

Inside the Rulebook – Butterfly

Butterfly. It is arguably the most beautiful stroke in the pool. Faster than breaststroke and backstroke but slower than freestyle. It requires strength and rhythm.

Butterfly is a relatively young stroke, compared to freestyle, backstroke, and breaststroke. It was considered a variant of the breaststroke until 1952, when it was accepted by FINA as a separate style with its own set of rules. The 1956 Summer Olympics were the first Olympic Games in which butterfly was contested.

After the start the swimmer may kick, but one single arm pull must bring him/her to the surface. Throughout the race the two arms must move simultaneously, and the arms (wrist to shoulder) must break the surface of the water whenever the arms are moving forward.

The kick is often referred to as “the dolphin kick,” with the feet and legs simultaneously moving up and down. They may not alternate at any time.

At the turns and the finish, a two-hand touch is required. The two hands must touch simultaneously and may not be stacked on top of one another.

After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may be completely submerged, but the head must break the surface of the water no further than 15 meters from the wall. Once the swimmer breaks the surface, he/she may not be completely submerged until the next turn or the finish.