

CSRA Swim League

Swimming Rules

(adopted – 3/17/12,

modified – 3/24/15)

These rules are not all-inclusive and do not address every conceivable situation. The meet referee has full authority to decide any conflicts not specifically covered. He will do so in the spirit of fairness and sportsmanship using the underlying principles common to USA Swimming (USAS) and the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

Officials

All referees, starters, stroke and turn officials, and computer software operators must be CSRA Swim League, Georgia High School Association, South Carolina High School League, or USA Swimming certified. CSRA Swim League certification is valid for two (2) years from the year of training.

The meet referee has full authority at the meet. He will assign all other officials and determine their duties on deck. He will determine whether to accept or reject their calls and has the authority to call any infraction he personally observes. The referee or his designee will take order of finish.

Start (All Events) - Rules

For the forward start, upon the starting command "Take your mark", swimmers shall promptly assume a stationary position with their foot/feet at the front edge of the platform or pool deck. When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall activate a starting device. With referee/starter permission, a swimmer may start in the water. The swimmer shall step in the water feet first, must be stationary, and have at least one hand in contact with the starting platform or end wall. A backstroke start is not permitted. Swimmers may stand up or step off the starting platform after the command "Stand up", but they shall not unnecessarily enter the water nor delay a new start.

For the backstroke start, swimmers shall step into the water feet first and face the starting end with both hands in contact with the end of the pool or the starting platform. Upon the command "Take your mark", swimmers shall promptly assume a stationary position. When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall activate a starting device. Prior to the command "Take your mark", and until the feet leave the wall at the starting signal, the swimmers' feet, including the toes, shall not be above or curl over the lip of the gutter or pool edge. Standing in or on the gutter, placing the toes above the lip of the gutter, or curling the toes over the lip of the gutter, before the start, is prohibited. Swimmers may release from the starting position after the command "Stand up", but they shall not leave the starting area nor unnecessarily delay a new start.

Subject to the discretion of the referee/starter (referee and starter at a championship meet), an infraction (false start) occurs when a swimmer unnecessarily delays reporting for the start or assuming a starting position, does not step feet first into the water for an in-water start, does not remain stationary immediately prior to the start, or leaves the mark before the starting signal. The swimmer or relay team is disqualified from the event if such an infraction occurs. If the starting signal has been given before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue without recall, and the infraction (false start) will be enforced at the conclusion of the race.

The referee/starter may recall the entire heat if he/she is not satisfied that the race was started properly. It is not necessary to charge any swimmer with a false start under these conditions.

Start (All Events) – Situations/Rulings

Situation 1 – A swimmer (a) requests permission to start in the water for an event requiring the forward start, (b) dives into the pool after requesting permission for an in-water start. Ruling 1 – (a) legal, (b) illegal. For all in-water starts, the swimmer shall step into the water feet first.

Situation 2 – A swimmer, who had initially placed both feet at the front edge of the starting platform: (a) drops one foot back as the starter says, “Take your mark”; (b) assumes a “track start” position, with one foot placed on the front edge of the block. Ruling 2 – Both (a) and (b) are legal.

Situation 3 – Following the command “Take your mark”, one competitor remains standing upright with one foot at the front edge of the starting platform. Ruling 3 – Legal. The starter should give the command “Stand up”, then determine if that is the starting position for that competitor. If this is not the swimmer’s starting position and he does not take the starting position again after the starter gives the command, the swimmer’s failure to assume a starting position could result in a disqualification.

Situation 4 – For in-water relay starts, the first swimmer must be stationary and have at least one hand in contact with the end wall until the starter activates the starting device. The second, third, and fourth swimmers need only maintain contact with the end wall with a foot until the previous swimmer has finished. Ruling 4 – Correct procedure.

Situation 5 – In an event using the forward start, a swimmer does not assume the proper starting position at the command “Take your mark.” The starter directs all swimmers to, “Stand up” and reminds them of the legal starting position. Ruling 5 – Correct procedure. While it is the responsibility of the coach to have swimmers familiar with the parameters of a legal start, the starter should remind swimmers of the legal starting position, if necessary, then repeat the starting sequence.

Situation 6 – For the backstroke start, a swimmer moves one foot out of the water and curls the toes over the gutter after the starting device has been activated but before leaving the wall. The stroke and turn official raises his hand and recommends a disqualification. Ruling 6 – Correct procedure. The starter’s responsibility is to ensure a fair start for all swimmers. Once the starting signal has been given, the violation becomes a stroke violation – not a false start infraction.

Situation 7 – At the starting signal, the starter observes a swimmer moving, but he also determines that the movement is a result of one of the timers sneezing. Ruling 7 – The starter should activate the recall device and recall the heat. The swimmer should not be charged with a false start infraction. If the heat was not able to be recalled, the swimmer should not be charged with a false start, and the results should be recorded as official.

