

1	HAYDEN, RILEY B	12	PC	
2	WILLIAMS, MEG	12	KC	
3	BESSETTE, BRITT L	11	PC	
4	SEAY, EMILY M	12	KC	
5	DEWITT, KAITLYN F	11	KC	
6	ULM, MADISON A	12	PC	
7	BUTT, CASSIDY R	11	KC	
8	KISS, BEANIE	12	KC	

#5 Boys 11-12 100 SC Meter IM

Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
<b>Heat 1 of 2 Finals</b>				
1				
2				
3	KONECNY, RYAN J	11	KC	
4	WASSON, JACOB M	12	PC	
5	KUCHTA, J D D	11	KC	
6				
7				
8				

Heat 2 of 2 Finals

1	BOCK, JACOB H	12	PC	
2	HAYNES, JEFFREY G	11	KC	
3	WILLIS, MASON S	12	KC	
4	PENDLEBURY, JACK R	12	PC	
5	GRIFFITHS, RYAN D	12	PC	
6	HEMLINGER, KAMER	11	KC	
7	HART, COLBY	11	PC	

#7 Girls 11-12 100 SC Meter IM

Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
<b>Heat 1 of 1 Finals</b>				
1				
2	OWENS, SAM J	8	PC	
3	WHYTE, COLE H	8	KC	
4	SHEFFIELD, GABE S	8	PC	
5	OWENS, NICK T	8	PC	
6	OWENS, JAKE C	8	PC	
7				
8				

#8 Girls 13-14 100 SC Meter IM

Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
<b>Heat 1 of 1 Finals</b>				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

Note that these lanes will not have swimmers in this heat.

Heat 2 of 2 Finals

1	COAKE, MARINA N	14	KC	
2	MOTLEY, SARAH C	14	KC	
3	STILES, CASSIE L	14	KC	
4	SHEFFIELD, MOLLY S	13	PC	

# Announcing the event & heat

- ▶ First announce the event: “Event two, girls nine ten, one hundred meter Freestyle, heat one of two.”
  - ▶ Say the whole word; do not abbreviate “freestyle” to “free” or “individual medley” to “IM,” etc.
- ▶ Then announce the heat: “Heat one step up.” This lets the swimmers next in line know that their event is about to start.
- ▶ For subsequent heats . . . “Heat \_\_\_ step up”
  - ▶ It is important to say the correct heat number for each heat so that all officials know the correct heat number for timer sheets, DQ cards, etc.
- ▶ In backstroke, you should tell the swimmers to “Step in” when the last heat of the prior event has all exited the pool

# What to do during the start

- ▶ 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
- ▶ 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
  - ▶ Forward start: Swimmers must have one foot at the front of the block
  - ▶ Backward start: Swimmers must not have toes over the lip of the gutter
  - ▶ In-water start: Swimmers must have one hand in contact with the wall
- ▶ As soon as all swimmers are stationary, immediately sound the starting signal.

**The timing between “take your marks” and the starting signal is critical to a good start**

# The “Stand” Command

- ▶ After giving the “take your marks” command, you can stand the heat by calmly asking the heat to “Stand”
  - ▶ Use a calm voice to avoid starting the swimmers
  - ▶ The word “Relax” can also be used, but is typically reserved for situations where there will be a substantial delay
- ▶ When to give the “Stand” command:
  - ▶ If a swimmer does not respond to “take your marks” command
  - ▶ If a swimmer is wobbly, unprepared, or does not assume a legal starting position
  - ▶ If there is a loud noise, flash, or other distraction that might cause an unfair start
  - ▶ Equipment malfunction

# 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 (e.g. “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



# ORDER OF FINISH



# Order of Finish

- ▶ GRAL recommends that order of finish be recorded for each race
- ▶ The Referee may request that the Starter record the order of finish (may be assigned to Starter, a non-working Strokes & Turns Judge, or Head Timer)
- ▶ It may take some time and practice to get used to balancing between recording order of finish and starting the next heat/race in a timely manner
- ▶ 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 program in case the Computer Rep or Head Table Worker needs the information

