



SWIMMING STROKE RULES

An Extraction of SwimmingSA Swimming Rules

Rules Updated October 2018

These swimming stroke rules have been extracted from the complete SwimmingSA Swimming Rules for ease of reference and use by Pool Deck Technical Officials.

*You will note that Multi Class swimming rules have been inserted where appropriate as is the case with FINA and Swimming Australia rules. However, while it is good to be aware of these rules, only the Referee has a list of exceptions for each MC swimmer which forms part of their classification. All Technical Officials, especially IOT and JOS must treat MC swimmers the same as they would treat all other swimmers and **report all rule infractions to the Referee** even the apparently obvious because, for instance, some swimmer without part of a limb may need to show intent to touch or kick while another may not. **Please verbally report all infractions to the Referee.***

SW 2.6 defines the duties of Inspectors of Turns while SW 2.7 describes the duties of Judges of Stroke.

SW 2 OFFICIALS

SW 2.6 Inspectors of Turns

SSW 2.6.1 Ideally one Inspector of Turns shall be assigned to each lane at each end of the pool to ensure swimmers comply with the relevant rules after the start, for each turn, and at the finish. However, if necessary and approved by the Technical Manager or Referee, a minimum of five (5) Inspectors of Turns shall be assigned to the non-finish end of a 10-lane pool to ensure swimmers comply with the relevant rules after the start, for each turn, and at the finish. (See also SSW 12.4.4.5.)

SW 2.6.2 Jurisdiction for the Inspector of Turns at the start end commences from the start signal until the completion of the first arm stroke, except in Breaststroke where it shall be the second arm stroke.

SW 2.6.3 For each turn, jurisdiction for the Inspector of Turns commences from the beginning of the last arm stroke before touching and ending with the completion of the first arm stroke after the turn, except Breaststroke where it shall be the second arm stroke.

SW 2.6.4 Jurisdiction for the Inspector of Turns at the finish commences from the beginning of the last arm stroke before touching.

SW 2.6.5 When a Backstroke ledge is being used, each inspector at the starting end shall install and remove the ledge.

SW 2.6.6 In individual events of 800 and 1500 metres, an Inspector of Turns at the start or turning end of the pool shall record the number of laps completed by the swimmer in his lane and keep the swimmer informed of the remaining number of laps to be completed by displaying "lap cards". Electronic equipment may be used, including under water display.

SW 2.6.7 Each Inspector at the starting end shall give a warning signal when the swimmer in his lane has two lengths plus five (5) metres to swim to finish in individual events of 800 and 1500 metres. The signal may be repeated after the turn until the swimmer has reached the five (5) metres mark on the lane rope. The Referee or other Official may perform this task if required. The warning signal may be by whistle or bell.

MC 2.2 For swimmers with a hearing impairment the Inspector of Turns shall use a visual cue to indicate to the swimmer that they have two lengths to swim to finish in individual events of 800 and 1500m. (**IPC 2.2.7.4.1**)

MC 2.3 For swimmers with hearing and visual impairment, the Inspector of Turns shall notify the tapper 15m and two lengths before the completion of the 800

and 1500m events. It shall be the responsibility of the tapper to indicate to the swimmer that they are commencing the final two lengths. (IPC 2.2.7.4.2)

SW 2.6.8 Each Inspector of Turns at the starting end shall determine, in relay events, whether the starting swimmer is in contact with the starting platform when the preceding swimmer touches the starting wall. When Automatic Equipment which judges relay take-offs is available, it shall be used in accordance with SW 13.1 and SSW 13.1.1.

SW 2.6.9 Inspectors of Turns shall report to the Referee any violation on signed cards detailing the event, lane number and the infraction.

SW 2.7 **Judges of Stroke**

SW 2.7.1 Judges of Stroke shall be located on each side of the pool.

SW 2.7.2 Each Judge of Stroke shall ensure that the rules related to the style of swimming designated for the event are being observed, and shall observe the turns to assist the Inspectors of Turns.

SW 2.7.3 Judges of Stroke shall report to the Referee any violation on signed cards detailing the event, lane number and the infraction.

SW 5 **FREESTYLE**

SW 5.1 Freestyle means that in an event so designated the swimmer may swim any style, except that in Individual Medley or Medley Relay events, Freestyle means any style other than Backstroke, Breaststroke or Butterfly.

SW 5.2 Some part of the swimmer must touch the wall upon completion of each length and at the finish.

SW 5.3 Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it shall be permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of not more than 15 metres after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface.