Situation 8 – A competitor dives in the water when the starter says “Stand up.” Ruling 8 – If, in the referee’s opinion, the command “Stand up” caused the swimmer to leave his mark, no false start shall be charged.

Situation 9 – In a championship meet, a false start is called by the starter but not confirmed by the referee. No infraction is charged. Ruling 9 – Correct procedure. In championship meets, dual confirmation by the starter and referee is required.

Breaststroke

Start/Turn – The forward start shall be used. On the start or turn, one arm stroke beyond the hipline followed by one breaststroke kick may be made while the swimmer is under water, except that before the breaststroke kick, a single butterfly kick is permitted. Some part of the head must break the surface before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke after the start and after each turn.

Stroke – The body shall remain on the breast except while executing a turn. Except as noted above, the hands shall not be brought back beyond the hipline. Some part of the head must break the water surface sometime during each stroke cycle (one arm pull followed by one leg kick) except after the final arm pull to the turn or finish. The arms shall move simultaneously and in the same horizontal plane, without any alternating movement. Both hands shall be pushed forward from the breast simultaneously on, above, or under the surface of the water. The elbows must remain under the water except for the last stroke at the turn and finish. Throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order.

Kick – The feet must be drawn up with the knees bent. The feet must be turned outward during the propulsive part of the kick. All movements of the legs and feet shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane. No scissors, flutter, or downward butterfly kick (developed from a flexing and extending of the knee) is permitted except as provide above. Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward butterfly kick.

Stroke/Kick – For the 8 & under age group, each swimmer is allowed two stroke and/or kick violations (not start, turn, or finish violations) within each official's jurisdiction without disqualification.

Turn/Finish – At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously at, above, or below the water level. The touch need not be made on the same horizontal plane. 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.

Breaststroke – Situations/Rulings

Situation 1 – During the recovery phase of the breaststroke, a swimmer thrusts his arms forward and upward, forcing the arms and elbows completely above the surface of the water. Ruling 1 – Illegal. The hands may recover under, on, or over the water provided the elbows remain in contact with the water and a butterfly recovery is not used.

Situation 2 – On the reach for the wall, a breaststroker touches with both hands simultaneously but not on the same plane, and the shoulders are not horizontal (a) at the turn, or (b) at the finish. Ruling 2 – Both are legal.

Situation 3 – A breaststroker makes two kicks without an intervening arm pull after ducking the head at the finish. Ruling 3 – Illegal stroke cycle.

Situation 4 – A breaststroker's head goes beneath the surface of the water as he is completing a stroke cycle during the race. Ruling 4 – Legal provided his head had broken the surface of the water at some time during that stroke cycle.

Situation 5 – During the start of the breaststroke event, a swimmer's head breaks the surface of the water after the hands have turned inward at their widest part of the second arm pull but prior to the arms beginning the recovery part of the second arm pull. The swimmer is disqualified. Ruling 5 – Correct procedure. The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second arm stroke at the start and after each turn.

Situation 6 – A breaststroker is disqualified for pulling his hands past the hipline as he swims down the pool even though his head breaks the surface of the water on each stroke cycle. Ruling 6 – Correct procedure. Pulling the hands past the hipline is only permitted on the first arm stroke following the start or turn.

Situation 7 – At the finish of the race, a breaststroker completes his final stroke cycle (one arm pull/one kick) and takes an additional arm pull prior to touching the wall. Ruling 7 – Legal. A stroke cycle is defined as one arm pull followed by one kick. An incomplete stroke cycle is permitted into the turn and finish.

Situation 8 – A competitor in the breaststroke on the turn initiates (a) a dolphin kick followed by a breaststroke kick, (b) two dolphin kicks. Ruling 8 – (a) Legal, (b) Illegal. The swimmer may execute a single dolphin kick followed by a breaststroke kick.

Situation 9 – A swimmer in the breaststroke has stopped approximately 5 yards from the wall prior to the turn and rested. The swimmer has permitted his body to become vertical. The swimmer is not in the process of initiating a turn. Ruling 10 – The swimmer is disqualified for a violation of body position.

Butterfly

Start – The forward start shall be used. After the start and after the turn, the swimmer is allowed one or more leg kicks, but only one arm pull is allowed under the water. This arm pull must bring the swimmer to the surface of the water. After the start and each turn, the swimmer may be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 meters. By that point, some part of the head must have broken the surface of the water. After breaking the surface of the water, the swimmer must remain on the surface except for turns and finishes.

Stroke – The body shall remain on the breast except while executing a turn. Both arms must be simultaneously pulled backward under the water, then simultaneously recover over the water.

