

2026

GKAISA TECHNICAL RULES

SECTION 101 INDIVIDUAL STROKES AND RELAYS

101.2 BREASTSTROKE

- .1 **Start** - The forward start shall be used.
- .2 **Stroke** - After the start and after each turn when the swimmer leaves the wall, the body shall be kept 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. 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 without alternating movement.

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 last stroke at the finish. The hands shall be brought back on or under the surface of the water. The hands shall not be brought beyond the hip line, except during the first stroke after the start and each turn.

During each complete cycle, some part of the swimmer's head shall break the surface of the water. After the start and after each turn, the swimmer may take one arm stroke completely back to the legs. The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.

- .3 **Kick** - After the start and each turn, at any time prior to the first breaststroke kick, a single butterfly kick is permitted. Following which, all movements of the legs shall be simultaneous without alternating movement.

The feet must be turned outward during the propulsive part of the kick. Scissors, alternating movements or downward butterfly kicks are not permitted except as provided herein. Breaking the surface of the water with the feet is allowed unless followed by a downward butterfly kick.

- .4 **Turns and Finish** - 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. At the last stroke before the turn and at the finish an arm stroke not followed by a leg kick is permitted. 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.

101.3. BUTTERFLY

- .1 **Start** - The forward start shall be used.
- .2 **Stroke** - After the start and after each turn, the swimmer's shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast. The swimmer is permitted one or more leg kicks, but only one arm pull under water, which must bring the swimmer to the surface. It shall be permissible for a swimmer to be completely submerged for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and after 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. From the beginning of the first arm pull, the body shall be kept on the breast 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. Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and pulled back simultaneously under the water throughout the race.

101.3 - Butterfly (cont'd)

- .3 **Kick** - All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous. The position of the legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other. A scissors or breaststroke kicking movement is not permitted.
- .4 **Turns** - At each turn the body shall be on the breast. The touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface. Once a touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired. The shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall.
- .5 **Finish** - At the finish, the body shall be on the breast and the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface.

101.4. BACKSTROKE

1. **Start** - The swimmers shall line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands placed on the gutter or on the starting grips. Standing in or on the gutter, placing the toes above the lip of the gutter, or bending the toes over the lip of the gutter, before or after the start, is prohibited. ~~When using a backstroke ledge at the start, at least one toe of both feet must be in contact with the end wall or face of the touchpad.~~ Bending toes over the top of the touchpad is prohibited.
- .2 **Stroke** - The swimmer shall push off on his back and continue swimming on the back throughout the race. Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it shall be permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn, and for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and after each turn. By that point the head must have broken the surface of the water. Additionally, once some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the 5 meter mark (long course and short course meters) or 5 yard mark (short course yards) immediately prior to reaching the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged prior to the touch.
- .3 **Turns** - Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. During the turn, the shoulders may be turned past the vertical toward the breast after which an immediate continuous single arm pull or immediate continuous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. The swimmer must have returned to a position on the back upon leaving the wall.
- .4 **Finish** - Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back

101.5. FREESTYLE

- .1 **Start** - The forward start shall be used.
- .2 **Stroke** - In an event designated freestyle, the swimmer may swim any style, except that in a medley relay or an individual medley event, freestyle means any style other than butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke. Some part of swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it shall be permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn and for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface.
- .3 **Turns** - Upon completion of each length, the swimmer must touch the wall.
- .4 **Finish** - The swimmer shall have finished the race when any part of his person touches the wall after completing the prescribed distance.

101.6. INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY - The swimmer shall swim the prescribed distance in the following order: the first one-fourth, **butterfly**; the second one-fourth, **backstroke**; the third one-fourth, **breaststroke**; and the last one-fourth, **freestyle**.

.1 **Start** - The forward start shall be used.

.2 **Stroke** - The stroke for each one-fourth of the designated distance shall follow the prescribed rules for that stroke, except in freestyle, the swimmer must be on the breast except when executing a turn.