MC 5.1 For S1-5 swimmers swimming on their back, during each complete stroke cycle some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water. One stroke cycle is defined as one full rotation of the shoulder joint(s) and/or one complete up and down movement of the hip joint(s). (IPC 3.2.3.1)

MC 5.2 Standing on the bottom during freestyle events or during the Freestyle portion of Medley events shall not disqualify a swimmer, but they shall not walk. (IPC 3.2.4)

SW 6 **BACKSTROKE**

SW 6.1 Prior to the starting signal, the swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands holding the starting grips. Standing in or on the gutter or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter is prohibited. When using a backstroke ledge at the start, the toes of both feet must be in contact with the end wall or face of the touchpad. Bending the toes over the top of the touchpad is prohibited.

MC 6.1 Where a swimmer is unable to hold both starting grips, it is permissible to hold the grips with one hand only. (IPC 3.3.1.1)

MC 6.2 Where a swimmer is unable to hold either starting grip, it is permissible to hold the end of the pool. (IPC 3.3.1.2)

MC 6.3 Where a swimmer is unable to hold the starting grips or end of the pool, the swimmer may be assisted by a Support Staff or starting device. This device

shall be cleared and deemed safe by the Technical Manager. Giving momentum to the swimmer at the start is not permitted. The swimmer shall have part of the body in contact with the wall until the starting signal is given. (IPC 3.3.1.3)

SW 6.2 At the signal for starting and after turning the swimmer shall push off and swim upon his back throughout the race except when executing a turn as set forth in SW 6.5. The normal position on the back can include a roll movement of the body up to, but not including 90 degrees from horizontal. The position of the head is not relevant.

SW 6.3 Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race. It shall be permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of not more than 15 metres after the start and each turn. By that point the head must have broken the surface.

MC 6.4 For S1-5 swimmers, during each complete stroke cycle some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water. One stroke cycle is defined as one full rotation of the shoulder joint(s) and/or one complete up and down movement of the hip joint(s). (IPC 3.3.3.1)

SW 6.4 When executing the turn, there must be a touch of the wall with some part of the swimmer's body in his/her respective lane. During the turn, the shoulders may be turned over the vertical to the breast after which an immediate, continuous single arm pull or immediate, continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. The swimmer must have returned to the position on the back upon leaving the wall.

MC 6.5 For the swimmer who has no arms or use of his/her arms during the turn, once the body has left the position on the back, the turn shall be initiated. The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall. (IPC 3.3.4.1)

SW 6.5 Upon the finish of the race the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back in his/her respective lane.

SW 7 BREASTSTROKE

SW 7.1 After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs during which the swimmer may be submerged. At any time prior to the first Breaststroke kick after the start and after each turn, a single butterfly kick is permitted. The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.

INTERPRETATION: A butterfly kick is not part of the cycle and is only permitted at the start and after the turn at any time prior to the first Breaststroke kick.

MC 7.1 After the start and after each turn, a swimmer who is unable to push off with the leg/s, may perform one arm stroke that may not be simultaneous or on the horizontal plane to attain the breast position. (IPC 3.4.1.1)

SW 7.2 From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the body shall be kept on the breast. It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time except at the turn after the touch of the wall where it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast when leaving the wall. From the start and throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order. All movements of the arms shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.

- MC 7.2** When a swimmer does not have any legs or arms or parts thereof, either the kick or the respective arm stroke shall constitute a complete stroke cycle. (IPC 3.4.2.1)
- SW 7.3** The hands shall be pushed forward together from the breast on, under, or over the water. The elbows shall be under water except for the final stroke before the turn, during the turn and for the final stroke at the finish. The hands shall be brought back on or under the surface of the water. The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hip line, except during the first stroke after the start and each turn.
- MC 7.4** Swimmers with a visual impairment approaching a turn or finish may push their hands forward from any point in the stroke cycle immediately after they have been tapped. (IPC 3.4.3.1)
- SW 7.4** During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer's head must break the surface of the water. All movements of the legs shall be simultaneous and on the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.
- MC 7.5** A swimmer with lower limb impairment must show intent of simultaneous movement and show intent to kick in the same horizontal plane throughout the race or trail/drag the leg/s throughout the race. (IPC 3.4.4.1)
- SW 7.5** The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. Alternating movements or butterfly kicks are not permitted except as in SW 7.1. Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward butterfly kick.
- MC 7.6** A swimmer who is unable to use one or both legs and/or foot/feet to gain normal propulsion shall not be required to turn the affected foot/feet outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. (IPC 3.4.5.1)
- SW 7.6** At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water level. The head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the surface of the water at some point during the last complete or incomplete cycle preceding the touch.
- MC 7.7** At each turn and the finish of the race where a swimmer has different arm lengths only the longer arm must touch the wall, but both arms must be stretched forward simultaneously. (IPC 3.4.6.1)
- MC 7.8** At each turn and at the finish of the race a swimmer with upper limbs too short to stretch above the head shall touch the wall with any part of the upper body. (IPC 3.4.6.2)
- MC 7.9** At each turn and the finish of the race, where a swimmer uses only one arm for the stroke cycle the swimmer shall be required to touch with one hand/arm only. (IPC 3.4.6.3)
- MC 7.10** At each turn and the finish of the race, where the swimmer who uses both arms but has restriction in the shoulder/elbow only the longer arm must touch the wall, but both arms must be stretched forward simultaneously. (IPC 3.4.6.4)
- MC 7.11** SB11-12 swimmers may have difficulty making a simultaneous touch at the turn and the finish if there are restricted due to contact with the lane rope, the swimmer shall not be disqualified provided that no advantage was gained. (IPC 3.4.6.5)

