

HIGH SCHOOL vs. USA SWIMMING RULE DIFFERENCES

As interpreted by Jeanette Soe

Updated April 6, 2023

Butterfly Start/Turn/Swim/Finish: At turns and finishes in USA Swimming, hands must be separated (in High School Swimming may be stacked)

Backstroke:

- **Start/Swim:** Swimmer must step into the water feet first.
- **Turn:** After the swimmer's head has passed the backstroke flags, prior to the turn, the swimmer's upper shoulder may rotate past vertical toward the breast before the touch is completed, provided such rotation is accompanied by an initiation of the turning action or continuation into the wall. After the initiation of the turning action, no additional arm pulls may be started; however, kicking and gliding actions are permitted. **WHAT IT MEANS: Swimmer can turn over at flags and glide/kick, but take no extra strokes.** A swimmer, who misses the wall after a turn, is allowed to scull back and touch it as long as he remains on his back during the process of returning to the wall.
- **Finish:** In High School swimming: At the finish, contact with the end must be done with any part of the swimmer with some part of the body at or above the surface (**may not be fully submerged at the finish - the moment a touch is made**). FYI, it is impossible to judge - what you will be able to see is swimmer being submerged prior to the finish (during the swim) - which is NOT allowed in High School swimming. **As of March 10, 2023, we have a new USA Swimming ONLY finish rule:** "The swimmer must touch the wall while on his back, however, once they pass the closing flags prior to reaching the finish, they can be completely submerged prior to the touch (be re-submerged) - AGAIN, this is NOT allowed in High School Swimming.
- Backstroke ledges are not permitted in high school swimming.
- **Breaststroke Start/Turn/Swim/Finish:** No sculling with the hands at the end of the first arm stroke following the start or turn. At turns and finishes in USA Swimming, hands must be separated (cannot be stacked but in High School swimming may be stacked). In USA Swimming, arms/legs no longer have to be in the same horizontal plane - they still have to in High School swimming.
- **Freestyle Start/Turn/Swim/Finish:** No differences.
- **Individual Medley and Medley Relay:**
- The final leg of the individual medley and of the medley relay (freestyle leg) requires the swimmer to be at or past vertical toward the breast before the first stroke, kick, or propulsive motion. **WHAT IT MEANS: Swimmer can push off the wall for the freestyle leg (start or turn) being past vertical towards the back, however must be past vertical towards the breast prior to any movements of legs/arms.** USA Swimming rule is now the same except for slightly different verbiage describing it.

· Relays:

- The first 3 swimmers must exit the pool in their lanes.
- Relay Takeoff Judges; Dual confirmation is required for all Championship meets. Accomplished by either two side judges observing the entire field or a combination of side and lane judges. The referee and the starter may serve as the relay takeoff judges as well. In championship meets, a relay takeoff judge shall be assigned to observe relay exchanges in no more than four lanes.
- Each relay takeoff judge who observes an early takeoff shall wait until the last competitor of the heat is in the water before signaling an observed violation by raising a hand overhead.

· General:

- Must swim entire race in assigned lane (USA Swimming only requires starting/finishing in assigned lane, without interference).
- Jewelry is allowed
- Host team must provide lap counters for the 500 Yard Freestyle, but swimmers are not required to use them. When used, the count may now be ascending or descending, only one person shall be designated by each competitor/coach to operate the visual counting system (cheering next to lap counters is allowed) .
- Tape may be used by a swimmer to treat a documented medical condition - referee must be presented with signed documentation from an appropriate health care professional before permitting the athlete to compete.
- Religious and medical-alert medals are okay, are no longer required to be taped to the body, and may be visible.
- Responsibilities of stroke inspectors and turn/finish judges can be combined.
- Officials to dress uniformly.
- The backstroke ledge is not allowed
- Photographers should be limited to areas adjacent to the starting area
- Swim suit fastening systems not allowed in competition (tie back suits)
- Competitors may wear suits providing full body coverage for religious reasons

• Caps/Suits:

May have one (1) visible manufacturer logo/trade mark, measuring no more than $2 \frac{1}{4}$ square inches, have an American flag, measuring no more than 2 x 3 inches, wear a high school team cap or blank cap (turn it inside out to be blank), wear only 1 swimsuit, may wear two caps but the visible cap must be with school logo or blank).
Suit material must be permeable, constructed of woven/knit textile material, except for one (1) post construction impermeable school name and/or logo which shall not exceed 9 square inches. If logo is woven into the fabric there is no size limitation.

· Referee/Starter: No entering the water without the referee's permission. If re-entering after a race, DQ'd from next event. Starter may designate another individual to sound a device (bell) for the lead swimmer in the 500Y Freestyle with two lanes + 5 yards remaining in the race.