

2026 JSSL Stroke and Turn Clinic



Laurelwood

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Creation Credit: James Oberhauser, Brookside Club

Revised: February 2025*

Stylistic Edits: May 2026

**Any changes to this presentation must be approved each year by the JSSL Board at the April Board meeting, see JSSL Bylaws,(E)8*



Agenda

- Stroke & Turn Philosophy
- Review of Strokes
 - Butterfly
 - Backstroke
 - Breaststroke
 - Freestyle
- Relays
6 & Under Rules
- Swim Meet Logistics
 - Meet organization
 - Positioning of S&T officials
 - Disqualifications

Stroke & Turn Philosophy

As Stroke & Turn judges, our purpose is to:

- Help swimmers learn to swim a legal race
- Keep the meet fair for all swimmers
- Emphasize learning, fun, and sportsmanship

Remember one overarching principle...

...the swimmer always gets the benefit of the doubt

Review of Strokes

Five Components of a Stroke

Each stroke has rules governing the five components of a stroke:

- Start
- Stroke
- Kick
- Turns
- Finish

We will review the five components for each stroke

The Junipero Serra Swim League (JSSL) adheres to USA Swimming rules with a few exceptions (noted throughout)

Review of Strokes

Butterfly

Start

- The forward start shall be used

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 the water, which must bring the swimmer to the surface
- The swimmer cannot be submerged for a distance greater 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
- Both arms must be brought forward simultaneously over the water and pulled back simultaneously under the water throughout the race

Review of Strokes

Butterfly

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

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

Review of Strokes

Butterfly

Finish

- At the finish, 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



[Butterfly Video](#) (5:46)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ajQQQnSKQ0>

Review of Strokes

Backstroke

Start

- 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

Review of Strokes

Backstroke

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 is 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. 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.

Review of Strokes

Backstroke

Kick

- N/A

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 simultaneous 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

Review of Strokes

Backstroke

JSSL Deviations

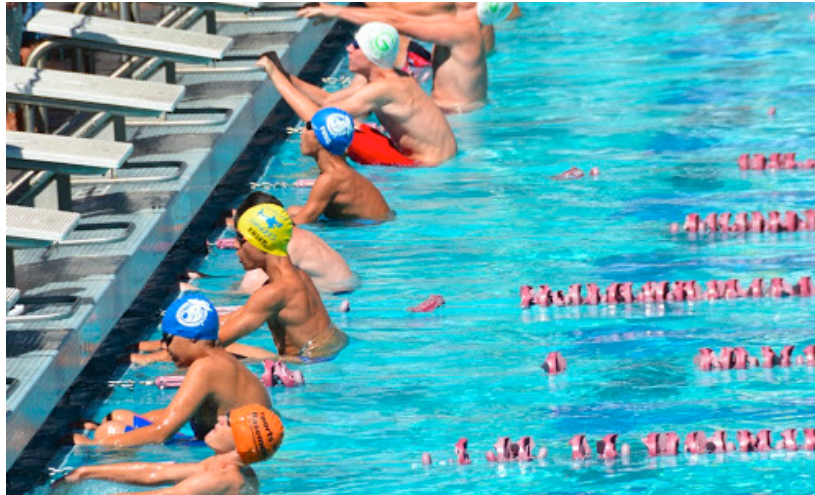
- Once a swimmer has left the position on the back, if the single arm or continuous simultaneous double arm pull has been completed but the backstroke flip turn not executed, **kicking into the wall will be allowed in order for the swimmer to complete the backstroke flip turn**
- **In the backstroke, if the swimmer does not touch the wall on a turn, JSSL allows swimmers to scull back to the wall for the touch without disqualification.**
[Deviation approved by the JSSL Board on March 10, 2020]
- **Backstroke ledges at all JSSL sanctioned meets are disallowed.**
[Deviation approved by the JSSL Board on March 10, 2020]

Review of Strokes

Backstroke

Finish

- Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back



[Backstroke Video](#) (6:34)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5ljKFBIY18>

Review of Strokes

Backstroke

JSSL Deviation

- JSSL allows “head cushioning” for the 6 & Under and 7-8 age groups
 - One timer should place the palm of his/her hand flat against the end wall of the pool in the location where the swimmer’s head may impact
 - The associated timer should not turn his/her palm towards the swimmer’s head or reach out to the swimmer, as it may mislead the swimmer and cause him/her to turn onto the breast prior to touching the wall and finishing the event

