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OFFICIALS' POOLSIDE HANDBOOK 2026

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This handbook has been prepared to provide uniformity of presentation at county events

but

must be read in conjunction with
Swim England Regulations and Technical Rules and
Swim England Hertfordshire Regulations

If there is anything within the handbook which contradicts the
Swim England Regulations and Technical Rules, then that part of the handbook
should be disregarded.

**All officials appointed for the County Championships
must be licensed**

Swim England Hertfordshire

Swimming Committee

January 2026

#

General – All officials

1. **Please report to the referee at least 45 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the events.**
2. Water will be available to top up water bottles.
3. Please wear your licensed official's identification card.
4. A white county polo shirt and black trousers or black knee-length skirt must be worn at all county galas. Shorts are not acceptable. Three-quarters cropped black trousers are acceptable. Suitable black poolside shoes must be worn, and ideally accessories such as belts should be black.
5. White polo shirts, with the county logo, are available for officials working at a county gala. Those officiating for the first time will be given a free, white, county polo shirt. Please check with the swimming officials' co-ordinator for availability and the cost of additional shirts.
6. Please ensure that you have the necessary personal equipment to carry out the duties for which you are qualified i.e. watch, whistle, pen and clipboard.
7. You are reminded that you are responsible for your own safety and the safety of others. If you see anything which compromises that safety you should advise the referee or meet director immediately.
8. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available before and between sessions in the officials' room, but officials should provide their own lunch/afternoon tea. The café at Westminster Lodge is expected to be open.

Meet director

The meet director shall work closely with the promoter and the principal referee, to assist in the smooth running of the sessions, including dealing with technical or non-technical issues which may arise.

The meet director's responsibilities include, to:-

1. Arrive at the venue at least one hour prior to the start of the warm-up
2. With one of the referees, carry out a pool safety check
3. Check that the false start rope is correctly set-up (if there is one)
4. Ensure that the backstroke indicators are set up and set down, as required
5. Ensure that the backstroke ledges are all correctly calibrated.
6. Assist the AOE operator to test the equipment and pads. Remind the starter to check the starting equipment
7. Brief the principal referee on the emergency exits and signal
8. Brief the coaches regarding the warm-up procedures
9. Brief the coaches regarding late withdrawals from the heats
10. Brief the coaches to advise the referee of any disability swimmers' requirements - starting in the water or the requirement of a strobe for hearing impaired swimmers.
11. Ensure that radios are available to those who need them. Ensure that someone has responsibility for monitoring the distribution and the collection of the radios, and that the radios are cleaned after use.
12. Ensure that adequate lifeguards are on poolside prior to the warm-up and during the session
13. Ensure that the appropriate safety announcements are made, checking the various measurements
14. Distribute necessary instructions to the announcer:
 - a) To confirm the pattern of announcing
 - b) To confirm arrangements for presentations
 - c) To advise the name and detail of the president and visiting dignitaries
15. Ensure that the lead referee has the necessary paperwork for the officials' duties
16. Ensure that chairs at the ends of the pool are dried prior to the start of the session
17. Ensure that the chief-timekeeper has lap cards and tick sheets, as necessary
18. Ensure that results and finalists are posted on poolside/advised to coaches, as required.

Chief competitor steward

The chief competitor steward should:

1. Arrive at the venue at least one hour prior to the start of the warm-up
2. Manage the deck, ensuring any clear deck policies
3. Enforce deck flows for athletes and other users
4. Ensure that the call area is correctly and appropriately set up throughout the session
5. Ensure that the call area protocol is initiated and maintained
6. Straighten chairs/boxes before sessions

Starter

The starter should:

1. Arrive at the venue at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the warm-up
2. Liaise with the meet director and the principal referee as to the positioning of the equipment and the operator
3. Check the starting blocks - that they are secure, and that there is no movement of the tops. Arrange with the meet director for them to be fixed, if there is a problem.
4. Liaise with the meet director and the AOE referee/operator regarding the operation of the equipment
5. Check the microphone and starting signal, including the strobe light, if available
6. Only use the microphone for commands relating to starting
7. Ensure that there is an alternative starting mechanism available
8. Complete a test start prior to each session
9. Ensure that the backstroke ledges are correctly calibrated - refer to the meet director if they are not.

Finish judges

1. Finish judges should report infractions to the referee for that race as quickly as possible, and, when required by the referee, complete a DQ sheet.
2. Finish judges should place the race, and record the placings on the finish judge's placing sheet, reporting those places to the race referee as soon as possible

There will not be start sheets for the finals

Paperwork should be handed to the principal referee at the end of the session

Judges of stroke

Judges of stroke should:

1. Report infractions to the referee for that race as quickly as possible, and, when required by the referee, complete a DQ sheet.
2. Watch for 15m infringements and turn infringements
3. Assist the inspectors of turns in observing the turns and the finish

There will not be start sheets for the finals.

Paperwork should be handed to the principal referee at the end of the session.

