

A Stroke Briefing in Rhyme
(With sincerest apologies to Dr. Seuss and real poets everywhere)
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In accordance with USA-Swimming Rules & Interpretations Effective 8 September 2015

The time has come, my friends, for a briefing o' the stroke; for as we all know the rules, they are no joke.
What's that you say? "Another Stroke Briefing? Oh dear!" For it causes eyes to glaze and naps, I fear.
But if it's done in rhyme and fun; perhaps will do the job and enthrall e'ryone.
Let us commence then, dear souls; for a review of our sacred roles.

The first in review is called the **Breast**; the start is forward, the swimmer on the chest.
From whence a cycle the stroke must fall; first the arms then kick is done by all.
Arms on the horizontal plane; hands back together then forward from the breast again.
Elbows under water throughout the race; whilst hands at, above, or below may trace.
Not past the hips, the hands may churn; save for once upon the entry and off each turn.
Remember, too, before the first breaststroke kick is plowed; a single butterfly motion is allowed.
Then move the legs with frog-like motion; simultaneous and horizontal is the notion.
Feet pointed outward is the proper command; for to do otherwise shall cause a raised hand.
Before hands turn inward on the second stroke; above the water, the head must poke.
The touch requires hands simultaneous for here's a tip; if they do not, out must come the DQ slip!
And when to the wall those hands do touch, there must be separation (but it may not be much).

In sequence with the rules we try; so the next in review is the **Butterfly**.
Much like the Breast, a forward start is done; remaining on the chest this race is won.
Feet simultaneous like a dolphin proud; for no scissors, breast or alternating movement is allowed.
The hands and arms in sync one ought-er; pulled simultaneously back below then forward above the water.
By the 15 meter mark above the surface the head must be; and with the first pull, of course, that's the key.
Hands simultaneous at the turn and finish as one; for the rules require they hit in unison.
Here, too, much like the Breast before, the swimmer has but one more chore.
Touch with hands simultaneous but not with fingers stacked or laced, for if no separation, a DQ gets traced.

What's next, you say, to keep on track? 'Tis the stroke we call the **Back**.
At the first long whistle in the water the swimmer goes; for with the next, 'tis time to place the toes!
Never above the gutter may they be placed; lest with a disqualification is the swimmer disgraced.
Shoulders past vertical toward the back throughout the race; save at the turns the body must face.
At the wall, some portion of the body must hit; for as officials we really do give aDarn.
Much like the fly, by 15-meters the head must break; we're not here to watch submarines, for heaven's sake!
The turn allows one to rotate to the chest in full; with an immediate single or simultaneous double-arm pull.
Following this by a continuous turning action; will bring about the official's satisfaction.
Finish on the surface per the rules described; lest on the ol' DQ slip is the error transcribed.

With further words the poetic license I do maul; to describe the stroke once known as The Crawl.
Freestyle is its name today; and with it comes much leeway.
The rules are rather broad you see; perhaps that's why it's called 'The Free'.
Walking on the bottom or pulling on the rope; is that allowed? We just say 'nope!'
Head up before the 15 meter mark, my friend; or in disgrace the swimmer will end.
A touch at each end the swim requires; and upon the finish the athlete retires.

Having mastered all the strokes today; 'tis time for the **IM** and **Med Relay**.
They are a mix of all, you see; with Back and Breast and Fly and Free.
The order depends on which you quote; ('twas for the Med Relay I just wrote).
But for the Individual Medley it is said; "the Fly comes first" be in your head
Followed by the Back and then its Breast; and end with something other than the rest.
At this point, please allow a slight digression, for there is a possible and unique transgression.
As you know each stroke of the IM or Med Relay must cover one quarter of the distance of play.
So on the last leg the swimmer must be off the back; at or past vertical toward the breast to keep on track.
Thus whence from the wall leave the swimmer's feet, if on the back, 'tis considered a backstroke repeat
One hopes that athletes doing this will be few, for if observed it is a DQ.
Now where was I when before we took this detour; oh yes, the finish of the race de jour?
Let's then return to the IM and Med Relay, for there is still a little more to say
Judge each stroke by their separate rules we must; the swims, turns, and finishes, all legal we trust.
[About each finish please remember this important condition; each stroke must properly end before transition.]

Relay takeoffs are next to chat; dual confirmation is required for that.
Look for toes from off the blocks it goes; then glance for touch (look to the nose).

Jurisdiction is a tricky thing to call; so too the thing called **Protocol**.
Which lanes to judge, one or all? Is it from the ends or wall to wall?
Each pool and deck is different you see; so with a shout 'enlighten us' we plea!
Do I stand or sit or can I walk? It is to the Chief Judge we must talk.

And lastly please remember all; upon a violation the hand goes tall,
Yes, quickly upon high, please raise those hands! Lest your CJ think you're waving to the Stands.
Then mark the slip and sign most clearly; and the Admin Ref will love you dearly.

Now as we end this oh so painful prose; remember 'close to the athlete' that it goes,
Be mindful please those athletes in the water; they are someone's son or daughter,
They train hard to swim real fast, striving for times or records surpassed.
For without them here there'd be no splatter, and none of this would really matter.
Please take your splashes, stand tall and proud; now let's go out and hear the crowd!