SW 8**BUTTERFLY****SW 8.1**

From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and each turn, the body shall be kept on the breast. It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time except at the turn, after the touch on the wall, where it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast when leaving the wall.

MC 8.1 After the start and after each turn, a swimmer who is unable to push off with the leg/s may perform one arm stroke that may not be simultaneous to attain the breast position. (IPC 3.5.1.1)

SW 8.2

Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and brought backward simultaneously under the water throughout the race, subject to SW 8.5.

MC 8.2 S11-12 swimmers may have difficulty bringing both arms forward together if they are restricted due to contact with the lane rope; the swimmer shall not be disqualified provided that no advantage was gained. (IPC 3.5.2.1)

MC 8.3 Swimmers with a visual impairment approaching a turn or finish may bring their arms forward under the water immediately after they have been tapped. (IPC 3.5.2.2)

MC 8.4 Where part of an arm is missing, the remaining part of the arm shall be brought forward together with the other arm. (IPC 3.5.2.3)

MC 8.5 Where a swimmer uses one arm for the arm stroke, the arm shall be brought forward over the water. (IPC 3.5.2.4)

SW 8.3

All up and down movements of the legs must be simultaneous. The position of the legs or feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. A breaststroke kicking movement is not permitted.

MC 8.6 When a swimmer's impairment results in only one leg being used the non-functional leg shall drag. (IPC 3.5.3.1)

Interpretation: "shall drag" means that the leg is not providing any propulsion but may follow the undulating hip line and appear to be alternating.

SW 8.4

At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously, at, above or below the water surface

MC 8.7 At each turn and the finish of the race where a swimmer has different arm lengths only the longer arm must touch the wall, but both arms must be stretched forward simultaneously. (IPC 3.5.4.1)

MC 8.8 At each turn and at the finish of the race, a swimmer with no or non-functional upper limbs or upper limbs too short to stretch above the head, shall touch the wall with any part of the upper body. (IPC 3.5.4.2)

MC 8.9 At each turn and the finish of the race, where a swimmer uses one arm for the arm stroke the swimmer shall touch with one hand/arm only. (IPC 3.5.4.3)

MC 8.10 At each turn and the finish of the race, where the swimmer who uses both arms but has restriction in the shoulder/elbow only the longer arm must touch the wall, but both arms must be stretched forward simultaneously. (IPC 3.5.4.4)

MC 8.11 S11-12 swimmers may have difficulty making a simultaneous touch at the turn and finish if they are restricted due to contact with the lane rope. The swimmer shall not be disqualified provided that no advantage was gained. **(IPC 3.5.4.5)**

MC 8.12 At the turn and finish, swimmers with no leg function may perform a half stroke with the arm/s recovering forward under the surface of the water, in order to contact the wall. **(IPC 3.5.4.6)**

SW 8.5 At the start and at turns, a swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks and one arm pull under the water, which must bring him to the surface. It shall be permissible for a swimmer to be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 metres after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface. The swimmer must remain on the surface until the next turn or finish.

SW 9 MEDLEY SWIMMING

SW 9.1 In Individual Medley events, the swimmer covers the four swimming styles in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle. Each of the four strokes must cover one quarter (1/4) of the distance.

Interpretation:

According to SW 9.1 each of the strokes must cover one quarter (1/4) of the distance. Being on the back when leaving the wall for the Freestyle portion of the Ind. Medley is covering more than one quarter of the distance in the style of Backstroke and is, therefore, a disqualification. Backstroke swimming is only defined as being on the back.

