

# SUMMARY OF SHARED RULE ELEMENTS (2011)

## ALL STROKES

- Legal stroke changes during the Individual Medley are **finishes and starts, NOT turns** (101.6.3)
- *A swimmer must start and finish the race in the same lane* [correct or not]. (102.22.4, 102.17.2A)  
**Jurisdiction:** finish-end stroke/turn judge.
- During any race *a swimmer must not leave the pool* (exception: 101.8.1A), *or walk, or spring from the bottom*. (102.22.5)  
**Jurisdiction:** if a swimmer leaves the pool before completing the distance prescribed for the race, **each stroke/turn judge (finish and turn end)** should write a DQ for “did not finish” or “no touch at turn” as appropriate.
- *Obstructing another swimmer by swimming across or otherwise interfering shall disqualify the offender, subject to the discretion of the Referee.* (102.22.6)
- *Grasping lane dividers to assist forward motion is not permitted.* (102.22.10)
- **After the touch at each turn**, and before leaving the wall again, the swimmer **may turn in any manner desired**, including standing up. (101.2.4; 101.3.4; 101.6.3B; Interpretation 6/1999)
- **Swimwear:** *shall include only a swimsuit, cap and goggles. Armbands or leg bands shall not be regarded as parts of the swimsuit and are not allowed* (102.8.1A). *In swimming competitions, the competitor must wear only one swimsuit in one or two pieces except as provided in 205.10.1. All swimsuits shall be made from textile materials. For men, the swimsuit shall not extend above the navel nor below the knees, and for women, shall not cover the neck, extend past the shoulder, nor extend below the knee* [except for pre-approved religious or medical reasons] (102.8.1B). *No swimmer is permitted to wear or use any device, substance or swimsuit to help his/her speed, pace, buoyancy or endurance during a race (such as webbed gloves, flippers, fins, etc.). Goggles may be worn, and rubdown oil applied if not considered excessive by the Referee. Any kind of tape on the body is not permitted unless approved by the Referee* (102.8.1E).
- **Swimwear:** *for age group competitions, it is permissible for an athlete to wear a single set of garments underneath his or her competition swimsuit for modesty and/or privacy reasons.* (205.10.1)

## BREASTSTROKE, BUTTERFLY, FREESTYLE, INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY

- *The forward start shall be used.* (101.2.1; 101.3.1; 101.5.1; 101.6.1)

## BREASTSTROKE, BUTTERFLY, BACKSTROKE

- Except while at the wall (see above), and except during freestyle at any time, *standing on the bottom during any other stroke shall result in disqualification.* (102.22.5)

## BUTTERFLY, BACKSTROKE, FREESTYLE

- A swimmer **may** be completely submerged for not more than the first 15 meters (16.4 yards) of each length, by which point the head must break the surface and the swimmer must remain on the surface until the next turn or finish. (101.3.2; 101.4.2; 101.5.2)

## BREASTSTROKE, BUTTERFLY

- Upon leaving each wall and until the next wall is touched, the shoulders shall remain **at or past vertical toward the breast** (=“on the breast”). (101.2.2; 101.3.2)
- Upon completion of each length, **both hands shall touch the wall simultaneously.** (101.2.4; 101.3.4; 101.3.5)

## BACKSTROKE, FREESTYLE

- Upon completion of each length, **some part of the swimmer must touch the wall.** (101.4.3; 101.4.4; 101.5.3; 101.5.4)

## CLINIC NOTES – BREASTSTROKE

- Forward start; remain on breast; touch wall with two hands simultaneously at any level(s).
- Longest rules of any stroke. It can help to think in terms of **exceptions**:

- **Breaststroke is the ONLY stroke in which:**

1. **There is a mandatory stroke cycle:**

*“Throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order.” (101.2.2)*

Other strokes: any number of kicks and pulls in any order (except during backstroke turn).

2. **The swimmer may totally (re)submerge past 15 meters of each length:**

*“During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer’s head shall break the surface of the water.” (101.2.2) [except during the first cycle of each length – see below]*

Other strokes: must swim on surface after the first 15 meters of each length.

3. **Corresponding parts of each arm/leg must move on the same level:**

*“All movements of the arms/legs shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.” (101.2.2, 101.2.3) [does not include unintentional drifting motion with the water currents]*

Other strokes: no requirement (freestyle), or shoulders must merely be past vertical toward back or breast.

