



STROKE AND TURN CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Minimum requirements:

Seven full sessions at OSI sanctioned meets working closely with an OSI S&T official. None of these sessions may be all freestyle events.

These sessions must be at a minimum of three different meets.

Three sessions must include judging relay exchanges.

Two sessions must include A swimmers, two must include B swimmers, and two must include C swimmers.

Two sessions must include 10 and under swimmers, and two must include 13 and over swimmers.

Must work with at least five different OSI certified officials.

Stage 1: Introduction Clinic

The trainee is introduced to the philosophy of officiating and a summary of rules and procedures. The presentation of video or pool observation time is optional. Swimming registration fees must be paid and credentials received before trainee can work on deck.

Stage 2: On Deck Orientation (Meet Sessions 1-2)

Training must begin within 90 days of attendance of the introductory clinic.

Trainee does a deck tour with Referee, or designee, observing all positions (including Electronic Timing) and general workings of meet. This can occur any time during the first two meet sessions.

Trainee works with certified trainer during first and/or second session. Trainee makes no calls while observing swims. Trainer introduces range of skills as trainee develops knowledge, especially regarding procedures and rules. If a trainer is not available, the trainee may work in position with a certified S&T official for one of these two sessions.

Stage 3: Guided Practice (Meet Sessions 3-5)

Trainee works with a certified S&T official if a trainer is not available. Trainee progressively takes on responsibility. Trainee may begin making calls and completing DQ slips as the official deems appropriate (official signature or initials still required). The certified official must also see the infraction for the call to be made. The trainee should self-assess performance on an on-going basis.

At the end of Stage 3, the trainee discusses progress to date with Deck Mentor who, if warranted, signs the training log verifying that the trainee is ready to progress to Stage 4. If trainee is not ready to progress, one or more meet sessions are recommended.

Stage 4: Evaluation (Meet Sessions 6-7)

Trainee works two sessions independently, each alongside a different trainer at an A-B-C, B-C or C meet. Each trainer must independently verify the trainee is ready for final test. Certification record is sent to Area Chair. Trainee takes final certification test online after receiving approval from the Area Officials Chair.



Stroke and Turn Clinic Guide

Well-run meets and good competitive results are directly related to good officiating. Thorough knowledge of the rules, coupled with fair and consistent application of them, make a good official. To confidently work on deck, a Stroke & Turn judge must study the rules, attend training sessions, and work regularly at meets.

Officials should keep in mind that swimmers have worked hard to achieve their successes and deserve a fair and equitable competition. Officials must apply the rules at all times, using common sense and good judgment. The rules of swimming are intended to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition. Officials must work hard to fully understand the rules and their responsibilities in applying them.

To function properly as an official, remember:

- The swimmer ALWAYS gets the benefit of doubt
- One set of rules applies to all swimmers
- The swimmer ALWAYS gets the benefit of doubt
- Officials do not judge style; ugly is not illegal
- The swimmer ALWAYS gets the benefit of doubt

An official, regardless of their position or certification, demonstrates impartiality and professionalism on deck through our uniform, posture, facial expressions, interaction on deck with others, and language.

Being an Official

- Take officiating seriously and work at it. Competitors have a right to expect officials to know the rules and interpret them correctly, fairly and courteously
- Call violations as seen. Don't guess or anticipate
- Wear the uniform – White shirt with navy blue shorts, pants or skirt. Jeans are not appropriate. White shoes and socks. The shirt may have a small logo or design, but should not be covering the front or back of shirt.
- Display your credentials. In our LSC this usually consists of your certification and your USA swimming registration.
- Sign in to officiate and attend the officials briefing prior to the meet to receive instructions and assignments.
- You will receive a heat sheet at the briefing where you may also pick up DQ slips.
- You should make sure to bring a writing instrument and a clipboard if desired. Make sure you have your training log.
- While on duty, demonstrate impartiality; no visible cheering for a particular swimmer or team.
- Do not use hand motions to describe infractions. Explain the infraction to the best of your ability using "rule book language".
- Position yourself so that you can safely observe the swimmers in your jurisdiction. This may involve asking swimmers, parents, or coaches to move. Always engage others in a professional polite manner.
- Scan between all of your lanes as to not over scrutinize one swimmer. This applies even if you have empty lanes in your jurisdiction.
- Be a team player. Consider your officiating team's needs as well as your own. Make sure you are back on deck a few minutes before your break time ends as to make sure the rotation stays on track.
- Do not discuss calls or other officials publicly. If you have an issue with another official, contact the referee and explain your situation privately.
- If a parent or coach approaches you regarding a call, refer the parent to their coach and the coach to the referee. If needed, the referee will come to you for clarification.