This interpretation is based on the following FINA Swimming rules:

SW 5 FREESTYLE

SW 5.1

“except that in individual medley or medley relay events, freestyle means any style other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly.”

SW 6 BACKSTROKE

SW 6.1 to SW 6.5

There are no kick or stroke requirements. The swimmer “must push off and swim upon his back throughout the race” “Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race.” Except for the 15 m at the start and turn.

SW 7 BREASTSTROKE

SW 7.1 to SW 7.6

There are specific stroke and kick requirements.

SW 8 BUTTERFLY

SW 8.1 to SW 8.5

There are specific stroke and kick requirements.

MEDLEY SWIMMING

SW 9.1 Each of the strokes must cover one quarter (1/4) of the distance.

MC 9.1 In the 150m and 75m Individual Medley events, the swimmer covers three swimming strokes in the following order: Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle. Each of the strokes must cover one third (1/3) of the distance. **(IPC 3.6.1.1)**

SW 9.2 In Freestyle the swimmer must be on the breast except when executing a turn. The swimmer must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.

- SW 9.3** In Medley Relay events, swimmers will cover the four swimming styles in the following order: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Freestyle. Each of the strokes must cover one quarter (1/4) of the distance.
- SW 9.4** Each section must be finished in accordance with the rule which applies to the style concerned.
- SW 10** **THE RACE**
- SSW 10.1** All races may be held as either individual or mixed genders where appropriate.
- SW 10.2** A swimmer swimming over the course alone shall cover the whole distance to qualify.
- SW 10.3** The swimmer must remain and finish the race in the same lane in which he/she started.
- MC 10.1** Should a swimmer with a visual impairment inadvertently surface in the wrong lane after a start or executing a turn and the swimmer has surfaced in a lane not in use, the swimmer shall be permitted to complete the race in that lane. If it is necessary for the swimmer to return to the correct lane the tapper may give verbal instructions, but only after clearly identifying the swimmer by name to prevent distraction or interference to other competitors. **(IPC 3.8.3.1)**
- SW 10.4** In all events, a swimmer when turning shall make physical contact with the end of the pool or course. The turn must be made from the wall, and it is not permitted to take a stride or step from the bottom of the pool.
- SW 10.5** Standing on the bottom during Freestyle events or during the Freestyle portion of Medley events shall not disqualify a swimmer, but he shall not walk.
- SW 10.6** Pulling on the lane rope is not allowed.
- SW 10.7** Obstructing another swimmer by swimming across another lane or otherwise interfering shall disqualify the offender. Should the foul be intentional, the Referee shall report the matter to the Member (SSA or Club) promoting the race, and to the Club of the swimmer so offending
- MC 10.2** S11, SB11 and SM11 swimmers, with the exception of those with prosthetics in both eyes, shall be required to wear opaque (blackened in) goggles for competition. S11, SB11 and SM11 swimmers whose facial structure will not support goggles shall be required to cover the eyes with an opaque covering. The goggles of the S11, SB11 and SM11 swimmers shall be checked at the finish of the relevant event. **(IPC 3.8.8)**
- MC 10.3** In the event that the goggles accidentally fall off during the dive or break during the race, the swimmer shall not be disqualified. **(IPC 3.8.8.1)**
- SSW 10.8** No swimmer shall be permitted to wear any device or swimsuit that may aid his/her speed, buoyancy or endurance during a competition (such as webbed gloves, flippers, fins, power bands, or adhesive substances etc.). Goggles may be worn. Any kind of tape on the body is not permitted unless approved by the Technical Manager or the session Referee.
- MC 10.4** No swimmer shall be permitted to use prostheses, except ocular or orthoses during a race. **(IPC 3.8.9.1)**

