Thank-you for your interest in becoming a certified USA-Swimming Official in Pacific Swimming. We hope you find this a very exciting and rewarding volunteer position, with lots of opportunities to learn about competitive swimming, develop new skills and friendships and become part of your child’s swimming journey.

The purpose of this document is to provide an all-inclusive guide for people interested in becoming certified entry level (L1) Stroke & Turn OR Admin Official in Pacific Swimming. We have also included an estimated time commitment for each activity. On average, we have found it takes 3-4 months for a person to complete all certification requirements, depending on how active they are in pursuing their certification. With this said, you can easily be on deck working as an apprentice (T1) official within a month or two.

PART I of this document provides a summary of steps (Certification at a Glance), followed by PART II which includes tips, and other key pieces of information that will help a person efficiently move through the steps.

If you have any questions about the certification process, please contact your Zone 1S Official’s Chairs – Gary Arita, Jennifer McKennan.

PART I - CERTIFICATION PROCESS AT A GLANCE:

Apprentice Official (T1) Requirements

An Apprentice Official is a person who has completed the basic administrative and training requirements to work on deck supervised by a senior official. You are always welcome and encouraged to shadow a certified official at Age Group meets while you are working through this process. Please see Part II for more specifics on each item.

1) Attend a Clinic for formal training (time commitment – half a day)

2) Shadow at Swim Meets (time commitment – session at a meet is approx. 4 hours, with breaks) – this can take place in parallel with the other apprentice activities.

3) Register with USA-S as a non-Athlete Member (time commitment - 5 min)

4) Complete Level II Background Check (time commitment – 5 min)
   [https://www.usaswimming.org/background-checks](https://www.usaswimming.org/background-checks)

5) Take Athlete Protection Training on USA-S Website (time commitment – 1hr)

6) Pass Online Certification Test – Certification Stroke & Turn/Timer OR Certification Admin Official (time commitment – 1.5 to 2 hrs)
Certified Official (L1) Requirements

Becoming a Certified (L1 or higher) Official means that you have completed the required administrative and training work as described in the Apprentice step above and have gained sufficient experience “working” as an official at swim meets. The following steps are required to finalize your L1 certification.

1) Work as an apprentice 6-10 sessions (includes sessions being evaluated)

2) Receive two evaluations from two 2-day meets (work both days) with recommendation from the Meet Referee for promotion

The final decision on promotion to an L1 is made by the Zone Official’s chairs who take into consideration multiple factors, as described in the certification criteria on the Pacific Swimming website (see link in part II). The goal is to ensure a person receives enough training and support before they are certified. Working as an apprentice allows a person to continue to receive guidance and feedback, and helps develop confidence on deck.

PART II – CERTIFICATION PROCESS TIPS, ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Official’s Clinic

Pacific Swimming holds an annual Official’s Clinic each Fall (October). This clinic is attended by officials and trainees through-out Pacific Swimming and offers multiple classes including basic Stroke & Turn, Admin Official/Referee, as well as more senior level classes such as starter, referee. These is also a good opportunity to meet officials in all Zones.

Zone 1S offers an annual clinic as well, which provides hands-on training using wet-clinics and training meets. This clinic takes place in the January/February timeframe.

Additionally, Zone 1S offers mini-clinics through the season usually at swim meets. Basic Stroke & Turn is often taught at these clinics, with time spent on the pool deck observing the meet.

Please contact your Zone Official’s Chairs for more information regarding upcoming clinic.
USA-S Non-Athlete Registration

USA-S Membership provides swimmers, coaches, chaperones AND officials with the insurance they need to work on a pool deck.

You will be required to register annually (each calendar year) as an OFFICIAL (check-box) with USA-S. The cost of this registration is $68 per year. For those of you registering for the first time in the Fall (after September 1st), your membership will be good through the remainder of the current calendar year and through the end of the following calendar year. Some teams do have programs in place to cover the cost of this membership – please check with your team for details.

NOTE: Your membership card will NOT be sent to you until you also complete your background check and Athlete Protection Training (see below)

Background Check

Officials (as well as coaches) are required to pass a Level II background check every two years. The background check takes 5 minutes to initiate, and results are returned usually within 5 days or less.

The initial background check costs $39, and the renewals are $19. Pacific swimming will reimburse officials for this item after a person completes their certification. Please make sure you hold on to your receipt. To be reimbursed, you will need to fill out a check request form and return to the Z1S Treasurer.


Athlete Protection Training

As an official, you will be first and foremost a Safety Officer.

Athlete Protection Training (APT) is a class that USA-S has put together on what USA-S members need to know and do to ensure we keep swimming safe for our swimmers, coaches, etc. This is about an hour video with a couple of questions at the end.

