

The Rules for Competitive Swimming

FINA (*Federation Internationale de Natation*) are the International governing body for swimming. They basically set the rules for World swimming which each country will follow. However, as we are not quite world standard, (well not yet anyway !) some of the rules of the galas we compete in are relaxed, such as the mini leagues when swimmers can start in the water rather than having to dive in.

In this document we have reproduced some of the FINA swimming rules, being those which we think are most useful and we recommend that you read them as it may help you in galas. However, should you have any questions you should have a word with your teacher or coach. There is nothing worse than going to a gala and then getting disqualified for something that could have been avoided.

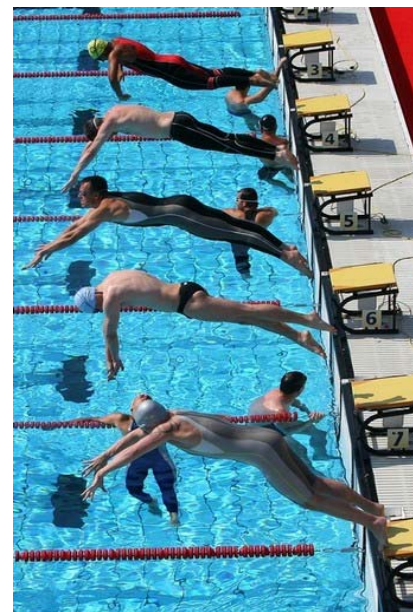
For example when swimming breaststroke or butterfly it is vital that you always touch the end walls with both hands together. It says in the rules that when you touch the wall at each turn or at the end of the race, you must do it two handed and this can be *“at, above or below the water level”*. To be absolutely safe, it may be advisable to try and touch at or above the water level, because if the referee cannot see both hands touching the wall you could get disqualified. It has been known !

The numbers in the following paragraphs are the numbers used in the FINA rules, with the ‘SW’ standing for swimming – as opposed to diving or water polo or synchro which have their own rules

SW 4 THE START

SW 4.1 The start in Freestyle, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Individual Medley races shall be with a dive. On the long whistle (SW 2.1.5) from the referee the swimmers shall step onto the starting platform and remain there. On the starter’s command “take your marks”, they shall immediately take up a starting position with at least one foot at the front of the starting platforms. The position of the hands is not relevant. When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal.

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 4.3 In Olympic Games, World Championships and other FINA events the command “Take your marks” shall be in English and the start 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.

SW4 FREESTYLE

SW 5.1 Freestyle means that in an event so designated the swimmer may swim any stroke, except that in individual medley or medley relay events, freestyle means any style other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly.

SW 5.2 Some part of the swimmer must touch the wall upon completion of each length and at the finish

SW 5.3 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 metres after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface.



SW 6 BACKSTROKE

SW 6.1 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.

SW 6.2 At the signal for starting and after turning, the swimmer shall push off and swim upon his back throughout the race except when executing a turn as set forth in SW 6.4 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 submerged during the turn, at the finish 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. During the turn the shoulders may be turned over the vertical to the breast after which a continuous single arm pull or a 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.

SW 6.5 Upon the finish of the race the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back.

SW7 BREASTROKE

SW 7.1 From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the body shall be kept on the breast. It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time. Throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg stroke in that order.



SW 7.2 All movements of the arms shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.

stroke after the start and each turn.

SW 7.3 The hands shall be pushed forward together from the breast on, 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 or under the surface of the water. The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hip line, except during the first

SW 7.4 During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer's head shall break the surface of the water. After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs. The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke. A single downward dolphin 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.

SW 7.5 The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. A scissors, flutter or downward dolphin kick is not permitted except as in SW 7.4. Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward dolphin kick.

SW 7.6 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 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.

SW 8 BUTTERFLY

SW 8.1 From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and each turn, the body shall be kept on the breast. Under water kicking is allowed. It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time.

SW 8.2 Both arms shall be brought forward together over the water and brought backward simultaneously throughout the race, subject to SW 8.5

SW 8.3 All up and down movements of the legs must be simultaneous. The legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. A breaststroke kicking movement is not permitted.



SW 8.4 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 surface.

SW 8.5 At the start and at turns, a swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks and one pull under the water, which must bring him 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.

SW 9 MEDLEY

SW 9.1 In individual medley events, the swimmer covers the four swimming styles in the following order ; Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle.

SW 9.2 In medley events, swimmers will cover the four swimming styles in the following order ; Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Freestyle.

SW 9.3 Each section must be finished in accordance with the rule which applies to the style.

SW10 THE RACE

SW 10.1 A swimmer swimming over the course alone shall cover the whole distance to qualify

SW 10.2 A swimmer must finish the race in the same lane in which he started.

SW 10.3 In all events, a swimmer when turning shall make physical contact with the end of the pool or course. The turn must be made from the wall, and it is not permitted to take a stride or step from the bottom of the pool.

SW 10.4 Standing on the bottom during freestyle events or during the freestyle portion of medley events shall not disqualify a swimmer, but he shall not walk.

SW 10.5 Pulling on the lane rope is not allowed.



SW 10.6 Obstructing another swimmer by swimming across another lane or otherwise interfering shall disqualify the offender. Should the foul be intentional, the referee shall report the matter to the Member promoting the race, and to the Member of the swimmer so offending.

SW 10.7 No swimmer shall be permitted to use or wear any device that may aid his speed, buoyancy or endurance during competition (such as webbed gloves , flippers, fins etc.) Goggles may be worn.

SW 10.8 Any swimmer not entered in a race, who enters the water in which an event is being conducted before all swimmers therein have completed the race, shall be disqualified from the next scheduled race in the meet.



SW 10.9 There shall be four swimmers on each relay team.

SW 10.10 In relay events, the team of a swimmer whose feet lose touch with the starting platform before the preceding team-mate touches the wall shall be disqualified.

SW 10.11 Any relay team shall be disqualified from a race if a team member, other than the swimmer designated to swim that length, enters the water when the race is being conducted, before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race.

SW 10.12 The members of a relay team and their order of competing must be nominated before the race. Any relay team member may compete in a race only once. The composition of a relay team may be changed between the heats and finals of an event, provided that it is made up from the list of swimmers properly entered by a Member for that event. Failure to swim in the order listed will result in disqualification. Substitutions may be made only in the case of a documented medical emergency.

SW 10.13 Any swimmer having finished his race, or his distance in a relay event must leave the pool as soon as possible without obstructing any other swimmer who has not yet finished his race. Otherwise the swimmer committing the fault, or his relay team, shall be disqualified.

SW 10.14 Should a foul endanger the chance of success of a swimmer, the referee shall have the power to allow him to compete in the next heat or, should the foul occur in a final event or in the last heat, he/she may order it to be re-run.

SW 10.15 No pace-making shall be permitted, nor may any device be used or plan adopted which has that effect.

----- End -----