

Guide to Becoming a Certified USA Swimming Official

Introduction

Volunteering as a **USA Swimming Official** is one of the most valuable ways to support your swimmer and the sport. Officials are responsible for ensuring that all competitions are conducted fairly and according to the rules. This guide walks new parents and volunteers through the steps required to become a certified USA Swimming Official—covering all officiating positions, including **Stroke and Turn Judge, Starter, Chief Judge, Deck Referee, and Administrative Official**.

Step 1: Understand the Role of USA Swimming Officials

Officials form the backbone of every sanctioned meet. They uphold the rules and ensure consistent, fair competition across all levels of swimming.

Common Official Roles

- **Stroke and Turn Judge** – Observes swimmers for compliance with stroke, turn, and finish rules.
- **Starter** – Ensures fair and consistent starts for every race.
- **Chief Judge** – Supervises Stroke and Turn Judges, reviews disqualifications, and assists the Referee.
- **Deck Referee** – Manages the deck, ensures all rules are followed, and has the final authority on disqualifications.
- **Administrative Official (AO)** – Oversees entries, results, timing, and official documentation of the meet.

No prior officiating or swimming experience is required—training and mentoring are provided for every role.

Step 2: Create a USA Swimming Account

1. Visit <https://www.usaswimming.org>.
2. Click **Login/Register**, click **Create A Login** to create a USA Swimming account.

User Info

Please supply the following information.

Legal First Name*	Preferred Name	Middle Name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Legal Last Name*	Email* (This will also be your username)	Birth Date*
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Month <input type="text"/> Day <input type="text"/> Year <input type="text"/>
Member Id (Use to link to an existing person)		
<input type="text"/>		
Password Requirements		
<input type="radio"/> No less than 10 characters		
<input type="radio"/> 1 number		
<input type="radio"/> 1 special character		
<input type="radio"/> 1 lowercase character		
<input type="radio"/> 1 uppercase character		
<input type="radio"/> Not equal to email		
<input type="radio"/> No spaces		
Password*	Confirm Password*	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
<input type="button" value="CONTINUE"/>	<input type="button" value="BACK"/>	

3. Complete your profile, including your full legal name, date of birth, and club affiliation.

Step 3: Register as a Non-Athlete Member

Officials are classified as **Non-Athlete Members** within USA Swimming. Registration is processed through your **Local Swimming Committee (LSC)**—the regional body that governs clubs and officials in your area.

To register:

1. Visit your LSC’s website (find your LSC [here](#)). CGDB is in Eastern under Virginia Swimming
2. Locate the **Officials** or **Membership** section.
3. Complete the **Non-Athlete Membership Application** and pay the annual fee.

Your LSC will then process your membership, which provides access to background checks, training, and certification tracking.

Step 4: Complete Required Safety Certifications

Before beginning your training, complete the following safety requirements:

Logon to your USA Swimming account, <https://www.usaswimming.org>.

- Click on the “Education – Course Catalog” tab

- Select “Officials” and then “Membership Requirements” in the window that opens.

The screenshot shows the USA Swimming membership requirements page. At the top, there are six circular icons representing different user groups: All, Coaches, Safe Sport, Officials (which is selected and highlighted with a dark blue background), Athletes, and Parents / Volunteers. Below these icons are five filter buttons: All, NCAA, Certification, Recertification, and Membership Requirements (which is highlighted in red). The main content area displays six training modules in a grid. The first four modules are 'Athlete Protection Training' (including three refresher courses), each with a description and a 'VIEW INFO' button. The fifth module is 'Background Check', showing a 'Complete - Passed' status and an expiration date of 10/31/2026. The sixth module is 'Concussion Protocol Training', which is required for all USA Swimming Coaches and Officials. Each module has a 'VIEW INFO' button at the bottom.

1. Background Check

- Conducted through **IntelliCorp** via your USA Swimming account.
- All payments for background checks are made through IntelliCorp, USA Swimming’s background check provider.
- Valid for two years.
- Required for all non-athlete members.

2. Athlete Protection Training (APT)

- Select “Athlete Protection Training for Non-Athletes.”

- Must be renewed **annually**.

3. Concussion Protocol Training (CPT)

- Select “**Concussion Protocol Training**”
- Doesn’t Expire.

Step 5: Take the Foundations of Officiating Course

This introductory online course explains the structure of USA Swimming, meet operations, and the roles of officials.

Logon to your USA Swimming account, <https://www.usaswimming.org>.

- Click on the “Education – Course Catalog” tab
- Select “Officials” and then “Membership Requirements” in the window that opens.
- Search for **Foundations of Officiating** and complete it before your first clinic.



- Save your completion certificate.

Step 6: Attend the Officials Clinic for Your Desired Position

After completing the Foundations course, attend a clinic specific to the officiating role you’re pursuing. Clinics are offered by your LSC and can be **in person** or **virtual**.

