

**STROKE & TURN
COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS
October 15, 2005**

FREESTYLE

1. If a swimmer misses the wall, can he go back and touch?

Yes, but only if he has not yet touched the wall at the opposite end of the pool as this would then complete the next length.

2. If a swimmer swims butterfly, breaststroke, or backstroke in an individual freestyle event, must he swim that stroke the entire event distance?

No, he can change to whichever stroke he wants, whenever he wants. However, the time recorded in a freestyle event is for freestyle only, regardless of the stroke used.

3. If a swimmer stands up during a freestyle event and then continues swimming, is she disqualified?

Not unless she leaves the pool, walks or springs from the bottom. This does NOT apply to the other strokes – once the swimmer has stood up during the back, breast, or fly, she has broken the stroke as she is no longer on her back or breast as applicable.

BACKSTROKE

1. How far can the swimmer swim completely under water – and whose jurisdiction is this call?

Fifteen meters (16.4 yards) – at which point the some part of swimmer's head must have broken the surface of the water. Jurisdiction for this call would normally be given to the stroke judges at the side of the pool. The 15-meter underwater rule also applies to the butterfly and freestyle. It does not apply to the breaststroke.

2. What is “vertical” and what part of the body is used to judge the swimmer's position?

Vertical is considered to be at a 90-degree angle from the surface of the water. The swimmer's shoulders are used as the reference point to judge body position. During the backstroke to include the finish, the shoulders must be past vertical towards the back. The only exception is during the turns. (See Rule Book Glossary for “Vertical” definition)

- 3. What about the swimmer who turns past vertical towards the breast, immediately touches or grabs the wall/gutter or takes one arm pull and immediately touches or grabs the wall/gutter, and even hangs on the wall/gutter for a time, and then pushes off and is past vertical towards the back when the feet leave the wall – is this legal?**

Yes, if it is a continuous part of the swimmer's turning action in reaching for the wall – this is considered their turn.

- 4. If the swimmer does not turn past vertical to make her turn, do her feet have to touch the wall?**

No. The rule only requires that some part of the body must touch the wall, but not necessarily the feet.

- 5. If the swimmer does turn past vertical towards the breast, flips, but misses the wall, can he scull back and touch with his feet?**

No. The “continuous turning action” required when the shoulders pass vertical towards the breast is considered to be terminated when the swimmer's feet touch the wall. If the swimmer misses the wall, stops and sculls back to touch, she is no longer in a “continuous turning action” and would merit a DQ.

- 6. What are the important things to watch for in judging whether the swimmer has made a “continuous turning motion?”**

Watch the arm or double arm pull. When the swimmer turns past vertical towards the breast, he is allowed one arm or one double arm pull (most use a one-arm pull). As long as the swimmer's arm is still moving back to the body, no turning action is required and the swimmer may continue to kick. In fact, experienced swimmers learn to adjust the speed of the arm pull to accommodate their distance from the wall – they slow the arm pull down if they are a bit too far away so that they can make up the distance before beginning the turning (flip) action.

However, once the arm pull is complete, watch to see that the swimmer IMMEDIATELY begins his turning motion with some action. This action could be raising the head, lowering the head, or actually beginning the “flipping” motion. The official must use his or her judgment on whether the turning action is immediately begun upon completion of the arm pull.

In sum, the two keys are the arm pull and starting the turning motion to determine whether the swimmer made a “continuous turning action.” Once the swimmer has started their turning action, he may kick through the turn as such kicking is not independent of the turning action. (See the next question regarding independent kicking.)

7. What are “gliding” and “independent kicking?”

Both terms relate to situations involving a “non-continuous turning action.” Gliding is where the swimmer turns past vertical towards the breast, finishes the arm pull, but does not immediately begin her turning action. Rather, the swimmer, in order to make up distance to the wall, uses her forward momentum to glide for some period before beginning the turning action.

Independent kicking is where the swimmer turns past vertical towards the breast, finishes the arm pull, but continues to kick without beginning her turning action. The kicking is independent of any turning action.

BREASTSTROKE

1. With the vertical motion allowed in the breaststroke kick, how do you really judge a breaststroke versus a butterfly kick?

The key is the phrase “the feet must be turned outward during the propulsive part of the breaststroke kick movement.” (See Rule 101.1.3) Are the toes pointed out? They should be pointed out for the breaststroke kick with propulsion from the bottom of the feet. In the butterfly, the toes are pointed in with propulsion coming from the top of the feet.

