

## TIMER

To the athlete, the most important part of a swimming event, other than winning the race, is the time he achieves. Each participant achieves a time of record. That time may mean that the swimmer has met the qualification standards for a future competition; it could set a local or national record; or, it could just be a "personal best" for the competitor. Thus, accurate timing and recording are very important. The use of electronic timing equipment at all levels of swimming provides more accurate timing than is obtained from manual techniques. Automatic systems **require** manual backup.

### DEFINITIONS:

#### A. Timing Systems :

1. **Manual timing** requires hand-held, battery powered, digital read-out stopwatches. Timers "start" and "stop" the watches.

2. **Semi-Automatic timing** is activated by an electronic pulse from a starting device or transducer. Finishes are recorded by buttons pushed by timers at the swimmer's finish touch. This timing may constitute a primary system if there are three or two buttons per lane, each operated by a separate timer. A secondary system may use one, two, or three buttons.

3. **Automatic timing** is started by an electronic pulse from a starting device and is stopped at the finish of the race by the swimmer's touch.

#### B. Timing System Designations :

1. **Primary:** Either electronic equipment or manual watches from which the swimmer's time will be recorded unless that equipment has malfunctioned.

**The minimum primary timing system should include two manual watches for each lane.**

2. **Secondary:** Any system to provide **backup** times if the primary system malfunctions. Automatic and semi-automatic electronic equipment must be backed up.

3. **Tertiary.** Unless the primary system consists of manual watches or the secondary system includes at least one manual watch per lane, a tertiary system of at least one watch per lane must be provided.

### TIMING PROCEDURES:

In any race not timed with automatic or semi-automatic equipment, the time for each competitor shall be taken by at least two, preferably three, Timers stationed at, or close to, the finish. Each Timer operates a hand-held, battery powered, digital stopwatch) that is started and stopped by the Timer. The times are individually recorded. Chief Timers may substitute for a Lane Timer only if a Timer's watch fails. Times should concentrate solely on ensuring they get the most accurate time possible. Lane timers may be requested to operate a watch and the button from a semi-automatic system simultaneously, but they may not operate two watches or buttons at the same time.

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### A. Chief Timer:

1. Assigns Timers to their respective lanes and properly instructs them.
2. Selects one Timer on each lane as Head Lane Timer.
3. Starts a watch on every race, to be used **only** if a Lane Timer's watch fails.
4. Delivers, to the Timing Judge, all times as recorded by the Head Lane Timers, including the times of disqualified swimmers.

### B. Head Lane Timer:

1. Determines that the proper swimmer or relay team is in the correct lane, heat and event, and that relay swimmers are swimming in the order listed on the Lane Timer's card.
2. Determines and records all manual watch times or the absence of a swimmer/relay team seeded in that lane.
3. Assigns one Timer to take relay splits and initial distance times, if requested by the Chief Timer.
4. Determines and reports if the swimmer has delayed in touching or has missed the touch pad at the finish.
5. Assigns one Timer to serve as Relay Take-off Judge (if requested).

### C. Lane Timers :

1. Shall be in position to have an unobstructed view of the Starter's strobe light and start the watch at the instant of observing the visual starting signal. If it is not observed, shall start the watch upon hearing the sound of the horn.
2. Shall stand directly over their assigned lane **at the finish**.
3. Stops the watch and/or push the semi-automatic system's button immediately when, in the Timer's opinion, **any** part of the swimmer's body touches the wall.
4. Reports to the Head Timer or the designated recorder if they observe a late or missed pad touch.
5. It is **not** the Lane Timer's responsibility to judge if the swimmer's finish touch meets the requirements of the appropriate stroke finish rule or if

a relay take-off infraction has occurred, unless assigned additional responsibility as a Turn Judge or Relay Take-off Judge.

6. All Lane Timers shall promptly report their times to the Head Lane Timer or the designated recorder; present their watches for inspection, if requested; and, shall not clear them until given the command to "Clear watches" or the Referee signals the next race is ready to start.

7. The time of each watch is recorded on the Lane Timer's card, and the official watch time is recorded in hundredths. When averaging watch times, the digits representing thousandths are dropped **with no rounding**.

8. During a race, one of the Lane Timers may, upon request of the Chief Timer, take split times or initial distance times. The **function** button shall be pushed when any part of the swimmer's body touches the wall. Split times shall be recorded on the Lane Timer's card.

9. For PVS and local records only, the Referee, if requested, for the purposes of recording record attempts at an initial distance for an individual event or for the lead-off leg of a relay, may for any lane:

a. Permit the use of the split function button of digital manual watches where all three Lane Timers on the lane are using digital watches with split function; or

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b. Assign three additional official timers to the lane to time the record attempt. (NOTE: Performances in this category require the swimmer(s) to complete the full distance of the **scheduled** event.)

