

USA SWIMMING
Frequently Asked Questions
(revised June 6, 2010)

Following is a summary of frequently asked questions regarding the application of the Rules & Regulations of USA Swimming. Any questions regarding these should be directed via e-mail to Bruce Stratton, Chair of the Rules & Regulations Committee at bruce@strattoncpa.com.

FAQ #1 - Backstroke Finish

Question: Article 101.4.2 states that it is permissible for a swimmer to be completely submerged at the finish. What is the definition of “finish”?

Answer: Article 101.4.4 states that at the finish, the swimmer must touch the wall. Therefore, the “finish” is defined as the instant that a swimmer touches the wall. If a swimmer is completely submerged any time prior to that, except for 15 meters after the start and after each turn, it would be cause for a disqualification because the swimmer was completely submerged prior to the finish.

FAQ #2 - Butterfly Stroke Recovery

Question: Article 101.3.2 states that both arms must be brought forward over the water and pulled back simultaneously. What does the term “over the water” mean and how should it be judged.

Answer: Article 101.3.2 requires that, in the butterfly stroke, “both arms” must be brought forward “over the water” and pulled back simultaneously. It is the interpretation of the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee that the “arm” is that portion of the body which extends from the shoulder to the wrist. It is also the interpretation of the Committee that “over the water” means the arm, as defined above, must break the surface of the water.

An analogy to this might be a comparison between a submarine and a sail boat. One operates under the surface of the water and one operates “atop” the surface of the water (i.e. part in the water and part above the water). Clearly, if the swimmer’s arms do not break the surface of the water it cannot be considered to be “over the water” and would be cause for a disqualification. However, if both arms (as defined above) break the surface of the water, that would be legal and no disqualification should be called. It is not required that both arms be completely out of the water.

FAQ #3 - Water Depth Announcement

Question: The 2009 House of Delegates added to Article 202.3, Conditions for Sanction, and to Article 202.4, Requirements for Approval, the following provision, “The meet announcement shall include information about water depth measured for a distance of 3 feet 3½ inches (1.0 meter) to 16 feet 5 inches (5.0 meters) from both end walls. What should be the nature of that statement?”

Answer: This provision was added by the 2009 House of Delegates for both sanctioned and approved meets (Articles 202.3.6 and 202.4.14) and it is effective January 1, 2010. Although the rule does not specify any exact language for including the information in the meet invitation, the recommendation of the Rules & Regulations Committee is the following, “The minimum water depth, measured in accordance with Article 103.2.3, is xx feet, xx inches at the start end and xx feet, xx inches at the turn end.”

FAQ #4 - Compliance with the 4-hour Rule

Question: Are we required to comply with the 4-hour rule in Article 205.3.1F? What is the penalty for not doing so?

Answer: Yes, you are required to comply with the rule. The intent of the 4 hour rule is pretty much as stated in our Rulebook. That is, to keep the time that 12 & under swimmers (and their parents) are at a swim competition. It applies to all USA Swimming age group competitions, open or closed, except for championship meets.

The rule states that age group competitions should be “planned” to be completed in less than 4 hours. We all recognize that unforeseen circumstances may occur that are out of our control which might cause a meet to last more than 4 hours. If the meet has been “planned” to last no more than 4 hours, the spirit of the rule has been met. The planning part involves a lot of considerations such as a projected time-line, taking into account the normal problems that come up at meets such as equipment malfunctions, delays because swimmers are slow getting to the blocks, administrative issues, etc.

If a meet has been properly “planned” to not last more than four hours, but due to unforeseen or unplanned circumstances it extends beyond the time, it is not necessary to stop the meet at the four-hour time limit. The rule was purposely written to give LSCs a great deal of flexibility in complying with the rule and to allow for common sense in the application of the rule.

The rule does not provide for any kind of penalty and unless the LSC has instituted some kind of penalty, there would be none. The rule intentionally did not include a penalty or specific enforcement provisions so that LSCs would have similar flexibility in both the application and enforcement of the rule.

FAQ #5 - Change in LSC Affiliation by a Club Member

Question: Our club which is physically located in XYZ LSC is very close to ABC LSC and, for a variety of reasons; we would rather be a member of ABC LSC. Can we change our LSC affiliation and what is the process for doing so?

