



## **Supporting d/Deaf and Hard of hearing Athletes at Competitions**

All swimmers who are d/Deaf and Hard of hearing and require an accommodation at swim meets should be identified within the Swimming Canada Registration System by club registrars. The PSOs and club registrars (for their own club) can produce a Hard of Hearing Report.

### **Support at competitions: best practices**

1. The Meet Information Package should state what accommodations are available to support swimmers who are d/Deaf and Hard of hearing at that competition with preference to the use of strobe/starting lights, when such is available at the facility or if a compatible system is available for their temporary use from the provincial sport organization (PSO) or another club. See Meet Information Package wording below.
2. Coaches/clubs should notify meet management **when meet entries are submitted** advising what accommodation is requested based on the available options outlined in the Meet Information Package.
3. Where possible, swimmers should be accommodated without moving from their seeded lane. If a strobe light is not available in the swimmer's seeded lane, or at all, the Meet Referee/Competition Coordinator should consult with the swimmer's coach to determine the best way forward which may include a change in lane or other accommodation.
4. Coaches should work together with the Meet Manager and/or Meet Referee/Competition Coordinator to maintain the consistency of the accommodation for the entirety of the competition.
5. If the accommodation is to be non-verbal instruction by a support person (i.e. ankle hold), the swimmer (or their coach) shall identify their preferred person and such person shall be duly registered with Swimming Canada and the PSO.
6. Officials should be trained and briefed as required so an accommodation can be provided while respecting the privacy of the swimmer as much as possible.
7. Coaches should work together with the Meet Manager and/or Meet Referee/Competition Coordinator to support d/Deaf or Hard of hearing athletes that require an alternative to using a bell to signal the final lap in distance events.



Options may include the use of a lap counter (if available), or a kick board placed in the water (provided that this is done in a safe manner and the board does not touch the swimmer).

## **Notes regarding support options**

### **1. Start signal conveyed by non-verbal instruction by support staff**

If requested by the swimmer/coach, swimmers may have a support staff holding/touching their ankle until the starting signal is given. For backstroke starts, the support staff may hold/touch the arm or hand.

Guidelines:

- a. Cannot give momentum to the swimmer on the start;
- b. Isn't a balancing aid;
- c. Doesn't interfere with other swimmers (undue sound, movement, etc.)

### **2. Start signal conveyed by a strobe placed at the lane**

When using a strobe:

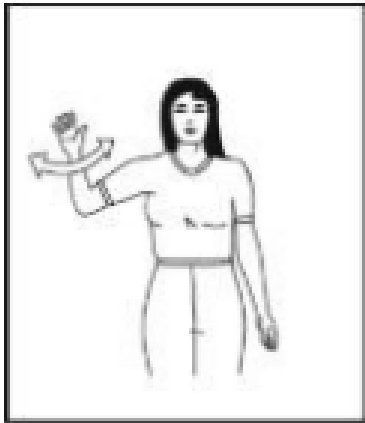
- a. The Meet Manager and/or Meet Referee/Competition Coordinator should ensure that they have officials trained in the use of strobes available in sessions where strobes will be required.
- b. Testing of the strobe at the lane should be done prior to the session. The strobe should be placed beside the block a few heats in advance to ensure it is functioning properly.
- c. If there are physical limitations on the lanes where the strobe can be placed, the Meet Referee/Competition Coordinator should consult with the coach before the session to come to an acceptable solution. If possible, the swimmer should not be moved from their seeded lane once the session begins.
- d. When possible, consult with the swimmer or coach ahead of time about which side of the block the swimmer would prefer the strobe be placed. This may not be possible in all circumstances depending on physical restrictions, the need to accommodate more than one swimmer in a heat, etc.
- e. A designated official should move the strobe to the lane before the race and remove it again afterwards.

- f. Meet Managers and/or Meet Referees/Competition Coordinators should work with the coach/club to put a suitable backup plan in place in case there are technical issues using the strobe during the meet.

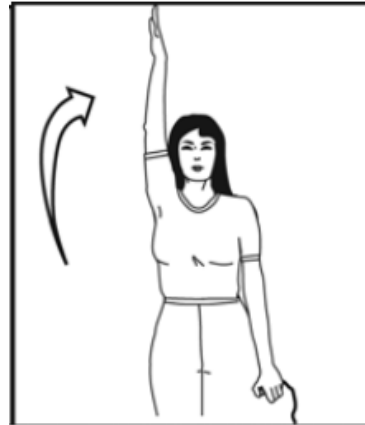
### 3. Start signal conveyed by hand signals

If requested by the athlete, hand signals may be provided by the starter or referee. Information on using hand signals can be found in the Starter and Referee Clinics.

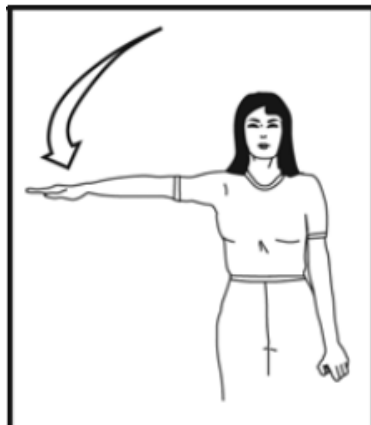
Requests for hand signals **MUST** be made in advance so that the session referee and starter are prepared.



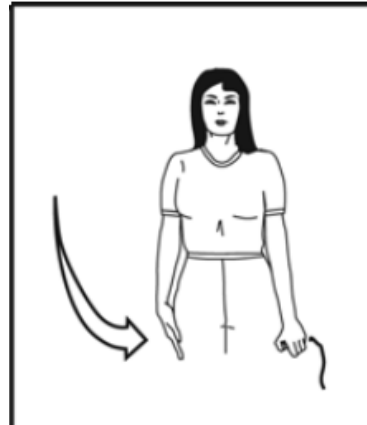
1. Twist hand at chin level  
(short whistle, if required)



2. Arm overhead (long whistle): swimmer steps onto starting block



3. Arm moves to shoulder level: Starter command  
“Take your marks”



4. Arm moves to side of body: Starting signal is given



## **Meet Information Package Wording to support d/Deaf and Hard of hearing athletes**

The following wording should be included in meet packages so that options for accommodation are clearly outlined.

This competition can provide the following accommodations for swimmers who are d/Deaf and Hard of hearing: (list those that apply)

1. Non-verbal instruction provided by a \*support person
2. An external strobe light
3. Hand signals given by the starter/referee

\*Note that the support person must show a status of “Registered” as support staff in the Swimming Canada registration system.