Responsibilities

Stroke Judge – The Stroke Judge ensures that the rules relating to the style of swimming designated for the event are being observed. At the start the stroke judge is responsible for observing the swimmers at the 15meter mark for all strokes except breaststroke. After the start, the judge walks the sides of the pool, preferable abreast of swimmers during all strokes except freestyle. The breaststroke and butterfly are best judged by walking slightly behind the swimmers. Judges should walk at a pace that is sufficient to stay with the swimmers. If the field spreads out, the stroke judge should maintain a position slightly ahead of the trailing swimmers while maintaining contact with the lead swimmer(s). If there are two stroke judges working one side of the pool (usually long course), a “lead-lag” observation pattern could be utilized as the field spreads out; i.e. the leading stroke judge takes jurisdiction over the faster swimmer(s) while the following stroke judge takes jurisdiction over the slower swimmer(s). After each turn, the stroke judges switch jurisdictions as they begin to walk in the opposite direction. Teamwork and coordination are important between the two judges to ensure that all of the swimmers are observed on a fair and equitable basis.

Turn Judge – Ensure that when turning or finishing the swimmer complies with the turning and finishing rules applicable to the stroke used. The turn judges are positioned at either end of the pool. Turns and finishes are best judged from the ends of the pool, slightly ahead of, but not directly over, the swimmer. The one exception to this occurs when judging backstroke turns and finishes, when the judge should stand directly over the lane, if possible. If a judge must observe more than one lane the official will have to adjust his position to best observe all assigned lanes. A turn judge at the starting end of the pool must position himself so he can step forward quickly to observe the first stroke and kick in the breaststroke, butterfly or individual medley events as soon as the starting signal is given and the swimmers leave the block. He will also position himself at the side of the pool to observe that the toes of the swimmer do not come over the top of the gutter after the starting signal is given. The stroke and turn judges responsibilities begin after the start. Any action prior to the start is the Starter’s responsibility, or in the case of relay take-offs, it may be the Relay take-off Judges responsibility.

Relay Exchange Judging – Relay Take-Off Judges ensures that a relay swimmer does not leave the starting platform before the preceding swimmer has touched the end of the pool. There are two positions for a Relay Take-off Judge. One stands immediately beside the starting block (the LANE judge) and looks out toward the side of the pool, while the other stands on the side of the pool and looks inward. In our LSC, this is referred to as “Inside Out”. Another configuration is one judge stands on either side of the pool and watches all of the lanes. This is commonly referred to as “Across the Board”.

- Keep your eyes focused on the toes of the swimmer on the blocks or deck until the toes leave, then immediately shift your vision to the hand(s) of the incoming swimmer.
- Early exchanges require dual confirmation. Do not raise your hand if an early exchange is observed. Do not discuss your observations with any other judge. If the exchange is legal, mark the swimmer number in the appropriate lane with a circle. If the exchange is early, mark the swimmer number with an X. The referee will compare the exchange slips and if there is a confirmed early exchange, will write up the DQ slip and bring to you for signature.

Technical Rules – The rules are in the USA Swimming Rule Book. As mentioned above, when explaining an infraction, use the language as much as possible. See rules.

Disqualifications applicable to all strokes:

- Did not finish
- Walking on or pushing off the bottom
- Pulling on lane lines
- Not touching the wall at each turn
- Interfering with another swimmer
- Unsportsmanlike conduct
- False Start



Reporting Violations – If you observe an infraction, immediately raise your hand overhead. This allows other officials as well as coaches a chance to see that there is a possible disqualification. If you do not raise your hand, there can be no disqualification. If you play the swim back in your mind and decide that what you saw wasn't what you originally called, you don't write the slip. On your heat sheet, prior to writing the DQ slip, make a note to yourself of the infraction. Indicate the heat and lane (Circling or marking an X on the lane number is a good indicator), and in your own shorthand, write what the infraction was. Then complete the DQ slip. Sign it and turn it in to the referee or if that is not possible, take it to the start area. Be prepared to accurately answer three questions from the referee or chief judge. "What was your position?", "What did you see?" and "What rule was broken?" Think carefully and refer back to your notes on your heat sheet. Do not take it personally if your DQ is overturned, you did your job and the Referee must to his/her job as well.

