

**Stroke and Turn Training Fall 2021**  
Arnie Cohen – coacharnie@yahoo.com  
Metro Winter Swim League and Winter Suburban Swim League

## **Officiating**

### Chain of command

- What to call
- Where to be At
  - Start
  - During the swim
  - At Turns
  - At the finish
- What to do when you make a call
  - Raise your hand – be decisive – DQ slips
- What if you are not sure?
- Interpretation
- Questions on calls

### **Rules of swimming – Technical rules**

- Breast
- Butterfly
- Backstroke
- Freestyle
- Relays

### **Officials Briefing** – go over rules and be on the same page as other officials

### **Certification**

- Training Session
- Written Test 80%

### **Words of wisdom**

- Uniformly interpret and apply the rules
- Call violations as seen, don't guess or anticipate
- Be fair and consistent – always give the swimmer the benefit of any doubt
- Exercise good judgment
- Make decisions quickly and decisively
- Admit a mistake
- Good officiating is a mix of thorough knowledge of the rules, coupled with fair and consistent application of the rules
- The rules of swimming are intended to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition
- "Fairness to all competitors, giving the benefit of the doubt, in every instance, to the swimmer"
- "UGLY ISN'T NECESSARILY ILLEGAL"

## **Online Resources**

Winter Suburban Swim League

[www.suburbanwinterleague.com](http://www.suburbanwinterleague.com) – Click on OFFICIALS

Metro Winter Swim League

[www.mwslma.com](http://www.mwslma.com) – Click on OFFICIALS

On both sites, you will find links to information posted on the USA Swimming web site.

Links include – Rule book, officials briefing, situation resolutions, guide to officiating, articles from USA Swimming and recently posted videos on officiating each stroke as well as relays. Posted is also a copy of the DQ slip we use and DQ codes

## **Steps to become an official in both the MWSL and the WSSL**

### **Step 1**

Participate in one of the training sessions offered in the fall

### **Step 2**

Complete the at home quiz (The quiz will be forwarded to you once you complete the in-person training)

### **Step 3**

Shadow an official for one meet. – Recommended but not required.

**Current Stroke and Turn Judge** from US Swimming or MIAA – please forward me a copy of your certificate/id badge so I can add them to the list of officials.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

Thank you

Arnie

coacharnie@yahoo.com

Stroke and Turn Training Fall 2021  
Metro Winter Swim League and Winter Suburban Swim League

**Updated by MWSL and WSSL on 10/22/18**

**PART ONE - TECHNICAL RULES**

The rules below have been copied from Parts of US Swimming Technical Rules 2018

**101.2 BREASTSTROKE**

**.1 Start —**

- The forward start shall be used.

**.2 Stroke —**

- After the start and after each turn when the swimmer leaves the wall, the body shall be kept on the breast.
- It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time except at the turn after the touch of the wall where it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast when leaving the wall.
- Throughout the race the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order.
- All movements of the arms shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.
- The hands shall be pushed forward together from the breast on, under, or over the water.
- The elbows shall be under water except for the final stroke before the turn, during the turn and for the final stroke at the finish.
- The hands shall be brought back on or under the surface of the water.
- The hands shall not be brought back beyond the hip line, except during the first stroke after the start and each turn.
- During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer's head shall break the surface of the water.
- After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs.
- The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.

.3 Kick —

- After the start and each turn, at any time prior to the first breaststroke kick a single butterfly kick is permitted.
- Following which, all movements of the legs shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.
- The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick.
- Scissors, alternating movements or downward butterfly kicks are not permitted except as provided herein.
- Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward butterfly kick.

.4 Turns and Finish —

- At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water level.
- At the last stroke before the turn and at the finish an arm stroke not followed by a leg kick is permitted.
- The head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the surface of the water at some point during the last complete or incomplete cycle preceding the touch.

### **101.3 BUTTERFLY**

.1 Start —

- The forward start shall be used.

