



stowmarketswimmingclub.co.uk

BECOMING AN OFFICIAL.

Stowmarket, like any swimming club, always needs officials, a.k.a. judges. If you are older than fourteen and have two thumbs you, too, can become one.

What Does an Official Do?

Officials are the people you see at galas wearing white. They range from time-keepers up to referees. At our level of competition they are all unpaid volunteers. Without them there would not be any competition. Different levels of licensed meets have a required number of officials.

Most galas now have automated timing (touch boards). However, they require a back-up with button activated timing finishes and hand-held stopwatches. Swimmers' styles must conform to set rules and someone has to ensure swimmers touch the ends when doing turns at the end of lengths. Starts have to be managed and the whole thing properly refereed. This is what the officials do.

Officials are a crucial part of competition swimming.

Why Become an Official?

Officials are crucial to any club and without them we cannot host galas and meets. For away galas, too, it is expected that clubs sending swimmers to compete also provide some officials. No club can have too many officials but the sad fact is that most have too few. At Stowmarket we are a club that relies on volunteers and need all the help we can get.

- Being an official makes you more involved and can identify more with the club (and is far less time consuming than being involved in the club's administration, say).
- Attending galas is more interesting, too. There are no dull lulls between your child's or children's events.
- There is a terrific feeling of satisfaction at the end of a gala in being part of something that made it a success.
- There is an *esprit de corps* among officials from all clubs.
- Being an official increases your technical knowledge of swimming.
- Being an official gets you close to the action.
- There is no entry fee to galas. Lunch and tea is provided and at some venues there are free parking privileges.

Upon completing the course and making a commitment to officiate at future meets (home and away) the club will:

- Present you with a club white shirt and provide any additional shirts at cost price.
- Reimburse the cost of the training book.

What Does the Training Involve?

The basic qualification is Judge Level 1 (known as JL1). It starts with two *ASA/Swim England* book-based sessions led by our qualified referee covering time-keeping and turns taking 1½ to 2 hours each. The turns session might also involve some observations of turns poolside during a training session.

The main knowledge and experience, however, is gained from attending galas and being assigned to a qualified official as a mentor. No one expects you to know it all and no one will judge you. You will, however, get to watch plenty of events and start to see when starts, turns and finishes are not performed properly. You will likely start out with becoming qualified as a time-keeper. This merely involves demonstrating the ability to record times on a stopwatch within a few tenths of a second of the official time. As for judging turns the qualified official will be responsible for reporting any infringements so there is no pressure placed on you. Over time you will grow in confidence and soon enough you will be itching to be allowed to manage a lane on your own. After attending sufficient galas and competing a log book you will likely attend a level 2 meet and be assessed by a suitable qualified referee. The assessment is taken seriously but handled in good humour and a friendly fashion.

After acting as a JL1 for sufficient meets there will then be opportunities to train as a JL2 (that includes judging strokes and finishes), a starter and even, ultimately, a referee but let's not get ahead of ourselves!

Interested? Here is what to do next:

Please declare your interest to a committee member at the club desk. If you would like to know more or have any questions you will be put in touch with one of our existing officials so you can have an informal chat with them. Once you are happy to commit to training we will put your name on a list and advise when the next course is being run.

In order to show a commitment to see the training through we charge all candidates the cost of the book (approx. £10) but this is reimbursed by the club upon being qualified as a JL1.

Equipment.

Finally, a word on equipment you will need. Officials are required to wear white shirts, trousers/skirts and shoes although at the lower level meets the trousers may be shorts and sandals are allowed. You will need to provide all this yourself.

Usually clubs have a supply of stopwatches but most, if not all, judges prefer to buy their own along with a clip board of some sort. Later you may need a whistle. That, though, is about it.