



Swim Rules - the simple version

Swimwear:

There are rules for swimwear - normal speedo style with no fastenings or zips is fine. Swimmers must wear only one pair of FINA approved swimwear. An additional item of swimwear must not be worn under another while competing. Please check with one of the technical officials if you are unsure. MSA is developing a new 'Inclusive Swimwear Policy', which will allow some flexibility based on cultural, religious or modesty grounds.

Remove your watch. Pacing and timing devices are not allowed so you can be disqualified just for wearing a dress watch. Strange, but it has happened as officials are not expected to determine which is which.

Starts:

Swimmers may start from the block, from the pool edge or in the water, except for backstroke which is always 'in-the-water'.

At least one foot must be at the front edge of the block or pool or one hand must be in contact with the wall (both hands for Backstroke), feet may not be in the gutter or touching the floor of the pool.

For all Strokes except Back, one long whistle means get on the blocks or the place where you are starting from. At "take your marks" you need to get into starting position and then remain still. Do not move forward and definitely do not dive until after the start signal (usually a buzzer) or you will be disqualified.

For Backstroke, the first long whistle means jump into the water. The second whistle means get to the block. At "take your marks" you need to get into start position with BOTH hands on the blocks and your legs up against the wall and then remain still as above.

Swimmers may lay a towel or similar item on the block if it is too slippery.

Freestyle:

Too easy. You can swim any stroke you like* as long as you stay in your lane, don't push off the floor and don't stay underwater except for 15m at the start and turns. At the turn, some part of the body must touch the wall.

*In the IM, the freestyle leg must be actual freestyle or "crawl".

Backstroke:

Swimmers must remain on their backs except during the turns, may not push off the floor nor be completely submerged except for 15m at the start and turns. Some part of the body must touch the wall at the turn. You may turn onto the chest and take an immediate continuous arm stroke before a tumble turn (except when changing to Breaststroke in the IM.)

Single or double arm is allowed, and any kick is allowed.

At the finish, the swimmer must remain on their back with some part of the body above water, and touch the wall, in your own lane. (You can touch the wall with any part of the body although touching with your head is not recommended!)

Breaststroke:

You really should read the full rules for Breaststroke if you can.

Swimmers must remain on their front at all times except during the turn but must leave the wall on their front. The order must always be an arm stroke then a kick.

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.

One butterfly kick is allowed at the start and after each turn, after which only breaststroke kick is allowed with both legs moving together on the same horizontal plane and the feet turned outward during the propulsive phase.

After the start and turn, the head must break the surface of the water before the arms have reached the widest part of the second stroke. The head must break the surface during each stroke cycle.

At every turn and at the finish, the wall must be touched with BOTH HANDS SIMULTANEOUSLY and SEPARATED, preferably above the water line where the officials can see them although on or under the water is allowed.

Butterfly:

Swimmers must remain on their front at all times except during the turn but must leave the wall on their front.

Both arms must be brought forward over the water with the elbows visible on the top of the water and the arms brought back simultaneously under the water.

All up and down movements of the legs must be simultaneous and alternating kick is not allowed. Either a Butterfly or Breaststroke leg action may be used with the Butterfly arm action. A mixture of these leg actions may be used during the performance of Butterfly. If using the Breaststroke kick, only one kick is allowed per arm stroke cycle.

At the start and at turns, a swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks but only one arm pull under the water, which must bring them to the surface. The swimmer must remain on the surface at all times except for the first 15m at the start and turns.

At every turn and at the finish, the wall must be touched with BOTH HANDS SIMULTANEOUSLY and SEPARATED, preferably above the water line where the officials can see them although on or under the water is allowed.

Individual Medley / IM:

Always swum in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle.

Each section must be swum following the rules for the stroke concerned especially regarding touching the wall. The Freestyle section must be real "Freestyle / front crawl" and may not be another stroke.

The Backstroke section must be finished on the back. The forward tumble turn is not allowed when changing to Breaststroke but a special back flip turn is allowed.

Medley Relay:

Always swum in the following order: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Freestyle.

The first swimmer starts in the water for Backstroke.

Swimmers must leave the water as soon as possible after completing their section without obstructing any other swimmer. If a swimmer can't safely leave the pool they may stay in their lane until the end of 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.