

1. Description

Introduce prospective USA Swimming stroke and turn officials to the fundamental aspects of officiating swimming and provide a platform of classroom training to these candidates.

2. Goals

To educate prospective USA Swimming stroke and turn officials about the philosophies behind and responsibilities of officiating swimming, the technical rules of swimming, and the subsequent steps necessary to continue training and pursue certification. These areas include:

- A. Understanding the role of officials at swimming competitions
- B. Understanding the philosophies behind officiating swimming
- C. Understanding one's role within the officiating team and within the context of the meet as a whole
- D. Dressing and behaving in a professional manner
- E. Understanding and correctly applying the technical rules of USA Swimming
- F. Accurately observing and reporting infractions of the technical rules
- G. Understanding all necessary requirements for certification

3. Prerequisites for Clinic Instructor

The clinic instructor should be an official that has significant experience officiating at the LSC level. Ideally, this person should have experience as a Meet Referee at the LSC level.

4. Prerequisites for Clinic Attendees

Attendees should be at least eighteen (18) years of age by the time of certification, but need not necessarily be eighteen (18) years of age to begin the training process. All candidates should have an interest in becoming a certified official of USA Swimming.

5. Materials for Students

- A. USA Swimming Stroke Briefing Document (most current version)
- B. "The Professional Stroke and Turn Official" document (most current version)
- C. Handout of pages 2-8 of this clinic manual (distribute at conclusion of clinic)

6. Optional Materials for Instructors

- A. Computer
- B. Projector or Computer-to-TV Capabilities
- C. Supplementary PowerPoint
- D. USA Swimming Stroke and Turn Training Videos
- E. USA Swimming Rulebook
- F. Student Materials

Clinic Instruction Plan

Focus Area	Time
Introduction	5 minutes
Philosophy of Officiating	20 minutes
Expectations and Professional Conduct	15 minutes
Introduction to and Discussion of Technical Rules, Presentation of Training Videos	40 minutes
Working a Meet	15 minutes
Pursuing Certification	15 minutes
Questions	10 minutes
Total Time	2 hours

I. Introduction (5 minutes)

- A. Introduce self and any co-instructors
- B. Welcome all participants and thank them for their interest in becoming a certified USA Swimming official
- C. Provide overview of clinic structure (refer to instruction plan above)
- D. Encourage participants to be engaged and ask questions as necessary—we want this to be an educational and beneficial experience for all participants

II. Philosophy of Officiating (20 minutes)

- A. A Required Part of Sanctioned Competition
 1. Meets are *sanctioned* by the Local Swimming Committee (LSC) and by the National Governing Body (NGB) of swimming, USA Swimming (USA-S). Swimmers' times are only official and valid at sanctioned meets. Sanctioned meets must be conducted according to USA Swimming Rules.
 2. USA Swimming Rules require a *minimum* of a referee, administrative official, starter, and at least two stroke and turn judges. Meets run far more optimally and swimmers are benefitted by more fair competition when more than the minimum number of officials are present.
 3. Stroke and turn judge is the entry-level officiating position and will be the focus of this clinic.
- B. Goal: Ensure Fair Competition for All Swimmers
 1. Officials are necessary to ensure that all swimmers have a fair competitive experience.

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2. The *rules* are the basis of all that officials do; it is the responsibility of the stroke and turn judge to ensure that all swimmers are competing within the rules.
 - a. Officials are *not* coaches, and therefore should not be providing any instruction to swimmers. Officials observe disqualifications; coaches help the swimmers prevent them in future swims.
 - b. There will be numerous cases, particularly with younger swimmers, where a swimmer's stroke may appear to be very "ugly" but falls within the rules. If the swimmer is swimming legally, the swimmer is swimming legally.
 - c. The rules allow for a number of possibilities for a variety of legal variations of the strokes to be performed. It is the role of the *stroke and turn judge* to utilize his or her judgment to determine whether or not a swimmer is competing within the rules of the stroke.
3. Stroke and turn judges are observers, not inspectors
 - a. It is the role of the stroke and turn judge to observe the swimmers in his or her jurisdiction, and report an infraction if he or she *observes* something outside of the rules.
 - b. The official should NOT be inspecting, scrutinizing, or criticizing the swimmers' strokes.
 - c. Judge all lanes in the jurisdiction using an equal amount of observation time, i.e. when judging four lanes spend 25% of the observation time on each lane.
4. Observation should be consistent for all rules and all swimmers
 - a. The swim of a six year old should be observed in the same way of that of a sixteen year old. Swim meets are a learning experience, and, if a swimmer is disqualified, he or she will eventually learn to perform the stroke legally. No swimmer should be held to a lower or higher standard because of his or her age.
 - b. All rules should be considered in observation, none more than others. There is no one rule that is more or less important than any of the others. All rules are thoroughly vetted nationally and internationally; in no case should one's "opinion" of a rule or thought that violation of a particular rule doesn't offer the swimmer a "competitive advantage" play any role in one's observation of the strokes.
 - c. The team of a swimmer and the official's personal relation to the swimmer (even if it is the official's own child!) should not play any role in the observation of the swimmer.

C. Principles of Observation

1. Do not infer or extrapolate.
 - a. Officials must specifically, personally, observe an infraction in order to report it.

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- b. For example, in order to call a one-hand touch in the butterfly or breaststroke, the official must observe one hand *NOT* touch (as opposed to simply observing only one hand touch).
2. The swimmer **ALWAYS** gets the benefit of the doubt.
 - a. If there is **ANY** doubt or uncertainty as to whether or not an infraction was committed by a swimmer, do not report the infraction.
 - b. An official may withdraw a call at **ANY** time if the official later doubts his or her call.

III. Expectations and Professional Conduct (15 minutes)

A. Teamwork

1. The officiating team
 - a. The Meet Referee is in charge and has final say over all officiating matters and matters regarding the conduct of the meet. At many local meets, this person will also be the Deck Referee, and will be conducting the officials' briefings.
 - b. At larger meets and at meets where enough officials are present, Chief Judges may also be utilized. Chief Judges are the primary "supervision" of stroke and turn judges and may conduct officials meetings.
 - c. Starters and administrative official are other required officiating positions at all meets.
2. Being a team player
 - a. Cooperate with and respect all people at all times.
 - b. Officials must accept assignment from the leadership team without complaint and perform it to the best of their abilities, even if it is not their desired assignment.
 - c. Answer any questions from the Chief Judges or Referees honestly and with as much detail as possible.
 - d. If a relief rotation is set-up, adhere to the rotation and try not to return late. Discuss any needed breaks with a Referee or Chief Judge.
 - e. Ask the Referee or Chief Judges questions for clarification if necessary.

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- B. Uniform and Self-Presentation (be sure to adapt to the needs of the LSC)
1. It is essential that all officials are professionally and comfortably dressed. Review the dress code that is in place for the LSC. Typically:
 - a. Khaki or navy (depending on LSC) pants or appropriate-length shorts or skirt
 - b. White polo shirt, tucked in
 - c. Belt
 - d. Primarily white tennis shoes
 - e. White socks
 - f. Credential and/or nametag
 2. Stand up straight when on deck, and, if sitting is involved, sit up straight.
 3. When officials present themselves professionally, it casts a positive image of the officiating team to coaches, officials, and spectators. (“If they look like they know what they’re doing, they must know what they’re doing!”)
- C. Conduct
1. An official must conduct him or herself professionally from the moment he or she arrives at the venue to the moment he or she leaves. These standards include:
 - a. Maintain a positive attitude at all times.
 - b. Give your undivided attention to your responsibilities at hand. Do not use a cell phone when on deck (do so when off-duty in a designated break area if necessary).
 - c. Try not to cheer for or coach the swimmers, nor criticize a swimmer or coach while on deck.
 - d. Officials must try to control their emotions on deck. No matter how ugly, illegally, or outright ridiculous a swimmer may be doing something in the water, avoid laughing.
 - e. Never discuss a disqualification with a parent or another swimmer or coach. If approached by a coach or swimmer, refer him or her to the Meet Referee or Deck Referee. Do not discuss disqualifications with other officials while on deck; only do so in designated officials’ areas when asked to by a Chief Judge or Referee (i.e. sharing an example from a session for the educational benefit of other officials).
 - f. Enjoy the meet and the camaraderie with your fellow officials!
 2. Admit mistakes.
 - a. We all make mistakes – and learn from them. Don’t be embarrassed to admit that.

D. Work Requirements

1. A minimum number of sessions is required in order to maintain certification.
2. Work meets outside of your swimmer's club! You will meet more fellow officials, have the opportunity to learn from more Referees and mentors, and the help is welcomed and needed.

IV. Introduction to and Discussion of Technical Rules, Presentation of Training Videos (40 minutes)

- A. Encourage all officials to read and become familiar with the USA Swimming Rulebook.
- B. Highlight key definitions pertaining to officiating as a stroke and turn judge.
 1. Arm—That part of the body that extends from the shoulder to the wrist
 2. Body—The torso, including the shoulders and hips
 3. Finish—The instant that a swimmer touches the wall at the end of the prescribed distance
 4. Horizontal—Parallel to the surface of the water
 5. May—Permissive, not mandatory
 6. On the Back—Position of the body when the shoulders are at or past vertical towards the back
 7. On the Breast—Position of the body when the shoulders are at or past vertical towards the breast
 8. Propulsive—Having the power to propel
 9. Scissor Kick—Use of the top of the instep of one foot and the bottom of the other foot in the propulsive part of the kick
 10. Shall—Mandatory
 11. Simultaneously—Occurring at the same time
 12. Touch—Contact with the end of the course
 13. Turn—A point where the swimmers reverse or change direction
 14. Vertical—Perpendicular to the water surface
 15. Wall—Vertical portion of the pool, contiguous surfaces of the deck and overflow gutter, the front portion of the starting block or platform, or the touchpad at the end of the course

C. Stroke Videos and Discussion

1. Freestyle

- a. Play video
- b. Stroke Highlights (Refer to most current version of USA-S "OFFICIALS' BRIEFING" on USA-S Website)
- c. Explanation of Common Infractions: Head did not break surface of water by 15 meter mark, Walking on/springing from bottom, No touch at turn
- d. Questions and discussion

2. Backstroke

- a. Play video
- b. Stroke Highlights (Refer to most current version of USA-S "OFFICIALS' BRIEFING" on USA-S Website)
- c. Explanation of Common Infractions: Toes above lip of gutter after start, Head did not break surface of water by 15 meter mark, Shoulders past vertical towards breast, Delay initiating arm pull, Delay initiating turn, Re-submerged
- d. Questions and discussion

3. Butterfly

- a. Play video
- b. Stroke Highlights (Refer to most current version of USA-S "OFFICIALS' BRIEFING" on USA-S Website)
- c. Explanation of Common Infractions: Head did not break surface of water by 15 meter mark, Alternating kick, Breaststroke kick, Scissors kick, Non-simultaneous arms, Underwater recovery, One hand touch, Non-simultaneous touch
- d. Questions and discussion

4. Breaststroke

- a. Play video
- b. Stroke Highlights (Refer to most current version of USA-S "OFFICIALS' BRIEFING" on USA-S Website)
- c. Explanation of Common Infractions: Head did not break surface of water by widest part of second stroke, Butterfly kick (including multiple downward butterfly kicks off start or turn), Scissors kick, Alternating kick, Arms past hipline, Arms not in same horizontal plane, One hand touch, Non-simultaneous touch
- d. Questions and discussion

5. Individual Medley

- a. Play video
- b. Rules Highlights (Refer to most current version of USA-S "OFFICIALS' BRIEFING" on USA-S Website)
- c. Explanation of Common Infractions: Swimming more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the race in the style of butterfly, backstroke, or breaststroke

- d. Questions and discussion
- 6. Relays
 - a. Play video
 - b. Rules Highlights (Refer to most current version of USA-S “OFFICIALS’ BRIEFING” on USA-S Website)
 - c. Explanation of Common Infractions: Early takeoff, Swimming more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the race in the style of butterfly, backstroke, or breaststroke (if a medley relay)
 - d. Questions and discussion

V. Working a Meet (15 minutes)

A. Pre-Meet

1. Officials should contact the Meet Referee and let him or her know of their intention to serve and what sessions they plan on working.

B. At the Meet

1. Arrive on time at the designated area of the officials’ briefing. If not specified by the Meet Referee or published in the Meet Announcement, meetings are typically held one hour prior to the start of the session.
 - a. Sign-in on the designated sign-in sheet.
 - b. Officials should introduce themselves to the Meet Referee or Chief Judge if they have not met him or her before.
2. Stroke Briefing
 - a. In most cases, the Meet Referee or Chief Judge will review the technical rules of the strokes.
3. Assignments and Jurisdiction
 - a. The Meet Referee or Chief Judge will assign officials a certain area of the pool that they are responsible for observing. This area is called “jurisdiction”—the area in which they have the authority to report an observation.
 - b. Officials should only make calls that fall within their jurisdiction.
4. Observing the Swims
 - a. Officials should observe all lanes in their jurisdiction equally, including the empty lanes.
 - b. Officials should not call particular attention to any lane they are observing. It should not be readily obvious which lane the official is observing at any given moment.
5. Reporting Disqualification
 - a. Disqualifications are to be signaled by raising one hand, with an open palm, above one’s head. The hand should be raised *confidently but not enthusiastically*.

- b. At some meets, stroke and turn judges will complete their own disqualification slips. In other cases, a Chief Judge may complete the slip for them. Regardless, prior to signing a disqualification slip, the stroke and turn judge should ensure that all information on the slip, including the event, heat, lane, swimmer's name, and infraction are correct.

VI. Pursuing Certification (15 minutes)

A. On-Deck Training

1. A minimum number of sessions of on-deck training with a mentor are required. The mentor will illustrate and help implement the concepts discussed in this clinic.
2. Contact the Meet Referee in advance of training so that he or she may ensure that a mentor is available.

B. USA Swimming Non-Athlete Membership

1. All officials must be non-athlete members of USA Swimming and be registered prior to acting as a certified official.
2. All officials must submit a background check through USA Swimming. Information is on the USA Swimming website.
3. All officials must complete USA Swimming Athlete Protection Training. Information is on the USA Swimming website.

C. Online Testing

1. All officials must complete the stroke and turn test in the officials' module on the USA Swimming website. The rulebook is necessary to complete the test. A minimum score of 80% is required to pass the test.
2. It is recommended that officials have competed at least some of their on-deck training prior to taking the test.

VII. Questions (10 minutes)

- A. Accept any remaining questions from clinic participants.
- B. Reassure participants that all of the information discussed in the clinic will be further elaborated on and become much more clear during on-deck training.
- C. Thank participants for their time and interest in becoming a certified stroke and turn judge of USA Swimming.