

Basic Guide to Starts, Turns and Finishes



Rules

- Starts - swimmer must be ready on whistle - no adjusting goggles on blocks!
On take your mark - swimmers must be still in start position. Swimmers must surface before 15m
- Breaststroke & Fly: Touch simultaneously with two hands, hands cannot meet but one hand can be higher than other
- Backstroke Turn: Can touch turn on front and push off on back. In backstroke flip turn, the pull must be continuous, starting while rotating onto front
- Backstroke Finish: Must touch on back.
- IM - Butterfly to Backstroke & Breaststroke to Freestyle: Touch with two hands
- IM - Backstroke to Breaststroke: Must stay on back to touch and then push off on front

Starts

The Start - Freestyle, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Individual Medley

Officials	You
Marshals marshal you	Pre-race you should be standing behind or next to the starting platform ready for your race
Referee blows the whistle	You move to your starting location, which is either: 1) On the starting block – for a normal start (track or conventional); 2) On the pool edge – for a pool side start (stand with one or both feet on the pool's edge); or 3) You get in the pool for an in-water start (one hand remains in contact with the pool's edge)
Starter orders "Take your marks"	Get to your race start position and remain stationary
Starter gives the starting signal	You dive and swim

NOTE: Over the top starts

If the starts are run this way, after you have finished your race, move about one metre down your lane and take up a vertical position holding onto the lane rope (either side). The next race will be started, and then the referee will sound a whistle to signal you to exit the pool – always wait for the referee's signal.

The Start - Backstroke

Officials	You
Marshals marshal you	Pre-race you should be standing behind or next to the starting platform ready for your race
Referee blows an initial long whistle	You immediately enter the water FEET first
Referee blows another long whistle.	Get to your starting position with both hands on the pool end or the backstroke starting grips
Starter orders "Take your marks"	You get to your race start position and remain stationary. Starting position is either Both Hands on the starting grips or Both Hands on the pools edge
Starter gives the starting signal	You start and swim

Relay changeovers

If you are the second, third or fourth person in a relay team, for the start you must be either:

- 1) standing on the starting platform
- 2) the edge of the pool deck
- 3) in the pool with one hand in contact with the pool end or the backstroke starting grips, immediately prior to your start.

Relay finishes

The first, second and third swimmer must leave the pool as soon as possible without obstructing any other swimmer who has not yet finished their leg (the Referee will not signal you to leave the pool). DO NOT get out over the end of the pool, instead, get out via the ladder near the pool end. The last swimmer should stay in the water as if it was an individual event.

Dive/Start

(Notes taken from <https://skillswimming.com/how-to-dive/> and edited accordingly)

1. Starting Position – Track Start

- Prior to getting in the block, it may be beneficial to dry your feet and the block to prevent slipping whilst starting.
- If your block has a wedge, adjust it before getting on the block.



Feet

- Strongest leg in front. To test – have someone push you from behind without warning – whichever leg goes naturally in front is your strongest.
- One foot should be on the front while the other one on the back with only the ball of the foot on the wedge or on the block.
- The back foot should be aligned with your hips
- If the block has a wedge, make sure you don't have it too far back. Somewhere aligned with your hips it is recommended.
- Both sets of toes are pointing forward, your rear heel is raised – **so you can drive forward with your hamstring.**



Finger & Toes

- The front foot and hands should be on the edge,
- Your **toes and fingers grabbing** the block.
- Bend from waist – flat back, not round, switch on core. weight is forward.



Hips

- Your hips should be the highest point of the body. This will help you get all the power to the front when you push from the blocks.

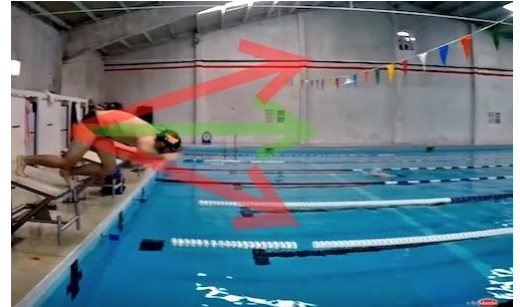


2. The Push

- After the “take your marks” command, tense all your muscles and stay very alert.

Arms and Feet

- When you hear the starting signal, at the same time as your hands will pull backwards (for slingshot effect) do a strong push forward, initially with back leg, then with your stronger front leg.
- Bring your arms in front of your head, do a streamline with legs together.
- Your front foot will generate most of the speed.
- Push straight out like you want to get to the other end of the pool, do not push up or down. Eyeball your entry hole, by looking forward with your eyes only – don’t lift your head.



3. The Entry

- After you dive horizontally, let gravity pull you down and into the water, ensure your head is in line with your spine, glutes and core are switched on and the arms are straight and taut.
- Try to enter your whole body through one small hole into the water. Entering your legs in the same spot where your arms passed is hard to do but is the best way to create less drag and enter with more speed.
- Your splash should be minimal.

Dive depth and kicks

- We recommend practising your starts and test both depth variations and the number kicks to take, to see at what depth and with how many kicks you can reach 15 metres the quickest.

Breaststroke Start

- To get most out of underwater work, in pull, include **1 fly kick** in streamline
- Dive, streamline, fly kick and pull through, **1 kick** and then hands to top to commence stroke. Head needs to break the surface of the water before your hands start the catch part of the pull i.e. before they move past shoulder width.

Backstroke Start

Depending on physical factors (including age), you may choose to either:

- perform a backstroke dive start, that is, from the starting position, dive backwards and arch your back over the water, or
- do a duck down and push off.

