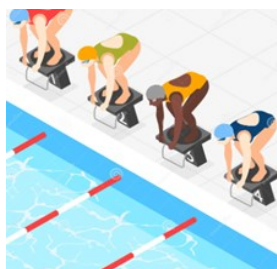




USMS Rules Reference for Swimmers

By: MI-LMSC Officials Coordinator

Entering a USMS meet is an exciting step for any competitive swimmer, but navigating the rules and regulations can seem daunting, especially for those new to the sport. USMS sanctioned meets operate under a specific set of rules designed to ensure fair competition for all swimmers. By familiarizing yourself with stroke-specific rules you can confidently prepare for your race, avoid disqualification, and focus on achieving your personal best. While this guide provides tips to help you understand some of the rules, ensuring a smooth and successful competitive experience, the USMS Rule Book shall apply.



Starts:

USMS prefers the use of Whistle Starts over voice commands because whistles are easily heard by all swimmers. What is a whistle start?

Short Whistle: the Referee uses four short whistles to signal the swimmers in the next heat to get ready and stand behind the block (not on the block)

Long Whistle: the Referee uses one long whistle to signal the swimmers to step onto the block, next to block for deck start, or enter water for in water start. At least one foot must be at the front of the platform or deck. Backstroke swimmers enter the water on first long whistle, at the second long whistle they may assume the starting position.

Start Signal: Once the Referee sees all swimmers are in place then a voice command "Take your marks" is used, all swimmers must be completely still, then the starting signal begins the heat.

False Starts: USMS Rule 103.8.6 states "Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified". USMS rules do not allow the swimmer to return to the block when they false start.

Butterfly:

Stroke: At the start, swimmer is allowed one or more leg kicks, but only one arm pull under water which brings swimmer to the surface. Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water throughout the swim and pulled back simultaneously under the water.

Kick: all up/down movements must be simultaneous and not alternate (scissor kick). Breaststroke kick may be used interchangeably with dolphin kick at any time, but only one breaststroke kick is permitted per arm pull. At the start and after each turn, a single breaststroke kick is permitted prior to the first arm pull.

Turns/finish: Touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above or below the water. At the finish, the touch shall be made in the same manner as the turn both hands simultaneously.



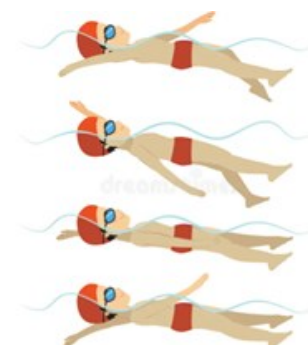


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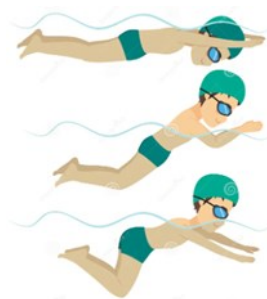
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Backstroke:

Start/Stroke: At the start, each swimmer must take the position facing the starting end with both hands placed on the gutter or 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 is prohibited. When using the backstroke ledge, at least one toe of each foot must be in contact with the end wall or touch pad. The swimmer shall push off on the back and continue swimming on the back throughout the race.



Turns/finish: During the turn the shoulders may be turned past vertical after which an immediate continuous single or double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. Once the turn is completed (ie: flip turn) the swimmer must return to a position on the back upon leaving the wall. Leaving the wall on the side (shoulders past vertical toward the breast) or stomach will result in disqualification. Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall or pad while on the back. Rolling onto the side, past vertical, or stomach prior to touching the finish wall/pad shall result in disqualification.



Breaststroke:

Start/Stroke: 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. The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hip line, except during the first stroke after the start and at each turn. After the start and each turn the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs. During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer's head shall break the surface of the water.

Kick: After the start/turn, at any time prior to the first breaststroke kick, a single butterfly kick is permitted, following which, all movements of the legs shall be simultaneous without alternating movement. The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. Scissor, alternating or downward butterfly kicks are not permitted except as noted above.

Turns/finish: At each turn and finish, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water. At the last stroke before the turn and at the finish, an arm stroke not followed by a leg kick is permitted.



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Individual Medley:

Start/Stroke: The stroke for each distance shall follow the prescribed rules for that stroke, except that in the freestyle, the swimmer must be on the breast (stomach) except when executing a turn.

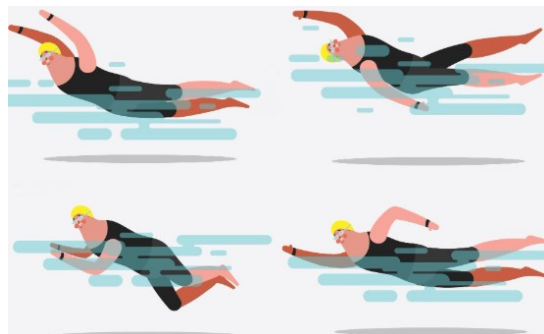
Turns: Turns within each stroke shall conform to the turn rules for that stroke.

Butterfly to backstroke: Swimmer must touch as described in the butterfly section above. Once a legal touch is made, the swimmer may turn in any manner, but the shoulders must be at or past vertical toward the **back** when the swimmer leaves the wall.

Backstroke to breaststroke: Swimmer must touch the wall while on the **back**. Once a legal touch is made the swimmer may turn in any manner but shoulders **must** be at or past the vertical toward the **breast** when the swimmer leaves the wall and the prescribed breaststroke form must be attained prior to the first arm stroke.

Breaststroke to freestyle: Swimmer must touch as described in the breaststroke section above, both hands simultaneously. Once a legal touch is made the swimmer may turn in any manner and must return to the breast **before** any kick or stroke.

Finish: Swimmer shall have finished the race when any part of the swimmer touches the wall after completion



Common Disqualifications:

False start: leaving the block or starting position before the signal

Improper finish: not touching the wall per the rules for each stroke outlined above (ie: non-simultaneous touch for butterfly and breaststroke)

Underwater violation: staying submerged more than 15 meters after the start or turn

Improper kick: using a scissor or flutter kick instead of breaststroke whip kick or butterfly dolphin kick

Improper arm movement: breaststroke, pulling arms/hands past the hips and for butterfly not bringing arms out of the water and forward at the same time during the recovery

Improper turning: for backstroke turning onto the stomach too early or taking too many strokes on the stomach at the turn or finish

Use of lane line: pulling on the lane line for forward motion