Disqualifications:

- Can only be made by the official within whose jurisdiction the infraction has been committed
- Must be based upon personal observation
- Swimmer must receive benefit of doubt
- Opinion of others must be disregarded
- Official must understand clearly what violation occurred and must be certain of what was seen
- Cannot be made if the hand is not raised

Jurisdiction – An official can only make a call within his/her jurisdiction. The jurisdiction will be defined by the referee. If you see an infraction in a lane that is not in your jurisdiction, you do not have authority to disqualify the swimmer.

Stroke and Turn Officiating: Mental Traps

It is not very difficult to acquire the technical knowledge required to judge the strokes and turns or finishes. A judge will gain that knowledge and become proficient with practice. The challenge is to apply that knowledge professionally. Whether we recognize it or not, as human beings, we are influenced by a wide variety of factors when we try to make judgments. We have to be careful not to apply human reason in such a way that it causes us to make poor or sloppy judgments. Some examples of the "Mental Traps" that have surfaced in S&T officiating over the years are:

- **Advantage vs Disadvantage** – The question of whether a swimmer's advantage/disadvantage should influence the official judgment of stroke, turn and finish violations has been the subject of much debate. Some authorities have used the term "unfair advantage" in decisions relating to specific situations. This has also caused considerable apprehension and/or misinterpretation about the intent of this phrase. There is no intent that this concept be applied broadly to all situations, thus justifying inaction by officials in not calling violations such as missed turns, touches etc., because no advantage was gained. This type of negative interpretation only leads to sloppy officiating and gives an official an excuse for inadequate performance. A violation of the rules should be noted and the competitor disqualified whether an advantage is gained or not.
- **The Twice Theory** – Some judges feel they should wait until an infraction happens more than once before they call it. They rationalize this position in all sorts of ways ("That confirms that it wasn't a simple mistake by the swimmer", "That clears up any doubt", etc.). These are crutches and excuses for uncertain and poor officiating. There is no basis for waiting to see an infraction happen twice. The official must simply be certain of what he saw and make the call as soon as it is observed. If there is any doubt about the violation, don't make the call! But by the same token, don't concentrate on that one swimmer to see if he commits the suspected infraction again. Continue to give all the competitors in your jurisdiction uniform coverage.
- **Don't Infer** – Succinctly put, this simple means: you can only call what you see, Not what you deduce. You must actually see the swimmer not touch the wall with his right hand on the turn, not assume he missed it because by the time you looked, he was touching the wall with his left hand and already into his turn. You must actually see the breaststroker take the second arm pull and be past the widest part of that second stroke before his head surfaces, not assume that it took two pulls to get that far out in the pool by the time you saw his head surface. Another way of putting this, don't look for reasons to disqualify. If you see the infraction and it is clear, report it, but if you are uncertain, remember, the benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer.



Officiating can be an enjoyable experience. It is not designed to win popularity contests; however, the self-satisfaction of having participated and having done a good job is very rewarding. Unfortunately, sloppy and uninformed officials rarely recognize their inadequacies, but fellow officials, coaches and swimmers do. Consequently, all officials must continually reassess their own performances. This can best be done by regularly reviewing the rules and training material and by attending retraining sessions.

The new or inexperienced official often asks, "How long will it take me to become a good S&T judge?" Obviously, it depends upon the individual, but it won't happen overnight or without effort. Knowing the rules and attending training sessions are very important, but the experience gained by working meets is the only real teacher. Only experience can build the confidence the S & T judge requires before his or her performance becomes automatic. Even then, it is essential that the judge reviews the rules and regularly attends retraining sessions.

Philosophy of Officiating

As officials, we help conduct swim meets so that fair and equitable conditions of competition are maintained and uniformity in the sport is promoted so that no swimmer has an unfair advantage over another.

One set of rules applies to all swimmers. The term "gray area" refers to how strictly a particular judge interprets and applies the rules.