### D. Official Time Determination:

1. If two of the three buttons or watch times agree, that shall be the official time.

2. If all three buttons or watches disagree, the time of the intermediate button or watch shall be the official time.

3. If only two buttons or watch times are available, the official time shall be the average of those two. For watches, the digits representing thousandths of a second shall be dropped with no rounding.

4. If only one button or watch time is available, that time shall be the official time.

### F. Tips and Techniques:

1. **Know the watch.** Know how to start, stop and return the readout from split recording; **practice** before the meet. Fading numbers, blinking numbers, or decimal points usually indicate that the watch needs new batteries. Studies have established that using the forefinger obtains the most accurate times. A smooth motion of the finger, rather than a jerky one, is best.

2. **Reading the watch.** Hold the watch steady; stop and start it only with the movement of the finger. A sweeping motion with the hand or arm in starting or stopping the watch contributes to inaccuracy. Hold the watch to avoid light reflections on the display and so that you can read the watch accurately.

3. **Check the accuracy of all watches.** The Chief Timer should request that the Starter conduct a time check before the start of the meet. If the time check indicates that the watch is inaccurate by more than 0.2 seconds, report the watch to the Chief Timer. Do not attempt to compensate for defects in the watch. If, at any time, a watch fails to start or stops after starting, immediately notify the Chief Timer.

4. **Sit for the start.** Sit at the start if Timer's chairs are provided and you can see. Remain seated during the event and return to your seat immediately after timing your swimmer. In case of problems, stand up to signal the Chief Timer that assistance is needed. If chairs are not provided and you must stand

throughout the races (the norm in PVS), raise your hand **with the watch in it** to get the Chief Timer's attention if you need assistance.

5. **Stay alert.** Pay attention to the Starter's instructions for information about the distance of the race and type of stroke.

6. **Look at the Starter.** Hold your watch UP in front of you so your attention is focused on the Starter. If timing is inaccurate, **it is usually caused by lack of concentration at the start.**

7. **Concentrate visually.** When the Starter gives the command, "Take your mark," focus your eyes on the strobe light and start your watch at the instant you see the flash of the strobe, rather than by sound. Of course, if there is no flash, you must then start your watch on the sound.

8. **Verify the watch is running once the race begins.** If it is not running or you were late at the start, stand up or hold up your hand **with the watch in it** and call for the Chief Timer.

9. **Taking split times.** Split times should be taken only by the designated Lane Timer(s) for events of 500 yards, 400 meters or longer, unless instructed otherwise. The function button should **never** be used to time the **finish** of a race. Split times are marked on the back of the time card. **Split times taken as official times for an initial distance** should be taken by individuals other than Lane Timers unless taken by digital watches with split function buttons. Just as for the complete event, three times are preferred; two are required. If asked to take split times, depress the watch's split function button when any part of the swimmer's body touches the wall.

10. **Position yourself appropriately.** At the start, you may position yourself anywhere behind the starting line where you can clearly see the starting

device, but back, so you do not obstruct the Starter's view of the competitors. Thereafter, you should remain far enough back from the race so you do not obstruct the other officials. When the swimmer approaches the end of the pool on the final lap, however, you should move forward to the end of your designated lane and position yourself **upright**, looking straight down over the edge of the pool so you can accurately see the touch at the finish. The swimmer may touch well below the water surface.

**11. Stop the watch when *any part of the swimmer's body touches the solid wall (or electronic pad) at the end of the pool.*** Stop your watch even if you think the touch is illegal and regardless of whether the touch is above, at, or below the water level. ***Watch your own lane!*** Be fair to the swimmer in your lane; you must **see** (not anticipate) the touch. Also, beware of "false finishes." Some swimmers, often a bit behind or in a close race, will lunge toward the wall, raise their heads, and stop stroking before actually touching the wall.

**12. Provide *your time, no one else's.*** Feel secure about your timing. Never change your time because it differs from the other Lane Timers. Do NOT look at the scoreboard and change your time to coincide with it (scoreboards only indicate **pad** time; thus, they do not show if the swimmer missed the pad or touched "too lightly"). Read your watch and carefully, and state your time. If you were attentive and followed the procedures, your timing is correct!

**13. Record the times.** The Recorder should write the times in the correct sections of the swimmer's card or computer slip. Do NOT record an official time; that is the Timing Judge's job.

**14. Do NOT clear your watch until told to do so.** Present your watch for inspection if requested. That means you should **not** reset the watch until the agreed upon "clear watches" signal is given by either the Chief Timer or the Referee.

**15. Conduct yourself as an official.** Do not cheer for, or coach, swimmers during a race. Don't provide unconfirmed official information to the swimmers (i.e., where the swimmer finished or whether the swimmer was disqualified).