.3 **Turns**

A. Intermediate turns within each stroke shall conform to the turn rules for that stroke, except in the freestyle, the swimmer must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.

B. The turns when changing from one stroke to another shall conform to the finish rules for the stroke just completed, and shall be as follows:

(1) **Butterfly to Backstroke** - The swimmer must touch as described in 101.3.5. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner, but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the back when the swimmer leaves the wall.

(2) **Backstroke to Breaststroke** - The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall and the prescribed breaststroke form must be attained prior to the first arm stroke.

(3) **Breaststroke to Freestyle** - The swimmer must touch as described in 101.2.4. Once a legal touch has been made, the swimmer may turn in any manner and must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.

.4 **Finish** - The swimmer shall have finished the race when any part of his/her person touches the wall after the prescribed distance.

101.7. RELAYS

.1 **Freestyle Relay** - Four swimmers on each team, each to swim one-fourth of the prescribed distance using any desired stroke(s). Freestyle finish rules apply.

.2 **Medley Relay** - Four swimmers on each team, each to swim one-fourth of the prescribed distance in the following order: first, **backstroke**; second, **breaststroke**; third, **butterfly**; and fourth, **freestyle**. Rules pertaining to each stroke used as described in 101.6 (Individual Medley) shall govern where applicable. At the end of each leg, the finish rule for each stroke applies in each case.

.3 **Mixed Gender Relays** – must consist of two (2) males and two (2) females.

.4 **Rules Pertaining to Relay Races**

A No swimmer shall swim more than one leg in any relay event.

B When automatic relay take-off judging is used, each swimmer must touch the touch-plate or pad in his/her lane at the end of the course to have finished his/her leg of the relay race.

C In relay races, a swimmer other than the first swimmer shall not start until his/her teammate has concluded his/her leg.

D Any relay team member and his/her relay team shall be disqualified from a race if a team member other than the swimmer designated to swim that leg enters the pool in the area where the race is being conducted before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race. Exception: When an in-the-water start is required or such start is approved by the Referee.

E Each relay team member shall leave the water immediately upon finishing his/her leg, except the last member.

F In relay races 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.

G In relay races involving in-the-water starts, the team of a swimmer who has lost touch with the end of the course before his/her preceding teammate touches the wall shall be disqualified, unless the swimmer in default returns to the original starting point at the wall.

H On relay, the second, third and fourth swimmers are prohibited from starting from the top of the adjustable back plate. A swimmer must have at least part of one foot in contact with the starting platform in front of the adjustable back plate during a relay exchange.

SECTION 102 (partial)

CONDUCT AND OFFICIATING OF ALL SWIMMING COMPETITION

102.21 DISQUALIFICATIONS

- .1 A disqualification can be made only by the official within whose jurisdiction the infraction has been committed. Except for the Relay take-off judges when dual confirmation relay take-off judging, as provided in 102.13.6B, is used, the Referee, Stroke, Turn, or Relay take-off judge upon observing an infraction, shall immediately raise one hand overhead. If the official does not do so, there shall be no disqualification.
- .2 The Referee or designated official making a disqualification shall make every reasonable effort to seek out the swimmer or his/her coach and inform him/her as to the reason for the disqualification. Failure to notify does not negate the disqualification.
- .3 For swimwear disqualifications, refer to 102.8.
- .4 Any swimmer who acts in an unsportsmanlike or unsafe manner within the swimming venue may be considered for appropriate action or penalty by the **Referee**.
- .5 A swimmer must start and finish the race in the same lane.
- .6 Standing on the bottom during a freestyle race shall not disqualify a swimmer, but a swimmer must not leave the pool, or walk, or spring from the bottom. Standing on the bottom during any other stroke shall result in disqualification.
- .7 Obstructing or otherwise interfering with another swimmer shall disqualify the offender, subject to the discretion of the **Referee**.
- .8 Any swimmer not entered in a race who enters the pool or course in the area in which said race is being conducted before all swimmers therein have completed the race shall be barred from the next individual event in which that swimmer is entered on that day or the next meet day, whichever is first.
- .9 Dipping goggles in the water or splashing water on the competitor's face or body prior to an event shall not be considered as entering the pool unless the **Referee** finds that such action is interfering with the competition.
- .10 Should a foul endanger the chance of success of a swimmer(s), the **Referee** may allow the affected swimmer(s) to re-swim the event. In case of collusion to foul another swimmer, the **Referee** may, at his/her discretion, disqualify the swimmer for whose aid the foul was committed, as well as the swimmer committing the foul.
- .11 Grasping lane dividers to assist forward motion is not permitted.
- .12 For relay disqualifications, refer to 101.7.4.
- .13 The time and/or place of any swimmer or relay team disqualified either during or following an event shall not be recorded in the results of the event. If awards have been made prior to the decision to disqualify, they shall be returned and made to the proper recipient(s), and if points have been scored by those disqualified, the event shall be rescored.
- .14 Time and/or place officially recorded for a swimmer shall not be nullified for violations occurring subsequent to such performance.

