



Staffing and Deck Sets for Masters Meets

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1. What is the right number of officials for a USMS sanctioned meet?

This is a seemingly easy question, but it is very difficult to give an answer that will suit all types of meets.

We can start by looking at the USMS Rule Requirements for officials.

ARTICLE 103: Meet Procedures

103.1 Required Personnel

The **minimum** personnel at USMS sanctioned Masters swimming meets or recognized events shall include the following for each course:

103.1.1 Officials

- A. **One referee**—The referee may also serve as a stroke and turn judge, but shall not serve as starter.
- B. **One starter**—The starter may also serve as a stroke and turn judge.
- C. **Two stroke and turn judges**—At least two people shall perform these duties during competition.

103.1.2 Timers—Two timers per lane if automatic timing is not being used. One timer per lane if automatic timing is used.

Note: These rules were made flexible enough to meet the needs of small LMSC's that may only run one meet a year and have a small pool of officials to draw from; up to a much larger LMSC that runs multiple meets per year and has a very deep pool of officials.

Therefore, it is possible to run a meet with only two deck officials – a Referee and Starter, with each also serving as a Stroke and Turn Judge – and be in accordance with the rules. However, this represents only a **minimum** requirement. A very small meet could be run very effectively with only 2-4 officials, but most meets will probably need more officials.

Our objective as officials is to provide fair and equitable officiating for all swimmers in attendance at the meet. We also want to provide officials with an enjoyable experience, which ideally means:

- Having enough people to reasonably share the work load
- Taking adequate rest breaks
- Balancing the deck with officials that have different levels of experience
- Providing opportunities to train new officials when appropriate

If you over work your officials, or if your meet provides them with a bad experience; they will not work future meets for you and you may have problems attracting new officials.

There are several factors to consider when determining the “right” number of officials for any meet.

The size and length of the meet: A very small meet that lasts only a couple of hours may run smoothly with only 2-4 officials. For larger meets, it will be necessary to have additional stroke and turn judges and maybe additional starters and deck referees to handle all of the competition. There should be enough officials to provide everyone with sufficient breaks if a single session lasts several hours. Meets that run over multiple days obviously need enough officials to handle all of the sessions.

The venue: You may be able to staff a short course pool by placing stroke and turn judges only at the ends, but long course pools may require walking the sides of the pool, which means more officials. A 10-lane pool will require more officials than a 6-lane pool. The layout of the deck and shape of the pool may make for unique jurisdictions if it is difficult to walk around the pool, stand in locations which would enable officials to have a good view of multiple lanes, or make it difficult to rotate jurisdictions. Some bulkhead pools or oddly-shaped pools may present challenges for stroke and turn jurisdictions. Obviously, if the meet is using more than one course simultaneously, the number of officials which are needed will double.

Experience level of the officials available: New officials may not be comfortable handling multiple lanes or jurisdictions. An inexperienced Starter may not be able to double as a Stroke and Turn Judge effectively. How many trainees will you need to accommodate and are there enough senior officials with whom to assign them?

Availability of Officials: Is the meet in an area where it is difficult to recruit qualified officials? Are there multiple meets (USA-Swimming, NCAA, high school) close together on the schedule, making it difficult to recruit officials? Many times, Meet Directors must get by with less than the optimal number, but there are things that LMSCs can do to recruit officials. LMSC's should work closely with Meet Directors and local clubs to assess the needs in your area. The best advice to Meet Directors is to make sure that you appoint a qualified Meet Referee well in advance of the meet and work closely with this individual to determine needs and make the assignments. By rule, the Meet Referee is responsible for making all assignments, determining the appropriate jurisdictions, and overseeing officials at the meet. LMSC's may want to consider some specific staffing guidelines based on their meet schedules and the pool of available officials in your areas.

2. If the key is making sure to have a qualified Meet Referee, who is qualified to serve in this position?

USMS rules state the following:

103.2 Qualification of Officials

103.2.1 Referees shall be certified in this capacity by USA Swimming, USMS, YMCA or any other USMS-approved certifying body (Appendix B). Starters or stroke and turn judges certified by one of these bodies may serve as referees if they receive training on specific duties of the referee.

Once again, we should read the rules as a minimum requirement. Officials normally progress through various certification levels and positions as they gain more experience. Typically, a new deck official will start out as a Stroke and Turn Judge and then move on to Starter and eventually to Referee.

Certification at Referee means that an official has been deemed qualified to fulfill all of these duties, which includes assigning and overseeing all officials, deciding all questions relating to the actual conduct of the meet, and overruling any official on a point of rule interpretation. In addition, USA-Swimming has a national certification system whereby officials may earn an N2 or N3 level certification by working at designated meets and being observed by senior officials.

Therefore, it is preferable in most cases to have a certified Referee serve in the position of Meet Referee. Zone or LMSC Championship meets may benefit from Referees with N2 or N3 certification since this indicates experience at working championship-level meets. If it is not possible to find an official with this level of certification, Meet Directors must follow the principle of getting the most qualified person available. LMSC Officials Chairs may want to provide information to officials on USMS rules and rules differences if the officials are certified by another governing body.

3. What about Starters and Stroke and turn Judges?

Per the USMS rules:

103.2 Qualification of Officials

103.2.2 Starters and stroke and turn judges shall be certified in said capacities by USA Swimming, USMS, YMCA or any other USMS-approved certifying body (Appendix B). However, uncertified officials may perform the duties of such positions if they receive training in the specified duties of their positions and are under the direct supervision of a certified official.

