



TIMEKEEPER/CHIEF TIMEKEEPER TRAINING NOTES

Adopted or Amended	By Whom	Date
Adopted	Technical Committee	March 2005
Amended	Technical Committee	2 nd June 2010
Amended	Technical Committee	August 2010
Amended	Graeme Field	January 2013
Amended	Technical Swimming Committee	March 2015

TIMEKEEPER/CHIEF TIMEKEEPER

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Introduction

These notes detail the responsibilities, duties and procedures of the Timekeeper and Chief Timekeeper and will help you whether you are working at Club, Area or State level.

The notes are structured to take you through the procedures; responsibilities and rules as you would encounter them in the normal course of a swim meet using manual digital stopwatches. Most Club and Area meets would use these or very similar procedures. At State and other meets with automatic or semi-automatic electronic timing, where Timekeepers operate the equipment, some modifications of these procedures may be necessary.

Arrival at the Meet

As a Timekeeper you are to report to the **Referee** at least thirty (30) minutes before the advertised starting time of the swim meet.

This enables the Referee to mark you present against the Officials' appointment roster, to give you a program and to also give you any special instructions which may apply.

You need to bring several items of equipment to do your job properly. These are a stopwatch, accurate to 1/100th of a second (if automatic or semi-automatic timing is not being used), pencils, notepad and a clipboard.

- Before arriving at the pool, check the display of your stopwatch and replace the batteries if necessary. The display should be checked before and regularly during the competitive session.
- Pencils are required instead of felt tip, ink or ballpoint pens as a pencil (HB or softer) will continue to write even if the time card or your paper gets wet.

You should know that there are two forms of competition, "**scratch**" and "**handicap**", which differ in their starting procedures. For scratch events, all swimmers start at the same time on the starting signal. For handicap events, swimmers start at different times according to the amount of handicap they have been given. The majority of competitive swim meets are conducted as scratch events.

Timekeepers' specific responsibilities and duties

Timekeepers have several distinct roles. You need to be aware of the relative responsibilities of each role if you are to work effectively at all meets. The four roles concerned are:

- Lane Timekeeper;
- Chief Lane Timekeeper;
- Chief Timekeeper;
- Reserve Timekeeper.

Each competition requires:

- one (1) Chief Timekeeper;
- three (3) Timekeepers per lane are advisable, one (1) of whom is appointed as Chief Lane Timekeeper (where 3 Timekeepers per lane are available there is no need for Finish Judges); and
- Reserve Timekeepers

The Race

Scratch events are started from a starting device (e.g., a horn, whistle or in some cases a pistol shot or word of command). Handicap events are started by the command "Go" and a simultaneous starting signalling device (usually a flag).

For **Scratch** events, you start your stopwatch when you see the flash of light from the starting device/pistol.

If a horn, whistle or word of command has been used without a starting flash, start your stopwatch at the sound of the starting signal.

When a pistol flash is used and it is obscured, such as by bright light, or the pistol does not have a light, you start your stopwatch when you see the smoke from the starting pistol.

For **Handicap** events, you start your stopwatch when the handicap starting signalling device used by the Starter reaches a pre-determined position. During the briefing before the start of a program that includes handicap events, the Chief Timekeeper will inform the Timekeepers of the position of the handicap starting signalling device at which they should start their stopwatch.

For both **Scratch** and **Handicap** events, you stop your stopwatch at the instant any part of the swimmer's body contacts the finish wall, or, in open water events, at the instant any part of the body contacts or passes under, through or over the finish line.

Immediately after starting your stopwatch, you should check that the stopwatch is running and functioning properly. Report any malfunction to the **Chief Lane Timekeeper (or Chief Timekeeper if a Chief Lane Timekeeper has not been appointed)**. Do this check regularly throughout the race.