GKAISA General Rules Section 8 – Scoring and Awards

8. SCORING and AWARDS

8.1 In Individual Events, only two swimmers per team may score, but all may compete for points unless designated as EXHIBITION.

8.2 In Relay Events, only one relay per team per event may score, but all may compete for points unless designated as EXHIBITION.

8.3 In all Dual or Tri meets, the first heat of each event shall be the only one scored, and each team shall have an equal number of lanes in that heat. Additional lanes shall be left empty in the first heat or shall be designated as EXHIBITION. In the case where a team is not able to fill their assigned lanes in the first heat, those lanes shall be left empty and may not be filled by swimmers from other teams unless designated as EXHIBITION and agreed upon by all coaches. All additional heats in an event, after the first, are considered to be EXHIBITION without the requirement that it be explicitly stated.

8.4 In the case of a pool having more than 6 lanes, the additional lanes shall be designated as EXHIBITION in the first heat or all lanes may be eligible to score if agreed upon by all coaches.

8.5 Scoring point values:

Scoring point values awarded for GKAISA Dual meets shall be:

Individual events: 5-3-2-1 Relays: 7-3

Scoring point values awarded for GKAISA Triangular meets shall be:

Individual events: 6-4-3-2-1-0 Relays: 8-4-0

8.6 Place ribbons are to be provided equal to the number of lanes used for the meet, i.e., 6 lanes equals 6 place ribbons. Ribbons are to be awarded on basis of actual finish in each heat, not by points scored by the swimmers. Teams are encouraged to provide participation ribbons to swimmers who may have been disqualified in an event.

SECTION 901

GKAISA STARTING RULES

901.1 THE START

- .1 The Starter shall stand within ten feet of the starting end of the pool and upon signal from the Referee, shall assume control of the swimmers until a fair start has been achieved. Once a fair start has been achieved, the Starter no longer has any responsibility or authority over the swimmers in that heat.
- .2 The Starter, upon receiving clearance from the Referee (for all events except Backstroke and Medley Relay) directs swimmers to step onto the starting block or platform and remain there. In the case of Backstroke and Medley Relay, the Starter will direct the swimmers to step into the water, after which they should immediately return to the starting end of the pool.
- .3 After the Referee's whistle, the Starter instructs the swimmers and directs them to "take your marks," to which they must immediately respond by assuming a starting position with at least one foot at the front of the starting block or platform. Swimmers starting in the water must have at least one hand in contact with the wall or starting platform, or in the case of a Backstroke or Medley Relay start, they must adhere to the form specified in section 101.4.1. Sufficient time should follow "take your marks" to enable swimmers to assume starting positions, but no swimmer shall be in motion immediately before the starting signal is given. When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.
- .4 When a swimmer does not respond promptly to the command "take your marks", the Starter shall immediately release all swimmers with the command "Stand Up" upon which the swimmers may stand up or step off the blocks.
- .5 A swimmer shall not be disqualified for an illegal starting position at the start if the race is permitted to proceed. Enforcement of the correct starting position is the responsibility of the Starter.

