

Knowing the Rules of Swimming

The Seattle Summer Swim League uses High School Rules, unless specifically changed by the league operating plan. Knowing these rules can really help you be successful in meets. When you're in a race, things get pretty "intense." It's easy to forget. However, your body can remember if you do the correct turn or stroke everyday in workout.

Starts

- The starter should help swimmers follow the rules prior to the start. For instance, if he or she sees something wrong the swimmers can be ask to "stand up" and have the rules explained.
- When the starter says "take your mark" you must be still. When all swimmers are motionless, the starter will activate the starting device.
- On the backstroke, the toes can no longer be "hooked" over the edge. The entire foot must remain underwater.
- In the forward start you have a great deal of freedom in what you do. For instance, you don't have to have your foot at the edge of the block. You don't have to "go down" at all. You just have to be still after you hear "take your mark."
- Swimmers are allowed one false start. A second false start on an individual in an event will result in disqualification. (SSSL Rule)
- You have to start in the water in the shallow end (SSSL Rule).

Relays

- Taking off early
 - Feet leaving the block before the incoming swimmer touches the wall
 - You can be moving - timing is crucial. False starts are often caused by the swimmer not swimming hard all the way to the wall.
- Using an improper stroke - see below

Individual Medley (IM)

- New in 2005 - you can no longer do a flip turn between the backstroke and breaststroke. You must do an open turn, touching on your back.

Freestyle

- At the turn some part of the body must touch the wall.
- The head must come up after 15 meters (16.4 yards) on the start and turns.

Backstroke

- Toes may not be curled over the lip of the gutter at the start.
- The head must come up out of the water by the 15 meter mark (16.4 yards) on the start and turns.

- Your shoulders must be at or past the vertical towards the back during the swim, except at the turn.
- You may turn towards the breast on the turn. You may take a single pull at this time. You may kick and glide towards the wall.
- You must be towards the back when the feet leave the wall after the turn.
- At the turn some part of the body must touch the wall.
- You must touch the wall at the finish while on the back.

Breaststroke

- **NEW:** "After the start and each turn, a single downward butterfly 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."
- At the start and at the turn the swimmer may take only one arm pull and one kick in that order while completely submerged. The head must break the surface by the time the arms have reached the widest part of the second pull.
- After the start and turn your shoulders must be at or past the vertical towards the breast
- You may not skull the hands at the end of the underwater pull at the start and turn
- The only time that the hands may be brought back beyond the hips is during the start and turn.
- Arms must move in the same plane with no alternating movement.
- There shall be no scissors, flutter, or downward butterfly kick. Breaking the surface of the water is OK as long as it is not part of a butterfly kick. (The position of the toes is key. The toes should be pointed out during the kick itself.)
- All motion with the hands and legs must be simultaneous.
- The head can go under water during the stroke, as long as it comes up at least once during the stroke cycle.
- At the turn and finish you must touch with both hands at the same time, not necessarily on the same plane (same level).
- Your stroke needs to follow the pattern of one pull and one kick. A double pull or double kick are not allowed.

Butterfly

- After the start and turn your shoulders must be at or past the vertical towards the breast.
- At the start and turn you may take as many kicks underwater as you want as long as your head comes up by the 15 meter mark (16.4 yards).
- The arms must come over the water at the same time. You can't recover underwater.
- All movements of the legs and feet shall be simultaneous. You can't have any alternative, scissors, or breaststroke kick.
- At the turn and finish you must touch with both hands at the same time. The hands must be at the same level.

Thanks to View Ridge's Peter Klein