

VHSL TYPICAL STARTING SEQUENCE

NFHS Rules for Whistle Preparatory Commands

REFEREE BLOWS SERIES OF SHORT WHISTLES TO ALERT TIMERS/SWIMMERS TO GET READY

ANNOUNCER (or Starter if no Announcer) ANNOUNCES EVENT NUMBER, EVENT NAME & HEAT NUMBER

REFEREE BLOWS LONG WHISTLE WHICH DIRECTS SWIMMERS TO STEP ONTO THE BLOCKS (for backstroke the long whistle directs swimmers to step into the pool after which a second long whistle directs the swimmers to place their feet) AND TURNS HEAT OVER TO STARTER WITH AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM

1. **"Take your mark"** -- *said conversationally with even or declining pitch*
2. **[Beep]** -- *given only after all swimmers are motionless*

Common Additional Starter Commands

- "Stand up." -- *used when all swimmers do not promptly assume a legal starting position*
- "Please respond promptly to the command" -- *used when swimmer is slow assuming a starting position*
- "Please hold your position motionless." -- *used to correct excessive motion*
- "Place your feet" -- *used optionally on backstroke starts—referee-starter agreement needed*
- "Your toes must be below the lip of the gutter" *(on backstroke starts)*
- "You must have at least one foot at the front of the block" -- *used when swimmer doesn't have at least one foot at the front of the block after the "Take your mark" command*
- "Lane __, please _____." -- *used to correct the action of a single swimmer; should only be used after the entire field has been corrected and the swimmer repeats problem*
- "Step down" -- *used to avoid swimmers standing on the blocks for too long*

NOTE: Whistle start protocols will be used at all district, regional and state championship meets

The use of verbal preparatory commands is **strongly** discouraged, but they may be used in dual meets where the officials working the meet are unfamiliar with the whistle preparatory command protocols and there is a risk that athlete starts might be negatively affected.

For more information, see starting protocols in the 2009-10 NFHS Rules Book on pages 74-75.