

Austin Hills Swim League

Stroke Judge Training

Summer 2024

Introduction

- One goal—to ensure compliance with the rules of swimming and ensure fairness to all!
- AHSL training
 - AHSL certification is this clinic; however, I strongly encourage you to coordinate with your team's lead or senior official and observe swimmers at practice as a way of getting some on-deck training, but this is not required
 - For AHSL certification, training is required for your first summer season and your second summer season; after that, you will need to do the training again every other year
- **Calling Only What You See**
- Rules covering the four strokes
 - Across all strokes—video presentation
 - Butterfly
 - Backstroke
 - Breaststroke
 - Freestyle
- Rules covering IMs and relays
- Key points to remember (including how AHSL rules and operations differ from other leagues such as other summer leagues, USA Swimming, UIL swimming, and YMCA)
- Questions and answers

Calling Only What You See

- Only call what you are **POSITIVE** you saw, not what you think you may have seen or what you did not see
 - For example, on breaststroke or butterfly turns, it is not that you did not see two hands touching, it is that you saw one hand not touch or you saw that the hands did not touch simultaneously
 - Think in terms of “what rule did they break?”
- *The benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer*
- Different, but legal versions of the stroke
- Illegal versus ugly – especially with very inventive kids
- Fairness and consistency
 - If not, the ones working hard and doing it right get punished
- Learning to do it right
 - $1+1 = 2$, regardless of age
 - If someone ALMOST makes a shot you wouldn't give them the 2 points
- REMEMBER -- SWIMMERS DISQUALIFY THEMSELVES. YOU ARE ONLY RECORDING IT.
 - Relate to other sports: a golfer putting a shot in the sand trap, a tennis player double faulting, a baseball player striking out, etc.

Rules Covering the Four Strokes (All Strokes)

- You CANNOT stand on the bottom or stop and hold onto the lane line
 - Exception -- you can in the freestyle, as long as other rules are not broken -- you can stand on the bottom or hold onto the lane line, however, swimmer cannot push off bottom or pull on the lane line to gain an advantage
- Definition of vertical – look at the shoulders relative to each other and relative to the water surface
- Definition of arms, hands, head
- Water movement versus body movement
- Backstroke, freestyle, and butterfly include rules for the “15 meter mark;” breaststroke has no such requirement
- Measure with your eyes, not with a microscope

BUTTERFLY

- Start
 - Forward (dive) or starting in the water with one hand and one foot on the wall
- Stroke
 - Body on breast
 - After start and each turn, swimmer’s shoulders must be at or past vertical toward the breast
 - Swimmer permitted one or more leg kicks, but only one arm pull under water
 - After the start and after each turn, swimmer can be submerged for up to 15 meters (“heads up”); swimmer must be on the surface for remainder of race.
 - From beginning of first arm pull, swimmer’s shoulders must be in line with water surface
 - Some part of entire arm (from wrist to shoulder) must break water surface each arm stroke
 - Arm stroke must be simultaneous
 - There is no rule about “how many” pulls you must take; not pulling is also legal, as long the swimmer is in compliance with all other rules
- Kick
 - All up and down leg and foot movements must be simultaneous
 - Relative position of legs/feet cannot change (but you must see the change) -- alternating, scissors, and breaststroke kicks are not permitted
 - Propulsion must come from top of feet
 - There is no rule about “how many” kicks you must do; not kicking is also legal, as long as the swimmer is in compliance with all other rules
- Turns
 - Body shall be on breast at turns
 - Touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously and separately (not overlapping)
 - After hand touch is made, swimmer may turn in any manner desired but cannot violate stroke
 - Flip turns are not allowed in the butterfly, this violates the rule about the body being “on the breast”
- Finish
 - On the breast
 - Touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously and separately (not overlapping)

BACKSTROKE

- Start
 - Backward position, with both hands and both feet on the wall (the hands can also grip the handle bars on a starting block, if present)
 - Toes can be under or over the water, but toes cannot be over the lip of the wall or curled over the top of the wall
- Stroke
 - There are no rules about the stroke; the swimmer can use one arm, both arms, both arms simultaneously, or can swim without using the arms
 - After start and each turn, swimmer's shoulders must be at or past vertical toward the back
 - After the start and after each turn, swimmer can be submerged for up to 15 meters ("heads up"); swimmer must be on the surface for remainder of race *including the finish*
 - The swimmer may not be completely submerged (and may not re-submerge) past the 15-meter mark
- Kick
 - Any kick is legal
 - No kick is legal
- Turns
 - Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall
 - Turning motion must be continuous
 - During the turn, the shoulders MAY BE turned past vertical toward the breast after which ONE continuous single or double arm pull may be used to execute the turn
 - It is ONE PULL NOT A CERTAIN DISTANCE
 - Once body has left position on the back and initiated the turn, there shall be no kick or arm pull that is independent of the continuous turning action
 - Shoulders must be at or past vertical toward back when leaving the wall
- Finish
 - Toward the back
 - Swimmer can be fully submerged once past the flags and then touch the wall.

BREASTSTROKE

- Start
 - Forward (dive) or starting in the water with one hand and one foot on the wall
- Stroke
 - Body on breast
 - There is a stroke “cycle;” it is one pull and one kick
 - The swimmer may not take two pulls under water or take pull without a kick, except at the turn or the finish
 - Arms move simultaneously
 - Hands push forward from breast
 - Hands brought back on or under the water
 - Hands cannot go beyond the hipline, EXCEPT during the first stroke after the start and after each turn (pullout)
 - Some part of the head must break water surface at least once during each complete arm pull/leg kick cycle (ie, you cannot swim “underwater”)
 - EXCEPT after the start and after each turn swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs (past hips) and one butterfly kick while wholly submerged
 - This pull and the butterfly kick are optional
 - Head must break water surface before hands turn inward at widest part of second stroke
 - Flip turns are not allowed in the breaststroke, this violates the rule about the body being “on the breast”
- Kick
 - There is a stroke “cycle;” it is one pull and one kick
 - The swimmer may not make two kicks under water or kick without a pull
 - All vertical and lateral leg movements must be simultaneous
 - Feet must be turned outward during the propulsive part of the kick
 - Scissors, alternating, and butterfly kicks are not permitted during the swim portion of the race
 - However, after the start, and after each turn, swimmer MAY take a single downward butterfly kick followed by a breaststroke kick (only while the body is wholly submerged)
 - The single dolphin kick may occur when the swimmer is in a streamline or at any point during the pullout
- Turns
 - Body shall be on the breast at turns
 - Touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously and separately (not overlapping)
 - After hand touch is made, swimmer may turn in any manner desired but cannot violate stroke
 - Shoulders must be at or past vertical toward the breast when leaving the wall
 - After the start and after each turn, and while wholly submerged, the swimmer MAY take one arm stroke completely back to the legs and one butterfly kick
 - Head must break water surface before hands turn inward at widest part of second stroke
 - Flip turns are not allowed in the breaststroke, this violates the rule about the body being “on the breast”
- Finish
 - On the breast
 - Touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously and separately (not overlapping)

FREESTYLE

- Start
 - Forward (dive) or starting in the water with one hand and one foot on the wall
- Stroke
 - In any event designated “freestyle,” the swimmer may swim any stroke and only the freestyle rules apply to whatever stroke they take
 - EXCEPT in a medley relay or individual medley event; then freestyle means any style other than butterfly, breaststroke, and backstroke
 - No arm stroke is legal
 - After the start and after each turn, swimmer can be submerged for up to 15 meters (“heads up”); swimmer must be on the surface for remainder of race
- Kick
 - Any kick is legal
 - No kick is legal
- Turns
 - Upon completion of each length the swimmer must touch the wall with any part of the body
 - Swimmer can turn in any fashion
- Finish
 - Race is completed when any part of the swimmer touches the wall

Rules Covering IMs and Relays

- Individual Medley—the “IM”
 - Stroke order is butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle
 - Rules governing each particular stroke are applied to that part of the race
 - Flip turns are not allowed between each stroke unless the swimmer has correctly finished the previous stroke (ie, back to breast flip turns are not allowed, unless the swimmer finished the backstroke on the back and touched the wall, flipped, and then pushed off on the breast)
 - The key is that it is four finishes, not four turns
- Relays
 - Order for medley relay is backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, freestyle
 - Rules governing each particular stroke are applied to that part of the race
- Relay Take-Offs
 - The starter makes any calls for a false start on the *first* swimmer of the relay team, just like for any other race. The stroke judges make any calls for an early-take off for the second, third, and fourth swimmers on the relay team.
 - In judging an early take-off, the stroke judge should watch the feet of the swimmer leaving the pool's deck (or wall, if the swimmer is doing an in-water start). At the moment that the feet leave the deck, the stroke judge should shift his attention to confirm that the swimmer in the water has touched the wall. *Look at the feet of the next swimmer, then look at the hands of the swimmer in the water.* An early take-off occurs when you see the feet of the next swimmer leave the deck, and the swimmer in the water has not yet touched the wall. This is a DQ. If you are not sure about the timing, and can't be certain that the swimmer left early, then you should not DQ the swimmer for an early take-off. You should also not DQ the swimmer for an early-take off if you think it was a tie or too close to observe.
 - If the swimmer in the water *doesn't touch the wall at all*, and the next swimmer leaves the pool deck, there are two disqualifications. The first call is for an early take-off for the swimmer on the deck; the swimmer in the water didn't touch the wall. The second call is to disqualify the swimmer in the water for failing to finish his leg of the relay correctly for not finishing with a two-hand touch in fly or breast, for not touching the wall on his back to finish the backstroke, or for failing to touch the wall to finish the freestyle leg.
 - 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 for an early take-off
 - In other words, watch the next swimmer's feet leave the deck
 - Once you see the feet leave the deck, look down and make sure a touch has been made
- During relay events, you will be watching for stroke violations and early take offs. Do your best!
- During relay events, coaches are not allowed to touch the swimmer as a way of assisting them with their start or stand in close proximity to them and verbally assist them

Logistics

- Positioning on the deck varies based on the pool shape
- Know your jurisdiction—you should only make calls in your “zone;” if you make calls elsewhere it’s a fairness issue of having more than one judge making calls in a zone
- Even if you think the other judge on your side made a call, make the call yourself; don’t coordinate calls with other judges
- Check everything that applies on the DQ slip (teams print their own DQ slips; when you arrive at the meet, the hosting team should provide them to you)
- Swimmers may start in the water instead of diving (one hand and one foot on the wall)
- False starts are only called by the starter; relay take offs on swimmers 2, 3, and 4 are only called by a stroke judge
- Uniform: white polo shirt, blue shorts, and AHSL stroke judge badge (your team rep will provide you with your stroke judge badge)
- **Remember that you represent the league, and not a team—act professionally and unbiased**
- No cell phones, deck conversations—your focus should always be on the swimmers
- Due to insurance requirements, starting blocks shall not be used by any AHSL member team
- There shall be no ankle holds or toe curling on backstroke starts. Placing a towel on the pool deck to reduce the possibility of accidents due to slippery surfaces is not permitted.
- Before the meet
 - Know where your initial position is and jurisdictions for each position
 - Understand how judges will rotate
 - Designate a senior official to act as a meet referee to handle any issues with officiating
- During the meet, use your heat sheet to know which event and heat are swimming
 - Write DQs on the league’s DQ form—be sure you have the correct event/heat/lane and infraction; write the swimmer’s name if you can; and sign your name on the DQ slip in case there are questions
 - Runners will pick up your DQ slips
 - Make sure you give your DQ slips to the computer operator after rotating or going on break
 - Stroke judges do not notify swimmers or coaches of DQs or indicate DQs (such as raising their hand)
 - Stroke judges should not discuss calls with parents or coaches—let the senior official take care of this

Key Points to Remember

- ***One set of rules applies to all swimmers, no matter the age or ability level***
 - However, rules can be modified by the senior stroke judge for a swimmer with a permanent physical or cognitive disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities
- Individual clubs/pools may not change the rules for strokes or competition
- Our league, just like USA Swimming, ***does not*** allow video review of calls, because of fairness issues (did every other swimmer in the heat have video backup?) and positioning issues (can you really see a swimmer's touch at the finish of the race when viewed from the opposite end of the pool?)
- As stroke judges we do not judge style -- we only determine if a swimmer conforms to the rules
- Give equal time to all lanes, including empty lanes, so that no swimmer is watched more than others
- Always look and act professionally
- Be supportive, but don't cheer for one swimmer or one side
- Just as a football official does not commit pass interference, and a basketball official does not foul the shooter, swimmers disqualify themselves -- you are only recording it
- And, don't have discussions with coaches or parents -- let the senior stroke judge manage any issues
- REMEMBER the stroke judges in our league are parents who have taken this class, and who may bring a lot or very little swimming experience to this role. Our league and its stroke judges are all volunteers; please don't allow any parent (or coach) to second-guess or criticize the stroke judges for calls they don't like or agree with. Mistakes are possible and probable; so are missed calls. Do your best!
- Ask questions if you are not sure about something!

COMMON STUFF YOU'LL SEE IN SUMMER LEAGUE AND HOW TO HANDLE IT *Summer 2024*

Butterfly

Situation	DQ
Starts the race swimming freestyle	Non-simultaneous arms, alternating kick, or both
Arms are not simultaneous or are entering the water at different times	Non-simultaneous arms
Arms recover completely underwater	Underwater recovery
Starts a pull but then doesn't complete it (during the swim or at the turn/finish)	Underwater recovery
Only one hand touches	One hand touch
Hands touch at different times or touch in an overlapping presentation (stacked)	Non-simultaneous touch
Hands touch in a different position on the wall (ie, one higher than the other) but still touch at the same time	NOT a DQ
Swimmer rolls past vertical toward the back	Not on breast
Swimmer is completely underwater past the 15-meter mark	Other: re-submerged
Swims without moving arms (swims in streamline position with arms in front of swimmer, and only kicks)	NOT a DQ, unless another rule of stroke is broken
Swims moving arms in stroke correctly, but keeps legs/feet still (not kicking or infrequently kicking a fly kick)	NOT a DQ, unless another rule of stroke is broken
Kicks with alternating or breaststroke kick	Alternating kick, breaststroke kick
Feet change position during kick	Alternating kick
Does a flip turn	Not on breast, non-simultaneous touch
Legal touch at turn, but then does a flip turn	Not on breast
Completely stops	NOT a DQ, unless another rule of stroke is broken (look at arms, legs/feet, body position)
Stops to adjust goggles, pulls on lane line, or stands on bottom of pool	Non-simultaneous arms, not on breast

Breaststroke

Situation	DQ
Starts the race swimming freestyle	Non-simultaneous arms, alternating kick, or both
Arms are not simultaneous	Non-simultaneous arms
Pulls hands past hipline during swim	Hands past hips UNLESS this is part of the swimmer's pullout the start or turn AND no other rule of stroke is broken
Only one hand touches	One hand touch
Hands touch at different times or touch in an overlapping presentation (stacked)	Non-simultaneous touch
Hands touch in a different position on the wall (ie, one higher than the other) but still touch at the same time	NOT a DQ
Swimmer rolls past vertical toward the back	Not on breast
Head not up during stroke (swimming underwater)	Head did not break surface during cycle
Not breathing every stroke	NOT a DQ, as long as some part of the head breaks the surface of the water. However, it is a DQ (for head did not break surface during cycle) if <i>no part of the head</i> breaks the water surface during each stroke cycle.
Two pulls underwater	Double pulls UNLESS this is part of the swimmer's pullout and no other rule of stroke is broken
Two breaststroke kicks underwater	Double kick
Pullout occurs when the swimmer's shoulders are not parallel to the water's surface	Arms not in same horizontal plane
Butterfly kick during swim	Butterfly kick
Alternating or scissors kick	Alternating or scissors kick
No pullout to the hips at the start or turn	NOT a DQ
No dolphin kick at the start or turn	NOT a DQ
Flip turn	Not on breast
Legal touch at turn, but then does a flip turn	Not on breast
Swimmer takes a stroke at the turn or finish and touches the wall, but without a corresponding kick	NOT a DQ, unless another rule of stroke is broken
Stops to adjust goggles, pulls on lane line, or stands on bottom of pool	Non-simultaneous arms, not on breast

Backstroke

Situation	DQ
Still on back, but arms are not simultaneous, or arms are not moving	NOT a DQ
Still on back, but butterfly or breaststroke kick	NOT a DQ
Swimmer rolls past vertical toward the breast	Not on back, UNLESS this is part of the swimmer's turn, and no other rule of stroke is broken
Swimmer is completely submerged prior to the 15-meter mark, but still on back	NOT a DQ
Swimmer passes 15-meter mark on the water surface, but then completely re-submerges prior to the turn or finish	Submerged prior to finish
Finishes first lap while on back, turns, and leaves the wall on back (ie, no flip turn)	NOT a DQ, as long as no other rule of stroke is broken
Swimmer misses the wall at the turn, or swims back to touch the wall after missing	No touch at turn
Swimmer turns to breast and doesn't immediately start the pull	Delay initiating arm pull
Swimmer turns to breast, kicks, but doesn't start the arm pull	Delay initiating arm pull
Swimmer turns to breast, finishes arm pull, and doesn't immediately start turning action	Delay initiating turn
Swimmer turns to breast, kicks to make up distance while taking a slow arm pull, and immediately starts turning action once arm pull is completed	NOT a DQ, unless another rule of stroke is broken
Swimmer turns to breast and then swims to wall	Not on back during swim
Swimmer rolls to breast immediately prior to the turn, touches the wall while on the breast, and then and pushes off on the back	NOT a DQ, unless another rule of stroke is broken
Swimmer takes a double arm pull at the turn	NOT a DQ, unless another rule of stroke is broken
Swimmer takes two or more strokes at the turn	Multiple strokes at turn
Swimmer turns legally but shoulders are past vertical toward the breast when the feet leave the wall	Not on back out of turn
Swimmer does a legal turn but does not touch the wall	No touch at turn, even if they swim back and touch
Swimmer's shoulders are past vertical toward the breast prior to the finish (rolls over)	Not on back at finish
Swimmer finishes the race and touches with his/her head	NOT a DQ, unless another rule of stroke is broken
Completely stops, or stops to adjust goggles, but still on back	NOT a DQ, unless another rule of stroke is broken
Pulls on lane line	Other—pulled on lane line
Stands on bottom of pool	Not on back

Freestyle

Situation	DQ
Swims backstroke, butterfly, or breaststroke during the individual freestyle event	NOT a DQ, even if they violate stroke rules for backstroke, butterfly, or breaststroke
Swims the entire lap or part of any lap as backstroke, butterfly, or breaststroke during the freestyle leg of the medley relay	Relay stroke infraction—other—swam incorrect stroke
Misses wall at turn, then swims back to touch it before completing the race	NOT a DQ, unless another rule of stroke is broken
Misses wall at turn	No touch at turn
	Head did not break surface of before 15m
Stands on bottom	NOT a DQ, unless springs off the bottom to continue swimming
Stops and holds on lane line	NOT a DQ, unless pulls on the lane line for propulsion

Individual Medley

Situation	DQ
Swims the entire lap or part of any lap as backstroke, butterfly, or breaststroke during the freestyle leg of the IM	Other—swam incorrect stroke
Swims strokes out of order	Strokes out of sequence
Swims a stroke twice	Strokes out of sequence
Stroke infraction for any of the four strokes	Mark DQ for the stroke
Does a flip turn from butterfly to backstroke	NOT a DQ, as long as there was a legal finish in the fly, a flip turn, and a legal start in the backstroke
Does a flip turn from backstroke to breaststroke	Backstroke DQ: Not on back at finish, UNLESS the swimmer touched the wall while still on the back, and then flipped to head or her breast, and started the breaststroke legally
Does a flip turn from breaststroke to freestyle	Breaststroke DQ, with regard to the touch at the finish, OR not on breast at finish

Relay Events

Situation	DQ
Swims the entire lap or part of any lap as backstroke, butterfly, or breaststroke during the freestyle leg of the medley relay	Other— Strokes out of sequence
Swims strokes out of order	Strokes out of sequence
Swims a stroke twice	Strokes out of sequence
Stroke infraction for any of the four strokes	Mark DQ for the stroke
Swims backstroke, butterfly, or breaststroke during the <i>freestyle</i> relay	NOT a DQ, even if they violate stroke rules for backstroke, butterfly, or breaststroke
One swimmer swims twice during relay	Other: Ineligible swimmer on team
Early take-off	Early take-off (mark swimmer #)
Swimmer on team doesn't exit pool or re-enters pool	Re-entered or stayed in pool