Inspectors of turns

1. Inspectors of turns should report infractions to the referee for that race as quickly as possible, and, when required by the referee, complete a DQ sheet.
2. Turns should be observed at the end of the allocated lane, observing the incoming swimmer from 5m from the turn, during the turn, and leaving the turn, until the stroke cycle is established. If two lanes are to be observed, the inspector of turn should observe from the end of the lane rope separating the lanes.
3. Inspectors of turn at the start end should step up on to the plinth to observe the start, and to observe the turns, the take-overs and the finish. If there is an infraction, the inspector of turns should remain standing on the plinth, but otherwise step back.
4. Inspectors of turn at the turn end should step up on to the plinth to observe the turn. If there is an infraction, the inspector of turns should remain on the plinth, but otherwise step back.
5. Inspectors of turn will operate lap cards for events of 800m and 1500m, as required. Starting at 31 and 59 laps (for a 25m pool) to go, respectively. A check should be made with the swimmer as to which side they would prefer the lap cards to be sited.

There will not be start sheets for the finals.

All paperwork will be collected by the chief inspector of turns at the end of the session and passed to the principal referee.

Chief inspector of turns

1. Be visible and available throughout the race, remaining on the same side and at the relevant end of the pool
2. Observe the inspectors of turns
3. Use a radio to give early notice to the referee of an incoming report from a lane inspector
4. If stationed at the finish end of the pool, start a stopwatch for each race
5. Be positioned on the spectator side of the pool
6. Stand when the first inspector of turns gets up on to the plinth at the start/turn or finish of a race, sitting down when all inspectors have sat down
7. If an inspector of turns remains standing, appoint a reserve official, if available, to act on the lane, and speak to the standing official
8. Direct the standing official to the referee to report the infraction and complete a DQ sheet, if required
9. Replace the inspectors of turns for the duration if no replacement official is available.
10. At end of session, collect all the paperwork from the inspectors of turns, and give it to the principal referee

There will not be start sheets for the finals.

Chief-timekeepers

1. Be visible and available throughout the race for which your referee has responsibility. *At the start of the race, be situated at the finish end*
2. Start a watch at the starting signal for each race for which your referee has responsibility
3. Assist any timekeeper having a problem with a watch
4. Record the time of the first and the last swimmer in the race
5. At the end of a race, if required by the referee, collect the placings from the finish judges
6. Collect the AOE slip, if there is no AOE referee
7. Assist the referee, as required, as the result is processed
8. Provide additional timing for a swim, as required by the referee
9. Distribute lap cards as necessary
10. Monitor lap cards if they are being used
11. At the end of the session, collect the start sheets from the lane timekeepers and hand them to the principal referee

Timekeepers/ Inspectors of turns

- 1 Ensure that the correct swimmer reports for the correct event. Inform the referee if this is not the case, before the start of the race
- 2 If the name is different from that on the start sheet, but the swimmer swims, ensure that the name of the swimmer is recorded on the start sheet, and that the chief-timekeeper is informed.
- 3 Stand when the referee gives a short series of whistles.
- 4 On the long whistle, move forward to behind the blocks' plinth
- 5 Observe the strobe light signal to start the watch. Do not touch back-up button
- 6 Following the starting signal, step up on to the plinth and observe the swimmer until the completion of the first full stroke, and remain standing forward if an infraction is observed, otherwise step back
- 7 Observe the turns - step up on to the plinth, observing the incoming swimmer from 5m from the turn, during the turn, and leaving the turn, until the completion of the first full stroke after the turn, and remain standing forward if an infraction is observed, otherwise step back
- 8 Report any infractions to the referee for that race as quickly as possible, and, when required by the referee, complete a DQ sheet.
- 9 Any infraction at the finish should also be reported to the referee
- 10 At end of the race, stop the watch and press the back-up button simultaneously, as the swimmer finishes the course. The back-up button should be activated with the best hand.
- 11 Record the manual time on the start sheet against the swimmer's name
- 12 For individual events of 800 metres or longer, blow a whistle as the swimmer reaches the backstroke flags, with 2 lengths and 5 metres to swim. One continuous long blast of the whistle is required, with a further blast, if necessary, after the turn. Consider that the swimmer cannot hear whilst submerged
- 13 Operate lap cards for events of 800m and 1500m, as required. Starting at 30 and 58 laps (for a 25m pool) to go, respectively. Check with the swimmer which side they would prefer the lap cards to be sited
- 14 Record 100m splits for races in excess of 100m, if required by the referee
- 15 Immediately advise the chief-timekeeper or the referee if a swimmer mentions that they are going for a national or higher record
- 16 Failure to start the watch, or stopping it prematurely, should be reported immediately to the chief-timekeeper.
- 17 Reset the watch on the referee's short blasts for the next race
- 18 Ensure that the swimmers leave the pool to the side and do not climb out over the pads

Notes

Swimming Officials Co-ordinator

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