



# JUDGE OF STROKES

## TRAINING NOTES

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# 1. Introduction

These notes detail the responsibilities, duties and procedures of the Judge of Strokes and the procedures applicable to the position.

These training notes cover swim meets in general, with a bias towards State Championships as they are the standard that you should emulate and the principles you should apply when officiating local competition. This ensures consistency and uniformity at all levels of competition across the State and equips you to officiate at State and National Championships.

In order to be competent in your position, you will need to know the [Rules of Swimming](#). These rules are referred to in these notes by their number in the rules e.g. SW2.1 .1. The NSW Rules often refer to the appropriate [Federation Internationale de Natation \(FINA\) Rule](#) (SW or FR) as included in the FINA Handbook.

# 2. General

As a Judge of Strokes, you are to report to the Referee at least thirty (30) minutes before the advertised starting time of the swim meet.

This enables the Referee to mark you present against the Officials' Appointment Roster, to give you a program and also advise any special instructions which may apply. This may also include changes to protocols due to specific circumstances such as televised events.

You need several items of equipment to do your job properly. These include:

- A whistle
- Pens, notepad and a clipboard
- Rule Infraction Cards - these are generally given to the Judge of Strokes by the Referee as needed.

Although Judges of Strokes are expected to know the [Rules of Swimming](#), it is recommended that they have a copy of the current edition of the Rules of Swimming with them at the pool.

### 3. Responsibilities and Duties

For the efficient running of a swimming meet there should be four Judges of Strokes, two on each side of the pool. The Judges of Strokes operate as directed by the Referee in accordance with the duties detailed in [SW2](#).

Their duties are to ensure that the rules relating to the style of swimming designated for the event are being observed and to observe the turns to assist the Inspectors of Turns.

They are to report any rule infractions to the Referee immediately an infraction is observed. If accepted, the Referee will provide an [Rule Infraction Card](#) for completion by the reporting Judge of Strokes requiring details of the event, heat, lane number, distance, stroke, gender and of the infraction in terms of the relevant rule.

At SNSW meets, Judge of Strokes in 50m events will report infractions immediately following the Start, to the Start Referee. The Start Referee being the closest Referee and able to quickly affect the infraction processing.

The roles of the Judge of Strokes and Inspector of Turns are integral to the successful operation of any meet. Teamwork is essential between people working in either of these roles and the Referee.