.2 Stroke —

- After the start and after each turn, the swimmer's shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast.
- The swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks, but only one arm pull under water, which must bring the swimmer to the surface.
- It shall be permissible for a swimmer to be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and after each turn.
- By that point, the head must have broken the surface.
- The swimmer must remain on the surface until the next turn or finish.

- From the beginning of the first arm pull, the body shall be kept on the breast except at the turn after the touch of the wall where it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast when leaving the wall.
- Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and pulled back simultaneously under water throughout the race.

.3 Kick —

- All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous.
- The position of the legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other.
- A scissors or breaststroke kicking movement is not permitted.

.4 Turns —

- At each turn the body shall be on the breast.
- The touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface.
- Once a touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired.
- The shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall.

.5 Finish —

- At the finish, the body shall be on the breast and the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface.

## 101.4 BACKSTROKE

.1 Start —

- The swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands placed on the gutter or on the starting grips.
- Standing in or on the gutter, placing the toes above the lip of the gutter, or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter, before or after the start, is prohibited.
- When using a backstroke ledge at the start, the toes of both feet must be in contact with the end wall or face of the touchpad. Bending the toes over the top of the touchpad is prohibited.

.2 Stroke —

- The swimmer shall push off on his back and continue swimming on the back throughout the race.
- Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn, and for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and after each turn.
- By that point, the head must have broken the surface of the water.

.3 Turns —

- Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall.
- During the turn the shoulders may be turned past the vertical toward the breast after which an immediate continuous single arm pull or an immediate continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn.
- The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall.

.4 Finish —

- Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back.

**101.5 FREESTYLE**

.1 Start —

- The forward start shall be used.

.2 Stroke —

- In an event designated freestyle, the swimmer may swim any style, except that in a medley relay or an individual medley event, freestyle means any style other than butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke.
- Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it shall be permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn.
- By that point the head must have broken the surface.

.3 Turns —

- Upon completion of each length the swimmer must touch the wall.

.4 Finish —

- The swimmer shall have finished the race when any part of his person touches the wall after completing the prescribed distance.

**101.6 INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY** — The swimmer shall swim the prescribed distance in the following order: the first one-fourth, butterfly; the second one-fourth, backstroke; the third one-fourth, breaststroke; and the last one-fourth, freestyle.

.1 Start —

- The forward start shall be used.

.2 Stroke —

- The stroke for each one-fourth of the designated distance shall follow the prescribed rules for that stroke.

.3 Turns

A Intermediate turns within each stroke shall conform to the turn rules for that stroke.

B The turns when changing from one stroke to another shall conform to the finish rules for the stroke just completed, and shall be as follows:

(1) Butterfly to backstroke — The swimmer must touch as described in 101.3.5. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner, but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the back when the swimmer leaves the wall.

(2) Backstroke to breaststroke — The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall and the prescribed breaststroke form must be attained prior to the first arm stroke.

(3) Breaststroke to freestyle — The swimmer must touch as described in 101.2.4. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner.

.4 Finish —

- The swimmer shall have finished the race when any part of his/her person touches the wall after the prescribed distance.

**101.7 RELAYS**

.1 Freestyle Relay —

- Four swimmers on each team, each to swim one-fourth of the prescribed distance using any desired stroke(s). Freestyle finish rules apply.

.2 Medley Relay —

- Four swimmers on each team, each to swim one-fourth of the prescribed distance in the following order: first, backstroke; second, breaststroke; third, butterfly; and fourth, freestyle.
- Rules pertaining to each stroke used shall govern where applicable.

- At the end of each leg, the finish rule for each stroke applies in each case.

### .3 Rules Pertaining to Relay Races

- C. In relay races a swimmer other than the first swimmer shall not start until his/her teammate has concluded his/her leg.
- D. Any relay team member and his/her relay team shall be disqualified from a race if a team member other than the swimmer designated to swim that leg enters the pool in the area where the race is being conducted before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race. Exception: When an in-the-water start is required or such start is approved by the Referee.
- E. Each relay team member shall leave the water immediately upon finishing his/her leg, except the last member.
- F. In relay races the team of a swimmer whose feet have lost touch with the starting platform (ground or deck) before his/her preceding teammate touches the wall shall be disqualified.
- G. In relay races involving in-the-water starts, the team of a swimmer who has lost touch with the end of the course before his/her preceding teammate touches the wall shall be disqualified, unless the swimmer in default returns to the original starting point at the wall.