Review of Strokes

Breaststroke

Start

- The forward start shall be used

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 ~~and in the same horizontal plane~~ without alternating movement

Review of Strokes

Breaststroke

Stroke

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

Review of Strokes

Breaststroke

Kick

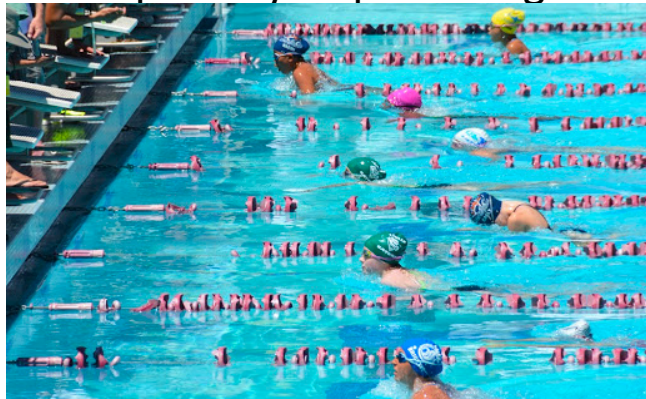
- After the start and each turn, a single butterfly kick, which must be followed by a breaststroke kick, is permitted during or at the completion of the first arm pull. Following which, all movements of the legs shall be simultaneous ~~and in the same horizontal plane~~ without alternating movement
- The feet must be turned outwards 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

Review of Strokes

Breaststroke

Turns & 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



[Breaststroke Video](#) (9:56)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZXUEfP-Agc>

Review of Strokes

Freestyle

Start

- The forward start shall be used

Stroke

- In an individual event designated freestyle, the swimmer may swim any style.
- 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 each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface

Review of Strokes

Freestyle

Kick

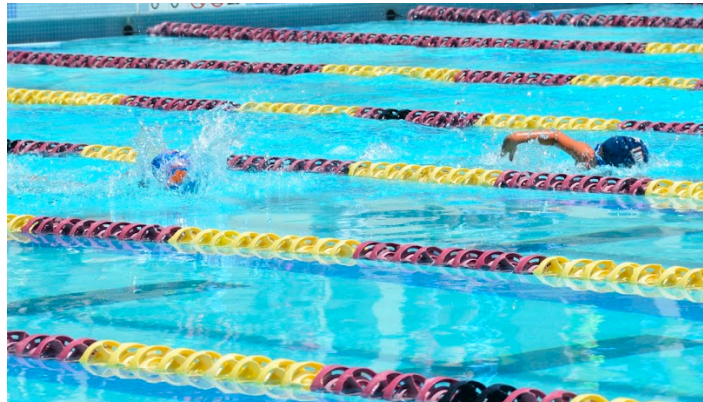
- N/A

Turns

- Upon completion of each length, the swimmer must touch the wall

Finish

- The swimmer shall have finished the race when any part of his person touches the wall after completing the prescribed distance



[Freestyle Video](#) (2:26)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baQJzcnG3oQ>

Review of Strokes

Freestyle

JSSL Clarification

- In the freestyle event, if the swimmer does not touch the wall on a turn, JSSL allows swimmers to scull back to the wall for the touch without disqualification. This is allowed in USA Swimming Rules.

[Language approved by the JSSL Board on March 10, 2020]

Relays

Medley Relay

General

- Four swimmers on each team, each to swim one-fourth of the prescribed distance in the following order: (1) backstroke, (2) breaststroke, (3) butterfly, and (4) freestyle
- Rules pertaining to each stroke used shall govern where applicable
- At the end of each leg, the finish rule for each stroke applies in each case

Relays

Medley Relay

Rules

- No swimmer shall swim more than one leg in any relay event
- A swimmer other than the first swimmer shall not start until his/her teammate has concluded his/her leg
- 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.
- Each relay team member shall leave the water immediately upon finishing his/her leg, except the last member
- 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.
- On relays, 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.

Relays

Medley Relay

JSSL Deviations

- For 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**

[Deviation approved by the JSSL Board on July 9, 2013]

- **The last 1/4 of the Medley relay may be swum in any style.**

[Deviation approved by the JSSL Board on March 10, 2020]

Reasoning: This rule relaxes the “Lochte Turn” rule restriction of the freestyle leg of the medley relay. Without this deviation, if a swimmer pushes off on their back in the freestyle portion of the medley relay (and per guidance, takes a propulsive kick), the relay would be disqualified for swimming > 1/4 of the race in any one particular stroke (in this case, backstroke).