The rules provide a lot of flexibility on certification of starters and stroke and turn judges. This gives LMSC's the flexibility to recruit and train officials, especially in areas where it may be difficult to recruit certified officials. Having all officials certified at the positions in which they are working is preferable and strongly recommended, but this may not always be possible.

Regardless of the rule requirements, no one benefits from assigning officials who do not have the knowledge to perform their duties. Use good judgment when assigning noncertified officials to positions. An official who has experience with a local recreation league, a USA-Swimming trainee who has not quite finished the certification process, or individuals who were previously certified may be good candidates. Referees should provide good instructions in pre-meet briefings and mentor less experienced officials during the meet. The assignments, jurisdictions, and instructions provided to officials should be designed to achieve fair and equitable officiating. If LMSCs find that they have to rely on non-certified officials on a regular basis, consider implementing a training and certification program within your LMSC.

4. I normally only ask officials from our club to work at our meets. Can I use officials from other clubs or LMSCs?

You not only may use other officials, you should! All officials at the meet are representatives of United States Masters Swimming, regardless of their host club affiliation or the organization by which they were certified. Once they step on deck, they are USMS officials. Staffing of officials at USMS sanctioned meets should always be approached in the spirit of getting the best crew available.

For USMS Sanctioned meets; it is required that the host have the latest copy of the USMS Rule Book available. It is strongly suggested that the host or Meet Referee order a sufficient number of USMS Mini Rule Books to distribute to the officials working the meet. The USMS web site also has documentation on the rule differences between USA and USMS. This information should be made available to all your officials and be part of the pre-meet officials briefing.

5. Ideally, how many officials should I have?



Two Examples of Officials Staffing Recommendations by Meet Size

Position	“Big” Meet Zone or Large LMSC Championship	“Small” Meet Local LMSC Meet
Meet Referee	Dedicated meet referee with advanced certification to oversee all functions.	An experienced official may be able to handle all of referee duties at a small meet.
Administrative Referee	Dedicated admin. Referee with advanced certification to oversee all administrative functions.	
Deck Referee	At least one per course at all times. Multiple deck referees for long or multi-session meets.	
Starters	At least one per course at all times. Multiple starters for long or multi-session meets. May designate a Head Starter.	One starter may be sufficient, but make sure to plan for adequate relief.
Chief Judges	One or two per course desired.	Enough to ensure fair and equitable judging and plan for adequate rotation and relief.
Stroke and Turn Judges	As many as you can get! Plan for adequate relief at long meets.	
Administrative Officials	As needed for check-in, seeding, timing system operation, preparation of results under the direction of the Admin Referee.	One timing system operator and one recorder may be sufficient.

Recommendations for Staffing a National Championship:

The meet host shall appoint a Meet Referee, an Administrative Referee, a Head Starter and a Chief Judge subject to qualification standards established by the USMS Officials committee.

The following positions shall be assigned for each session:

- A minimum of one deck referee for each course,
- A minimum of one starter for each course,
- A minimum one chief judge for each course.

A sufficient number of stroke and turn judges shall be assigned in order to provide fair and equitable jurisdictions per article 103.10.4. The number of stroke and turn judges assigned shall not go below the following minimum requirements:

- A minimum of two turn judges at each end of the pool, for each course, so that the number of lanes covered by each judges does not exceed 5 lanes.
- A minimum of one stroke judge on each side of a 50m pool.
- A minimum of one official at the 15m mark, for each course, at the start of each race.

In addition to the officials listed above, it is strongly recommended that additional officials be assigned in order to provide adequate relief for all officials during each session.

All officials shall be certified by USA Swimming, USMS, YMCA, or any other USMS-approved certifying body in the capacity to which they are assigned.

DECK STAFFING AND ASSIGNMENTS - LCM Configuration

Staffing the deck should use the table below as a guide:

# of S&T Officials	Start End	Turn End	Stroke Judges	Relief (use relief for RTO)
6	2	2	2 (1+1)	0
7	2	2	2 (1+1)	1
8	2	2	4 (2+2)	0
9	2	2	4 (2+2)	1
10	3	3	4 (2+2)	0
11	3	3	4 (2+2)	1
12	4	4	4 (2+2)	0
13	4	4	4 (2+2)	1
14	4	4	4 (2+2)	2 (each take an end and a side)
15	4	4	4 (2+2)	3 (1 for start end, 1 for turn end, 1 for stroke judges)
16	4	4	4 (2+2)	3 (1 for start end, 1 for turn end, 1 for stroke judges) + 1 reserve (jumps in to cover S&T making a call)
17	4	4	4 (2+2)	3 (1 for start end, 1 for turn end, 1 for stroke judges) + 2 reserve (jumps in to cover S&T making a call - one at each end)
18	4	4	4 (2+2)	4 (1 for start end, 1 for turn end, 1 for lane 8 stroke judges, 1 for lane 1 stroke judges) + 2 reserves as above
19	4	4	4 (2+2)	4 (1 for start end, 1 for turn end, 1 for lane 8 stroke judges, 1 for lane 1 stroke judges) + 2 reserves as above + 1 Head Timer
***20	8	8	4 (2+2)	0

*** For 20 or more (even numbers), consider two teams. Rotate teams by gender, event, or time - whatever is the most even.