Another question that arises is when is the up and down motion of the feet and legs a problem after a breaststroke kick has been completed and the legs are extended straight back before recovery. If the up and down motion is just the swimmer’s feet and legs following the motion of the body, then no violation has occurred. However, if the downward motion involves a butterfly kick that is independent of the motion of the swimmer’s hips and upper body, then the swimmer should be disqualified.

RULE CHANGE: Effective 9/21/2005, a swimmer is permitted, but is not required, to do a single downward butterfly kick during or at the end of the arm pull-down after the start and after each turn. This butterfly kick must be followed by a breaststroke kick. In addition, during all breaststroke kicks there is now a requirement that all movements of the legs be in the same horizontal plane.

2. What is meant by the requirement that “the arms be in the same horizontal plane?”

Beginning with the first arm pull after the start and after each turn, the arms must move simultaneously and in the same horizontal plane. This means the arms must move in line with the surface of the water during any arm stroke, to include the first arm pull under water after the start and turns. The term ‘Horizontal’ is defined in the Rule Book Glossary as “parallel to the surface of the water.”

3. At the start and after each turn, must the first stroke be the arm pull?

Yes. The breaststroke is the only stroke that requires a set stroke sequence – arm pull, then kick. This is true from the first stroke through to the finish.

RULE CHANGE: See Breaststroke Question 2 above.

4. Can the hands recover over the surface of the water-and how does this differ from the butterfly arm recovery?

Yes, the hands can recover over the water surface, but they must still be pushed forward together from the breast (within the shoulder blades, not outside the line of the body as in the butterfly). The elbows must remain in contact with the water during the arm recovery phase except for the final stroke before the turn, during the turn, and the last stroke at the finish.

BUTTERFLY

1. What is meant by underwater recovery at the turn and finish and how is it judged?

To recover, according to Webster's Dictionary, is to "bring back to normal position." In swimming it is the forward motion of the arms, bringing them back into position for a pulling action. In butterfly, the arms must be brought forward simultaneously OVER the water. Therefore, if a swimmer pulls his arms back and then finding himself too close to the wall, pushes his arms forward again underwater to make the touch, he should be disqualified for an "underwater recovery."

2. Would you judge an 8 & Under the same as older swimmers? How far do the arms have to be over the water during recovery?

Eight& Unders are entitled to the same standard of officiating as any other swimmers! If your child came home from school and said $2+2=5$, would you let him think the answer is correct? Of course not. The same is true in swimming. It is not fair to let an 8 & Under think he is doing a stroke legally if he is not.

To judge whether the arms of a swimmer are recovering "over the water," look at the elbows – are they coming out of the water? If they are, then the swimmer is probably doing a legal butterfly. If the elbows are not coming out of the water, chances are he is doing a simultaneous-type "dog-paddle, not the butterfly.

3. Can a swimmer stop her butterfly stroke during the swim to rest or adjust her goggles?

No. This would constitute “breaking the stroke” and would merit a disqualification. (This same rule applies to the breaststroke). Of course, at each turn after the swimmer makes a simultaneous two-hand touch, she may pause while remaining at the wall to rest or adjust her goggles.

4. Does a swimmer whose arm hits the lane line and causes the over the water arm recovery to not be simultaneous merit a disqualification?

Yes. The lane lines are part of the pool and hitting them does not relieve a swimmer from compliance with the rules.

INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY

1. Are turns between the different strokes considered “turns” or “finishes?”

The turns between the different strokes are considered “finishes” so swimmers must comply with the finish rules for that stroke. This comes into play when changing from the backstroke to the breaststroke. The swimmer must touch the wall while still on his back before turning to the breaststroke.

2. Is a swimmer who swims the butterfly or breaststroke or backstroke during the freestyle leg in violation of the rules?

Yes. In the individual medley, the swimmer swims the butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle in that order. During the freestyle leg, the swimmer may swim any stroke EXCEPT in the style of the butterfly, backstroke, or breaststroke.

Contact Bryan Lawler, Iowa Swimming Officials Chair at (blawler@universalclimate.com or 319-354-9005) if you have any questions or comments.

Bryan Lawler
ISI Officials Committee Chair