In addition to being difficult to judge, swimmers that are starting in the water and “looking up” at their coach helpers are inclined to naturally push off on their back.

Relays

Officiating False Starts

Off the Blocks

- Watch the toes of the swimmer leaving the blocks, then look down at the incoming swimmer to confirm the touch
- Benefit of the doubt to the swimmer!

In the Water

- Watch the feet of the outgoing swimmer leaving the wall, then look at the incoming swimmer to confirm the touch
- Benefit of the doubt to the swimmer!

For safety, each lane should have no more than one swimmer swimming and one swimmer waiting in the water to start from the shallow end. However, there is no DQ related to “early” in the water entry of swimmer 2 or swimmer 4 for any age group.

Review of Strokes

Officiating Relays



[Relay Video](#) (2:01)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BV2dAE0VXTE>

Review of Strokes

Additional JSSL Deviations and Clarifications

JSSL Deviation

- Two false starts (not one) are cause for a disqualification
- The swimmer must not pull on the side of the pool or the lane lines to propel themselves forward
- The swimmer finishes an event when any part of the swimmer touches the wall, not crossing the plane of the wall
- The swimmer must not push off the side or bottom of the pool, except for in-the-water relay starts as discussed herein. Touching the bottom of the pool is **not** cause for disqualification unless competitive advantage is gained by pushing off
- The swimmer must not interfere with another swimmer during an event. A swimmer may cross under a lane line with part or all of the body as long as he/she does not interfere with another swimmer or propel himself/herself forward using the lane line

Review of Strokes

JSSL Deviations for 6 & Under Age Group

JSSL Deviation

- A 6 & Under age group swimmer may be disqualified if the rule infraction gives him/her a clear and distinct competitive advantage over the other swimmers in the event
- As long as the 6U swimmer is making an attempt to swim the stroke correctly (i.e., their swim is “in the spirit of the stroke”, as demonstrated by their, at least occasionally, engaging in the stroke that complies with the rules), they should not be disqualified
- The intent of this rule is to allow the youngest age group swimmers to enjoy the competitive swimming experience as they develop their stroke skills, but not place those who have already mastered those skills at a competitive disadvantage

Review of Strokes

JSSL Deviations for 6 & Under Age Group

JSSL Deviation

- Examples of 6 & Under violations for which disqualifications should not be made include:
 - One hand or non-simultaneous touch at the finish of butterfly and breaststroke events
 - Non-simultaneous arms or underwater recovery arms in butterfly
 - Alternating, breaststroke or scissor kick in butterfly as long as it is not continuous
 - Toes over the lip of the gutter in a backstroke start
 - Failure to be on the back at the start or finish of a backstroke event
 - Hands brought beyond the hipline during breaststroke
 - Scissor kick in breaststroke

Review of Strokes

JSSL Deviations for 6 & Under Age Group

JSSL Deviation

- Examples of valid 6 & Under disqualifications include:
 - Multiple repetitions of any component of a different stroke (except in freestyle) that makes the swimmer faster than he/she would be swimming the required stroke correctly
 - Example: Alternating kick in a breaststroke event
 - The bottom or side of the pool or a lane line is used to advance a swimmer's position more quickly than he/she would swimming the required stroke correctly
 - If an older swimmer or coach is in the water with the 6U swimmer
 - Early take-off during a relay exchange

Swim Meet Logistics

Meet Organization

Prior to Start

- Check-in with club volunteer coordinator
- Stroke & Turn officials meeting call 15 minutes prior to meet start to discuss how the meet will be officiated

Requirements

- 2 officials per team per half-meet (4 total per meet)
- First-half officials must return after 15-18 age group freestyle event to serve as relay start officials
- Each club governs when first-half and second-half official hand-off occurs
 - Most clubs switch after the 9-10 age group breaststroke event
 - Brookside switches after the 15-18 age group backstroke event