Answer: Yes, you may be able to change your LSC affiliation if certain requirements are met. These requirements are included in Article 604.1 of our Rules and Regulation and require the following:

1. The LSC to which the club desires to move must be contiguous to its existing LSC and there must not be any other Member Club which geographically intervenes between the Changing Club and the new LSC boundary.
2. The club must approve the change in accordance with its rules and the approval must be duly certified by the Changing Club's President and Secretary, which must then be provided to the Chair of the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Committee.
3. Both LSCs must approve the change in affiliation by a 2/3 vote of their LSC House of Delegates and a copy of the minutes reflecting the action and the vote must be provided to the Chair of the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Committee.
4. Upon receipt of the items described in #2 and #3 above by the Chair of the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Committee, a written notice of approval will be provided to all parties and the transfer will become effective 90 days after the date of the notice.

FAQ #6 - Exhibition Swims

Question: What is an "exhibition swim"?

Answer: Although both High School and NCAA rules do recognize exhibition swims in their rules, they are unique to those two organizations. In USA Swimming, allowing kids to swim events that are not listed in the meet invitation or allowing kids to swim events for which they are ineligible (not in compliance with age group, gender, or entry requirements) is strongly discouraged. Any times achieved in such situations are not eligible for entry into SWIMS. For administrative purposes, however, it may be necessary to mark certain swims as "exhibition" in the meet data base so that they do not place or score. Such swims, if done within the parameters listed in the meet invitation and in accordance with USA Swimming rules, are not truly exhibition swims and the times are eligible for inclusion in SWIMS.

The above applies to all USA Swimming sanctioned or approved competitions, but may be modified for swimmers with a disability under the provisions of Article 105.1.1.

FAQ #7 - Swimming With an Older Age Group (“swimming up”)

Question: My swimmer is 10 years old and would like to achieve a time in the 200 yard butterfly event, but the event is never offered for swimmers 10 years old. Can I enter him/her with the 11-12 age group which does offer the event?

Answer: No, a swimmer may not participate in an age group which does not correspond to his/her age. Article 205.2.4 states, “A swimmer must compete in the age group events according to the swimmer’s age.” In addition, any time achieved while swimming in an age group that does not correspond to the swimmer’s age would not be a valid time and would not be eligible for entry into our SWIMS database.

FAQ #8 – Taping on the Body

Question: Is any kind of tape allowed on the body during competition?

Answer: Article 102.9.1E states, “Any kind of tape on the body is not permitted unless approved by the Referee.” The intent of this rule is that no tape be allowed unless it is needed for valid medical reasons. However, regardless of any medical reason, tape should not be allowed if it will provide any kind of competitive advantage to a swimmer. For example, a band-aid applied to a cut or an open wound would be considered necessary for medical reasons, but would not provide any competitive advantage to a swimmer and therefore should be allowed. However, if a swimmer was required to tape all of his fingers together for a good and valid medical reason, it should not be allowed because regardless of the medical reason, it would provide a competitive advantage to the swimmer. One of the more common types of taping is known as kinesio taping and although there may be a valid medical reason for using it, it is considered to provide the swimmer with a competitive advantage and should not be allowed. In all cases, the use of tape can only be approved by the referee and only if it does not provide a competitive advantage to the swimmer.

FAQ #9 – FINA Labels on Swimsuits

Question: Swimsuits approved by FINA and included on its list of suits approved for use in competition are supposed to have a label affixed to the suit indicating it is “FINA Approved”. Does this mean that a suit must have a FINA label in order to be used in any competition?

Answer: No. Except for USA Swimming Championships as defined in Article 207 of the Rulebook, a suit is not required to have a FINA label. Any suit which is included on the FINA list and any other suit which meets the three criteria of (1) being made of full textile materials,

(2) not covering more of the body than allowed by 102.9.1B and (3) not having any zippers or other fastening devices, is considered to be an allowable suit whether or not it has a “FINA Approved” label affixed to it. For USA Swimming Championships, suits used in competition must have the “FINA Approved” label affixed to the suit or be inspected at the meet to confirm the suit is included on the FINA list of approved suits.