

ARTICLE 105

GUIDELINES FOR OFFICIATING SWIMMERS WITH A DISABILITY IN USA SWIMMING MEETS

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105.1 GENERAL

- .1 **Authority** — The USA Swimming Rules & Regulations grant the Referee the authority to modify the rules for the swimmer with a disability. Disability is defined as a permanent physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This section contains guidelines and suggestions for making such modifications.
- .2 **Responsibilities**
 - A Athlete — The athlete (or the athlete's coach) is responsible for notifying the Referee, prior to the competition, of any disability of the athlete. The swimmer/coach shall provide any assistant(s) or equipment (tappers, deck mats, etc.) if required.
 - B Referee — The Referee's responsibilities include:
 - (1) Inquiring regarding the athlete's needs and determining what modifications will be required.
 - (2) Instructing the Starter and Stroke & Turn officials as to the accommodations to be made for that swimmer.
- .3 **Modifications** — Some of the modifications which the Referee may make to accommodate the athlete with a disability are:
 - (1) A change in starting position.
 - (2) Reassignment of lanes within a heat, e.g., exchanging Lanes 2 and 7.
 - (3) Allowing the athlete's assistant(s) on the deck or in the water to assist with a start. Other allowable modifications are further described in this section under the type of disability.
- .4 **Use of ID Card for Swimmers with a Disability** — All swimmers with a disability, who have an International Paralympic Committee authorized classification, will be issued an ID card listing their specific International Paralympic Committee swimming rule exceptions on the reverse of the card. Swimmers shall be judged under these specific exceptions.

105.2 BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

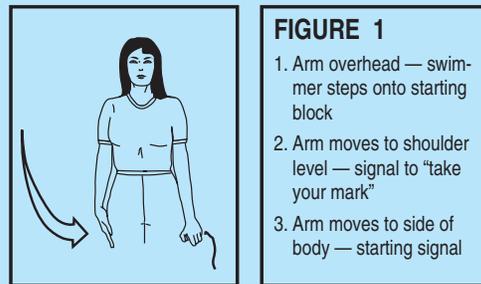
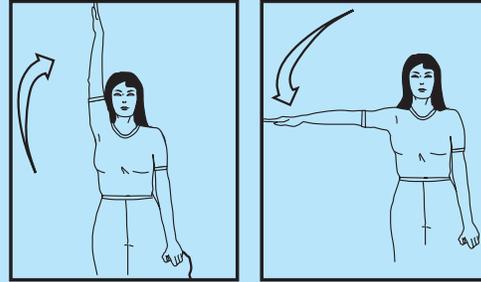
- .1 **Start** — With an audible starting system, no modification is usually required for a blind or visually-impaired swimmer. They may, however, require assistance getting to and on the block. Should they feel insecure starting from the block or deck, an in-the-water start may be allowed.
- .2 **Turns and Finishes** — A blind or visually-impaired swimmer is permitted to have a "tapper", which is a pole with a soft-tipped end. The swimmer is tapped with the "tapper" as notification of turns and the finish. Sound devices shall not be used. It is the swimmer's responsibility to provide the tapper(s) and operator(s), who shall be positioned within the confines of the swimmer's lane at the ends of the pool.

105.2

- .3 **Relay Take-Offs** — A physical touch may be required to signal the relay swimmer when his/her teammate has touched the wall. The specific method may be tailored to the swimmer's preference so long as it does not aid the swimmer's take-off or interfere with the timing.

105.3 DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

- .1 Deaf and hard of hearing swimmers require a visual starting signal, i.e., a strobe light and/or Starter's arm signals. The Referee may reassign lanes within the swimmer's heat, i.e., exchanging one lane for another, so that the strobe light or Starter's arm signal can more readily be seen by the deaf or hard of hearing swimmer. Standard Starter's arm signals are shown in Figure 1. A false start rope is required in the event of a recall.
- .2 **Strobe light location** — The Starter shall advise the swimmers about the location of the strobe light and the light shall be located where the swimmers can clearly see it for the start. For backstroke starts, the light should be positioned so that the swimmers don't have to turn their heads to look backwards.



105.4 MENTALLY IMPAIRED — A deck or in-the-water start is allowable and the swimmer may be permitted to have an assistant on the deck when necessary. No other specific rule modifications are required other than patience and clarity in communicating instructions.

105.5 PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

- .1 **Start** — Swimmers with physical disabilities:
 - A May take longer to assume their starting position;
 - B May not be able to hold onto the starting grips or gutter for a start;
 - C May need assistance on the deck or from in the water to maintain a starting position;
 - D May need to assume a modified starting position on the blocks, deck, gutter or in the water in order to maintain their balance.
 - E For freestyle, breaststroke and butterfly, a forward start (facing the course) shall be used. The Referee, however, may allow modifications such as the following:
 - (1) The swimmer may start from a sitting position on the block or on the deck;
 - (2) The swimmer may assume a starting position in the water, with or without assistance;

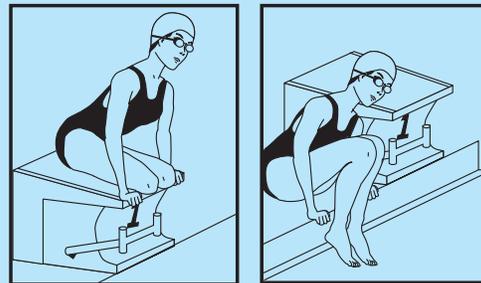


FIGURE 2 — Sitting on block or deck

- (3) If the swimmer cannot use a hand and/or foot to maintain contact with the wall, some other part of the body may be used.
- (4) For breaststroke and butterfly, after the start and after each turn, a swimmer who is unable to push off with the leg(s) may perform one asymmetrical stroke to attain the breast position.

Examples of modified starting positions are shown in Figures 2 through 5.

- .2 **Stroke/Kick** — In judging the stroke or kick of a swimmer with a physical disability, the Referee and Stroke & Turn Judge should follow the general rule that: if a part of the body is absent or cannot be used, it is not judged; if it is used during the stroke or kick, it should be judged in accordance with the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations.

Judgments should be made based on the actual rule — not on the swimmer's technique. For example, the breaststroke swimmer with one arm or leg shorter than the other, may have a non-symmetrical stroke or kick, but as long as the arm or leg action is simultaneous, it would meet that portion of the rule. No flotation devices should be permitted.

- .3 **Turn/Finishes** — Touches shall be judged in the same manner as strokes and kicks, i.e., on the basis of the arm(s) and/or hand(s) that the swimmer can use. In breaststroke and butterfly events, the competitor must reach forward as if attempting a simultaneous two-hand touch. When a swimmer has a different arm length, only the longer arm must touch the wall, but both arms must be stretched forward simultaneously. Swimmers with no arms or with upper limbs too short to stretch above the head may touch the wall with any part of the upper body.
- .4 **Relays** — Relay swimmers who cannot exit the water immediately may be allowed to remain in the lane until all relays have finished so long as they do not interfere with the other swimmers or the timing equipment.