Available Clinics

- **Stroke and Turn Judge**
- **Starter**
- **Chief Judge**
- **Deck Referee**
- **Administrative Official (AO)**

Each clinic covers the rules, responsibilities, and procedures for that position. Upcoming clinic schedules are available on your LSC's website or through your Officials Chair.

Available Online:

Available through <https://university.usaswimming.org>.

- **Stroke and Turn**
- **Administrative Official**
- **Starter**
- **Referee**

Step 7: Complete the Online Open-Book Test

Following your clinic:

1. Log into your USA Swimming account.
2. Navigate to **Officials > Online Testing**.
3. Choose and complete the test that matches your clinic (e.g., "Stroke & Turn/Timer" or "Administrative Official").

A score of 80% or higher is generally required to pass. You may reference the **USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Handbook** during the test.

Step 8: Apprentice on Deck

Practical experience is a key part of certification. You'll complete a series of **on-deck apprentice sessions** under supervision.

Request Apprentice Training Card

Request an apprentice card through the VSI link below, by filling out this online form after completing training for specific role. Apprentice Card will be emailed to you and you will need to print it out and have it with you throughout your apprentice sessions.

[Apprentice Card Request Form](#)

Typical Apprenticeship Requirements

- **Stroke and Turn Judge:** 4–6 sessions.
- **Starter:** 3–5 sessions after certification as Stroke and Turn.
- **Chief Judge:** 3–5 sessions after experience as Stroke and Turn or Starter.
- **Deck Referee:** 4–6 sessions after serving as Starter or Chief Judge.
- **Administrative Official:** 4-6 sessions in meet operations and timing.

During each session, you'll shadow experienced officials, perform supervised duties, and receive feedback. Your mentor will sign an **Apprentice Record Card** documenting your progress.

Step 9: Certification and Approval

Once you've:

- Completed membership and safety requirements,
- Attended the required clinic or complete online course,
- Passed the online test, and
- Fulfilled your apprentice sessions,
- Submit your apprentice card to your LSC District Chair. CGBD is in VSI Southern District. **Genny Kimbel** (gennykimbel@gmail.com) is the District Chair.

[Officials Committee](#)

Your LSC Officials Chair will review your materials and issue your **USA Swimming Official Certification**. You'll receive credentials authorizing you to officiate at sanctioned meets.

Step 10: Maintain Your Certification

To remain active, all officials must:

- Renew **Non-Athlete Membership** annually.
- Complete **Athlete Protection Training** each year.

- Renew **Background Check** every two years.
- Participate in a minimum number of sessions per year (varies by LSC).
- Attend **re-certification clinics** or rule updates when required.
- **VSI** Re-certification process is outlined here: [Recertification Process](#)

Officials are also encouraged to stay involved in training, mentoring, and advancement opportunities.

Step 11: Advance to Higher Positions

Officials can progress through a structured pathway of advancement:

1. **Starter**
2. **Chief Judge**
3. **Deck Referee**
4. **Meet Referee or National Certification**

Each level requires additional experience, testing, and evaluations, all coordinated through your LSC Officials Committee.

Helpful Resources

- **USA Swimming Officials Page:** <https://www.usaswimming.org/officials>
- **USA Swimming Learn Platform:** <https://university.usaswimming.org>
- **USA Swimming Rules and Regulations:** Available under “Resources” on the USA Swimming site.
- **LSC Directory:** <https://www.usaswimming.org/about/lsc-websites>
- **Virginia Swimming (VSI) Officials:**
<https://www.gomotionapp.com/team/va/page/officials/training-for-officials>
- **VSI** becoming an Official reference documents.
 - [Administrative Official](#)
 - [Stroke and Turn Official](#)
 - [Stroke and Turn Official Junior](#)
 - [Chief Judge](#)

- [Starter](#)
- [Referee](#)

Summary Checklist

Requirement	Description	Completed
USA Swimming Account	Create or update online profile	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-Athlete Membership	Register through your LSC	<input type="checkbox"/>
Background Check	Via Sterling Volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Athlete Protection Training	Complete annually	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foundations of Officiating	Complete online	<input type="checkbox"/>
Position-Specific Clinic/Course	Attend clinic or complete online course for specific role	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online Test	Pass applicable test	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apprenticeship Sessions	Complete required deck sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Certification Approval	Issued by LSC Officials Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>

Conclusion

Becoming a USA Swimming Official gives you a front-row seat to the sport, helps ensure fairness and safety for all athletes, and supports your local swim community. Whether you start as a Stroke and Turn Judge or pursue higher certification levels, your contribution directly shapes the quality and success of every meet.

Welcome to the deck! —you're an essential part of the team that makes competitive swimming possible.