Automatic Officiating Equipment

Swim meets can be judged and timed using Automatic Officiating Equipment (AOE) together with Semi-Automatic Timing (SAT) as back-up. Both are initiated electronically by the starting device and the AOE is stopped by the swimmer activating a touch pad. The Timekeepers stop the SAT equipment by pressing the hand-held buttons on their lane the instant any part of the swimmer's body contacts the finish wall. The buttons are connected to the SAT equipment console.

The manual times the Timekeepers take using the SAT buttons are used as a back-up in case of an AOE malfunction, such as when the swimmer's touch fails to activate the touch pad. Due to your reflex differences there will be small variations between the manual times you take and those recorded on the AOE.

When AOE is used, the placing and times recorded on that equipment prevail over manual results, except when the Referee may be required to make a decision in accordance with the Rules of Swimming - which also cover the adjustment procedure that is to be followed.

SAT equipment has been approved by FINA for world record purposes when used as backup to the AOE and the AOE fails or fails to record a time, provided that 3 timekeepers take the time of the record breaker.

Lane Timekeeper

In any scratch event, *Lane Timekeepers* will start their stopwatch when they see the flash of light, sound or smoke from the starting signal device. It is the Lane Timekeepers' responsibility to position themselves for each start so that they have a clear and unobstructed view of the Starter and the starting device. Some clubs now use semi-automatic timing equipment whereby the stopwatch is started **electronically** by the starting device (usually a hooter and light, e.g., Colorado Dolphin Timing System). Where this type of equipment is used, the Timekeepers need only stop their stopwatch immediately when some part of the swimmer's body touches the finish wall.

For a handicap start, when the handicap signalling device reaches the pre-determined position, the Starter simultaneously calls "**Go**" and starts a stopwatch. The predetermined signal could also be the starting light on a SAT system. **All Lane Timekeepers** start their stopwatches when the handicap signalling device reaches the pre-determined position or signal. The Chief Timekeeper would have advised the Timekeepers of this pre-determined position for the handicap signalling device at a briefing before the start of the meet.

For both scratch and handicap events, all Timekeepers stop their stopwatch at the instant any part of the swimmer's body in their lane makes contact with the finish wall.

Taking times accurately is the single most important responsibility of a Timekeeper to ensure each swimmer is treated fairly. To ensure a proper view of the finish, Lane Timekeepers must stand:

- (a) at the finish end,
- (b) of the lane of the swimmer that they are timing,
- (c) directly over the top of the lane, and
- (d) looking down the face of the wall.

The implication is that if the swimmer is finishing in a different lane to their starting lane, Lane Timekeepers need to move to that lane in order to be over the top of the lane and take the time correctly.

Note: You cannot accurately take the time from the side of the pool.

Timekeepers should stand and move forward together, into their position to observe the finish, as the leading swimmer in an event reaches the fifteen (15) metre point from the finish (the false start rope). To avoid anticipating the finish, Lane Timekeepers are advised to watch the swimmer until approximately five (5) metres from the finish (the backstroke flags) and then look down the face of the finish wall. Wait for the swimmer to swim into your field of view and then stop the stopwatch as soon as any part of the swimmer's body makes contact with the finish wall. This procedure for taking

the time applies to both scratch and handicap races. Once you have taken the time, you should return to your chair/position in readiness for the next race.

The method of touch, particularly in form strokes, is not the responsibility of the Timekeeper. If you do not have a swimmer in your lane, you should assist with timekeeping in other lanes if directed by the Chief Timekeeper.

Note: When the timing system used involves each stopwatch being set to a predetermined lane (e.g., Dolphin timing), you should not use that stopwatch to take the time of another (different) lane.

When AOE is used, Timekeepers may notice whether a swimmer touched the touchpad lightly or firmly. Make a note of any "light" or "soft" touches on your programme in case of an enquiry from the Referee or Chief Timekeeper.

When stopwatches are used, Timekeepers are to keep a personal record of their individual times for each race on their program or notepad (or lane time sheet) in order to be able to verify the time in case of enquiries from the Referee, Chief Lane Timekeeper, Chief Timekeeper or Chief Recorder, or any other authorised Official. You also may be asked to verify times when the manual times differ by more than 0.30 seconds (plus or minus) from the time recorded by the AOE.