Swim Meet Logistics

Meet Organization

Jurisdiction

- 4 stroke & turn officials on duty at one time, 2 from each club

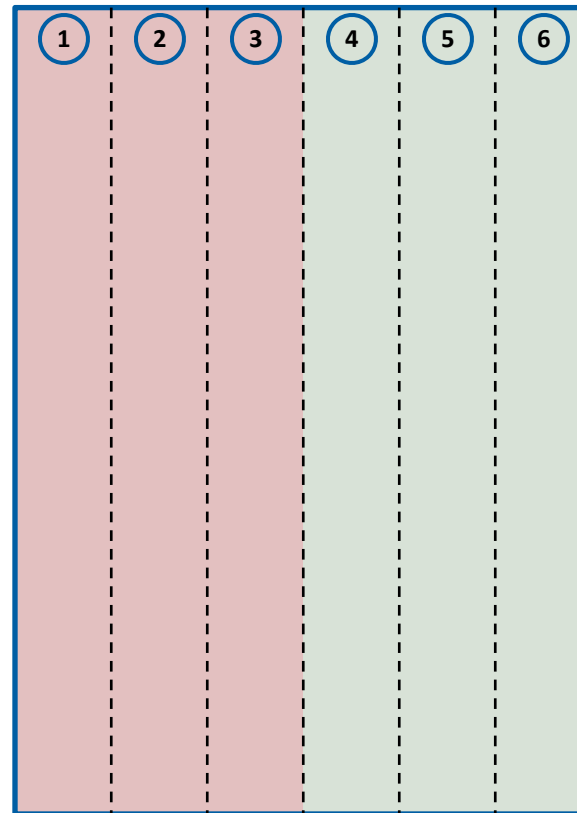
Standard Configuration 25 yard events

- 1 official from each club is paired at each side of the pool
- Each pair is responsible for the 3 lanes nearest them
- During a race, each pair traverses the side of the pool with the swimmers, scanning all 3 lanes equally

