

1 ~ STARTS & FINISHES

1.1 Forward Start

For the forward start, swimmers will receive the command “step up” after the whistle is blown. Then they will get the command “take your mark”.

1.1a

With referee/starter permission, a swimmer may start in the water. The swimmer shall step in the water feet first, must be stationary and have at least one hand in contact with the starting platform or end wall. A backstroke start is not permitted.

1.2 Backstroke Start

For the backstroke start, swimmers will receive the command “step in” after the whistle is blown - “place your feet” is used often. Referee/starter can warn swimmers about the swimmer lowering their feet if they are curled over the gutter.

1.3

Subject to the discretion of the referee/starter, (referee and starter in championship meets), an infraction/false start occurs when a swimmer:

- a. unnecessarily delays reporting for the start or assuming a starting position;
- b. does not step into water feet-first for an in-water start;
- c. does not remain stationary immediately prior to the start. Other swimmers are to be released by the starter’s command, “Stand up;” or
- d. leaves the mark before the starting signal.

1.4

When one or more swimmers have obtained an unfair advantage at the start, the race shall continue without recall.

a. If the recall signal is activated inadvertently, the race is recalled and the referee/starter (referee and starter in championship meets) may disqualify the swimmer(s) leaving the mark before the starting signal. This is if the starter activates the recall and there was a false start. The recall should not be used but sometimes it happens.

b. The referee/starter may recall the entire heat when he/she is not satisfied that the race was properly started. It is not necessary to charge any swimmer with a false start under these conditions.

1.5

For the forward start, swimmers may stand up or step off the starting platform after the command “Stand up,” but they shall not unnecessarily enter the water nor delay a new start.

1.6

For the backstroke start, swimmers may release from the starting position after the command “Stand up,” but they shall not leave the starting area nor unnecessarily delay a new start.

1.7 Finishes

To finish the race, the swimmer shall contact the finish end in the manner prescribed.

2 ~ Freestyle

2.1 The forward start shall be used.

2.2 Any body position, stroke and kick is permitted and any combination of styles may be used.

2.3 The turn requires that some part of the swimmer's body contact the end wall.

2.4 The swimmer may be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 16.4 yards (15 meters) after the start and each turn. By that point, some part of the head must have broken the surface of the water. After breaking the surface of the water, the swimmer must remain on the surface except for turns and finishes.

2.5 The finish requires completion of the required distance and contact with the finish pad (when automatic timing is used) or the finish end by any part of the swimmer.

3 ~ Backstroke

3.1 The backstroke start shall be used.

3.2 Any stroke is permitted. The body shall remain on the back to the degree the shoulders do not turn over beyond the vertical plane except while executing a turn.

3.3 Standing in or on the gutter or curling the toes over the lip of the gutter immediately after the starting signal is not permitted.

3.4 Any kick is permitted.

3.5 The swimmer may be completely submerged during the turn or for a distance of not more than 16.4 yards (15 meters) after the start and each turn. By that point, some part of the head must have broken the surface of the water. After breaking the surface of the water, the swimmer must remain on the surface except for turns and finishes.

3.6 The turn requires that some part of the swimmer's body contact the end wall. After the swimmer's head has passed the backstroke flag, prior to the turn, the swimmer's upper shoulder may (but is not required to) rotate past the vertical toward the breast before the touch is completed, provided such rotation is accompanied by an initiation of the turning action or continuation into the wall.

3.7 The initiation of the turning action shall be accomplished by a single- arm or simultaneous double-arm pull, or in the absence of such pulls, by an upward or downward, underwater movement of the head. After the

initiation of the turning action, no additional arm pulls may be started; however, kicking and gliding actions are permitted. The swimmer shall assume a position on the back before the feet leave the wall.

3.8 The finish requires completion of the required distance and contact with the finish pad (when automatic timing is used) or finish end by any part of the swimmer. Backstrokers are required to touch the finish end on their back.

4 ~ Breaststroke

4.1 The forward start shall be used.

4.2 The body shall remain on the breast except while executing a turn.

4.3 On the start or turn, one arm stroke beyond the hipline followed by one breaststroke kick may be made while the swimmer is underwater; anytime before the breaststroke kick, a single butterfly kick is permitted. Some part of the head must break the surface before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke after the start and after each turn.

4.4 The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hipline.

4.5 Some part of the head must break the water surface sometime during each stroke cycle (one arm pull followed by one leg kick) except after the final arm pull to the turn or finish.