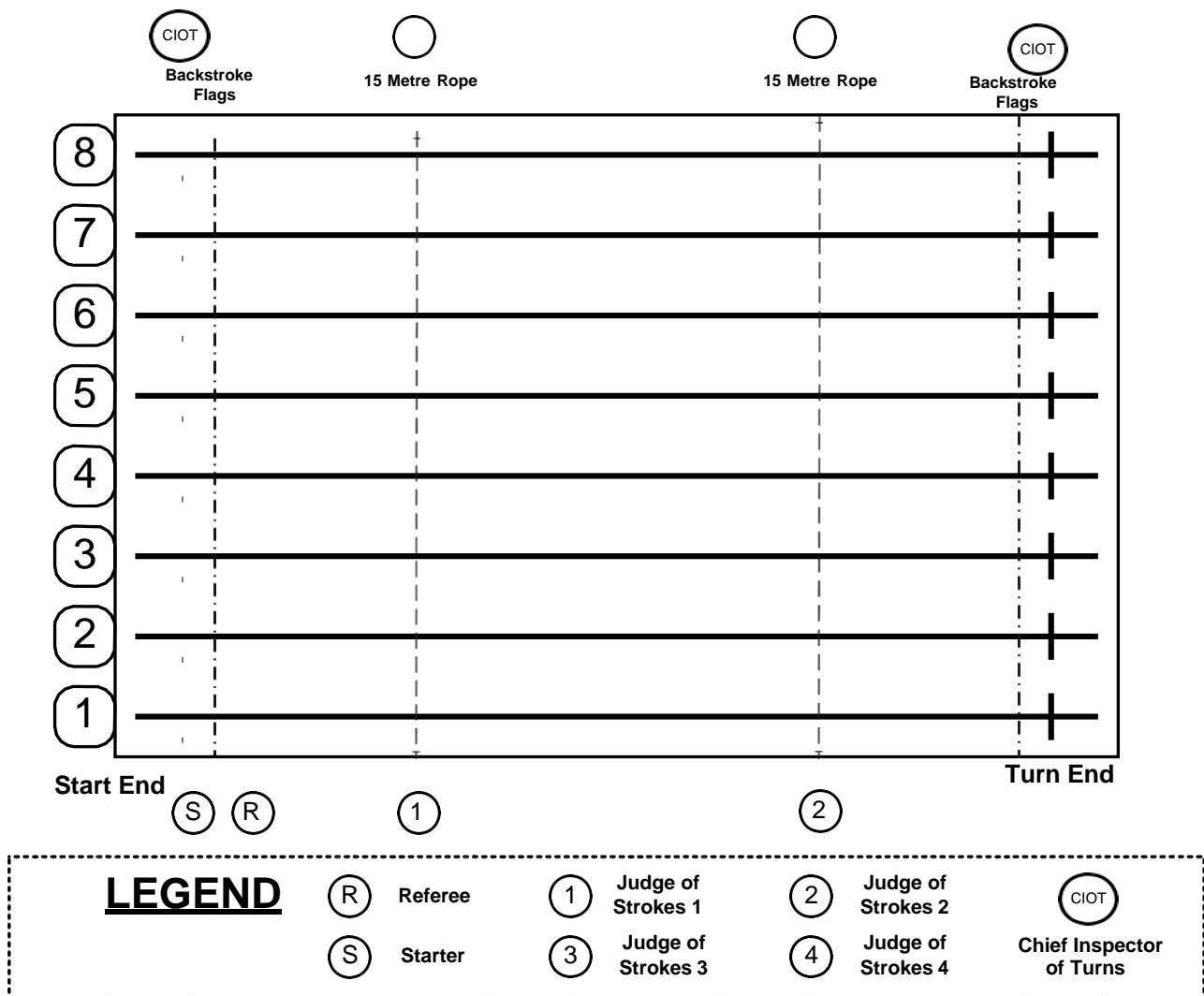
### 4. Jurisdiction and Positioning

For a long course pool, the Judges of Strokes are located around the pool as indicated in **Figure 1** below.

The Starter and Referee are normally located for the start on the lane 1 side of the pool within five metres of the end of the pool. Lane number 1 shall be on the right-hand side of the pool when facing down the course from the starting end.

Moving counter-clockwise from the Referee, the Judges of Strokes positions are commonly referred to as Judges of Strokes 1 and 2 on the lane 1 side of the pool and 3 and 4 on the lane 8 side of the pool.

**Figure 1 - Typical Eight Lane Long Course Pool Layout**



Judges of Strokes have jurisdiction from the commencement of the race. Judges of Strokes 1 and 2 observe swimmers in lanes 1 to 4, while Judges of Strokes 3 and 4 observe swimmers in lanes 5 to 8.

Judges of Strokes need to position themselves consistently throughout each race so that they can, as a team, best observe all of the swimmers in their assigned lanes. The positioning described below is that recommended for long course pools but could be applied to short course pools by adjusting to the number of laps completed in each event.

Note that the Judges of Strokes assist the Inspectors of Turns by observing the turns and the finish. As the Judges of Strokes are there to observe that the swimmers conform to the rules relating to the finish of each stroke, it is not appropriate to act as a Finish Judge by judging the finish of a race.

While observing a race, Judges of Stroke should concentrate on watching the swimmers. They should avoid discussion and reach their conclusion regarding infractions independently.

## 4.1 Freestyle Event Positioning - Full Complement of Inspectors of Turns

All JOS stand at the Referee's whistle.

At the start of each race, each pair of JOS on both sides of the pool should be positioned at the 15m mark from the start to observe swimmers' head breaking the surface of the water. JOS's 2 and 3 shall follow the swimmers to the turn end 15m mark and remain there until the completion of all heats of the event. Once the last swimmer in the last heat passes the 15m mark on the last length, JOS's 2 and 3 will follow the swimmers back to the 15m mark from the start end. Refer **Figure 2** below.

For 200m or longer individual freestyle events, each JOS should sit once the last swimmer has passed the 65m mark and remain seated at the 15m mark from each end of the pool. Once the last swimmer in the last heat passes the 15m mark on the last length, JOS's 2 and 3 will follow the swimmers back to the 15m mark from the start end.

