

Potomac Valley Swimming



CHIEF TIMER

Introduction: The Chief Timer shall: (1) assign official lane timers to their respective lanes—the least experience to outside lanes with at least one experienced timer; (2) deliver to the recorders all times as recorded by the Head Lane Timers, including those of disqualified swimmers, and (3) instruct the timers properly, before the meet starts, about how to time a race, determine the official time, and when to reset their watches.

The Chief Timer also designates a Head Lane Timer for each lane. An Assistant Chief Timer can assist you with half the lanes. If possible, appoint an alternate timer for each lane or, at least, one who will be available for all lanes. You and/or your assistant may have to serve in that capacity.

The Chief Timer has direct control over the prime purpose for the swimmers' participation in the meet—TIMES! Thus the Chief Timer is one official whose non-performance can irretrievably ruin an otherwise perfect swim. Chief Timers who are not on top of everything that happens on the lanes, constantly, do the swimmers a major disservice.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Chief Timers have many different personal styles; but all have the following qualifications, they:

- are experienced and knowledgeable in all timing and recording responsibilities,
- are familiar with all applicable rules,
- are "people oriented." He/she will be coordinating the efforts of up to 18 people,
- understand the concept of being "in charge,"
- are able to take responsibility seriously.

A good Chief Timer will be flexible. No two meets are exactly alike, and the Chief Timer must adjust to the situation as well as the people.

DUTIES:

A. Prior to Meet:

One of the keys to a successful meet is to be prepared ahead of time. A few minutes spent ahead of meet day will go a long way towards a more efficiently run meet. If possible:

1. Line up timers in advance. Try to get at least three per lane. With electronic timing systems, you only "need" one timer per lane, but when (not if) the electronics fail, you'll need at least three watch times to get an "official" time for certain types of "records" e.g., NTVs (National Times Verification) (required when-ever a swimmer makes a national qualifying time, or for entry in other high levels of competition). PVS has a written policy that stipulates, each club entering a PVS meet must identify a number of timers proportional to its entries in the meet. Clubs hosting or sponsoring PVS meets must provide one timer for each lane used and substitutes. **This requirement has no penalty attached, so it is often ignored.**

2. Check watches and backup watches to ensure all are in operating condition.

3. Prepare Lane Timer materials and supplies: clipboards, timer cards, programs (when available), pencils (#2), and spare pencils.

4. For dual meets, determine which teams will be in the even and which in the odd lanes. This affects the assignment of timers.

B. Prior to First Event:

You should:

1. Arrive well ahead of the scheduled meet time.
2. Have check-in sheet readily available.
3. Wear official whites over blues, if at all possible; it is an important recognition factor. The Referee determines who will instruct the Timers (you or the Starter).
4. Recruit additional Lane Timers (from stands, at gates?). If possible, get one or two extra timers (for reserve).
5. About 30 minutes before the session starts, assign timers to specific lanes. Pair inexperienced timers with an experienced person. (At dual meets, you normally assign one timer from the home team and two visiting timers to the home team lanes, one visiting timer and two home team timers to the visitor's lanes.)
6. Appoint Head Lane Timers.
7. Work out the "all clear" signal with the Referee (to be used after you have examined the time cards). One procedure is to wave to the Referee with the cards in your hand.
8. Arrange for a "time check" with the Starter to eliminate any defective watches (or timers). When using automatic timing equipment, the time check should include pads (when used) and buttons, to ensure system is set up properly and every lane is operational.
9. Have Lane Timers in position, 10 minutes before the scheduled start time.

C. Timer Instructions:

Always provide some short instructions and conduct a time check. Doing so focuses the timers' mind on the swim meet, acquaints each timer with the workings of the specific watch they will use, and identifies any bad watches. Some basic items to include in the instructions are to:

1. Start the watch with the strobe light (if electronic starting is used). (If the strobe does not work, the timers should advise the Starter immediately.)

2. Stop the watch and button (if in use) when **any** part of the swimmer's body touches the end of the pool at the end of the race. Don't worry about whether the touch is legal or illegal! Timers need to be **over the edge** of the pool to see the entire surface of the wall **before** the touch. Make a note on the card if swimmer touches the pad late or not at all.

3. Start watches for every event, even if there is no swimmer in your lane. Raise a hand (with the watch in it), if a watch fails or some other malfunction occurs (e.g., missed the start).

4. Step back from the edge of the pool then record the times for the lane in the same order each time in order to identify watches (or timers) that are not performing well.

5. List the middle time of three as "official." If two times are identical, however, **that** is the official time. If only two times are available, average the two, dropping any thousandths; do **not** round up or down.

6. During distance events (e.g., the 500 freestyle), the Head Lane Timer should mark the completion of each lap on the card someplace (with a hash mark). *Don't rely on the counter at the other end of the pool!*

7. Clear your watch for the next event when instructed OR when the Referee blows the long whistle to indicate to the swimmers to step up or in. If you are not ready for the next start, get the Referee's attention to ensure the next race does not proceed. (Shout if you have to.)

8. Focus on **timing** only! Timers are NOT to be cheerleaders for **any** team or competitor.

9. During relays, be sure that four **different** swimmers swim for each relay team.

10. Instruct all timers to turn off cell phones or put them on vibrate and not to take calls during a race. If there is a call they need to take get them a substitute.

11. Keep an eye out for wristwatches. If you see a swimmer wearing one remind them to remove it.

12. Instruct timers to check names of swimmers to determine that the right swimmer is in the proper lane.

13. Bring any taunting, foul language or other unsportsmanlike behavior to the Referee's attention.

D. During the Meet:

Observe whether the timers are watching the strobe light at the start, looking **over the edge** at the finish, reading the watches correctly, not clearing them prematurely, etc. If necessary, reinstruct them or replace them.

Identify timers who are not doing a good job, but also note those lanes where the timers are doing well. Then, let them know that they are doing a good job. You should also:

1. Check every lane for accuracy and the spread of times. Use the split hand on your watch to check for accuracy by depressing it when the winner finishes. Then stop the main watch when the last swimmer finishes. All times should be between those two times.

2. After each race or event, collect the time cards for all lanes. Be sure that the Head Lane Timers are recording times correctly and properly determining official times (if they are to do so). Remember that the thousandths are dropped **with no rounding** when two watch times are averaged.

3. Signal the Referee that all time cards have been completed properly and instruct the Timers when to reset their watches.

4. Don't substitute your time or an alternate's time for one of the Official Lane Timers unless there is a failure of a timer or a malfunction of their watch.

5. Deliver all the official times, including those of disqualified swimmers, to the

Recorders. Sometimes, to keep the meet moving, it works best to deliver them after the next event starts.

6. During Mini meets the 25-yard events and in long course meets 50-yard events start at the opposite end of the pool.

E. After the Meet

Collect all watches and clipboards, and account for them. Note any damaged conditions and inform the Meet Manager or other responsible official of any inoperable watches.

CONCLUSION

The single, most important factor in functioning as a Chief Timer is to recognize that you are in charge of total lane timing and recording; you are not just a watch custodian/ alternate timer. The swimmers are depending on you to ensure the Timers provide an accurate record of their performance.