Kick – Both legs and feet must move up and down simultaneously in the vertical plane. Scissors, breaststroke, and alternating up and down movements of the legs are not permitted. The position of the legs or feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other.

Stroke/Kick – For the 8 & under age group, each swimmer is allowed two stroke and/or kick violations (not start, turn, or finish violations) within each official's jurisdiction without disqualification.

Turn/Finish – At each turn and at the finish, the body shall be on the breast. The touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously at, above, or below the surface of the water. The touch need not be made on the same horizontal plane. Once a 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.

Butterfly – Situations/Rulings

Situation 1 – A butterfly swimmer inadvertently (a) drags one arm in the water and fails to make a simultaneous arm recovery, (b) catches one arm under a lane line and fails to make a simultaneous arm recovery. Ruling 1 – In both (a) and (b) the stroke is illegal, and the swimmer should be disqualified.

Situation 2 – A butterfly swimmer (a) drops one shoulder into the turn, (b) drops one shoulder into the finish, or (c) kicks partially on the side after the turn. Ruling 2 – (a) and (b) Legal. (c) Legal provided the swimmer regains the proper body position prior to the first pull.

Situation 3 – A butterfly swimmer dives in and kicks the first length under water. Ruling 3 – Illegal. A swimmer may be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 meters after the start and each turn. By that point, some part of the head must have broken the surface of the water.

Situation 4 – A swimmer in the butterfly has stopped approximately 5 yards from the wall prior to the turn and rested. The swimmer has permitted his body to become vertical. The swimmer is not in the process of initiating a turn. Ruling 4 – The swimmer is disqualified for a violation of body position.

Backstroke

Start/Turn – At the start, the swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands placed on the gutter or on the starting grips. Standing in or on the gutter, placing the toes above the lip of the gutter, or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter, before or after the start, is prohibited. After the start and each turn, the swimmer may be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 meters. By that point, some part of the head must have broken the surface of the water. After breaking the surface of the water, the swimmer must remain on the surface except for turns and finishes.

Stroke – The body shall remain on the back throughout the race except while executing a turn. Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except as noted above.

Turn – The turn requires that some part of the swimmer's body contact the end wall. The backstroke turn may be accomplished by either of the following methods:

- 1) After the swimmer's head has passed the backstroke flag, prior to the turn, the swimmer's upper shoulder may (but is not required to) rotate past the vertical toward the breast before the touch is completed, provided such rotation is accompanied by an initiation of the turning action or continuation into the wall. The initiation of the turning action shall be accomplished by a single-arm or simultaneous double-arm pull, or in the absence of such pulls, by a downward, underwater movement of the head. After the initiation of the turning action, no additional arm pulls may be started; however, kicking and gliding actions are permitted. The swimmer must assume a position on the back before the feet leave the wall.
- 2) The swimmer must touch the end wall while on the back. Once a touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. The swimmer must assume a position on the back before the feet leave the wall.

Finish – Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back.

Backstroke – Situations/Rulings

Situation 1 – As the head of a backstroker passes under the flags (at the 20 yard/meter mark), he rotates past the vertical toward the stomach, then glides and kicks into the wall with arm extended. Ruling 1 – Legal. Kicking and gliding are permitted throughout the turn and the touch provided no more than one arm pull occurs.

Situation 2 – A swimmer in the backstroke event (a) uses the elementary backstroke, (b) touches the wall with both hands simultaneously, (c) uses the butterfly kick. Ruling 2 – All are legal.

Situation 3 – A swimmer does a legal backstroke turn but does not use a flip turn. The swimmer is on his back before his feet leave the wall. The opposing coach insists the swimmer be disqualified for failing to do a legal turn. Ruling 3 – The swimmer should not be disqualified. The backstroke turn does not require the use of a flip turn.

Situation 4 – At the start of the backstroke event, a swimmer is completely submerged and only the swimmer's chin breaks the surface of the water by the 15 meter mark. Ruling 4 – Legal. After the start and each turn, the swimmer may remain completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 meters. By that point some part of the swimmer's head must have broken the surface of the water. The chin is part of the head.

Situation 5 – A swimmer in the backstroke has stopped approximately 5 yards from the wall prior to the turn and rested. The swimmer has permitted his body to become vertical. The swimmer is not in the process of initiating a turn. Ruling 5 – The swimmer is disqualified for a violation of body position.

Freestyle

Start – The forward start shall be used. After the start and each turn, the swimmer may be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 meters. By that point, some part of the head must have broken the surface of the water. After breaking the surface of the water, the swimmer must remain on the surface except for turns and finishes.

Stroke – In an event designated “freestyle” (FR and FR Relay), any body position, stroke, and kick is permitted, and any combination of styles may be used.

Turn/Finish – Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall.