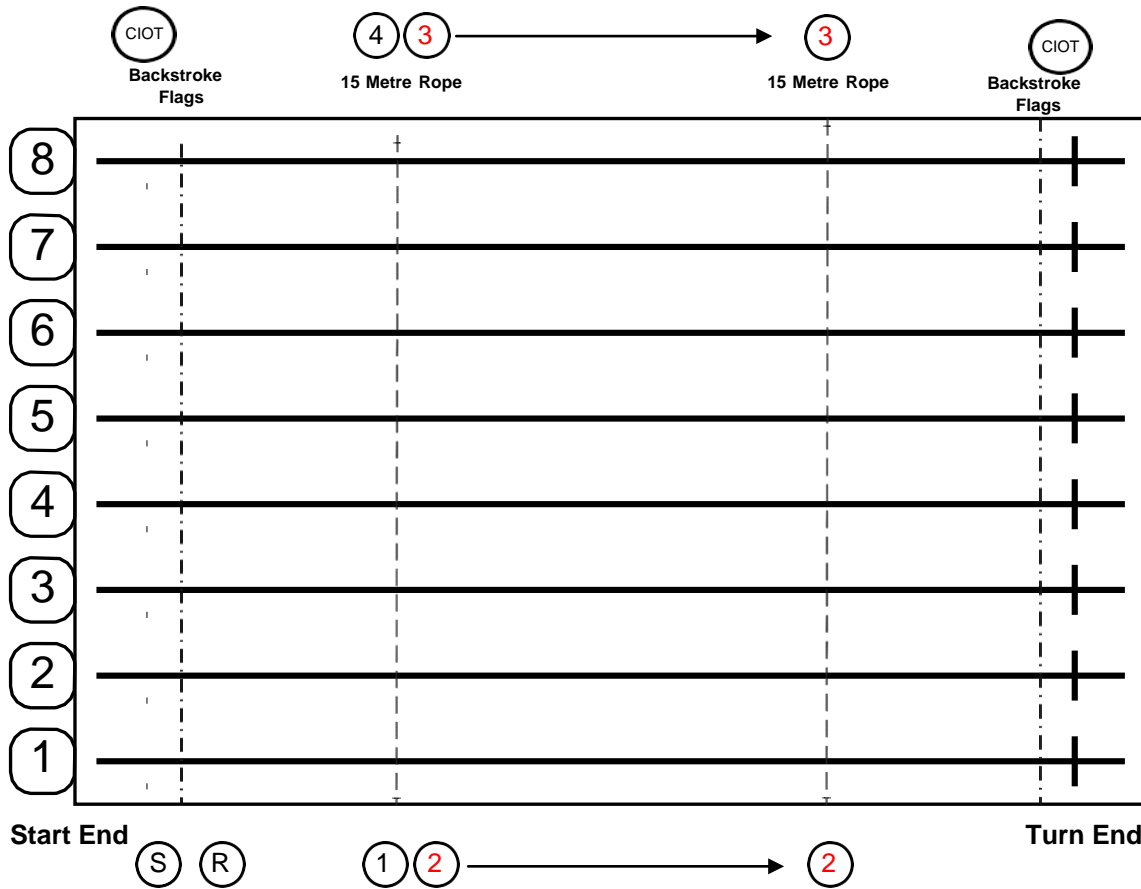
In 50m and 100m freestyle events, each JOS should remain standing throughout the race and remain at the 15m mark from each end of the pool. Once the last swimmer in the last heat passes the 15m mark on the last length, JOS's 2 and 3 will follow the swimmers back to the 15m mark from the start end.

For Relay events, all Judges of Strokes should remain standing throughout the race. Referees may decide to vary these protocols where circumstances necessitate a variation.

Where there is a full complement of Inspectors of Turns, Judges of Strokes need to position themselves to best observe the swimmers at the 15 metre mark at the start and turns and throughout the race including the finish.

Where there are insufficient Inspectors of Turns to fully observe all turns, the Judges of Strokes will be required to move up and down the pool to observe the turns, the 15 metre marks and the finish of the event.

**Figure 2 - Judges of Strokes positioning at the start of Freestyle Events with a Full Complement of Inspectors of Turns**



**LEGEND**

(R) Referee	(1) Judge of Strokes 1	(2) Judge of Strokes 2	(CIOT) Chief Inspector of Turns
(S) Starter	(3) Judge of Strokes 3	(4) Judge of Strokes 4	

## 4.2 Backstroke, Butterfly and Medley Event Positioning

For the start of Backstroke, Butterfly and Medley events, JOS's 2 and 3 would position themselves at the 15 metre mark to observe where swimmers' heads break the water surface, whilst JOS's 1 and 4 would position themselves closer to the starting blocks in a position to observe underwater swimming after the start. Refer **Figure 3**.

As the swimmers move down the pool, the Judges of Strokes would move down with them in a position to best observe the swimmers within their jurisdiction. Typically, this is somewhat in line with and a little behind the swimmers' feet.