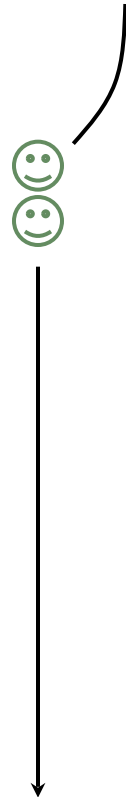
Different clubs



Starting Blocks



Different clubs



Swim Meet Logistics

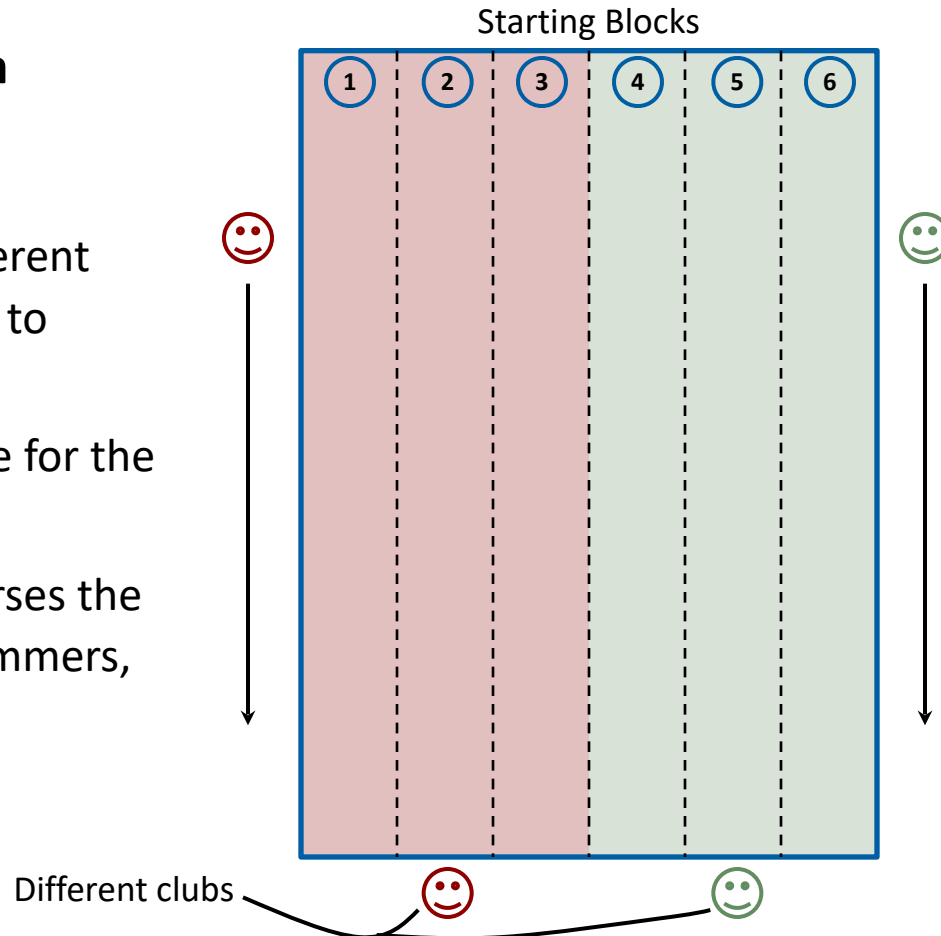
Meet Organization

Jurisdiction

- 4 stroke & turn officials on duty at one time, 2 from each club

Standard Configuration 50 yard events

- 1 official from each side (different clubs) moves to the pool end to officiate turns only
- Each pair remains responsible for the 3 lanes nearest them
- During a race, 1 official traverses the side of the pool with the swimmers, scanning all 3 lanes equally



Swim Meet Logistics

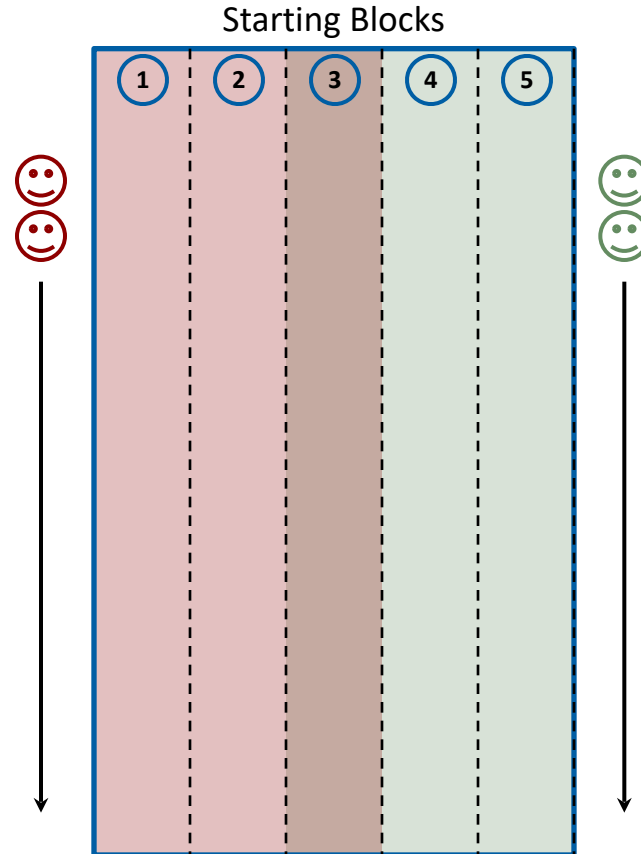
Meet Organization

Jurisdiction

- 4 stroke & turn officials on duty at one time, 2 from each club

Idiosyncratic Pools 25 yard events

- Some pools may only have 5 lanes to officiate
- Both pairs of officials should scan the three lanes nearest them
- However, only the pair assigned to lanes 1-3 should officiate lane 3



Swim Meet Logistics

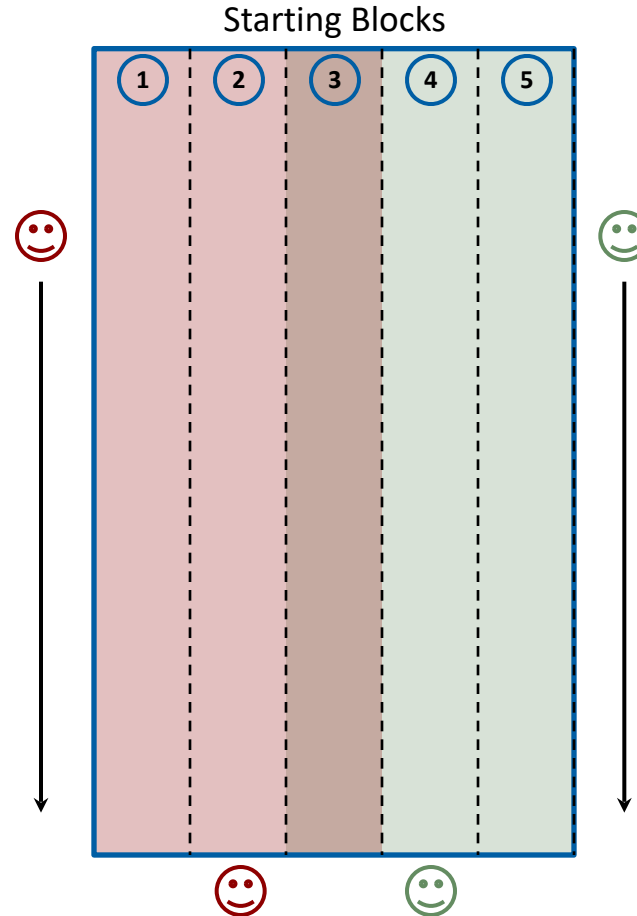
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Swim Meet Logistics