4.6 There shall be no sculling with the hands at the end of the first arm stroke following the start or turn.

4.7 The stroke requires that the arms shall move simultaneously and in the same horizontal plane, without any alternating movement. Both hands shall be pushed forward from the breast simultaneously on, above or under the surface of the water. Elbows must remain under the water except for the last stroke at the turn/finish of the prescribed distance (butterfly recovery is not permitted at any time).

4.8 The kick requires the feet be drawn up with the knees bent. The feet must be turned outward during the propulsive part of the kick. All movement of the legs and feet shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane. No scissors, flutter, or downward butterfly kick.

4.9 The turn requires a simultaneous touch with two hands, not necessarily on the same plane, after which any manner of turn is permitted. The shoulders shall be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the feet leave the wall. The legal body position shall be regained prior to the first arm pull.

4.10 The finish requires completion of the required distance and contact with the finish pad (when automatic timing is used) or finish end with both hands simultaneously, not necessarily on the same plane.

5 ~ Butterfly

5.1 The forward start shall be used.

5.2 The body shall remain on the breast except while executing a turn. After the start and after the turn, the swimmer is allowed one or more leg kicks, but only one arm pull under water. A swimmer can perform as many dolphin kicks as they like at the start and turns without surfacing, however it must be before the 15 meter mark. One underwater pull is allowed - the next arm pulls must recover over the surface of the water. Pulls should be above the surface between the wrist and the elbow.

5.3 The stroke requires that both arms simultaneously pull backward under the water, then simultaneously recover over the water. At any given time, corresponding points on both hands shall be at the same horizontal plane.

5.4 The kick requires that both legs and feet move up and down simultaneously in the vertical plane. Scissors, breaststroke and alternating up and down movements of the legs are not permitted.

5.5 The turn requires a simultaneous touch with two hands, not necessarily on the same plane, after which any manner of turn is permitted. The shoulders shall be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the feet leave the wall. The legal body position shall be regained prior to the first arm pull.

5.6 The swimmer may be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 16.4 yards (15 meters) after the start and each turn. By that point, some part of the head must have broken the surface of the water. After breaking the surface of the water, the swimmer must remain on the surface except for turns and on the finish.

5.7 The finish requires completion of the required distance and contact with the finish pad (when automatic timing is used) or finish end with both hands simultaneously, not necessarily on the same plane. The pull must be an above water recovery and no underwater recovery is allowed (breaststroke pull into the wall).

6 ~ Individual Medley

6.1 The individual medley begins with the forward start. Competitors shall swim the butterfly for the first quarter of the required distance of the complete race, the backstroke for the second quarter, the breaststroke for the third quarter and any stroke other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly for the last quarter. Each section must be finished in accordance with the finish rule that applies to the style concerned.

7 ~ Relay Rules

7.1 The medley relay is swum by a team of four competitors, each swimming one quarter of the required distance of the race. The first shall use the backstroke start and swim backstroke; the second shall swim breaststroke; the third, butterfly; and the fourth shall swim any stroke other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly. Each swimmer shall adhere to the position, stroke, kick, turn and finish rules governing the stroke being swum.

7.2 The freestyle relay is swum by a team of four competitors, each swimming one quarter of the required distance of the race in any style, adhering to the turn and finish rules of the freestyle event. The first swimmer of the relay team must use the forward start.

7.3 All other relay events shall be swum in accordance with all rules governing the strokes involved. In the backstroke relay events, all takeoffs except the initial start shall be from a forward start, after which the swimmers are permitted one immediate arm pull in the prone position prior to turning over on their backs.

7.4 The first swimmer of a relay team, once called to the starting platform by the referee, shall not change his/her swimming order in the relay event with any teammate.

7.5 On the takeoff, the second, third and fourth swimmers on a relay team may be in motion before the previous swimmer finishes. The swimmer shall remain in contact with the starting platform/pool deck until the previous swimmer has finished. However, moving from the back of the starting platform to the front is permitted provided the swimmer is on the starting platform and does not initiate the action from the pool deck.

7.6 For in-water starts, the second, third and fourth swimmers need only maintain contact with the end wall with a foot until the previous swimmer has finished.

7.7 Each swimmer of a relay team must contact the finish end at the conclusion of his or her leg of the relay in accordance with the finish rule applicable to such stroke.

7.8 The first three members of relay teams shall leave the water by the finish end of their lane promptly after finishing their quarter of the race.

7.9 Swimmers who have completed their portion of the race shall not enter the water once the final swimmer has touched the finish end of the pool, unless the referee has opened the pool and allowed swimmers to enter the pool.

* Stroke judges must raise their hand over their head to signal a disqualification.