

Strokes & DQ Info

Strokes

The four competitive swimming strokes are butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle. The combination of all four is called Individual Medley (IM).

The following information is meant as a guide/reference. Your swimmer's coaches will work with them to introduce swimming concepts as their swimming abilities mature.

Disqualifications (DQ): The Rules of Swimming

- Stroke & Turn officials from each team govern the meets to ensure each of the four strokes is performed properly and to keep the competition fair. When an official spots an infraction where the swimmer isn't following one of the designated rules for the stroke, they raise their hand and write down the infraction on a DQ slip. The head referee official reviews the DQ slip, and then a copy goes to the swimmer's coach and a copy goes to the computer room to enter into the results.
- DQs are a big part of the learning process, especially for new swimmers
- Communication for each DQ is crucial, as breaking a rule of a stroke may teach the swimmer what not to do, but it's more important for a swimmer to learn what action to take to prevent breaking the rule.
- As some DQs are harder than others to translate what to do instead of what not to do, it is the coach's job to determine the reason for the DQ and communicate an active solution to implement in practice. It's important for the swimmer to communicate with their coaches after each race to check for any advice and feedback.

Freestyle:

Start: Forward Start

Stroke: Any style may be used, but some part of the swimmer must break the surface throughout the race, except as noted in turns and start

Turns: Some part of the swimmer must touch the wall at completion of each length or required distance

Finish: Any part of the swimmer touches the wall after swimming the prescribed distance

This is the hardest stroke to be disqualified in, because it has the fewest stroke rules.

Some examples of how a swimmer can be disqualified in Freestyle include:

- Failing to touch the wall on the turn in a multi-lap race
- Pulling on the lane line
- Pushing off the bottom to continue swimming (standing on the bottom is allowed, but pushing off isn't)
- Dual false start confirmation: Swimmer may not move from their starting position before the starting horn sounds; if two officials confirm this rule was broken, the swimmer will be disqualified

Backstroke:

Start:

- In water facing start end with both hands on gutter or starting grips
- Gutted pool-feet/toes may be above the water but may not be in, on, above lip, or bent over the gutter
- Flat wall pads-feet/toes may be placed above the water level

Turns & Start: may not be submerged for more than 15 meters where head must break surface

Stroke:

- Any style as long as swimmer remains on back throughout the race (except as noted in turns)
- Some part of the swimmer must break surface throughout the race (except as noted in turns, start & finish)

Turns:

- Swimmer may go past vertical to breast and may utilize continuous single or continuous simultaneous double arm pull to initiate the turn
- Some part of the swimmer must touch wall at completion of each length
- Swimmer must have returned to back upon leaving the wall

Finish:

- Swimmer may be completely submerged at finish
- Some part of swimmer must touch the wall while on back

Younger swimmers who are DQ'd in the backstroke usually have a focus issue, while older swimmers who are learning the turn have a highly technical undertaking which can take some time to master.

Some examples of how a swimmer can be disqualified in the backstroke include:

- Turning shoulders past vertical towards the stomach before completing a one lap race or on the finish of a multi-lap race (If you are flat on your back, you can't roll more than 90 degrees or you are more on your stomach than your back)
- The turn-This is tricky, but the rule is that swimmers may roll to their stomachs, take one arm stroke, and IN ONE CONTINUOUS MOTION, do a freestyle flip turn and then push off the wall on their back. The "one continuous motion" part is fairly subjective. A guideline: if a swimmer rolls over, takes their one allotted arm stroke, and then has to kick into the wall before they turn, they will probably be DQ'd

Butterfly:

Start: Forward start

Turns and Start

- Multiple kicks permitted but first arm pull must bring swimmer to the surface
- May be submerged for not more than 15 meters where head must break surface

Stroke:

- Body kept on breast
- Arms brought forward over water and pulled back simultaneously

Kick

- Simultaneous up and down movement
- No alternating, scissors, or breaststroke kicking movements

Turns:

- Touch, Simultaneous two hand touch at, above, or below the water surface
- Once completed the touch, Turn in any manner
- Shoulders at or past vertical toward breast when swimmer leaves wall
- Departure, See turns and start above

Finish: Simultaneous two hand touch at, above, or below the water surface

The butterfly is a more challenging stroke, especially for younger swimmers who lack the upper body strength to propel themselves through the water with force. These infractions are typically caused by late or long breath timing, sinking body position (caused by head being up) or some combination.