The swimmer always gets the benefit of the doubt. IF *you think* you see something, you should not raise your hand. IF *you know* you saw something, your hand should go up with confidence.

We do not judge style; "ugly is not illegal".

Officials demonstrate impartiality and professionalism on deck through uniform, posture, facial expressions, interactions with others on deck, and language.

When you go out onto the deck you want to be recognized by the coaches, athletes and spectators, as a consummate professional official; you want them to respect you and understand whatever you do it is in the interest of the athlete and that you are considered a professional and will treat everyone the same.

You need to be professional in your actions, your words, and your appearance.

The success of every meet depends on the official's integrity, knowledge, concern and regard for the competitive interest of the swimmer.



The Alphabet of Officiating:

The rules of any sport are designed to be applied by officials and it is no less so in our sport of swimming. In our venue, an infraction of the rules can eliminate an athlete from the competition, a rarity in athletic events. There is no penalty box or points deduction, but rather elimination. With such an awesome responsibility we may rightly ask – “What makes a good official?”

What makes a good official is knowledge of the rules and their intent. Knowledge of the rules builds an appreciation for them. The rules of swimming are designed to provide fair conditions of competition for all. Our rules codify the principle that “no swimmer shall obtain an unfair advantage over another.” The rules must be interpreted with ALL the swimmers in mind. The only acceptable officiating philosophy then must be to conduct any and all swim meets according to the written rules that everyone has had a chance to see, to know, and to understand prior to a meet. We cannot suspend any rule that we do not like. Our legislative process is designed to allow for democratic dissent by proposing for adoption at each USAS convention changes to our code, but once adopted we must live by those written rules. A good official must understand the philosophy and intent of the rule. There are many fine rules-people who can’t officiate, but there aren’t any fine officials who don’t understand the rules.

Officiating to some is the ability to “run the show”. A good official is often perceived as one who gets things done. You know the type; the referee or chief judge who is always running here and there to solve some problem during a meet. It may be that the truly good official is the one who is proactive rather than reactive. The official who considers in advance where a problem might occur and

plans to solve that eventuality before it occurs may be a more valuable ally than the official who runs to the store to buy the watches for the timers after the sound of the gun.

A good official arrives early for pre-meet briefings and coaches meetings. The good official has established the lines of verbal and visual communication around the pool before the events. During each heat the good official is alert to everything going on around oneself.

The dividing line between swimmer, coach and official is how differently each looks at the fairness of a competition:

A Swimmer-wants a fair start and knowledgeable stroke and turn judges.

A Coach -wants to project outcomes and doesn’t want an official to determine that outcome.

An Official -doesn’t care who wins, he just care that the race is swum fairly and within the rules.

When a volunteer enters the pool deck an aura of professionalism must also enter with him/her. The approved officiating uniform of the day must be clean and pressed the deck shoes must be polished and the whistle shiny. Becoming a professional volunteer swim official doesn’t just happen. It takes effort, ability, study and diligence. The key to success is the mind set that “*I am a good official.*”

Many suggest that the good official is the one who is diligent in his/her efforts to provide the athlete, coach and other volunteers with a professionally officiated contest. The swim official who is the professional is the one:

- who considers it a privilege not an obligation to officiate.
- who is consistent and provides a uniform interpretation and application of the rules in all situations.
- who has a protective rather than a punitive attitude toward enforcement of the rules.
- who put forth maximum effort before, during and after the meet.
- who has a strong working knowledge of the rules.
- who focuses on observation not expectation, anticipation, nor preference.
- who listens.
- who is honest enough to admit an error in judgment.
- who knows his intention is right and his attention was correctly focused.
- who doesn’t get hung up on worst case scenarios.
- who avoids adversarial relationships.
- who doesn’t make officiating a contest between the competitor and the officials,
- who doesn’t project probable outcomes, then makes a decision,
- who makes sure a swimmer or coach is informed of an infraction,
- who is physically fit and has a proper professional appearance.
- who provides a safe and fair competition for all.
- who acts in the spirit of good sportsmanship.
- who finds it rewarding to serve.
- who maintain his/her dignity.
- who recognizes merit in another’s point of view.
- who renders timely decisions,
- who is impartial,
- who has the courage to make a call as they observe,
- who practices critical self-evaluation
- who has respect for all those working to make a swim meet a great experience for young people