Stopwatches are to be reset to zero prior to the start of each race on the long whistle from the Referee. You would be briefed on this procedure by the Chief Timekeeper prior to the start of the meet.

Most swimmers want to know the time they have achieved as soon as they finish the race. You can tell them the lane time recorded but you **must** inform the swimmer that the time is **unofficial** until there is an official announcement of results.

- If AOE is in use, swimmers times recorded electronically are also subject to official confirmation.

If times are to be used for record purposes, a person may operate only one button or stopwatch on a lane. FINA accepts that a Timekeeper can operate a stopwatch and a button at the same time for other purposes.

If stopwatches are not used, Lane Timekeepers are required to operate, as directed, any officiating equipment or timing device approved for use at the meet. Inspectors of Turns may be called upon to assist Timekeepers by operating any approved timing device.

Timekeepers cannot act as a Finish Judge during an event.

Stopwatch failure or malfunction

On noticing that their stopwatch has malfunctioned the Timekeeper must immediately advise the Chief Lane Timekeeper (or Chief Timekeeper if a Chief Lane Timekeeper has not been appointed) who shall notify the Chief Timekeeper without delay.

In this circumstance the Chief Timekeeper can:

- (a) replace the Timekeeper with a Reserve Timekeeper (provided the Reserve's stopwatch is functioning and was started at the starting signal);
- (b) replace the Timekeeper with a Timekeeper from another lane whose swimmer is not anticipated to fill a major placing or break an age record; or
- (c) have the Timekeeper restart the failed stopwatch (or a replacement) from an "elapsed" time call from the Chief Timekeeper (this is best done at a thirty or sixty second elapsed time mark).

The time for that stopwatch will be sum of the time recorded on the restarted stopwatch and the “elapsed” time call. This time, taken in “two parts”, cannot be accepted for record purposes, as the stopwatch was not started at the starting signal.

Reading your stopwatch

Stopwatches must have a digital display accurate to 1/100th of a second e.g. 1:01.86. This is the actual time that is recorded on the result slip or event card or programme and is used to determine the indicated official time.

Determining indicated official times

When all three (3) stopwatches or two (2) of the stopwatches on the same lane record the same time, this time is the indicated official time.

For example, if three (3) stopwatches read:

	1:01.79
	1:01.75
	1:01.79

the indicated official time is 1:01.79

When all three (3) stopwatches record different times, the indicated official time shall be that of the stopwatch recording the intermediate (middle) time.

For example, if three (3) stopwatches read:

	2:10.82
	2:10.97
	2:10.92

the indicated official time is 2:10.92

If for some reason only two (2) stopwatches record the time and they differ, the stopwatch showing the slower time shall be taken as the indicated official time.

For example, if two stopwatches read:

	1:40.01
	1:39.96

the indicated official time is 1:40.01

When only one (1) stopwatch time is recorded, that time will be the indicated official time

The Chief Lane Timekeeper will determine the indicated official time in accordance with these procedures and tick (✓) this time on the result slip/event card. The Recorders compare the indicated official times and the AOE/Judges' placings and, subject to the Referee's concurrence, determine the **official** time that is posted in the results.

Note: In the event that AOE is in use and fails, and a manual backup is used, official manual times shall be determined as above, except that if only two (2) watch times are recorded, the Meet Director/Referee should decide at the start of the meet whether to use the average of the two (2) recorded times or the slowest time recorded as the official time.

Stopwatch reading adjustments

It is not permitted to announce times that do not agree with the official placing.

Sometimes the ranking of manual official times disagree with the Finish Judges' placings. If this happens, the Referee will make decisions on placings, when necessary. This may require an adjustment to the times.

The adjustment procedures are carried out by the Recorders but are mentioned here for completeness. The Recorders calculate the average of all stopwatch times on all the lanes concerned and each swimmer involved is credited with this "averaged" time.