It is recommended testing both prior to racing!

From “Take your marks”

- Pull up to sit on the surface or as far as you can.

- Toes close to the surface.
- Flat back - 90-degree power position for knees.
- Eyes looking at the block.
- No need to pull in (bend elbows) - Maintain a straight back, head in line with spine.
- Feet - shoulder width apart and slightly staggered gives better grip on wall.

From "Go"

- First, throw the arms straight back overhead, and extends the head backward. Arching the back avoids contact with the water (head is normally held neutral for Masters Swimmers, or younger swimmers may extend the head backwards as if to look at the other end of the pool).
- Second, push with the legs. This sequence will also prevent slipping.
- The hands should be wrapped together wrist over wrist at entry in the body taut and streamline.
- Dolphin kick underwater up to 15 metres.

It is recommended that you practice your starts and test both depth variations and the number kicks to take, to see at what depth and with how many kicks you can reach 15 metres the quickest. Depending on your skills, you could lose time by kicking too many times or alternatively you may go faster by kicking more.

Start Practice Time start to breakout, experimenting with underwater work, working on reaction time

Turns

- Underwater work very important.
- Practice dolphin kick off wall, no stroke till flags, no breathe on first stroke.

Tumble Turn Drills

- Somersault in water push off pool bottom and jump to streamline.
Next step - jump and rotate 180 degree.
- Somersault down lane – couple of strokes and tumble slapping calves on water.
- Fins On -practise turning at speed
- Time turns from 10m – full pace on wall.
- Backstroke - as in freestyle – practice stroke count in, push off on back

Touch Turns

Can be just as effective for novice swimmers as a tumble turn

- Finish on a full stroke.
- Hit the wall at speed to come off quickly.
- Head down - breathing - low and late.
- Technique - eyes down, touch with hands, one hand come off almost immediately, knees up on wall and body starts to come onto side, arms go: *PUNCH YOUR BROTHER, PHONE YOUR MOTHER.*

Touch Turn Drills

Hanging on side of pool, on whistle bring knees up on wall, then work through stages of turn until finally complete action with push off.

FINISH

- It is most important to practise and time strokes to wall to finish on a full touch, particularly in the 2 hand touch.
- Freestyle and Butterfly -head is down, no breathing past the flags.
- Freestyle – lunge and extend 1 hand to wall.
- Backstroke – lunge and extend 1 hand to wall.

MSA Rules

SW 4 THE START (Incorporating FINA Masters rule MSW 3.2)

SW 4.1M In Freestyle, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Individual Medley races, when using the forward start, the referee's long whistle (SW 2.1.5) shall indicate that the swimmers may take their positions with at least one foot at the front of the starting platform or pool deck, or in the water with one hand having contact with the starting wall. On the starter's command "take your marks", they shall immediately take up a starting position. The position of the hands is not relevant. When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal.

Clarification: Sitting on the block or pool edge is discouraged as it is an unsafe practice. Swimmers who cannot stand unaided should use support staff or start in the water.

SW 4.2 The start in Backstroke and Medley Relay races shall be from the water. At the referee's first long whistle (SW 2.1.5), the swimmers shall immediately enter the water. At the Referee's second long whistle the swimmers shall return without undue delay to the starting position (SW 6.1). When all swimmers have assumed their starting positions, the starter shall give the command "take your marks". When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal.

SW 4.3M In MSA events the command "Take your marks" shall be in English. At MSA National Championships the start command shall be by multiple loudspeakers, mounted one at each starting platform.

SW 4.4 Any swimmer starting before the starting signal has been given shall be disqualified. If the starting signal sounds before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue and the swimmer or swimmers shall be disqualified upon completion of the race. If the disqualification is declared before the starting signal, the signal shall not be given, but the remaining swimmers shall be called back and start again. The Referee repeats the starting procedure beginning with the long whistle (the second one for backstroke) as per SW 2.1.5.

Interpretation: After all swimmers are "stationary" (SW 4.1) following the Starter's command "take your marks", any swimmer who makes an actual forward movement before the starting signal may be disqualified when such movement is observed and confirmed by both the starter and referee (SW 2.1.6).

This is to allow for the unsteadiness of some swimmers. When video timing is available, it may be used to verify the disqualification.

SW 6 BACKSTROKE

SW 6.1M 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. Bending the toes over the top of the touchpad is prohibited.

SW 6.2 At the signal for starting and after turning the swimmer shall push off and swim upon their 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 is permissible for the swimmer to be completely sub-merged 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.

SW 6.4 When executing the turn there must be a touch of the wall with some part of the swimmer's body in their 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.

Clarification: The swimmer who turns past the vertical and, in a continuous motion, touches the wall with any part of the body and leaves the wall on their back is deemed to have executed a legal turn.

Clarification: Kicking of the legs while on the breast is allowed provided it is part of the turning action.

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

Clarification: If a swimmer applies to have one or more intermediate distances especially timed (see SW 12.6.9M) they must complete that distance in accordance with this rule.

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.

SW 7.2 From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the body shall be 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 on the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.

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.

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.

SW 7.5 The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. Alternating movements or downward 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.

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. At the last stroke before the turn and at the finish an arm stroke not followed by a leg kick is permitted. 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.

Interpretation: "Separated" means that the hands cannot be stacked one on top of the other. It is not necessary to see space between the hands. Incidental contact at the fingers is not a concern.

SW 7.4 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.

SW 7.5 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 them 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.