 The Rules 

**THE START**

**SW 4.1** The start in Freestyle, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Individual Medley races shall be with

a dive. On the long whistle (SW 2.1.5) from the referee the swimmers shall step onto the starting

platform and remain there. On the starter's command "take your marks", they shall immediately take

up a starting position with at least one foot at the front of the starting platforms. The position of the

hands is not relevant. When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal.

**SW 4.2** The start in Backstroke and Medley Relay races shall be from the water. At the referee's

first long whistle (SW 2.1.5), the swimmers shall immediately enter the water. At the Referee's

second long whistle the swimmers shall return without undue delay to the starting position (SW 6.1).

When all swimmers have assumed their starting positions, the starter shall give the command "take

your marks". When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal.

**SW 4.3** In Olympic Games, World Championships and other FINA events the command "Take

your marks" shall be in English and the start shall be by multiple loudspeakers, mounted one at each

starting platform.

**SW 4.4** Any swimmer starting before the starting signal has been given, shall be disqualified. If

the starting signal sounds before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue and the

swimmer or swimmers shall be disqualified upon completion of the race. If the disqualification is

declared before the starting signal, the signal shall not be given, but the remaining swimmers shall

be called back and start again. The Referee repeats the starting procedure beginning with the long

whistle (the second one for Backstroke) as per SW 2.1.5.

**FREESTYLE**

**SW 5.1** Freestyle means that in an event so designated the swimmer may swim any style, except

that in individual medley or medley relay events, freestyle means any style other than backstroke,

breaststroke or butterfly.

**SW 5.2** Some part of the swimmer must touch the wall upon completion of each length and at

the finish.

**SW 5.3** 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 metres after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must have

broken the surface.

**BACKSTROKE**

**SW 6.1** Prior to the starting signal, the swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting

end, with both hands holding the starting grips. Standing in or on the gutter or bending the toes over

the lip of the gutter 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.

**SW 6.2** At the signal for starting and after turning the swimmer shall push off and swim upon his

back throughout the race except when executing a turn as set forth in SW 6.4. The normal position

on the back can include a roll movement of the body up to, but not including 90 degrees from

horizontal. The position of the head is not relevant.

**SW 6.3** Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race.

It is permissible for the swimmer to be completely sub-merged during the turn, and for a distance

of not more than 15 metres after the start and each turn. By that point the head must have broken

the surface.

**SW 6.4** When executing the turn there must be a touch of the wall with some part of the

swimmer’s body in his/her respective lane. During the turn the shoulders may be turned over the

vertical to the breast after which an immediate continuous single arm pull or immediate continuous

simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. The swimmer must have returned

to the position on the back upon leaving the wall.

**SW 6.5** Upon the finish of the race the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back in

his/her respective lane.

**BREASTSTROKE**

**SW 7.1** After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely

back to the legs during which the swimmer may be submerged. At any time prior to the first

Breaststroke kick after the start and after each turn a single butterfly kick is permitted. The head

must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second

stroke.

**SW 7.2** From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the body

shall be 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. From the start and 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 on the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.

**SW 7.3** 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.

**SW 7.4** During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer’s head must break the surface

of the water. All movements of the legs shall be simultaneous and on the same horizontal plane

without alternating movement.

**SW 7.5** The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. Alternating

movements or downward butterfly kicks are not permitted except as in SW 7.1. Breaking the surface

of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward butterfly kick.

**SW 7.6** 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.

**BUTTERFLY**

**SW 8.1** From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and each turn, 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.

**SW 8.2** Both arms shall be brought forward simultaneously over the water and brought backward

simultaneously under the water through-out the race, subject to SW 8.5.

**SW 8.3** All up and down movements of the legs must be simultaneous. The legs or the feet

need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. A breaststroke

kicking movement is not permitted.

**SW 8.4** 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 surface.

**SW 8.5** At the start and at turns, a swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks and one arm pull

under the water, which must bring him to the surface. It shall be permissible for a swimmer to be

completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 metres 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.

**MEDLEY SWIMMING**

**SW 9.1** In individual medley events, the swimmer covers the four swimming strokes in the

following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle. Each of the strokes must cover

one quarter (1/4) of the distance.

**SW 9.2** In Freestyle the swimmer must be on the breast except when executing a turn. The

swimmer must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.

**SW 9.3** In Medley relay events, swimmers will cover the four swimming strokes in the following

order: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Freestyle. Each of the strokes must cover one quarter

(1/4) of the distance.

**SW 9.4** Each section must be finished in accordance with the rule which applies to the stroke

concerned.