For long course 50 metre events, all Judges of Strokes would follow the swimmers almost to the end of the pool, maintaining positions such that all swimmers within their jurisdiction could be observed.

For events of 100 metre and longer, Judges of Strokes 2 and 3 would follow the swimmers almost to the turning end of the pool, to observe touches and turns, whilst Judges of Strokes 1 and 4 would remain at 15 metres from the turn end to observe where swimmers' heads break the surface. Judges of Strokes 2 and 3 would then follow the slowest of the swimmers, whilst Judges of Strokes 1 and 4 would follow the fastest group of swimmers on their side of the pool as they returned up the pool, continuing to observe all swimmers where possible. These positionings would reverse on subsequent laps.

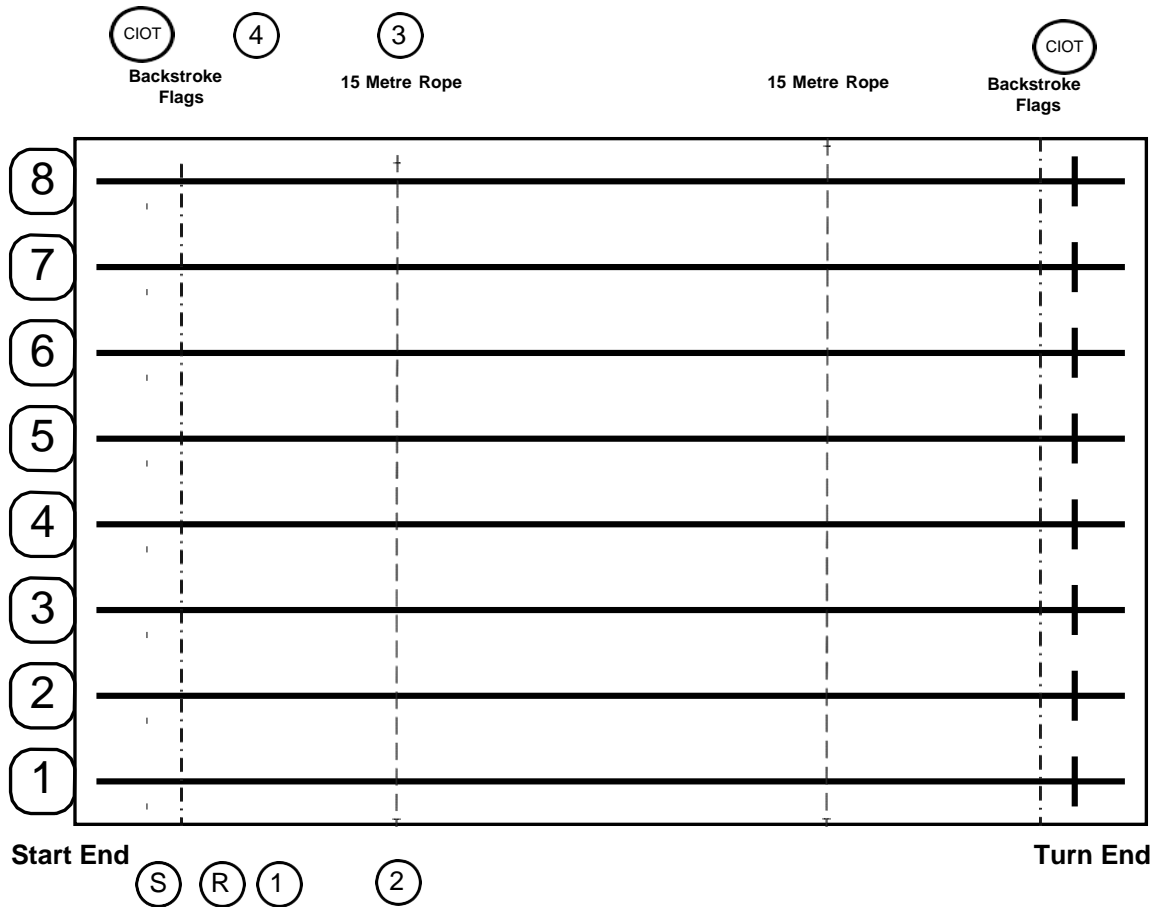
The Judges of Strokes positioned at the 15 metre mark should remain in that position until they have observed the heads of all swimmers break the surface after the turn. Only then should they move down the pool.

As the race progresses it can be expected that the swimmers will begin to spread out, and, particularly for events of 200 metres and longer, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain positioning as described for the first lap. The Judges of Strokes should work as a team to ensure that the lead swimmers and the trailing swimmers are observed at all times, while continuing to monitor the 15 metre marks when required. All Judges of Strokes should follow the swimmers they are observing almost to the end of the pool to assist Inspectors of Turns.