Records

Records can only be established in scratch events or individual record attempts and cannot be set in handicap events.

To be recognised as a record, a time must be recorded by the AOE, or three (3) digital stopwatches accurate to 1/100th of a second. Each timing device must be started at the starting signal of the race and not stopped until the instant any part of the swimmer's body contacts the finish wall. As each Timekeeper may operate only one (1) stopwatch or button, it is necessary to have three (3) Timekeepers on each lane to enable records to be claimed.

When three (3) stopwatches are started at the starting signal and one (1) stops during the race, the times from the other two (2) stopwatches by themselves are insufficient for record purposes (hence the need for Reserve Timekeepers).

Records can be created by other than event winners in circumstances of:

- (a) a local record established by a local swimmer e.g. a Resident Record; or
- (b) an Age Group Record created by a swimmer swimming outside his/her age group or in an open event, or
- (c) an intermediate distance record as provided in the Rules e.g. 800m Record during a 1500m race; or
- (d) 1st swimmer's split time in a relay. **Note that individual records cannot be achieved in mixed relays.**

For swim meets organised by Areas or clubs, whether timed by AOE or manually, when a swimmer's performance equals or improves a current State Record, an "Application for Record" form must be properly completed and signed for the swimmer to claim the record. Current State records are generally published on the Swimming NSW web site.

When the AOE recorded the time, the "Application for Record" form is signed, before leaving the pool, by the Control Room Supervisor, the Official who inspected the AOE used to record the time, and the Referee. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Swimming NSW will also sign the form once it has been submitted to Swimming NSW. If SAT is used as the primary timing equipment there must be three (3) timekeepers each pressing a single button.

When the record is manually timed, the application form is signed, before leaving the pool, by the three (3) Timekeepers on the particular lane, verifying the times recorded by their stopwatch (checking against their personal record), the Official who inspected the stopwatches (this will normally be the Chief Timekeeper or in some instances the Referee), and the Referee. The CEO of Swimming NSW will also sign the form once it has been submitted to Swimming NSW.

You must sign the "Application for Record" form **before** you leave the pool on the day of the competition.

At State Championship or other meets directly controlled by Swimming NSW, "Application for Record" forms are not required and any new records will be identified from the Official Results produced and certified by the Chief Recorder.

Reserve Timekeepers

The *Reserve Timekeepers* are to start their stopwatches at the starting signal of each race as if they were a Lane Timekeeper and keep them running until the last swimmer has finished his/her race.

They may be called upon at any time by the Chief Timekeeper to replace a Lane Timekeeper whose stopwatch has malfunctioned or who is otherwise unable to record the time or, for example, to take the time on a record attempt or a split time on a distance event.

Chief Lane Timekeeper

Apart from responsibilities for timekeeping, *Chief Lane Timekeepers* have the following additional tasks:

- (a) ensure that the result slip or event card used to record lane times shows the correct event number and heat number as well as the correct lane number;
- (b) inspect stopwatches on behalf of the Chief Timekeeper when necessary (checking each stopwatch recording a time on the particular lane)
- (c) record the time from each stopwatch on the result slip or event card;
- (d) determine the indicated official time for that lane by placing a tick (✓) in the margin against that time;
- (e) hand the completed result slip or event card to the runner to be taken to the Chief Recorder immediately after each race; and
- (f) report any irregularities to the Chief Timekeeper, such as the failure or inaccuracy of a stopwatch or inefficiencies in the Lane Timekeeper no matter what the reason.

Note: At most meets, the Check Starter is responsible for placing swimmers in their assigned lanes. When the check starting procedure is not used, Chief Lane Timekeepers should also check the name of their swimmer against the event card or result slip for that heat.

Chief Timekeeper

The *Chief Timekeeper* is in charge of all Timekeepers and has duties and responsibilities prior to the meet commencing, during each race and after each race.

