



## Invigilation - The Act of Being Vigilant

*By: Wayne Shulby and Kathleen Scandary*

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Contrary to what many may think, invigilation is not a made-up word. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines it as "*to supervise students at an examination*" and the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "*to be watchful, watch over, and keep watch.*"

What does this have to do with invigilating at a swim meet? A team of two, a deck referee and a starter are assigned to this role for each session. Invigilation is done only in the hour prior to the start of competition, and it is performed at levels from Local Swim Committee (LSC) meets to international World Aquatics meets. The invigilator has several responsibilities: keep equipment out of the competition pool, open the pace and sprint/start lanes, and be available to coaches who need information or have concerns.

Why do we keep equipment out of the pool? In some cases, it may be to protect the timing equipment from being damaged, but it is also due to the safety of the athletes competing in the upcoming session. The swimmers are from many different teams, and each team has their own individual warm-up program with different equipment, making these less-than-organized moments in the water. Coaches may have other distractions during this time and are not always able to keep an eye on their athletes. Invigilators have witnessed injuries such as broken fingers, lacerations, and even more severe life-threatening issues requiring their assistance.

The opening of lanes for sprint and pace are usually defined and are at a specified time in the warm-up procedures. It is not unusual, however, for a coach to request a sprint/pace lane or just one for starts earlier than the scheduled time. One may feel a little reluctant to open a lane early when the pool is crowded. Dan McAllen, in his role of vice president of Program Operations, once advised that if you can grant a request for a coach, it is worth the goodwill developed. It may be surprising how quickly these lanes fill and stay busy during warmups. If you open lanes early, do so one at a time by first clearing the lane. If the demand is evident, open a second, and so on.

Invigilators also provide visibility on the deck for coaches to get information or relay any concerns they may have to the right person (the meet referee, administrative referee, or facilities management). The invigilators might also be assigned to take declared false starts.

Don't look at invigilation as an obligation, but as an opportunity to get to know the coaches and athletes!