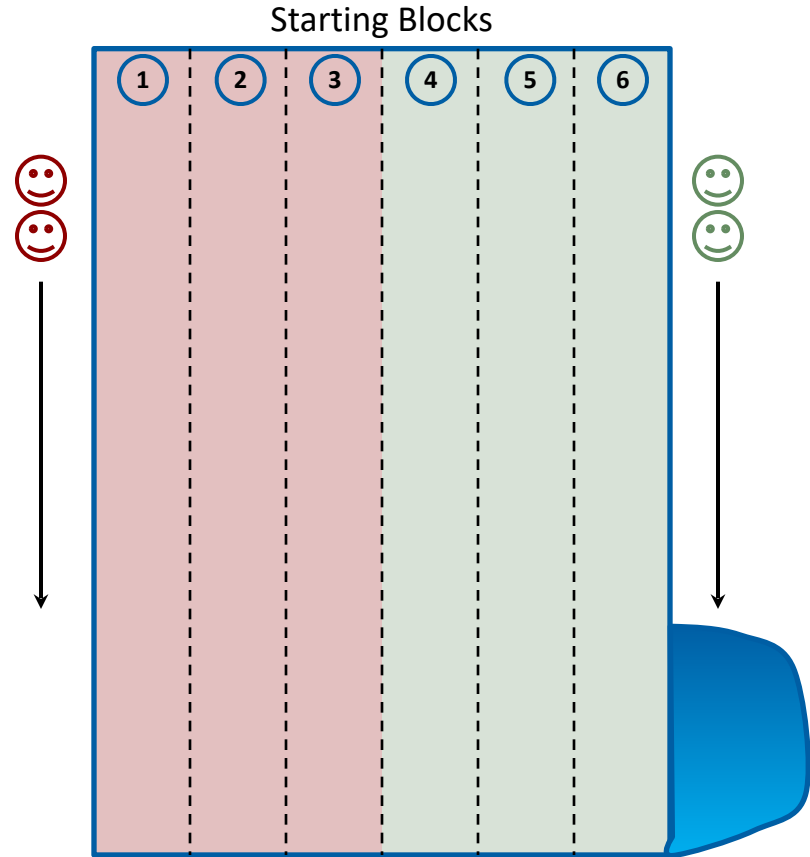
Meet Organization

Jurisdiction

- 4 stroke & turn officials on duty at one time, 2 from each club

Idiosyncratic Pools 25 yard events

- Some pools may have a cutout at one end that prevents full traversal of a side
- Pairs of officials on each side must travel the same limited path length



