

After officiating many, many USA-Swimming , Masters, high school and collegiate meets, over the years, there are a couple of things that Masters just can't seem to learn, while the other groups, including high school swimmers seem to learn fairly easily. I'm going to take a few paragraphs here to go over them again.

### **BASIC START RULES FOR COMPETING (The Whistle System)**

For some reason, Masters have a very difficult time remembering what all the whistles mean.

1. Multiple string of whistles-stand behind your block, and take off your parka, and adjust your goggles.  
The referee and starter are checking that everyone in the heat is there and ready. You should have already checked in with the timer.
2. One single, long whistle-step up onto the block, or into the water, if this is a backstroke event, or you are starting in the water.
3. "Take Your Mark", bend into your start position. You must be steady and as still as you can be. We are not holding you a specific length of time. Sometimes, a swimmer in lane 2 may be coming down way too slow, or the swimmer in lane 8 didn't hear, and we are waiting for him to come down.
4. If you hear "STAND", that means that one or more swimmers are not being steady and are moving around. In many cases, the Starter is trying to stop someone from having a false start/DQ! When you hear the "Stand" command, you get step back or even off the block, if you want.
5. BEEP-go, dive off the block, and race.

Getting up on the block or in the water without being invited by the referee is very dangerous!! In Masters, many times swimmers are crossing lanes to get to a ladder to get out. We have had a swimmer, get up on the block, before being invited by the whistles. That swimmer fell forward and just barely missed landing on a swimmer who was swimming across to get to the ladder!!!

**Please wait until the referee whistles you onto the blocks or into the water!!**