

# Why Become a USA / Wisconsin Swimming Official?

Have you ever thought about becoming an official?

Are you thinking about it now?

SEA needs you!



## Did you know.....?

The cost that you pay for your swimmer to be a member of this team is one of the lowest in the area. One big part of keeping the swimmer cost down is by running meets hosted by the team. Without the revenue from these meets, your swimmer fees would be double or triple what they are currently. The team needs to have a solid core of team officials to help support these meets in order to continue to keep our swimmer fees low and at reasonable cost.

## Some myths about officiating

**MYTH:** I could never be so mean as to DQ a little kid!

In reality, the officials are not out there to “disqualify swims”. They are there to “qualify swims”. Occasionally, officials do need to issue a DQ and, quite honestly, it is a bit difficult at times.

As a parent, have you ever had a situation where you have tried to educate your child on something and it goes right on past them? Until one day, someone else tells them the exact same thing and they take it to heart? You would not believe how many times that I have had coaches (and swimmers) come up to me and thank me for confirming something via a DQ call that they have been preaching to the swimmer but fell on deaf ears.

Additionally, if the swimmer is made aware of a particular weakness or rule violation and it gets called, they have time to work on it and improve so that they are not called on it in a state qualifying or championship meet. I always keep it as a goal to help our swimmers be properly prepared so they do not get a DQ violation at a Championship meet. Tough love.

**MYTH:** I do not know enough to become an official and I do not want to embarrass myself.

When I started officiating, I knew almost nothing about competitive swimming. I was taken under the wings of some of our existing team officials plus a few from other teams and they helped and mentored me a lot.

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The way that USA Swimming has set up the officials program is one of baby steps, mentoring and continuous education. You are never just put out there on an island. You always are being coached and helped.

The USA Swimming officiating network is one of the best organizations that I have ever had the privilege to be associated with. I assure you that you will never be treated with anything but support and friendship. If there ever is a situation in which you feel uncomfortable, there is a very detailed procedure for investigation and if appropriate, it will be addressed by the Wisconsin Swimming Officials Committee.

**MYTH:** [The athletes and coaches don't really care about officials and are resentful to them.](#)

Building relationships and being helpful is extremely rewarding. Did you ever think about what is like for a young swimmer to go to a large meet for the first time, away from their home pool? It can be overwhelming for them. For the athletes to see a familiar face on deck, one that they can go up to and feel comfortable asking a question is invaluable and may make the difference between them having a positive experience or not.

The same goes for the coaches. As you get to know them, they will often come to you for a clarification or help with an issue. You also meet officials from other teams, learn from them, and develop supportive relationships and friendships. Mutual respect.

**MYTH:** [I really do not have time for this and cannot make the commitment. If I become an official, I will be forced to work every meet.](#)

I assure you that this is not the case. Many officials voluntarily work way more than the minimum 4 sessions annually for Wisconsin swimming. No official is ever told that they have to work a meet. It is because we want to and know that are our team will likely need the reciprocal support from other team's officials at our team hosted meets.

Many of you have multiple children, other commitments and need to divide your time, just need a break, or want to volunteer in a different role for a change. This is understandable. Additionally, there have been trainees or officials that have started the program and decide that it was just not for them. Or, have officiated for a year or more and decided that they no longer wish to be an official. In any case, individuals are thanked for their support of the team and wished well. The invitation is always open for them to rejoin officiating if they change their minds or are looking for hobby or somewhere to volunteer their time.

Remember, it is all in support of the young athletes to participate in competitive swimming and benefit from all that swimming on a team can provide. The bottom line is: the more officials the team has, the more coverage we can be provided, the more relief can be provided, and the less each one of us needs to help out.

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## Three main meet objectives

1. Safety of the swimmers
2. Fairness to allow everyone to compete on an even level
3. Fun: Quite simply, the student-athletes should be having fun otherwise why should they be here? This includes being properly educated in the rules, knowing how the meet is being run, and being respectful of everyone around them. A good official and officiating crew create an environment conducive to these principals by their presence, by their conduct, and by having fun volunteering their service. Officials are qualifying swims by applying proper protocols for the meet.

If you have questions or are even slightly interested in becoming an official, please come up and talk to me or one of our other team officials. Attend a training clinic and decide afterwards your level of interest going forward.

Information is distributed to the team as clinics are scheduled. If a few people are interested and there is no pending clinic, the team will make arrangements to schedule a clinic. So, please express your interest even if you see a clinic that does not fit into your schedule.

There is also a wealth of information available at [usaswimming.org](http://usaswimming.org), [wisconsinswimming.org](http://wisconsinswimming.org), and by browsing for specific swimming officiating topics on the internet for additional reference.

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Credits: Chadd Chatterton, PX3 Head Official and Wisconsin Swimming Officials Committee member, providing the source context for this document and gracious support to our team.