## **102.22 DISQUALIFICATIONS**

.1 A disqualification can be made only by the official within whose jurisdiction the infraction has been committed.

.4 A swimmer must start and finish the race in the same lane.

.5 Standing on the bottom during a freestyle race shall not disqualify a swimmer, but a swimmer must not leave the pool, or walk, or spring from the bottom. Standing on the bottom during any other stroke shall result in disqualification.

.6 Obstructing another swimmer by swimming across or otherwise interfering shall disqualify the offender, subject to the discretion of the Referee.

.8 Dipping goggles in the water or splashing water on the competitor's face or body prior to an event shall not be considered as entering the pool unless the Referee finds that such action is interfering with the competition.

.10 Grasping lane dividers to assist forward motion is not permitted.

.11 For relay disqualifications, refer to 101.7.4.

**102.13 JUDGES —**

- Shall have jurisdiction over the swimmers immediately after the race has begun.

.3 Stroke Judge — Shall operate on both sides of the pool, preferably walking slightly behind the swimmers during all strokes except freestyle, during which events they may leave poolside, at the Referee's discretion; shall ensure that the rules relating to the style of swimming designated for the event are being observed; and shall report any violations to the Referee on signed slips detailing the event, the heat number, the lane number and the infraction.

.4 Turn Judge — Shall operate on both ends of the pool; shall ensure that after the start and when turning or finishing, the swimmer complies with the rules applicable to the stroke used; and shall report any violations to the Referee on signed slips detailing the event, the heat number, lane number and infraction observed.

.6 Relay Take-Off Judges —

A        Relay take-off judges shall be assigned by the Referee and shall stand so that they can clearly see both the feet of the departing swimmer(s) as they leave the starting platform and the touch of the incoming swimmer(s), and shall judge whether the swimmer is in contact with the platform when the incoming swimmer touches the end of the pool.

B        If dual relay take-off judging is used, the lane and side take-off judges shall independently report infractions in writing without the use of the infraction hand signal. A relay will be disqualified only if the lane take-off judge has reported an infraction and the assigned side take-off judge has confirmed the same infraction.

## PHILOSOPHY OF OFFICIATING

Potential volunteers are sometimes reluctant to become involved as Stroke and Turn Officials because they feel bad about the possibility of disqualifying a swimmer. This same feeling is often felt by new officials as well. If that's the case you may find it helpful to understand that enforcing the rules is best thought of as protecting the swimmers who are swimming within the rules rather than as punishing the swimmers who are swimming in violation of the rules. The swimmer acting outside of the rules should be disqualified; as a Stroke and Turn Judge you are merely recording the violation.

To be a knowledgeable and competent Stroke and Turn Judge you will need to have a thorough understanding of the technical rules of swimming. While swimming is a relatively simple sport, it is important for you to realize that different organizations (ex. USA Swimming, the NCAA, and the NFHS) have slightly different sets of rules. To officiate as a Stroke and Turn Judge you will need to know the technical rules of USA Swimming as those are the standards for league competition.

It is also very important to understand that the rules change from time to time. Some of these changes are small while other changes are large. Just because you swam the stroke in a particular way when you competed earlier in your life doesn't mean that the stroke is still swum that way. In any given year there might be no changes or there might be two or three changes. The only way for you to know what the rules say is for you to read the rule book, and no matter

how long you have been officiating or swimming you should always review and re-familiarize yourself with the rules at the beginning of each season.