Prior to the meet commencing, the Chief Timekeeper:-

- (a) allocates Timekeepers to their respective lanes, appoints Chief Lane Timekeepers as well as Reserve Timekeepers (if AOE is not in use) and assigns seating positions;
 - the "Timekeepers' Lane Allocation" form (see copy at the end of this section) is to be filled in and given to the Referee at the end of the competition for compilation with the Referee's Report to the Technical Committee or Area Technical Swimming Committee Coordinator as appropriate;
- (b) informs all Timekeepers of the method of start to be used in scratch or handicap events (he/she is advised by the Starter);
- (c) ensures that Timekeepers are informed about the operation of any timing equipment and checks that the equipment is operating effectively;
 - in the case of SAT Equipment this check will be carried out in conjunction with the equipment operator and supervisor during the pre-competition briefing and stopwatch check.
- (d) checks all stopwatches for accuracy in accordance with the recommended procedure;

- (e) instructs Timekeepers what they are to do in the event of their stopwatch failing at the start or during the race;
- (f) tells Timekeepers to check their stopwatch immediately after the start, to ensure that the stopwatch is working properly, and again several times during each race and
- (g) instructs Timekeepers when to reset their stopwatches to be ready for the next race.

During each race, the Chief Timekeeper:-

- (a) inspects the stopwatch of any Timekeeper when considered necessary such as checking the time recorded of the first placing;
- (b) takes the time of first place or any possible record breaker;

After each race, the Chief Timekeeper:-

- (a) signals the Referee when all Timekeepers are ready for the next race;
- (b) informs the Referee of any irregularities;
- (c) ensures that the completed event card or result slip is being collected from each lane and forwarded to the Chief Recorder; and
- (d) informs the Referee of any irregularities in the timekeeping function (e.g., a Timekeeper who is inefficient or unable to perform their timekeeping duties for any reason, such as, illness or incapacity; a Runner not collecting cards).

At the end of the session/meet, the Chief Timekeeper should return the previously completed Timekeepers' Lane Allocation form to the Referee for attachment to the Referee's Report for the meet.

Stopwatch Check Procedure

Before the start of a meet the Chief Timekeeper will have all Timekeepers participate in a stopwatch check by;

- having all Timekeepers start their stopwatches, and starting his own, at the starting signal initiated by the Starter;
- stopwatches are to be run continuously for at least the length of time required for the longest event on the programme or a 400m event if there is a longer event;
- having all Timekeepers stop their stopwatches, and stopping his own, on a pre-arranged signal (usually initiated by the Starter);
- comparing the times on his stopwatch with those on all the Timekeepers' stopwatches;
- all stopwatches should be within the accuracy limits of +/- a few hundredths of a second. Those which are not should be replaced;
- stopwatches are not to be reset to zero until times have been checked with the Chief Timekeeper.

Note: This procedure will vary when SAT is used.

Rules

The following Rules relate to Timekeepers' responsibilities and duties:

- SW2 Swim Meet Officials, their Control, Duties and Powers, particularly:
 - SW2.9 Chief Timekeeper,
 - SW2.10 Timekeepers, and
 - General comments on Rule SW2
- SW11 Determination of Times and Placings
- SW12 Swimming Records - Record Attempts and Applications for Records, particularly:
 - SW12.1 Regulations, Applications for New South Wales Records
 - SW12.3 Application for Recognition of a Record
 - SW12.4 Application for Recognition of an Age Record
- GR18 Officials for Individual Attempts on Records
- GR21 Accidental Omission by an Official
- AOWS4.12 - 15 Open Water Swimming Chief Timekeeper
- OWS4.16 - 18 Open Water Swimming Timekeepers

See also Timekeepers' Lane Allocation form next page.

Timekeepers' Lane Allocation Form

Date:

Chief Timekeeper:

Meet:

Reserve Timekeepers:

Session:

1.....

2.....

3.....

LANE 0	LANE 1	LANE 2	LANE 3	LANE 4	LANE 5	LANE 6	LANE 7	LANE 8	LANE 9
	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

COMMENTS:

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