Freestyle – Situations/Rulings

Situation 1 – A swimmer misses the wall during the turn of a freestyle event. Upon realizing that the wall was missed, the swimmer sculls back to the wall, touches the wall, and continues the swim. Ruling 1 – Legal. There is no specific body position in freestyle. Since the turn requires some part of the swimmer’s body to contact the wall, the swimmer can scull back and touch if it is missed on a turn.

Situation 2 – A contestant in a freestyle event does a flip turn and kicks the final length under water. Ruling 2 – Illegal. A swimmer may be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 meters after the start and each turn. By that point, some part of the swimmer’s head must have broken the surface of the water.

Situation 3 – A contestant swims backstroke during a freestyle event but does not abide by the backstroke turn rule. Ruling 3 – Legal. The turn rule in freestyle allows a swimmer to turn in any manner provided he touches the wall.

Situation 4 – A swimmer in a freestyle event has stopped approximately 5 yards from the wall prior to the turn and rested. The swimmer has permitted his body to become vertical. The swimmer is not in the process of initiating a turn. Ruling 4 – Legal. There is no body position requirement in freestyle.

Individual Medley

Start – The forward start shall be used.

Stroke/Kick – Swimmers shall swim butterfly for the first quarter of the prescribed distance using the butterfly rules above. Swimmers shall swim backstroke for the second quarter of the prescribed distance using the backstroke rules above. Swimmers shall swim breaststroke for the third quarter of the prescribed distance using the breaststroke rules above. And swimmers shall swim any style other than backstroke, breaststroke, or butterfly for the fourth quarter of the prescribed distance .

Start/Turn/Finish – The start/turn/finish rules of each stroke shall apply.

Individual Medley – Situations/Rulings

Situation 1 – In the individual medley event, a swimmer rotates to his stomach while finishing the backstroke leg. An official disqualifies the swimmer for the position of the body during the finish of the leg. Ruling 1 – Correct procedure. The transition from one stroke to another in the individual medley event is a finish of one stroke and a start of the next. The correct finish and start rules for each stroke must be followed.

Situation 2 – A swimmer in the individual medley event swims the final quarter of the race using (a) elementary backstroke, (b) butterfly with a breaststroke kick, (c) breaststroke with a flutter kick. Ruling 2 – (a) Illegal. Any stroke swum on the back is considered to be backstroke. (b) and (c) Legal. These variations are not legal forms of breaststroke or butterfly, such strokes would not be considered repetitions of breaststroke and butterfly.

Freestyle Relay

The freestyle relay is swum by a team of four competitors, each swimming one quarter of the required distance of the race in any style, adhering to the turn and finish rules of the freestyle event. On relay exchanges from the deck, the second, third, and fourth swimmers must use the forward start with at least one foot at the edge of the deck. The body may be in motion, but no intentional movement of the feet is permitted. For in-water relay exchanges, the second, third, and fourth swimmers need only maintain contact with the end wall with a foot until the previous swimmer has finished. The first three members of a relay team shall leave the water promptly after finishing their quarters of the race.

Medley Relay

The medley relay is swum by a team of four competitors, each swimming one quarter of the required distance of the race. The first shall use the backstroke start and shall swim backstroke. The second shall swim breaststroke. The third shall swim butterfly. And the fourth shall swim any stroke other than backstroke, breaststroke, or butterfly. Each swimmer must adhere to the position, stroke, kick, turn, and finish rules governing the stroke being swum. On relay exchanges from the deck, the second, third, and fourth swimmers must use the forward start with at least one foot at the edge of the deck. The body may be in motion, but no intentional movement of the feet is permitted. For in-water relay exchanges, the second, third, and fourth swimmers need only maintain contact with the end wall with a foot until the previous swimmer has finished. The first three members of a relay team shall leave the water promptly after finishing their quarters of the race.

Relays – Situations/Rulings

Situation 1 – (a) A team enters a swimmer to swim both the leadoff and anchor leg of a relay. (b) A team enters a swimmer as the leadoff swimmer on one relay team and as the anchor swimmer on another relay team in the same event. Ruling 1 – Both (a) and (b) are illegal. A competitor may only be entered once in an event.

Situation 2 – For deck starts in relay events, all four swimmers must be stationary and have at least one foot at the front edge of the deck. Ruling 2 – Incorrect procedure. The second, third, and fourth swimmers must assume a position with at least one foot at the front edge of the deck, but the remainder of the body may be in motion prior to the finish of the incoming swimmer.

Situation 3 – During a relay using in-water starts, the second swimmer stands on the bottom of the pool. Just before the incoming swimmer completes his leg, he places both feet on the wall and begins to push off but does not lose contact with the wall until after the incoming swimmer has touched the end wall. Ruling 3 – Legal.

Situation 4 – The third swimmer on a relay team completes his leg but continues to swim. Ruling 4 – The relay team is disqualified.