Swim Meet Logistics

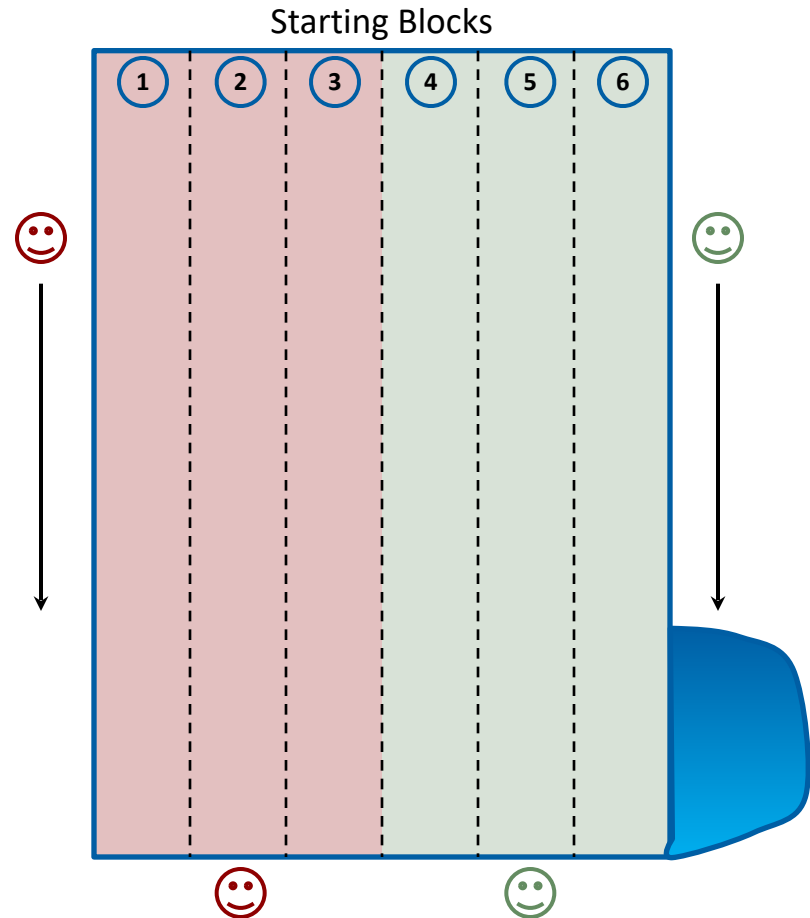
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Idiosyncratic Pools 50 yard events

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Swim Meet Logistics

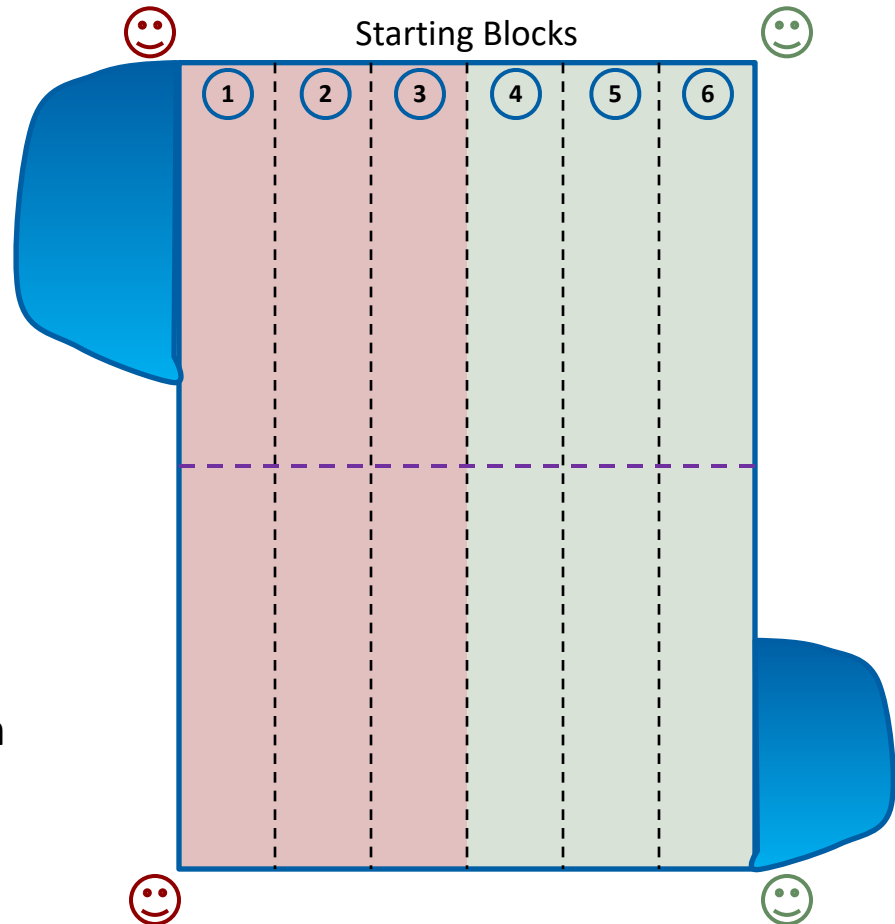
Meet Organization

Jurisdiction

- 4 stroke & turn officials on duty at one time, 2 from each club

Idiosyncratic Pools 25 yard events

- Some pools may have cutouts on both sides, making it impossible to officiate from the sides
- Officials are placed at pool corners (officials from the same club on the diagonal)
- Each official is responsible for three lanes on one-half of the pool length only



