



BASIC SWIMMING RULES

The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions for competition and to promote uniformity in the sport. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair competitive advantage over another swimmer. The technical rules for each stroke may be found in the publication "United States Swimming Rules and Regulations". You can ask the coach to see a copy of this booklet.

Competitive Strokes

The four competitive strokes are (1) freestyle, (2) backstroke, (3) breaststroke, and (4) butterfly. Events are held in all of the competitive strokes at varying distances depending on the age-group of the swimmer. In addition, there is a combination of the strokes swum by one swimmer called the individual medley (IM). Other swimming events include relays, which are a group of four swimmers who either all swim freestyle (freestyle relay) or each swim one of the competitive strokes in the order of backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle (medley relay).

Freestyle

In **Freestyle** events, the competitor may swim any stroke. The stroke most commonly used is sometimes called the crawl, which is characterized by the alternate stroking of the arms over the water surface and an alternating (up-and-down) flutter kick. On turns and finishes, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. Most swimmers do a flip turn.

Backstroke

The **Backstroke** consists of an alternating motion of the arms with a flutter kick while on the back. On turns, swimmers may rotate to the stomach and perform a flip turn and some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. The swimmer must finish on the back.

Breaststroke

The **Breaststroke** requires simultaneous movements of the arms on the same horizontal plane. The hands are pressed out from in front of the breast in a heart shaped pattern and recovered under or on the surface of the water. The kick is a simultaneous somewhat circular motion similar to the action of a frog. On turns and at the finish, the swimmer must touch the wall with both hands simultaneously at, above or below the water surface.

Butterfly

The **Butterfly** features a simultaneous recovery of the arms over the water combined with an undulating dolphin kick. In the kick, the swimmer must keep both legs together and may not flutter, scissors or use the breaststroke kick. Both hands must touch the wall simultaneously on the turns and the finish.

Individual Medley

Commonly referred to as the **I.M.**, features all four strokes. In the IM, the swimmer begins with the butterfly, then changes after one-fourth of the race to backstroke, then breaststroke and finally freestyle.

Starts

The swimmers are not allowed a false start. If they jump the start and the starter thinks they are trying to get an advantage (whether intentional or not-it does not matter), they will be taken out of the race. This is not like the Olympics where they are allowed two false starts.

Turns and Finishes

- **Freestyle:** feet have to touch the wall
- **Backstroke:** swimmers have to be on their back when they touch the wall. After he/she touches, he/she can then turn around, but he/she must push off on their back. At the finish a swimmer must finish on his/her back. A swimmer may not roll over and grab the wall until they have first touched it.
- **Breaststroke and Butterfly:**
 1. Swimmers have to touch with both hands at the same time.
 2. A swimmer may not freestyle kick off the wall in either breaststroke or butterfly.
 3. When swimming butterfly, both arms must move at the same time.

Technical Rules

Trained officials observe the swimmers during each event to ensure compliance with these technical rules. If a swimmer commits an infraction of the rules, he/she will be disqualified from that event. This simply means he/she will not receive an official time, nor be eligible for an award in that event. Disqualifications may result from actions such as not getting to the starting blocks on time, false starting, walking on or pushing off the bottom of the pool, pulling on the land line, or unsportsmanlike conduct.

Technical rule violations for each stroke may include:

Freestyle:

- Walking on the bottom
- Pulling on the lane rope
- Not touching the wall on a turn
- Not completing the distance

Backstroke:

- Turning past the vertical onto the stomach and gliding or kicking into the wall on the turn (the roll must be part of a continuous turning action)
- Pushing off the wall on the stomach after a turn
- Not remaining on back while swimming
- Turning onto stomach before the finish

Butterfly:

- Alternating movements of the arms or legs
- Pushing the arms forward under instead of over the surface of the water
- Using a breaststroke style kick
- Touching with only one hand at the turns or at the finish

Breaststroke:

- Using either a flutter, dolphin, or scissor kick instead of the breaststroke kick
- Shoulders not level
- Alternating movements of the arms
- Head not coming out of the water for each stroke including one pull and kick
- Touching with one hand at the turns or at the finish