4. **There is a foot-position requirement while kicking:**

*“The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick.” (101.2.3).*

5. **The elbows must remain under the water** (during forward recovery – Interpretation 6/1995):

*“The elbows shall be under water except for the final stroke before the turn, during the turn and for the final stroke at the finish” (101.2.2).*

- **FIRST CYCLE (“pulldown”) of each length is the ONLY cycle in which the swimmer:**

6. **May pull completely back to the legs:**

*“The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hip line, except during the first stroke after the start and each turn” (101.2.2).*

7. **May remain totally submerged:**

*“After the start and after each turn ... The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.” (101.2.2)*

8. **May take one butterfly kick during or at the end of (not before) first arm pull:**

*“After the start and each turn, a single butterfly kick, which must be followed by a breaststroke kick, is permitted during or at the completion of the first arm pull” (101.2.3)*

**[Interpretation 12/2008:** only for purposes of timing the optional butterfly kick, the first arm pull begins with any lateral or downward movement of the hands or arms (but not with a mere sculling motion).]

Other breaststroke cycles: “A scissors, flutter or downward butterfly kick is not permitted except as provided herein.” (101.2.2).

## CLINIC NOTES – BUTTERFLY

### □ DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE:

1. **As in Breaststroke: forward start; remain toward breast (=“on the breast”); touch wall with two hands simultaneously at any level(s) upon concluding each length. (101.3)**
2. **As in Freestyle and Backstroke: may be submerged up to first 15 meters of each length:** *“It shall be permissible for a swimmer to be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface. The swimmer must remain on the surface until the next turn or finish.” (101.3.2)*

### □ SOME COMPLICATIONS:

3. **Both arms must be brought forward over the water and pulled back simultaneously.** (101.3.2)
  - a. **“Arm”** is the *entire* portion of the body which extends from the shoulder to the wrist (Interpretation 10/2009). **“Over the water”** means the arm, as defined above, must break the surface of the water (Interpretation 10/2009).
    - **Therefore**, a mere knuckle, fingertip, hand, hair, or elbow breaking the surface **does not** satisfy the requirement of this rule. **“Arm” does not** mean “some part of the arm.”
    - **Judgment call:** additional forward extension after re-entry at the end of an over water recovery. A few more inches to complete a forward reach already in progress is generally considered OK. Re-entry near shoulder level (and/or, initiation of a new backward pull), followed by full forward reach under water, is generally considered an illegal underwater recovery. Elbow flexion might be relevant to the judgment.
  - b. **“Simultaneously”** means **at the same time**. **“Simultaneously” does not** mean symmetrically, **does not** mean horizontally, and **does not** mean covering equal distances.
    - **Therefore**, arms **may** be different shapes (for example one straight, one bent), **may** be at different levels (as long as the shoulders are at or past vertical toward the breast), and/or **may** move different distances between exiting and re-entering the water.
    - **Judging tip:** observe the relative **times** of exit and re-entry of the **arms** during recovery.
4. **Kick — All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous. The position of the legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. A scissors or breaststroke kicking movement is not permitted.** (101.3.3)
  - a. Since legs or feet need not be on same level, **“up and down”** movements are judged relative to the plane of the body, not to the surface of the water. (USA Swimming Situation Resolutions 7/2007)
  - b. **“Movements”** do not include unintentional drifting motion with the water currents.
    - **Therefore**, accidental alternation during an **interval between** kicking movements is legal.
  - c. **“Simultaneous”** again means **at the same time**.
    - **Therefore**, the downward movement of each leg should begin and end **at the same times**, and so should the upward movements (otherwise they would be alternating). These movements **may** otherwise be unequal, or on different levels, as long as the levels do not cross (**“alternate in relation”**) during a single movement.
5. **After the start and after each turn .... The swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks, but only one arm pull under water, which must bring the swimmer to the surface.** (101.3.2)
  - a. More than one arm pull before breaking the surface would necessitate an illegal underwater recovery.
  - b. This intent of this portion of the rules is generally interpreted to mean that, once the first arm pull brings the swimmer to the surface, the swimmer **must remain on the surface** until the next turn or finish, **even if** the swimmer’s head has **not yet passed the 15 meter mark**. Re-submersion prior to the 15 meter mark is **not** permitted, unlike in the other strokes.

## CLINIC NOTES – BACKSTROKE

- **With one exception, backstroke rules are very simple – “freestyle on the back”:**
  1. **Backward start *in the water*, with no toes on, or past lip of gutter (if any):**

*“Standing in or on the gutter, placing the toes above the lip of the gutter, or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter, before or after the start, is prohibited.”* – Starter responsible if in violation before or at start. (101.4.1, 101.1.3E)
  2. **Swim and finish on the back – any kind of arm stroke and kick allowed:**

*“The swimmer shall push off on his back and continue swimming on the back throughout the race.”* (101.4.2) *“Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back”* (101.4.4)
  3. **Swim on surface, except at finish, during turns, and during first 15 meters of each length:**

*“Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn, at the finish and for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface of the water.”* (101.4.2)
  4. **“Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall.”** (101.4.3)
- **THE BIG EXCEPTION: optional turn toward breast.**
  5. **During the turn the shoulders may be turned past the vertical toward the breast after which a continuous single arm pull or a continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn.** (101.4.3) **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**
  6. **Examples of LEGAL backstroke turns (finish must be on back):**
    - a. Stay on the back, touch the wall, push off on the back.
    - b. Roll toward the breast, immediately contact the wall, push off on the back.
    - c. Roll toward breast, immediately execute flip turn ending in touch of wall, push off on back. **NOTE:** A small head, arm, or hand **movement used as leverage to execute the flip turn** is usually considered part of that rotation and not an independent action – this is a judgment call.
    - d. Roll toward breast, immediately take a single arm pull (using one or both arms), followed immediately by flip turn and/or touch of wall, push off on back.
  7. **Most common backstroke DQ: “non-continuous turning action” (“delay initiating arm pull” or “delay initiating turn”) after rolling toward the breast. **Examples of ILLEGAL turns:****
    - a. Roll past vertical toward breast, then fail to immediately and continuously pull and/or flip and/or touch wall.
      - Usually seen as flotation or “gliding” (kicks are irrelevant) before or after arm pull, before or after flip turn, or before touch of wall. (NOTE: in High School swimming this is legal within backstroke flags.)
    - b. Two or more arm pulls while toward breast.
    - c. No touch of wall.
  8. **Judging backstroke turn toward breast:** after shoulders are past vertical toward breast, **observe the hand(s) of the arm(s) about to pull** (ignore any pull already in progress before going past vertical). When the hand first stops (or does not start) moving rearward, the swimmer must be executing the rest of the turn, or already be in contact with the wall. The hand(s) may move rearward very slowly and/or as part of a wide sculling motion.
- **Another frequent DQ:** not on back off wall or at finish. Judges should observe relative position of shoulders **after** feet leave the wall and **at** (not after) finish touch.
- **Submersion before the finish:** If you can’t see the entire body, you can’t make the call. *“If the swimmer completely submerges prior to the turn judge having to shift attention to the touch at the wall, this would be a disqualification. Once the turn judge must watch for the touch, this disqualification would be too close to call.”* (Interpretation 6/1997)

## CLINIC NOTES – FREESTYLE

### □ ANYTHING GOES ....

1. **Any combination of stroke(s) and/or kick(s)**, on the breast, back, and/or side, may be used, but the swim can **only** be recorded as a freestyle time. (101.5.2, 102.24.1A(2))

### □ EXCEPT ....

2. .... ***in a medley relay or an individual medley event, freestyle means any style other than butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke.*** (101.5.2)

During freestyle leg of Individual Medley or Medley Relay: “When a swimmer has traveled a sufficient distance that the official can with certainty judge that the competitor is swimming in the style of butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke, then a disqualification is appropriate.” (Interpretation 6/1997)

3. **The forward start shall be used.** (101.5.1) – Starter responsible for enforcement.

4. **Must swim on surface, except** during turns, and during first 15 meters of each length:

“Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it shall be permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn. By that point the head must have broken the surface.” (101.5.2)

5. **Upon completion of each length the swimmer must touch the wall.** (101.5.3)

Call is made when the swimmer misses a touch of the wall. If the swimmer later returns and completes the missed touch, **before touching the next wall**, then the call should be withdrawn.

6. Shall not walk on or spring from bottom (but may stand on bottom); shall not grasp lane lines to assist forward motion; shall not leave pool before completion of prescribed distance (102.22.5, 102.22.10, 101.5.4) except during long distance pool events of 5000 yards or more (101.8.1A).

### □ JUDGING FREESTYLE:

7. **Stroke judges may be excused during freestyle** when separate stroke and turn judges are used. (102.13.3)

8. Turn judges are often posted or seated at corner(s) during freestyle events. **Should you move around?**

- a. **Ask yourself:** during a freestyle turn, could I tell the difference between a 4-inch miss of the wall, versus a light brush of the wall (with no touchpad activation or visible push-off), in the lane right next to me? How about 4, 6, 8, or 10 lanes away from me? Would it be fair and equitable to remain next to the same lane for an entire freestyle event (or an entire long-distance heat)?
- b. **If not, and** you are responsible for 3 or more lanes, consider changing positions **during heats of longer-distance** (200 or more), or **between heats of shorter-distance** (100 or less) freestyle events, to better equalize judging of your lanes. But ....
- c. .... also consider how the other end of the pool is being officiated, and always follow the instructions of your meet referee (or deck referee or chief judge).