

Officials Update — Fall 2025 rule changes (all effective immediately)

Following the September 2025 USA Swimming House of Delegates meeting, the rules below were adopted to clarify officials' jurisdiction, align equipment specifications with World Aquatics, and tighten administrative procedures. All updates are effective immediately.

1) Remain in your lane — Rule 102.21.5

What changed: Now explicitly states the swimmer must remain and finish in the same lane in which they started (clarifies prior wording).

What to do now: Enforce exactly as written; practical application is unchanged.

2) Starts — illegal starting position & jurisdiction — Rule 101.1.2.E

What changed:

- If the race is permitted to proceed, do not DQ for an *initial* illegal starting position; the Starter must correct positions before the signal.
- DQ is appropriate if a swimmer moves from legal → illegal immediately around “Take your marks” and the illegal position exists at the start signal (may be called by the Starter or Stroke & Turn).

What to do now: Starters prevent issues pre-start; Starter or S&T may call the legal→illegal DQ at the signal.

3) Lap counters — Rule 102.6

What changed: Clarifies counters are permitted for SCM 400/800/1500, in addition to 500/1000/1650 yards and LCM 800/1500 (and other long-distance pool events in 102.1.4).

What to do now: Allow counters for short course meters distance events using the same procedures as yards/long course.

4) Backstroke ledge — size/position & usage — Rule 103.15

What changed: Ledge must be adjustable ± 4 cm about water level ($\sim \pm 1.57$ in), minimum length 60 cm (~ 23.6 in), height 8 cm (~ 3.15 in), width 2 cm (~ 0.79 in), 10° slope; do not use ledges if pool depth is < 1.22 m (4 ft); identical ledges in all lanes.

What to do now: Include ledges in equipment checks; if any lane or the pool depth can't meet specs, don't use ledges for the session.

5) Backstroke start — toe contact with ledge — Rule 101.4.1

What changed: With a ledge, at least one toe of each foot must contact the end wall or touchpad; no toes over the top of the pad.

What to do now: Starters/S&T confirm foot placement before the start and correct illegal positions prior to the signal.

6) 12 & Under technical suit rule — Rule 102.8

What changed: Ban reaffirmed and definition tightened: any bonded/taped seams or woven fabric past the hips = technical suit.

Exceptions: Junior Nationals, U.S. Open, Nationals, Olympic Trials.

What to do now: Continue proactive checks with coaches/athletes; resolve before the swim.

7) Over-entered athletes — administrative enforcement — Rule 102.2.7 (A–B)

What changed:

- Before seeding: scratch events beyond the limit in the order contested.
- After swimming: administratively DQ any events beyond the allowable limit.

What to do now: Route to the Administrative Official/Referee; not a lane-level S&T call.

Bonus: 2026 Rulebook — free pre-order window

USA Swimming is offering one free 2026 Rulebook per member if you submit the request by December 1, 2025. After that date, you'll need to purchase through SwimOutlet.

- Pre-order (free by Dec 1): [Request your 2026 Rulebook](#) (USA Swimming order form). [Formsite](#)
- After Dec 1: Purchase via SwimOutlet (USA Swimming “Rules & Policies” page notes post-deadline orders go through SwimOutlet). [USA Swimming](#)
- SwimOutlet USA Swimming storefront (general): swimoutlet.com/usa-swimming