901.2 FALSE STARTS

- .1 Any swimmer initiating a start before the signal may be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation that a violation occurred. Swimmers remaining on the starting blocks shall be relieved from their starting positions with the "stand up" command and may step off the blocks.
- .2 If the starting signal has been given before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue without recall. If the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation that a violation occurred, the swimmer or swimmers who have false started shall be disqualified upon completion of the race..
- .3 If the recall signal is activated, no swimmer shall be charged with a false start and the Starter shall restart the race upon signal by the Referee.
- .4 A swimmer who would otherwise be charged with a false start may be relieved of the charge if the false start was caused by the swimmer's reaction to the "Stand Up" command.
- .5 If 'Dual Confirmation' is being used, a swimmer can be charged with a false start by the Starter only if the Referee has observed the violation and confirms that the violation occurred.
- .6 The Starter shall indicate the swimmer or swimmers, if any, who are charged with a false start.
- .7 Enforcement of the correct starting position is the responsibility of the Starter, who may impose the appropriate penalty for violation before the starting signal is given.

901.3 DELIBERATE DELAY OR MISCONDUCT

- .1 Any swimmer, who delays the start by entering the water or by willfully or deliberately disobeying a Starter's command to step on the blocks or to take a starting position, or for any other misconduct taking place at the start, can be disqualified from the event by the Starter with concurrence of the Referee.
- .2 A swimmer who fails to appear at the starting platform ready to swim in time for the initial start of his/her heat shall be disqualified by the Referee.

SECTION 902 GKAISA STARTING SCRIPTS

902.1 FORWARD START SCRIPT

- Referee blows a series of short whistles, <alerts swimmers to prepare for their heat>

(If this is the first heat of a new event, first announce event, else go directly to 'Heat x, Step Up')
“Event 51, Girls 8 and Under, 25 Yard Butterfly” then,

“Heat 1, Step Up”
- Referee Blows One long whistle, after which they signal to the starter that the course is clear to proceed

“25 Yard Butterfly” <this serves to focus swimmers on impending start>
- Pause, Breathe and let field settle down

“Take Your Marks”
- Pause for swimmers to become stationary, then activate the Starting Signal

902.2 BACKSTROKE START SCRIPT

- Referee blows a series of short whistles, <alerts swimmers to prepare for their heat>

(If this is the first heat of a new event, first announce event, else go directly to 'Heat x, Step In')
“Event 38, Boys 13 & 14, 50 Yard Backstroke” then,

“Heat 1, Step In”
- Referee Blows One long whistle, after which they signal to the starter that the course is clear to proceed

“50 Yard Backstroke” <this serves to focus swimmers on impending start>

“Place Your Feet” <swimmers should then assume a 'relaxed' starting position>, thereafter
- Pause, Breathe and let field settle down

“Take Your Marks”
- Pause for swimmers to become stationary, then activate the Starting Signal

Remember:

- Say “Yard,” not “Yards” or “Meter,” not “Meters.” Avoid hissing “s” sounds as much as possible.
- Say “Butterfly,” not “Fly.” Say “Breaststroke,” not “Breast.” Say “Backstroke.” not “Back.” Say “Freestyle” not “Free.” Say “Individual Medley,” not “I.M.”
- Use hand signals for hearing-impaired swimmers, regardless of whether they are looking at you or not!
- If you use the “Stand up” command, do not repeat the stroke & distance before the next “Take Your Mark” command.
- If you use the “Relax, Please” or “Stand Down” command on the start of the backstroke, DO use the “Place Your Feet” command (but do not repeat the stroke & distance) before the next “Take Your Mark” command.
- Say “Thank You, Ladies (or Gentlemen)” to the swimmers to clear the pool.

STROKE AND TURN

Important Thoughts

As officials, our responsibility is to assist in the conduct of swim competitions so that fair and equitable conditions are maintained and uniformity in the sport is promoted, so that no swimmer has an unfair advantage over another.