NOTE: To initiate the training, you will need to look-up your membership information. You cannot take the APT training until your USA-S Non-Athlete Registration has been received and entered into the system. This process takes 1-2 weeks after you mail your membership to the Pacswim registrar. Please contact your Official’s Chair to confirm if your member has been received.

Online Certification Test

USA-S has online certification for the various Official Role. To receive your T1 certification as a Stroke and Turn, you will need to pass with 80% correct the Certification Stroke & Turn/Timer Test, as an Admin Official, the Admin Official Test (different from Admin Referee). The Test takes about 1.5 to 2 hours and you will need the USA-S Rulebook which is online (see link below). Thereafter, the re-
certification test must be taken every two years to keep your certification up to date.

The test can be suspended and resumed; hence you do NOT need to take the test in one time slot. Another nice feature is that you can print out the test and take it online, and then go back and add your answers into the system. You can also take the test as many times as you need to pass.

Note: please confirm which year’s rule book the test is based upon and use it accordingly. The current test is based upon the 2016 rule book, and this could change to 2017.


Shadowing and Working as an Apprentice

Shadowing is the process of observing a certified official working as an official, which includes calling infractions, writing DQ slips, talking to swimmers. For AOs this includes overseeing the check-in process, runners, validating/adjusting times. The shadow will not be judging swimmers or writing slips but has the luxury to ask the official questions about infractions, strokes, etc. This is a first step in the learning process, and we encourage people to start shadowing after they have completed a clinic and have gained basic knowledge.

Working as an apprentice means that you have completed the basic training requirements and admin requirements which allows you to work on deck, and you are now developing/practicing officiating skills.

Your USA-S membership with background check and APT is similar to your insurance, and your T1 certification is similar to your learner’s permit, and your certification is your driver’s license.

If you would like to work as a shadow or apprentice, please attend the Official Meeting before the meet starts – between 8:15 to 8:30. If you are a shadow the Referee/Chief Judge will assign you to an official to observe, or as an apprentice, you will be assigned to a team. It is a good idea to contact the Meet Referee and let them know that you would like to attend and where you are in your development.

NOTE: Championship Meets such as JOs, Far Westerns, Brian Malick Zone Champs, do not allow shadows/apprentices to attend.
Evaluations

To complete your L1 certification, you are required to receive two evaluations with recommendations for promotion working for two or more days at each meet.

During the first day, the official will receive coaching and feedback on items to work on to continue development of their officiating skills. On the second day, the evaluator will confirm that the official is making an attempt to acknowledge and implement the feedback. As an official, your development will continue after you receive your L1 certification, and it is important that you are open to mentorship and coaching from other officials – this is how we all get better.

There is a set of criteria that an official must meet to become certified. As an L1 official there is no expectation that an official knows everything, but understands the basics and are developing the skills they need to be successful. The Official’s chair will make the decision on promotion based upon feedback from the evaluation AND other information to determine if the candidate meets the required certification criteria.

When you are ready to request an evaluation, please let the Meet Referee or designee (e.g. Chief Judge) know that you are interested in being evaluated at the Official’s meeting BEFORE the meet starts. Make sure your request comes in before the session starts, you cannot ask for an evaluation during or after the session is over.

Certification/Promotion Criteria + Eval Form – Stroke and Turn


Certification/Promotion Criteria + Eval Form – Admin Official


Tips for successful evaluations:

Work a couple of sessions as an apprentice BEFORE requesting your initial evaluation. This give you time to DEVELOP your skills while being mentored, and reduces your stress level.

Work a couple sessions between your initial final evaluations. Take the feedback you learn as part of your first evaluation, and practice these skills at a couple of meets. As for lots of feedback and coaching.
Make sure that you meet with your evaluator after the first day to receive items for you to work on, and meet with your evaluator to review your evaluation before you leave.

Evaluations are not Pass/Fail but to provide you with information where you are in your development process.

Once you have completed your L1 certification, you will receive an email from USA-S informing you of the change in your status. Attached to the email, you will have your updated certification card. Please make sure your print this out and bring it with you to meets. The meet referee will be checking this info.

**Online Tracking Tool (OTS)**

On the USA-S website, all information about officials including certifications, membership, certification tests, sessions worked activities such as clinic attended is tracked using the Online Tracking Tool or OTS.

To access OTS, you will need to create an account on USA-S. When you receive your membership card, you need to link your account to your USA-S ID (combination of characters in your name plus your birthdate).

It is important as an official that you stay on top of your activity, certifications, etc. In particular, monitor when your background check or APT expires, that your tests are up to date (every two years), and that meets worked and clinic attended have been accurately enter into the system.

The link to OTS is below, and to see your data you will need to login to your account and have your membership ID linked.