

Interpretations Made by the Rules & Regulations Committee (revised August 2015)

The USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee, or its designee, has the sole authority to interpret Part One of the Rulebook and has the authority to interpret the remainder of the Rules and Regulations. Following is a summary of interpretations that have been issued.

Interpretations of Article 101.2 (Breaststroke)

June 3, 1995: Clarified that, in conformance with FINA's intent, the requirement for the elbows to remain under water on the breaststroke applies only to the recovery (forward) portion of the arm stroke, not to the backwards pull.

June 1, 1997: Agreed that the breaststroke must start with an arm pull to comply with the cycle of "one arm stroke and one leg kick, in that order" as stated in the rule. A swimmer starting with a leg kick first would be disqualified.

May 30, 1998: Reiterated that, under the March 6, 1998 rule changes by FINA, the arms must be in the same horizontal plane during the first pull at the start and after each turn.

June 5, 1999: Adopted the following parameters regarding touching the bottom during a turn:

- Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. Therefore, standing on the bottom after a legal touch has been made and prior to pushing off the wall should be considered part of the turn and no disqualification should be called.

February 22, 2006 (relating to the 2005 FINA rule change):

1. A swimmer who chooses to take a butterfly kick after the start or any turn, as provided in Article 101.2.3, does **not** need to be wholly submerged.
2. The breaststroke kick has three basic requirements: all movements of the legs shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement; the feet must be turned outward during the propulsive part of the kick; and, a scissors, alternating or "downward" butterfly kick is not permitted except as provided in the first paragraph of Article 101.2.3. Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed at any time as long as it is not followed by a "downward" butterfly kick (except as provided in the first paragraph of Article 101.2.3). There is no prohibition against an upward butterfly-type kicking action or motion at any time and this should not be cause for a disqualification.

January 15, 2014 (relating to the 2013 FINA rule change)

The official breaststroke and butterfly separated hands interpretation means that the hands cannot be stacked one on top of the other. It is not necessary to see space between the hands. Incidental contact at the fingers is not a concern.

Interpretations of Article 101.3 (Butterfly)

June 5, 1999: Adopted the following parameters regarding touching the bottom during a turn:

- Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. Therefore, standing on the bottom after a legal touch has been made and prior to pushing off the wall should be considered part of the turn and no disqualification should be called.

Interpretations of Article 101.3 (Butterfly) cont.

June 7, 2010: Reiterated the interpretation of the application of the rule requiring the arms to recover over the water:

- Article 101.3.2 requires that, in the butterfly stroke, "both arms" must be brought forward "over the water" and pulled back simultaneously. For purposes of Article 101.3.2, as it relates to the recovery of the arms in the butterfly stroke, it is the interpretation of the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee that the "arm" is that portion of the body which extends from the shoulder to the wrist. It is also the interpretation of the Committee that "over the water" means that the arm, as defined above, must break the surface of the water during the recovery phase of each stroke.

January 15, 2014 (relating to the 2013 FINA rule change)

The official breaststroke and butterfly separated hands interpretation means that the hands cannot be stacked one on top of the other. It is not necessary to see space between the hands. Incidental contact at the fingers is not a concern.

Interpretations of Article 101.4 (Backstroke)

June 1, 1997: Adopted the following parameters regarding disqualifications for being completely submerged prior to the touch at the finish:

- The turn judge should, when possible, be given jurisdiction and should watch the swimmer approaching the wall. If the swimmer completely submerges prior to the turn judge having to shift his attention to the touch at the wall, this would be a disqualification. Once the turn judge must watch for the touch, this disqualification would be too close to call.

June 5, 1999: Adopted the following parameters regarding touching the bottom during a turn:

- Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. Therefore, standing on the bottom after a legal touch has been made and prior to pushing off the wall should be considered part of the turn and no disqualification should be called.

September 21, 2005 (relating to 2005 FINA rule change): The official interpretation for the change to the backstroke (101.4.1) is that the toes are no longer required to be under the surface of the water at the start. However, the toes are still not allowed to be above the lip of the gutter or curled over the lip of the gutter. The change was actually made so that when full face pads are used (pads that extend above the gutter) there is no requirement to have the toes under the water. From a practical standpoint there is no change when using touch pads that actually hang on the pool gutter

Interpretations of Article 101.5 (Freestyle)

June 5, 1999: Adopted the following parameters regarding touching the bottom during a turn:

- Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. Therefore, standing on the bottom after a legal touch has been made and prior to pushing off the wall should be considered part of the turn and no disqualification should be called.

Interpretations of Article 101.6 (Individual Medley) and 101.7.2 (Medley Relay)

June 1, 1997: Adopted the following FINA Technical Committee interpretation regarding the freestyle leg of these events:

- When a swimmer has traveled a sufficient distance that the official can with certainty judge that the competitor is swimming in the style of butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke, then a disqualification is appropriate.

Interpretation of Article 203.3 (Closed Competition and the 120-day Rule)

June 24, 2008: For the purposes of club representation under Article 203.3, closed competition shall mean competition exclusively among members of a single club (i.e. inter-squad meets), or among two or more USA Swimming member clubs within an organization or group formed for the specific purpose of such competition or series of competitions that are open only to members of that group or organization. Examples of this would include YMCA clubs and leagues consisting of a limited number of USA Swimming clubs within an LSC. It does not include groups or organizations such as an LSC, Zone, Region, or Section within USA Swimming.

Interpretation of Article 205.3.1F (Four Hour Rule)

September 14, 2013: Rule 205.3.1F, commonly referred to as the four hour rule, was adopted by the USA Swimming House of Delegates in 1989 to ensure that swimming would be competitive with other youth sports, namely baseball and soccer, insofar as time commitment for both athletes and parents was concerned. Clearly, it was not in the best interest of our sport for developmental athletes to be at a pool all day or for the entire weekend to the exclusion of other family interests, particularly when other athletic activities could be completed in a far more reasonable time. With that by way of background, the follow interpretations are issued:

Meets must be planned such that events for 12&Unders can reasonably be concluded within four (4) hours. Sessions that exceed four hours are not in violation of the rule if properly planned.

The rule does NOT apply to Open events even if swimmers 12 years of age or younger are entered.

Measurement of the time duration applicable to this rule begins with the published meet start time of a session that offers 12U events and ends with the conclusion of the last 12U event of the day for the same gender.

Under NO circumstances may a meet or meet session be terminated before all individual events have been concluded as a means of complying with the rule. Relays may be eliminated only if the meet announcement clearly states the conditions under which relays will be eliminated and whether relay entry fees will be refunded.

Events that are scored multi-age are impacted by the rule if the multi-age scoring involves 12U designations, such as 11-12, 10U, 12U, etc.

Some suggested planning tools that facilitate compliance include:

- Using meet management software to monitor the timelines as entries are processed.
- Selection of a heat interval appropriate for the session.
- Being aware of the number of swimmers appropriate for the number of lanes available and distances offered.
- Adequate meet staffing such that marshals, timers and other meet personnel are properly trained and in place.
- Keeping equipment (computers, timing systems, printers, etc.) in proper working order.

Interpretation of Article 305.5.1 (Coach Member's Travel Sleeping Arrangements)

In order to clarify the intent of Article 305.5.1, the Board of Directors of USA Swimming, at its meeting on November 21, 2010, made the following interpretation.

For the purposes of Article 305.5.1, where an adult is registered both as a coach and an athlete member of USA Swimming, and is functioning primarily as a coach, he/she may share sleeping arrangements with another registered coach.
