

UNITED STATES SWIMMING TECHNICAL RULES (Rev. 4/1/06)

FREESTYLE

1. **Start** — The forward start shall be used.
2. **Stroke** — In an event designated freestyle, the swimmer may swim any style, except that in a medley relay or an individual medley event, freestyle means any style other than butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke. 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 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn. By that point the head must have broken the surface.
3. **Turns** -- Upon completion of each length the swimmer must touch the wall.
4. **Finish** — The swimmer shall have finished the race when any part of his person touches the wall after completing the race length.

BACKSTROKE

1. **Start** – Upon command from the starter to “step or jump in” swimmers shall jump into the water and face the starting end with both hands placed on the gutter or starting grips. Prior to the command “Take Your Mark” and until the feet leave the wall at the starting signal, the swimmer’s feet, including the toes, shall be placed under or above the surface of the water. **HOWEVER**, standing in or on the gutter or curling the toes over the lip of the gutter is not permitted at any time before the start.
2. **Stroke** - Standing in or on the gutter or curling the toes over the lip of the gutter immediately after the start is not permitted. The swimmer shall push off their back and continue swimming on the back throughout the race. Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of no more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must break the water surface.
3. **Turns** – Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. During the turn the shoulders may be turned past the vertical toward the breast after which a continuous single arm pull or a continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to execute the turn. Once the body has left the position on the back, there shall be no kick or arm pull that is independent of the continuous turning action. The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall.
4. **Finish** – Upon the finish of the race the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back.

BREASTROKE

1. **Start** – The forward start shall be used.
2. **Stroke** – From the beginning of the first armstroke after the start and after each turn, the body shall be kept on the breast. The arms must move simultaneously in the same horizontal plane without any alternating movement. The hands must be pushed forward together from the breast, on, under, or over the water and must be brought back on or under the water surface. The elbows shall be under the water except for the last stroke at the finish of the prescribed distance. The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hipline except during the first stroke and after the turn. Some part of the swimmer’s head shall break the water surface at least once during each complete cycle of one arm stroke and one leg kick, in that order, except during the first cycle after the start and turn. During the first cycle after the start and each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs and one leg kick while wholly submerged. The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.
3. **Kick** – After the start and each turn, a single downward butterfly kick followed by a breaststroke kick is permitted while wholly submerged. Following which, all movements of the legs shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement. The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. A scissors, flutter or downward butterfly kick is not permitted except as provided herein. Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward butterfly kick.
4. **Turns** – The touch must be made with both hands simultaneously at, above, or under the water surface, the two hands need not be on the same level. The head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the water surface at some point during any part of the last complete or incomplete stroke cycle preceding the touch. Once the touch has been made the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. The shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall. The prescribed form must be attained from the beginning of the first arm stroke
5. **Finish** – At the finish, the body must be on the breast and the touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously at, above, or under the water surface, the two hands need not be on the same level. The head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the water surface at some point during any part of the last complete or incomplete stroke cycle preceding the touch.

BUTTERFLY

1. **Start** – The forward start shall be used.
2. **Stroke** - After the start and each turn, the swimmer shall remain on the breast. Once or more leg kicks are permitted, but only one arm pull underwater, which must bring the swimmer to the surface. It is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of no more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the water surface. The swimmer must remain on the surface until the next turn or finish. From the beginning of the first

arm pull, the swimmer's shoulders shall be in line with the water surface. Both arms must be brought forward over the water and pulled back simultaneously.

3. **Kick** – All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous. The position of the legs and feet need not be on the same level but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. The feet may be crossed, or one may be higher than the other, provided no alternating action is performed. A scissors or breaststroke kick is not permitted.
4. **Turns** – At the turn the body shall be on the breast. The touch must be made with both hands simultaneously at, above, or under the water surface, the two hands need not be on the same level. Once the touch has been made the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. The shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall. The prescribed form must be attained from the beginning of the first arm stroke.
5. **Finish** – At the finish, the body must be on the breast and the touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously at, above, or under the water surface, the two hands need not be on the same level.

INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY

The swimmer shall swim the race in the prescribed distance in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle

1. **Start** – The forward start shall be used.
2. **Stroke** – The stroke for each leg of the designated distance shall follow the prescribed rules for that stroke.
3. **Regular Turns** – Intermediate turns within each stroke shall conform to the turn rules for that stroke.
4. **Transition Turns** – The turns when changing from one stroke to another shall conform to the finish rules for the stroke just completed. **Butterfly to Backstroke** – Once a legal touch has been executed the swimmer may turn in any manner desired, but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the back when the swimmer leaves the wall. **Backstroke to Breaststroke** – The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. Once the legal touch has been made the swimmer may turn in any manner, but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall. **Breaststroke to Freestyle** – The swimmer must execute a legal breaststroke touch and then may turn in any manner.
5. **Finish** – The race shall be completed when any part of the swimmer's body comes into contact with the wall.

RELAYS

1. **Freestyle Relay** – Four swimmers on each team, each to swim one-fourth of the relay using any desired stroke(s).
2. **Medley Relay** – Four swimmers on each team to swim one-fourth of the prescribed distance continuously in the following order: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, and Freestyle. Rules pertaining to each stroke, turn and finish used shall govern.
3. **Rules Pertaining to Relay Races** –
 - No swimmer shall swim more than one leg of the relay.
 - A swimmer shall not leave the starting platform prior to the swimmer in the water touching the wall at the completion of their leg of the relay. Swimmers who leave early will be disqualified.
 - Any relay team member and their relay team shall be disqualified from a race if a team member other than the swimmer designated to swim that leg shall jump into or enter the pool in the area where the race is being conducted before all swimmer of all teams have finished the race.
 - Each relay team member shall leave the water immediately upon finishing their leg except the last member.

DISQUALIFICATIONS

1. A disqualification can be made only by the authorized official for the meet. Upon observing an infraction an official should immediately raise one hand overhead with open palm.
2. An official should make every effort possible to notify a swimmer or coach of a disqualification.
3. A swimmer who acts in an unsportsmanlike or unsafe manner in the judgment of an official may be considered for appropriate action or penalty from the official.
4. A swimmer must start and finish the race in the same lane. Swimming across lanes does not result in disqualification unless that action interferes with the progress of another competitor in the discretion of an official.
5. Standing on the bottom during a freestyle race shall not disqualify a swimmer, but a swimmer must not leave the pool, or walk, or spring from the bottom. Standing on the bottom during any other stroke shall result in disqualification.
6. Obstructing another swimmer by swimming across or otherwise interfering shall disqualify the offender.
7. Any swimmer not entered in a race who enters the course where the race is being conducted before all swimmers have completed the race shall be disqualified from the next individual event that swimmer is scheduled to swim.
8. Dipping goggles in the water or splashing water on the competitors face or body prior to an event shall not be considered as entering the pool unless the official determines such action is interfering with competition.
9. A swimmer may not use any device or substance to assist their speed or buoyancy during a race.
10. Grasping of lane dividers to assist forward motion is not permitted.