

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 completely below the water" *(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 2008-09 NFHS Rules Book.