Some examples of how a swimmer can be disqualified in butterfly include:

- Both hands must touch simultaneously at the turn and finish, although they do NOT have to be on the same level (i.e. one hand could be under the water while the other hand is above the water)
- The feet have to kick together. They can be separated, but they have to stay that way. If the feet start crossing, it's not longer a dolphin kick, it's a flutter kick and a DQ
- Arms must be recovered OVER the water. If you pull down and then recover your arms for the next stroke under the water, you're essentially swimming breaststroke, not butterfly. Arms must be recovered simultaneously OVER the water. (Typically, the position of the elbows determine if the arms are above or below the water. If the arms are moved forward with the elbows under water, it's typically a DQ).

Breaststroke:

Start: Forward Start

Turns and Start:

- Swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs
- Swimmer may take one butterfly kick during or at the completion the first arm pull, but it must be followed with a breaststroke kick
- Head must break surface at widest part (before hands turn inward) of second pull

Stroke:

- Body kept on breast
- Stroke cycle is one arm pull and one leg kick in that order
- Hands cannot go beyond hip line (except at as noted in turns and start)
- Simultaneous arm movement in same horizontal plane
- Hands should be push forward together from the breast on, under or over the water, elbows shall be under the water – Except for the final stroke before the turn
- During each complete cycle some part of the swimmers head must break the surface of the water
- Recovery by the hands from the breast-on, under, or over the water
- Elbows under water except last stroke before turn or finish

Kick

- Simultaneous vertical and horizontal movements of the legs
- Feet turned out during propulsive part of kick
- No alternating, scissors or downward butterfly (except as noted

in turns and start) Turns:

- Simultaneous two hand touch at, above, or below the water surface

Finish:

- Simultaneous two hand touch at, above, or below the water surface
- Head may be submerged at turn or finish provided it broke surface during last complete or incomplete stroke cycle proceeding the touch

This is the most challenging stroke to swim legally. May of the infractions are caused indirectly by late or long breath timing, sinking the body position (caused by head being up) or some combination. In addition, the breaststroke kick is vastly different from the other strokes and can be counter-intuitive for some kids who are learning to find the power and propulsion in the water.

Some examples of how a swimmer can be disqualified in the breaststroke include:

- Both feet must be turned OUT during the propulsive part of the kick. Some swimmers tend to turn out one foot but not the other. This ends up being a scissors kick. If both feet are turned in this is considered a butterfly kick.
- Both hands must touch the wall simultaneously, at the finish and at the turn, although they do NOT have to be on the same level.
- Cannot take more than one stroke and kick underwater. Only one pull-down stroke and one kick allowed at the start and after a turn. The head must break the surface of the water BEFORE the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second arm pull. Multiple underwater strokes will result in a DQ because the swimmer's head must be above the surface of the water at some point during the stroke cycle. (In other words, a swimmer can't go underwater for two or more strokes at a time during the start, turn, or during the race.
- Hands may NOT pull beyond the HIP line except once on the start and once after a turn.
- Incorrect stroke cycle-the stroke cycle must be one arm pull followed by one leg kick. You cannot pull twice and then kick or vice versa. At the start or after a turn the swimmer must start with an arm pull then a leg kick. This cycle must be continued throughout the race, ie no double pulls or double kicks. Breaststroke is the only stroke where a stroke cycle is specified.
- Dolphin kick at the start or turn BEFORE arm pull has started. A swimmer is permitted to take ONE dolphin kick DURING or at the end of the first pull down stroke at the start or after a turn. "During" occurs once the hands have moved outward from the streamline. If the dolphin kick is taken before the hands move, a DQ results.

Individual Medley (IM):

Start: Forward start with Butterfly

Stroke Order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle

Stroke:

- Rules for each stroke apply
- May not swim in the style of the other three strokes during the freestyle leg

Turns: Immediate turns conform to turn rules for the stroke

Finish: Transition turns conform to finish rules for the stroke

Some examples of how a swimmer can be disqualified in the IM include:

- Breaking any of the individual stroke rules during that segment of the race
- On turns, swimmers must finish the stroke they are swimming before they transition to the next stroke. In other words, the butterfly to backstroke turn must incorporate a butterfly FINISH and then transition to backstroke that puts swimmer on their back for that leg of the race. The sometimes tricky transition is from the backstroke to breaststroke. Swimmers must complete the backstroke leg on their backs and then transition to the breaststroke. It is legal to do a flip turn if the hand touch is done on the back during the backstroke finish.
- On the freestyle leg of the IM, a stroke OTHER than backstroke, breaststroke, or butterfly must be swum.

Relay:

The same rules apply in relays as for the individual strokes as previously described.

False start-Relay starts require the swimmer on the blocks to have some part of their body STILL TOUCHING THE BLOCKS when the swimmer in the water touches the wall.

Physical assist from another person-at the start of a relay leg the swimmer on the block may NOT be physically assisted by anyone else. Yelling is fine; touching is not.