- SW 10.9** Any swimmer not entered in a race, who enters the water in which an event is being conducted before all swimmers therein have completed the race, shall be disqualified from his next scheduled race in the meet.
- SW 10.10** There shall be four swimmers on each Championship relay team, but more or less swimmers may be prescribed for other relays. Mixed relays may be swum. Mixed relays consist of two (2) men and two (2) women. Split times achieved in these events cannot be used for records and/or entry purposes.
- SSW 10.10** SSA Mixed Relays in a SwimmingSA endorsed event must include one (1) member of each gender. First swimmer split times in these events may not be used for records but may be used for entry times.
- MC 10.5** Relay teams are based on a point score. The sport class of an individual swimmer is worth the actual number value i.e. Sport class S6 is worth six (6) points, class SB12 is worth twelve (12) points, etc. **(IPC 3.7.6)**
- MC 10.5.1** Relay Event Point List. **(IPC 2.18.1)**
- 4 x 50m Freestyle maximum 20 points for S1-S10
 4 x 100m Freestyle S14 and maximum 34 points for S1-S10 (ie. 2 events)
 4 x 50m Medley maximum 20 points for S1-S10
 4 x 100m Medley S14 and maximum 34 points for S1-S10 (ie. 2 events)
 4 x 50m Freestyle Maximum 49 points for S11-S13
 4 x 100m Freestyle Maximum 49 points for S11-S13
 4 x 50m Medley Maximum 49 points for S11-S13
 4 x 100m Medley Maximum 49 points for S11-S13
- SW 10.11** In relay events, the team of a swimmer whose feet lose touch with the starting platform before the preceding teammate touches the wall shall be disqualified.
- ASW10.11** The swimmer who is next to swim in the relay event must be standing on the starting platform immediately prior to his/her start. Running starts shall not be permitted.
- MC 10.6** In a relay event a swimmer may commence in the water. The swimmer may not lose hand/feet contact with the starting place until such time as the preceding team member touches the wall otherwise the swimmer shall be disqualified. **(IPC 3.7.8.1)**
- SW 10.12** Any relay team shall be disqualified from a race if a team member, other than the swimmer designated to swim that length, enters the water when the race is being conducted, before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race.
- MC 10.7** A swimmer, in a relay event, who is to commence with a water start, may enter the water only when the preceding take off at the same end has been executed. **(IPC 3.7.9.1)**
- MC 10.8** The tapper is able to convey to the swimmer the relay changeovers and convey the position/place of the relay. An extra tapper may be required, one for tapping the swimmer completing the leg of the relay and one tapper for conveying the changeover. No coaching is permitted. **(IPC 3.7.10)**
- SW 10.13** The members of a relay team and their order of competing must be nominated before the race. Any relay team member may compete in a race only once. The composition of a relay team may be changed between the heats and finals of an event, provided that it is made up from the list of swimmers properly entered by a Member for that event. Failure to swim in the order listed will result in disqualification. Substitutions may be made only in the case of a documented medical emergency.

- MC 10.9** The names of the swimmers and their sport class must be submitted on the IPC Swimming official form a minimum one hour before the start of the session in which the event is to take place, in the order in which they are to swim. The names must be listed in their order of competing and the swimmers in the Medley Relay events must be listed for their respective strokes. Failure to swim in the order listed will result in disqualification. Substitutions may be made only in the case of a medical withdrawal. **(IPC 3.7.4)**
- MC 10.10** The reserve/s for relays are to be named on the relay declaration form identifying the sport class of the swimmer/s and in the case of the Medley Relays also the stroke that is to be performed. **(IPC 3.7.5)**
- SSW 10.14** Any swimmer having finished his race, or his distance in a relay event, must leave the pool as soon as possible without obstructing any other swimmer who has not yet finished his race. Otherwise the swimmer committing the fault, or his relay team, shall be disqualified. The Referee, at his/her discretion, may allow swimmers to remain in the lane in SC relays.
- MC 10.11** S1-5 swimmers may stay in their lane until the last swimmer of the team has completed the race. A swimmer remaining in the water shall move a short distance away from the end of the pool, close to the lane rope but shall not obstruct another swimmer in another lane. **(IPC 3.8.11.1)**
- SW 10.15** Should a foul endanger the chance of success of a swimmer, the Referee shall have the power to allow him to compete in the next heat or, should the foul occur in a final event or in the last heat, he/she may order it to be re-swum.
- MC 10.12** For swimmers with visual impairment, should an accidental foul occur during a race, caused by a swimmer either surfacing after the start or turn, in a lane that is in use by another competitor, or by swimming too close to the lane rope, etc, the Referee shall have the power to allow one or all swimmers to re-swim the event. If the foul occurs in a final, the Referee may order the final to be re-swum. **(IPC 3.8.7.1)**
- SW 10.16** No pace-making shall be permitted, nor may any device be used or plan adopted which has that effect
- SSW 10.17** Any competitor who during a form stroke race swims a stroke other than the nominated stroke shall be disqualified.
- SSW 10.18** At a pre-seeded meet without marshalling any competitor who swims in the wrong heat or lane may be disqualified.
- SSW 10.19** In handicap events, any competitor deemed by the Referee, to be deliberately swimming slowly, so as to swim within the nominated time, shall be disqualified.
- SSW 10.20** When starting over the top is being used, the Referee must ensure that the pool is cleared before the start of all MC races and at the end of each of these races.