Note that for Medley events, the requirements for Breaststroke and Freestyle will introduce positioning variations specific to those sections of the race. The completion of each section in Medley events must be finished in accordance with the rule which applies to the style concerned ([SW9](#)), therefore the relevant Judges of Strokes must be in a position to assist the Inspectors of Turns on each occasion.



**Figure 3 - Judges of Strokes positioning at the start of Backstroke, Butterfly and Medley Events**



<b>LEGEND</b>	(R)	Referee	(1)	Judge of Strokes 1	(2)	Judge of Strokes 2	(CIOT)	Chief Inspector of Turns
	(S)	Starter	(3)	Judge of Strokes 3	(4)	Judge of Strokes 4		

### 4.3 Breaststroke Event Positioning

For the start of Breaststroke events, Judges of Strokes 1 and 4 would position themselves close to the starting end where they can best assist the Inspectors of Turns by observing the competitors' stroking after the start. Typically, Judges of Strokes 1 and 4 would move to 5 metres from the starting end, while Judges of Strokes 2 and 3 would move to approximately 10 metres from the starting end to be able to also observe the start, the swimmers' heads breaking the water surface and, be in a position to move down the pool with the lead swimmers. Refer **Figure 4**.

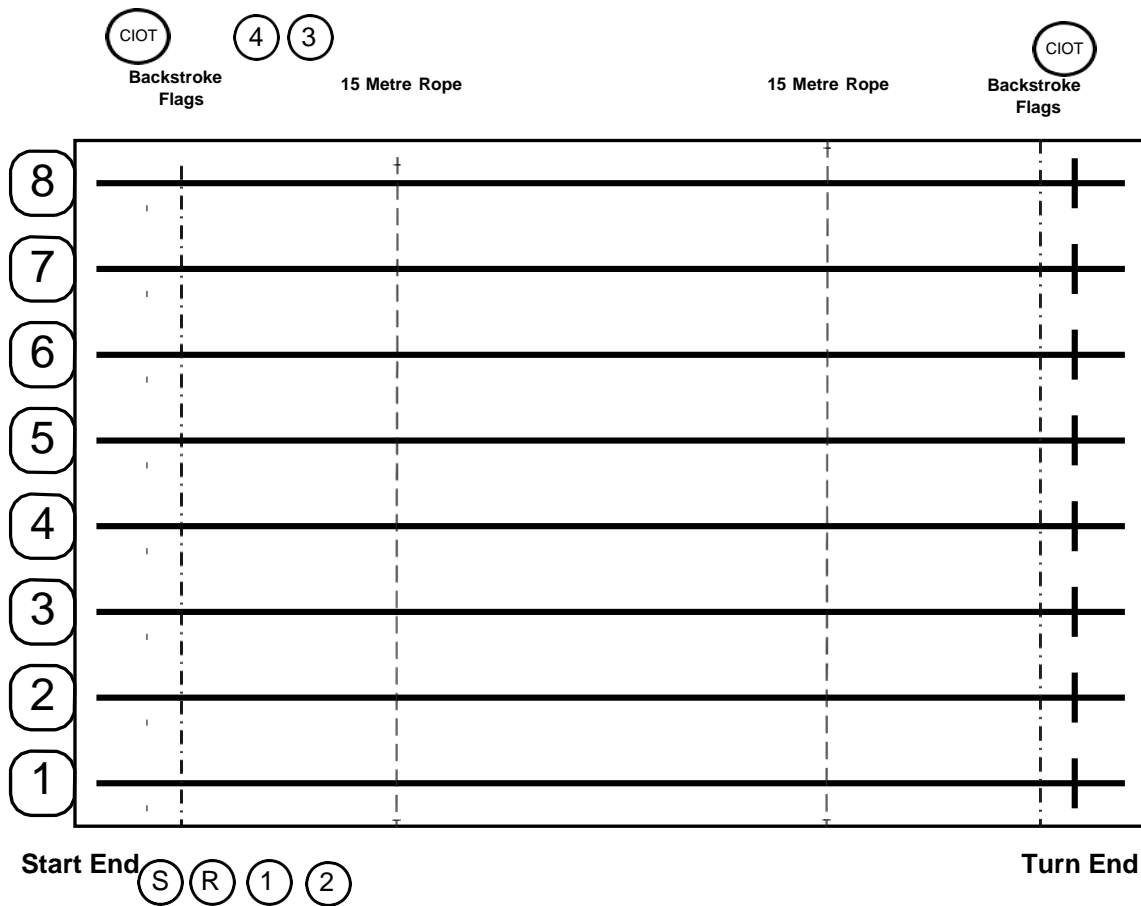
As the swimmers move down the pool, the Judges of Strokes would move down the pool with them in a position to best observe the swimmers within their jurisdiction. Typically, this is somewhat in line with and a little behind the swimmers' feet.

