

OFFICIATING RELAYS

1. Relays consist of four swimmers per team. Each relay team member must swim one-fourth of the race; only swimmers listed on the relay slip may swim and they must swim in the order listed.
2. Relay races are either freestyle or medley. In freestyle relays each swimmer may swim any style or stroke, but each swimmer must swim one-fourth of the race.
3. In medley relays, the first swimmer must swim the backstroke, the second swimmer must swim the breaststroke, the third swimmer must swim the butterfly, and the fourth swimmer does freestyle **THAT MUST BE ANY STROKE OTHER THAN LEGAL BACK, BREAST, OR FLY**).
4. In medley relays, as in the individual medley, the finish rule for each stroke applies when the swimmer transitions from one stroke to another.
5. **Unless using “In-the-Water” starts**, no relay swimmer other than the swimmer designated to be swimming may enter the pool until that swimmer has concluded his or her portion of the race.
6. During relay exchanges, the next swimmer must not lose contact with the starting platform before the swimmer in the water touches the wall. An early “take-off” warrants a disqualification for that relay team. **For “In-the-Water” starts, the next swimmer must not lose touch with the end of the course before the preceding swimmer touches the wall.**
7. In Iowa we normally use dual confirmation of relay exchanges. Both officials must agree that there was an early “take-off” before a team is disqualified. However, unlike for stroke and turn disqualifications, the officials **DO NOT** raise their hands. Each official annotates a Relay Take-Off Slip, and they then compare after each relay race for any early “take-offs.” This is to ensure each official **independently observes** each “take-off” during the race.
8. The correct way to observe relay “take-offs” is to first watch the feet of the swimmer on the starting block; after this swimmer’s feet lose contact with the block, look down to see if the swimmer who just finished has touched the wall (**FEET THEN HANDS**). The next swimmer can be completely extended out over the water, but as long as he or she maintains any contact (i.e., one toe) with the starting block up to the point the swimmer in the water touches the wall, there is no early “take-off.” **For “In-the-Water” starts, watch the next swimmer until contact is lost with the end of the pool, then look to see if the swimmer who just finished has touched.**
9. Swimmers may use the “running relay take-off start” where they stand at the back of the starting block and “run off” the block at the exchange. This is perfectly legal, but be aware of it as it happens fast. The same observation rules apply – watch the feet until final contact with the starting block is lost, then look down for the hands of the swimmer in the water.
10. Remember – give the swimmers the benefit of the doubt. As with individual disqualifications, only annotate an early “take-off” if you are 100% certain the swimmer’s feet lost contact with the starting block before the swimmer in the water touched the wall.
11. The meet and admin referee must decide on the protocol if using relay take-off pads. Typically, if they are available, they should only be used if they are available for all lanes, and be a third, independent confirmation (i.e. only if both the two take-off judges indicate an early take-off) in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines.