

2023 MSA SWIMMING RULES – EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

World Aquatic (Formerly FINA) review and update the competition regulations of all the aquatic sports, including swimming and masters swimming, every five (5) years.

The most recent review was undertaken in 2022 with the updated competition regulations being approved by the World Aquatics Bureau on 21st February 2023 and becoming immediately effective from that date.

Under MSA General Rule GR 4.1 the MSA National Technical Committee will consider the rule changes made by World Aquatic and prepare a draft document of the MSA Swimming Rules incorporating those rule changes that they deem are relevant to ensure the continued fairness, integrity and safety at all MSA pool competitions. The MSA National Technical Committee completed their review of the recent changes and recommended changes to the MSA Swimming Rules that were approved by MSA and its affiliate members at the MSA General Meeting in April.

The updated MSA Swimming Rules took effect on 7/05/2023 and can now be viewed on the MSA website:

- [**MSA Swimming Rules Inc MC - April 2023**](#)

Below is a summary of the major rule changes for MSSA members' reference. Please note that these notes are a guide to the changes and should be read in conjunction with the actual MSA Swimming Rules.

N.B. As well as the integration of the World Aquatic swimming rules the opportunity was taken to correct spelling, grammar and punctuation throughout the document in the MSA Swimming Rules.

If you have any questions, please direct them to the MSSA Technical Co-Ordinator.

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RULE N°	RULE	COMMENTARY
SW 1	MANAGEMENT OF COMPETITIONS	
SW 1.2	<p>At the Masters Swimming Australia National Championships the Meet Director shall appoint the following minimum number of officials for the control of the competitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referee (2) • Control Room Supervisor (1) • Judges of Stroke (4) • Starters (2) • Chief Inspectors of Turns (2, 1 at each end of the pool) • Inspectors of Turns (1 at each end of each lane) • Chief recorder (1) • Clerk of course (2) • Announcer (1) • AOE/SAT Operator (1) • Timekeepers (minimum 2 per lane) <p><u>Organisers of swimming competitions shall appoint sufficient officials to ensure the fairness, integrity and safety of the competition.</u></p>	Promoters and organisers of events must appoint sufficient officials to ensure that the competition is fair and safe
SW 1.2.2	<p>Where Automatic Officiating Equipment is not available, such equipment must be replaced by a Chief Timekeeper. , two (2) Timekeepers per lane each with digital watches and two (2) additional Timekeepers. <u>Wherever possible, a minimum of two (2) Timekeeper per lane shall be appointed together with one (1) additional timekeeper in case of a watch malfunction. It is advisable that there shall be three (3) timekeepers for each lane.</u></p>	Good practice

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SW 2	OFFICIALS	
SW 2.1	Referee	
SW 2.1.5M	<p>At the commencement of each event, the referee shall signal to the swimmers by a short series of whistles inviting them to remove all clothing except for swimwear. Once all swimmers have removed their clothing, except for swimwear, the Referee shall signal the commencement of an event by a short series of whistles inviting them to get ready at the starting end. followed by a long whistle indicating that they should take their positions on the starting platform (or for backstroke swimming and medley relays to immediately enter the water). A second long whistle shall bring the backstroke and medley relay swimmer immediately to the starting position. When the swimmers and officials are prepared for the start, the referee shall gesture to the starter with a stretched-out arm, indicating that the swimmers are under the starter's control. The stretched-out arm shall stay in that position until the start is given.</p>	Formalisation of good practice that competitors remove their clothing, except swimwear, before the referee starts the whistle blowing procedure
SW 2.1.6	<p>A disqualification for starting before the starting signal must be observed and confirmed by both the s Starter and the r Referee. <u>When Automatic Officiating Equipment is available, it may be used to verify the disqualification.</u></p>	<p>Confirmation that AOE overhead cameras may be used to confirm a start infraction.</p> <p>Reaction times from starting blocks should not be used.</p>
<u>SW 2.1.8</u>	<p><u>All potential infractions shall be verbally reported to the Referee. Once confirmed by the Referee, a signed disqualification card shall be completed by the reporting official, detailing the event, lane number and the infraction.</u></p>	Good practice
<u>SW 2.1.9</u>	<p><u>The Referee shall appoint officials who shall determine, in relay events, whether the starting swimmer is in contact with the starting platform when the preceding swimmer touches the starting wall. When Automatic Officiating Equipment which judges relay take-offs is available, it shall be used in accordance with SW 13.1.</u></p>	The referee may appoint officials to judge relay takeovers

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SW 2.3	Starter	
<u>SW 2.3.5</u>	<u>The Starter shall report to the Referee any violation observed within their jurisdiction.</u>	
SW 2.4	Clerk of Course <u>Call Room (Marshal, Check Starter)</u>	
SW 2.4.1M	The clerk of course <u>Marshal</u> shall assemble swimmers prior to each event and allocate swimmers to heats and lanes if required.	Change of name for this important role
SW 2.4.2M	The clerk of course <u>Marshal</u> shall report to the r Referee any violation <u>with regard to swimwear</u> and if a swimmer is not present when called.	Simplification of rule format

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SW 2.6	Inspector of Turns	
SW 2.6.5	Not applicable to Masters. <u>When a Backstroke ledge is being used, each inspector at the starting end shall install and remove the ledge. Once installed, the ledge shall be set at Zero (0).</u>	
SW 2.6.9	Inspectors of Turns shall report to the Referee any violation on signed cards detailing the event, lane number, and the infraction <u>observed within their jurisdiction</u> .	
SW 2.7	Judges of Stroke	
SW 2.7.3	Judges of Stroke shall report to the Referee any violation on signed cards detailing the event, lane number, and the infraction <u>observed within their jurisdiction</u> .	
SW 2.9	Timekeepers	
SW 2.9.1	Each timekeeper shall take the time of the swimmers in the lane assigned to him in accordance with SW 11.3. The watches shall be certified correct to the satisfaction of the meet Management Committee.	
SW 2.12	DESK CONTROL <u>Control Room (Recorder & Automatic Officiating Equipment Operators)</u>	

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SW 4	THE START	
SW 4.4	<p>Any swimmer starting before the starting signal has been given, shall be disqualified. <u>After all swimmers are stationary, Any swimmer initiating a start before the signal may be disqualified.</u> 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.</p>	<p>Incorporating the rule interpretation. A swimmer may be disqualified if they initiate their start before the signal.</p> <p>An involuntary movement or twitch is not regarded as initiating the start</p>
SW 6	BACKSTROKE	
SW 6.1	<p>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. <u>When using a backstroke ledge at the start, at least one toe of each foot must be in contact with the end wall or face of the touchpad.</u> Bending the toes over the top of the touchpad is prohibited.</p>	
SW 6.3M	<p>Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, <u>except that once some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the 5 metres mark immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged.</u> It is 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.</p>	Can be submerged at the finish once past the 5m flags
SW 6.4	<p>When executing the turn there must be a touch of the wall with some part of the swimmer's body in their 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.</p>	

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SW 6.5	Upon the finish of the race the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back in his/her respective lane.	
SW 7	BREASTSTROKE	
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.	Whether a swimmer's arms are on the same horizontal plane is very difficult to judge. The more important aspect is the arm movements being simultaneous without alternating movement
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.	Whether a swimmer's legs are on the same horizontal plane is very difficult to judge. The more important aspect is the leg movements being simultaneous without alternating movement
SW 9	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. <u>Leaving the wall on the back during the freestyle portion is permissible but no kicking action is permitted until the swimmer has returned past the vertical to the breast at which point kicking, including a butterfly kick(s) may commence.</u>	Incorporation of the previously published interpretation

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SW 10	THE RACE	
SW 10.2	A swimmer swimming over the course alone shall cover the whole distance to qualify. <u>A swimmer who does not complete the whole distance in accordance with the relevant Masters Swimming Australia rules shall be disqualified.</u>	A swimmer who does not complete the course is disqualified and NOT listed as “Did not finish (DNF)”
<u>SW 10.3</u>	<u>On the pool deck, the competitors must immediately remove all clothing except for swimwear.</u>	Good practice
<u>SW 10.11</u>	<u>Relay exchanges must commence from the starting platform. Running starts from pool deck are not permitted.</u>	Confirmation that relay exchanges must be made from the block and to ensure a safe competition, running take-overs are not allowed

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SW 11	TIMING	
SW 11.1	The operation of Automatic Officiating Equipment shall be under the supervision of appointed officials. Times recorded by Automatic Equipment shall be used to determine the winner, all placing and the time applicable to each lane. The placing and times so determined shall have precedence over the decisions of timekeepers. In the event that a break-down of the Automatic Equipment occurs or that it is clearly indicated that there has been a failure of the Equipment, or that a swimmer has failed to activate the Equipment, the recordings of the timekeepers shall be official (See SW 13.3). <u>In the event that there is failure of all timing devices in a lane then the swimmer may be offered a reswim.</u>	Confirmation of best practice that a swimmer may be offered a reswim in the event of a timing malfunction
SW 15	SWIMWEAR AND WEARABLES	
SW 15.1	<u>For swimming competitions, swimwear must comply with Masters Swimming Australia General Rule GR 16.</u>	Replaces former World Aquatic By-laws
SW 15.2 <i>Formerly rule SW 10.8M</i>	No swimmer shall be permitted to use or wear any device or swimsuit that may aid his/her speed, buoyancy or endurance during a competition (such as webbed gloves, flippers, fins, power bands, or adhesive substances, etc.). <u>The use of technology and automated data collection devices is permissible for the sole purpose of collecting data. Automated devices shall not be utilised to transmit data, sounds, or signals to the swimmer and may not be used to aid their speed.</u> Goggles may be worn. Any kind of tape on the body is not permitted unless approved by the Referee.	It is acceptable for devices to transmit data to a coach and/or the cloud during a race but not the swimmer. Basic watches can now be worn. Smart goggles may not be worn. Smart watches (e.g. Fitbits, Garmins, Apple Watches) may not be worn.
SW 15.3	<u>A World Record will only be recognised by World Aquatics if approved Swimwear as per Masters Swimming Australia General Rule GR 16.1 has been used.</u>	Replaces former World Aquatic By-laws