For long course 50 metre events, the Judges of Strokes would follow the swimmers almost to the end of the pool, consistently maintaining positions such that all swimmers within their jurisdiction could be observed. All Judges of Strokes should ensure that they position themselves approximately 5 metres from the finish end of the pool to be able to assist the Inspectors of Turns by clearly observing the finish.

For events of 100 metre and longer, Judges of Strokes 2 and 3 would follow the swimmers almost to 5 metres from the turning end of the pool where they can position themselves to assist the Inspectors of Turns by observing all aspects of the turn, whilst Judges of Strokes 1 and 4 would be 10 metres from the turning end of the pool to also observe the turns and be in a position to move down the pool with the lead swimmers. Judges of Strokes 2 and 3 would follow the trailing swimmers as they returned up the pool.

As the race progresses it can be expected that the swimmers will begin to spread out and particularly for 200 metre events, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain positioning as described for the first lap. The Judges of Strokes should work as a team to ensure that all swimmers, including the lead swimmers and the trailing swimmers, are observed at all times. All Judges of Strokes should follow the swimmers they are observing almost to the end of the pool to assist Inspectors of Turns.

**Figure 4 - Judges of Strokes positioning at the Start of Breaststroke Events**



<b>LEGEND</b>	(R)	Referee	(1)	Judge of Strokes 1	(2)	Judge of Strokes 2	(CIOT)	Chief Inspector of Turns
	(S)	Starter	(3)	Judge of Strokes 3	(4)	Judge of Strokes 4		

## 5. Applying the Rules of Swimming

Judges of Strokes apply the [Rules of Swimming](#) as relevant to their area of jurisdiction as fully detailed in:

- Freestyle - SW5
- Backstroke - SW6
- Breaststroke - SW7
- Butterfly - SW8
- Medley swimming - SW9
- The Race - SW10

These Rules are subject to revision by [FINA](#). Judges of Strokes must always be aware of the latest version of the rules and are encouraged to review the rules prior to every meet to reinforce their knowledge.

It is imperative that the Judges of Strokes know the Rules and are able to express infractions clearly in terms of any rule that has been breached.

When an infraction has been observed, the Judge of Strokes must be very clear that a rule has been breached. If there is any doubt in the mind of the Judge of Strokes, the benefit must be in favour of the swimmer. Report only what you observe - not what you think may have occurred.

When learning to adjudicate strokes and stroke cycles, it is suggested that Judge of Strokes candidates break down the sequence of the stroke cycle that occur during a race, in the order that the stroke cycle occurs and then describe the applicable rules being observed at each point in the stroke cycle.

### 5.1 Freestyle - SW5

Freestyle means that in an event so designated, the swimmer may swim any style and can change styles at any time during the race except that, in individual medley and medley relay events, freestyle means any style other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly.

After the start, during a turn and after each turn, the swimmer can be submerged for a distance of not more than 15 metres. By that point, the head must have broken the surface. From that point, some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race.

Some part of the swimmer must touch the wall upon completion of each length of the course and at the finish.

- A hand touch is not mandatory
- Because there are no touch restrictions, a swimmer who, when turning, fails to touch, can return to the wall, make contact and then continue to swim without disqualification. This could happen when a tumble turn is being executed by inexperienced swimmers.

Other considerations during a freestyle event include:

- No stepping, strides or walking
- No pulling on the lane ropes
- No fouling or interfering with other swimmers
- Finishing in the same lane as the swimmer started

## 5.2 Backstroke - SW6

At the signal for starting and after turning, the swimmer shall push off and swim upon the back throughout the race except when executing a turn. 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.

After the start, during a turn and after each turn, the swimmer can be submerged for a distance of not more than 15 metres. By that point, the head must have broken the surface. From that point some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water, except during a turn, as detailed below.

During the turn the shoulders may be turned over the vertical to 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. It is important that Judges of Strokes are in a position to observe the complete body of the swimmer in forming an opinion as to the compliance of the turn.