1. **One set of rules apply to all swimmers**, no matter the age or ability level.
2. Violation of a stroke or turn rule results in the disqualification of the swimmer. Therefore, **the swimmer always receives the benefit of the doubt**.
3. **An official can only make a disqualification within his/her jurisdiction**. Before a meet, the Referee must be sure the stroke and turn judges understand their jurisdictions.
4. When overlapping jurisdiction has been assigned, both judges should not be watching the same swimmer for an entire swim or turn.
5. **As stroke and turn judges, we do not judge style**. We only determine if a swimmer conforms to the rules. A wide variety of stroke styles are allowed under the rules.
6. **Give equal time to empty lanes** (so that no swimmer is watched more than others).
7. **Always look and act professional**. While on deck, your job is to observe the swimmers in the pool. Do not engage in conversation with coaches or spectators while a race is ongoing.
8. Sample DQ procedure:
 - a. Upon observing an infraction within your jurisdiction, you must immediately raise one hand overhead. The hand should be raised as a reflex to the observed infraction, do not wait.
 - b. Complete designated DQ form as soon as possible after observing the infraction, entering all required data on the form and initial or sign form as directed by Referee.
 - c. Give the completed DQ form to the referee or other designated person.
 - d. Stay in your position. Wait until the final swimmer has left your jurisdiction on his or her last lap before moving from your assigned position.

Becoming a Skilled Starter

Your job as a starter is to give the athletes the best start they've ever had every time you say, "Take your marks"... and give the starting signal. This is one of the hardest jobs on the pool deck. You may be fighting heat/cold, noise, equipment that doesn't work properly, conflicts between egos or personalities, new swimmers, or cocky 16-year-olds. So the key is - be prepared.

Get to the meet early enough to check the equipment. Talk to the coaches and athletes (this clues you into any problems that may be simmering on the back burner). Smile and give everyone the feeling that you are a calm professional that will be fair and responsive to the athlete. Get with your referee and discuss how you are going to handle the big one - a situation where everything goes down the tubes - kids are fidgety, your concentration is broken, lightning threatens or you just had a terrible start. Use common sense; do not penalize the field because you had a bad start. A good starter does not stand out. The best compliment you can receive is for someone to ask you after the meet what you did.

Always maintain a calm demeanor. Never look or act as if you are nervous. It is contagious.

Be consistent. If you do not call a false start on a swimmer because he or she slipped on a block, you must have the same rules for all the heats. You can't call a false start on an older athlete "because they should have been able to catch themselves."

Know the rules: The current GKAIISA Starting Rules apply to all GKAIISA swim meets, dual, tri, and championship. Do not start a meet until you review the rules that apply.

Never hesitate to stand a heat up if you see a problem, e.g. broken goggles, torn bathing suit. etc. Saving a swimmer from a disqualification is a heroic thing to do.

Time lines are there for a reason, but never hurry the swimmers for the sake of staying on the time line. You can usually make up the time later. Don't let a time line make you a bad starter.

Keep your concentration. Be sure you watch the start; you would be surprised how many starters turn away to hang up the mike immediately after they push the button. Watch the swimmers at least until their heads break the surface. You may see a problem right after the start that you can nip in the bud.

Work with your referee, especially when few or no officials show up. Call his or her attention to empty lanes. Offer to help in any way you can.

We all have bad days. If you're not at your best, take a break. If there is no other starter to take over, then step back, take a deep breath, and try again. A positive attitude will help.

Be familiar with the equipment you will be using. Make sure the cords are long enough. Check buttons, whistles, bells, hand mikes, or starting systems. Know how all equipment operates.

The first meet of the season may be difficult. Have patience with new deck and administrative officials and the athletes themselves. Take it easy, be calm, and use common sense. Don't rush; mistakes will be made. Smile and keep going. Make sure the rookies have a positive experience. We want them to be participating 10 years from now. The same goes for the veteran. Treat everyone with courtesy.