FALSE STARTS



# False Starts

- ▶ A false start occurs when a swimmer is set for the start then begins their starting motion prior to the sound of the starting signal.
- ▶ Not all movements result in a false start - only if the swimmer was stationary and then begins their starting motion prior to starting signal
- ▶ A false start can occur whether or not the swimmer enters the water
- ▶ False starts must be called by the Starter and confirmed by the Referee. Only the referee may disqualify a swimmer.
- ▶ GRAL allows one false start per swimmer (per heat) without disqualification. This is different from USA Swimming rules.
  - ▶ Upon the second false start from the same swimmer (observed by both the Starter and Referee), the Referee will write the card to disqualify the swimmer

# Scenario # 1

**You have given the “take your marks” command but have not pressed the starting signal**

- ▶ If a swimmer moves forward but does not leave the blocks:
  - ▶ Stand and restart the heat. No false start is assessed.
- ▶ If one or more swimmers leave the blocks:
  - ▶ Stand the heat
  - ▶ Verbally recall the swimmer
  - ▶ Use the machine recall and deploy recall rope (if necessary)
  - ▶ Consult with referee to determine if false start should be assessed

# Scenario #1 (cont.)

**You have given the “take your marks” command and have not pressed the starting signal**

- ▶ Swimmers are responsible for their own starts
  - ▶ If multiple swimmers leave the blocks, they should each be assessed a false start
- ▶ Exception: if a swimmer leaves the blocks in response to “Stand” command, or some other distraction, no false start should be assessed

## Scenario #2

**You observe forward motion, or a swimmer leaves the blocks, but you cannot avoid pressing the starting signal**

- ▶ Use machine recall and deploy recall rope (if needed) to recall the heat
- ▶ Consult with referee to determine if a false start should be assessed
- ▶ If false start is assessed, notify the swimmer and restart the heat

# Scenario #3

## Second false start from same swimmer in same heat

- ▶ If you have not started the heat:
  - ▶ Stand the heat
  - ▶ Consult with referee to determine if a false start should be assessed
  - ▶ If false start is assessed, referee will write DQ card and dismiss the swimmer from the heat
  
- ▶ If you have started the heat:
  - ▶ Do not recall the heat
  - ▶ Consult with referee to determine if a false start should be assessed
  - ▶ If a false start is assessed, referee will write DQ card



# Using the recall command

- ▶ Use the recall command following a false start or any other condition that results in unfair start:
  - ▶ Equipment malfunction
  - ▶ Starter error
  - ▶ Environmental distraction
  - ▶ Recall a heat upon direction from the Referee
- ▶ In order to use the machine recall:
  - ▶ The recall command will automatically signal if you hit the start button a second time while still holding the talk button. It is good practice to continue holding the start button until you are certain you will not recall the heat
- ▶ The starting signal will sound over and over
- ▶ Many swimmers (especially younger ones) will not respond to a recall command, so be ready to deploy the recall rope
- ▶ Referee may decide to delay a recalled heat so swimmers can rest

# RELAY TAKEOFFS



# Relay Takeoffs and Dual Confirmation

- ▶ A Referee may ask the starter to assist with dual confirmation of relay takeoffs
- ▶ The proper way to judge a relay take-off is to confirm that the swimmer on the block has left the block, **then shift your focus down** to the arriving swimmer to see if s/he has touched the wall (i.e. feet then touch)
  - ▶ If s/he has not, then mark as an early takeoff (but do not raise your hand); otherwise mark as a legal takeoff
  - ▶ You will be asked at the end of the relay events if you observed any early take-offs. If you and the other observer (Referee, or Strokes & Turns Judge) both observed the same early take-off, the other observer will write the card and ask that you sign it as well.

# Dual Confirmation Communication

- ▶ When using the dual confirmation method, you may be given a slip of paper that has the event, heat, lane, and swimmer (1-4) information
- ▶ Simply place an “X” in the correct square if you see an early takeoff and an “O” if the takeoff is legal
  - ▶ Always write something so that no one can tell that it was illegal just because they see you write
- ▶ This information will be compared with that of the other judge
- ▶ Both observers must observe the same early take-off to result in a disqualification

# QUESTIONS?

- ▶ Ask on the Facebook group
- ▶ Email [officials@gralva.com](mailto:officials@gralva.com)