- FINA has defined that "except when executing a turn" means any deviation from the normal backstroke other than to execute a turning action
- A swimmer who turns off the back too far away from the wall when approaching a turn cannot recover the mistake by returning to their back
- Many swimmers kick whilst undertaking the turn. You will note from careful consideration of this rule that this is permitted, provided it is part of a turning action initiated by an immediate, continuous, single, arm pull or an immediate, continuous, simultaneous, double, arm pull. Kicking while off the back is not permitted to get the swimmer into a position in which to start the turn

- Should they fail to touch the wall at the turn, the swimmer cannot float or scull backwards to the wall whilst on their back and touch to rectify the error
- Swimmers do not have to do this form of tumble turn. They may stay on their back and touch the wall with some part of their body before turning or they may leave the position on the back to touch the wall immediately, with some part of their body, before pushing off on their back.

When executing the turn, there must be a touch of the wall with some part of the swimmer's body in their respective lane. The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall.

- There is no requirement for a swimmer to use a hand to touch the wall at a turn or finish. Any part of the body will satisfy the rule that some part of the body must touch the wall.

Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back while in their respective lane. It is not permissible for a swimmer to be completely submerged prior to, or at the turn or finish of the race.

During the race, the swimmers must be observed for the following:

- No standing on the bottom of the pool
- No pulling on the lane ropes
- No fouling or interfering with other swimmers
- That they swim on their back throughout the race except when executing a turn.

### **5.3 Breaststroke - SW7**

From the start and throughout the race, the stroke cycle must be one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order. A single butterfly kick is permitted after the start and after each turn. Note that the butterfly kick is not part of the stroke cycle and may be executed at any time prior to the commencement of the first breaststroke kick.

For the first arm stroke after the start and each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs i.e. the hands may be brought back beyond the hip line and the swimmer may be submerged. From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and after each turn, the body shall be kept on the breast.

It is not permitted to roll on to 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.

- After the touch the swimmer can be on their side or back while turning provided they are on the breast i.e. have not rolled on to their back, when they lose contact with the wall
- It is permissible for a swimmer to execute a tumble turn after touching the wall, as long as they are on the breast when leaving the wall.

After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may be completely submerged during the first arm stroke and breaststroke kick. The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke after the start and after each turn. During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer's head must break the surface of the water. Adjudication on this is the responsibility of both the Inspectors of Turns and the Judges of Strokes.

All movements of the arms shall be simultaneous and on the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.

- Simultaneous means occurring or happening at the same time
- Alternating (of two things) means occurring successively or by turns.

The hands shall be pushed forward together from the breast on, under or over the water. The elbows shall be under the 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.

- Elbows shall be under the water relates to that part of the stroke when the arms are in forward motion.

The feet must be turned outwards during the propulsive part of the kick. Turned outwards means that the toes must be turned out beyond the line of the heels.

All movements of the legs shall be simultaneous and on the same horizontal plane. Alternating movements of the legs or a downward butterfly kick is not permitted except as in [SW7.1](#). Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward butterfly kick.

- After the start and at each turn, either the complete or incomplete movement of the arms or legs is considered as one stroke or kick
- The involuntary rise and fall of the feet and legs following the body's movement in a vertical plane, is not a butterfly kick and, therefore, does not break the rule
- A simultaneous upward drive of the feet does not break the rule.

For the final stroke before each turn and before the finish, the hands shall be pushed forward together from the breast on, under or over the water. For the final stroke before the turn, during the turn and for the final stroke at the finish, the elbows may be above the water.

At the last stroke before the turn and the finish, an arm stroke does not need to be followed by a leg kick.

The hands need not necessarily be at the same level at the touch, i.e. an uneven touch with one hand higher than the other is allowed, provided both hands touch separated and simultaneously.

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.

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.

FINA has interpreted separated to mean that the hands shall not be stacked one on top of the other. The hands may be touching, or the thumbs may be linked, provide that the hands are not stacked. This is illustrated in the following figure.



Other considerations throughout the race:

- No standing on the bottom of the pool
- No pulling on the lane ropes
- No fouling or interfering with other swimmers.



## 5.4 Butterfly - SW8

From the beginning of the first arm stroke after the start and each turn, the body shall be kept on the breast. Underwater kicking on the side is allowed. It is not permitted to roll onto the back at any time except at the turn, after the touch, where it is permissible to turn in any manner as long as the body is on the breast when leaving the wall.

- The swimmer may be on their side or back after a turn, provided they are on the breast when they lose contact with the wall.
- It is permissible for a swimmer to execute a tumble turn after touching the wall, as long as they are on the breast when leaving the wall.

After the start and after each turn, a swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks and one arm pull under the water which must bring them 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 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.

Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and brought backward simultaneously under the water throughout the race.

- Over the water means that at some stage of the recovery, i.e. the forward movement of the arms, the whole of some part of the arms must clear the normal surface of the water.
- If, at the turn or finish, a swimmer's hands fall just short of the wall, the swimmer has the option to either kick or float into the wall with arms extended or to take another stroke, bringing both arms over the water to touch the wall. Disqualification would result if the swimmer started to pull their hands back under the water and then recovered them forward from the breast at, on or below the water to make the touch. Therefore, because another stroke has commenced, the arms must be brought forward over the water.

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.

- An alternating kick occurs when the legs or feet move relative to each other. It should be noted that it is not necessary for the feet to pass each other to constitute an alternating kick
- If the legs or feet are not together then they would need to maintain their relative position to each other throughout the pool length, e.g. right leg and foot higher than the left leg and foot. There can be no appreciable movements of the legs or feet in relation to each other.

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. It is not permissible to be completely submerged prior to, or at, the turn or finish of the race.

- The hands need not necessarily be at the same level at the touch, i.e. an uneven touch with one hand higher than the other is allowed provided both hands touch simultaneously and are separated.

FINA has interpreted separated to mean that the hands shall not be stacked one on top of the other. The hands may be touching, or the thumbs may be linked, provide that the hands are not stacked. See the figure in the Breaststroke section above for clarification.

Other considerations throughout the race:

- No standing on the bottom of the pool
- No pulling on the lane ropes
- No fouling or interfering with other swimmers.

## **5.5 Medley - SW9**

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 ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of the distance.

In Medley relay events, swimmers will cover the four swimming strokes in the following order: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Freestyle. Note that this happens to correspond to the alphabetical order of the strokes.

The key requirement for medley swimming is that each section must be swum, and finished, in accordance with the rules applicable to the style concerned as detailed above.

Of special note in Medley swimming:

- At the start of Individual Medley events, apply the Butterfly Rules
- The normal rules of Butterfly apply throughout the Butterfly section
- The Butterfly section must finish as per the Butterfly Rules i.e., swimmers must be on the breast, both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water, the touch must be made with both hands separated and simultaneously and, no breaststroke kicking movement or alternating kick is permitted. It is not permitted for the swimmer to be submerged prior to or at the finish of the butterfly section

- The swimmer must be on the back upon leaving the wall at the commencement of the Backstroke section
- The normal Rules of Backstroke apply throughout the Backstroke section
- The Backstroke section must finish as per the Backstroke Rules i.e., the swimmer must be on the back when touching the wall at the end of the backstroke section. It is not permissible for the swimmer to be submerged at the finish of the backstroke section
- During the change from backstroke to breaststroke, the swimmer must touch the wall while still on the back before the shoulder has rotated beyond the vertical
- The swimmer must be on the breast upon leaving the wall at the commencement of the Breaststroke section
- The normal Rules of Breaststroke apply throughout the Breaststroke section including the first stroke at the commencement of the breaststroke section i.e., 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 Breaststroke section must finish as per the Breaststroke Rules i.e., the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above or below the water level
- Note that for the Freestyle section of the race, freestyle means any style other than backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly ([SW5](#))

Leaving the wall on the back in the freestyle section is permissible but the swimmer must have returned to the position on the breast before any kick or arm stroke is commenced. At this point, kicking, including butterfly kicking may commence ([SW9.2](#)).

Note that if a swimmer commences to swim the incorrect stroke of any section, they cannot negate disqualification by stopping, returning to the end of the pool and then recommencing the race in the correct style.

## 5.6 Relay Events

Swimmers who have finished their section are required to leave the pool as soon as possible without obstructing any other swimmer who has not yet finished his race. Note that there is a higher chance of interference occurring when swimmers are leaving the pool after the completion of their respective section of a relay.

At the completion of a race, some swimmers may become over-exuberant and can re-enter the water before all swimmers of other teams have finished the race. Note that any relay team shall be disqualified from a race if a team member, other than the swimmer designated to swim that length, enters the water when the race is being conducted before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race ([SW10](#)).

## 6. Summary

- Know the current [Rules of Swimming](#)
- Know where to position yourself to best perform your role
- Familiarise yourself with the location and any equipment with which you will be working
- Familiarise yourself with the people with whom you will be working. Teamwork is essential
- Be consistent, not only in applying the Rules, but also in the way you act and in how you position yourself
- The benefit of any doubt must go with the swimmer.

## Appendix 1: Rule Infraction Card

[Rule Infraction Card](#)