**While officiating on deck you should strive to conduct yourself in a professional manner.**

- You should be thoroughly familiar with current USA-S Rules & Regulations as this is the bedrock upon which the rules and officiating are built.
- You should apply the official interpretations of the Rules & Regulations. Sometimes there are rules which you might find difficult to understand. Other times there may be a disagreement between yourself and another official as to the proper interpretation of a rule. Many leagues have the benefit of having a number of very experienced USA-S Swimming officials who are well-versed in the current interpretations. Please ask if you have a question. You may sometimes disagree with an official interpretation. When that happens it is important that you use the official interpretation so that all of the swimmers are judged according to the same standards.
- You should understand and follow the standard as well as meet-specific procedures and protocols. These will be detailed below and include such things as how to handle disqualifications, jurisdictions, dual confirmation of relay takeoffs.
- You should treat all of the swimmers in an unbiased manner regardless of club affiliation or family relationship. It might help if you think of yourself as belonging to a team of officials rather than as an official who is affiliated with a particular team.
- You should dress neatly and according to the current dress code (white polo shirt or blouse; navy blue shorts, pants, or skirt; white socks and shoes (sandals are okay)).
- If you work regularly you will find that you will develop experience and confidence much more quickly.

The preamble in the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations states that: "All competitive swimming events held under USA Swimming sanction shall be conducted in accordance with the following rules which are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition."

**How can you as a Stroke and Turn Judge help to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition?**

- You should enforce all of the rules . Don't individually choose to enforce some rules and ignore others.
- You should enforce the rules across all age groups and levels of ability.
- You should be neutral in the enforcement of the rules. Don't favor one team over another. Don't favor one swimmer over another.
- You should provide consistent judging at different meets. Regular season meets and the championship meet all use the same rules and should be judged the same.
- When each Stroke and Turn Judge follows these guidelines the swimmers will have consistent officiating among the different judges and at different meets.

**There are a variety of mind-sets or mental traps that you should avoid as a Stroke and Turn Judge. Examples include:**

- Advantage vs. disadvantage: You should not judge a violation by whether or not it gives an unfair advantage to the person violating the rule; sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn't; it only matters that a rule was violated.
- The “twice theory”: You do not have to see a violation more than once before it is illegal; if you see an infringement of the rules and are sure of what you saw, it should be called.
- “We do not disqualify 8 & unders”: There are many variants of this statement but the bottom line is that all swimmers are judged by the same rules. Remember, younger swimmers are not necessarily less experienced than older swimmers even if we could judge based on experience, age is not an absolute indicator of experience.
- “Do not ask me to judge my child”: Our expectation is that all officials should be able to treat all swimmers equally.
- Do not infer (Call what you see, not what you do not see): For example, as you observe a swimmer approaching the turn in breaststroke and you observe only one hand touch the wall, while the other hand doesn't come within several inches of the wall this is an example of an illegal one-handed touch. Conversely, if you observe multiple swimmers simultaneously approaching the turn in breaststroke, you will not be able to observe everything. As you shift your eyes from one swimmer to the next you might observe one swimmer leaving the wall with one hand still on the wall and the other hand off the wall. The swimmer might not have touched simultaneously with both hands but then again they might have; you didn't observe that portion of the turn and therefore you can't infer something you did not see.
- Do not anticipate: You should not judge swimmers based on having a reputation of violating a particular rule and we should not have discussions that lead to this type of reputation. Likewise, you “might” have seen a swimmer do something in a previous length of the race or in an earlier race do not use this as a basis to look for a particular violation.

**There are some simple rules of thumb to keep in mind when you're officiating:**

- The benefit of the doubt **ALWAYS** goes to the swimmer. In swimming, there is no loss of yardage, no foul shots, no penalty box; the penalty for violating a rule is disqualification. Therefore, it is extremely important to know with certainty that a rule has been violated. If you're not sure, don't make the call.
- What you observe in the pool is sometimes white, sometimes black, and sometimes grey. White means that you're sure that what you observed is within the rules – it is legal. Black means you're sure that what you observed is prohibited by the rules – it is illegal. Grey means you're unsure of what you observed – it might have been legal or it might have been illegal. Because you're not sure, the benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer and no call is made.
- Ugly technique is not (necessarily) illegal.
- Know the rules. You should review the rules before every meet.
- Experience, experience, experience! Even experienced officials frequently learn something new or experience a situation that they haven't previously seen; don't ever assume that you know it all.