Swim Meet Logistics

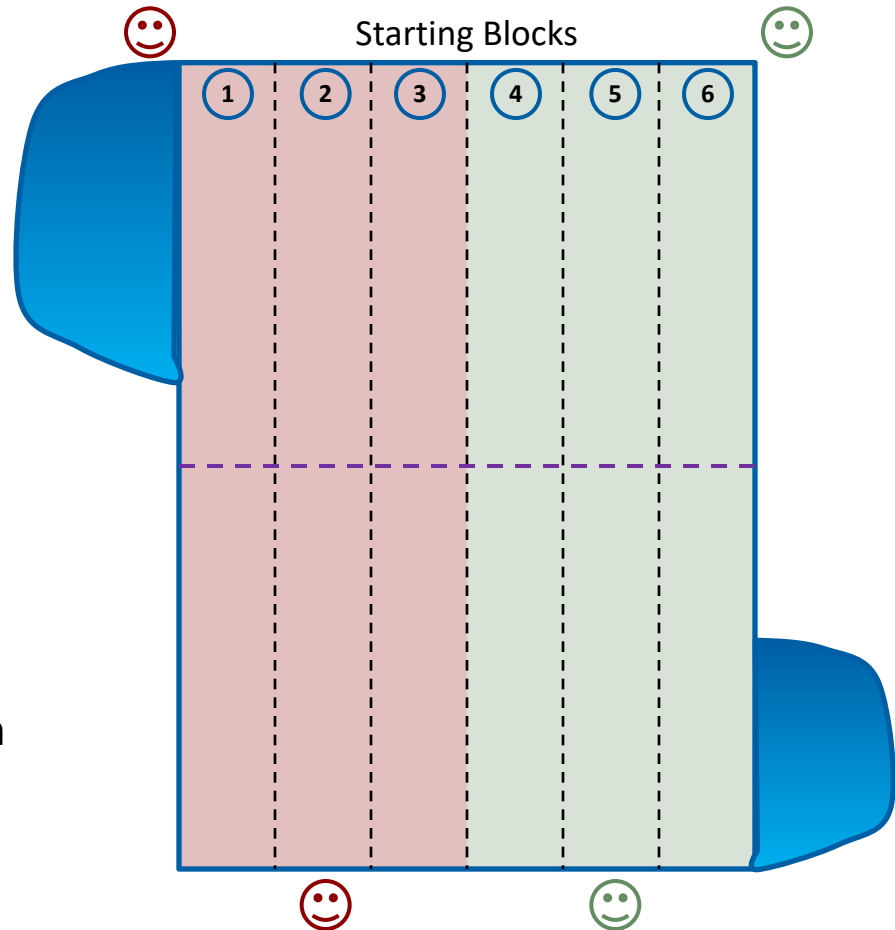
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- Officials are placed at pool corners (officials from the same club on the diagonal)
- Each official is responsible for three lanes on one-half of the pool length only



Swim Meet Logistics

Disqualifications

If an official believes he/she has witnessed an infraction, that official completes a disqualification slip that documents several key elements:

- Event #
- Heat #
- Lane #
- Boy | Girl
- Age Group
- The point during the race at which the infraction was witnessed (e.g., start, swim, turn, finish)
- The type of infraction
- The name of the official submitting the disqualification slip (clearly written!)

JSSL Disqualification Slip Lane _____

Boy Girl Event _____ Heat _____
 6/U 7-8 9-10 11-12 13-14 15-18

Butterfly Start Swim Turn Finish

Start: 1N Head did not break the surface by 15 meters
Arms: 1E Non-simultaneous 1F Underwater recovery
Kick: 1A Alternating 1B Breast 1C Scissors
Turn: 1M Not toward the breast off wall
Touch: 1J One hand touch 1K No touch
 1L Non-simultaneous touch
Other:

Backstroke Start Swim Turn Finish

Start: 2P Toes over lip of gutter after start
 2K Not on back off wall
 2N Head did not break the surface by 15 meters
Turn: 2L Shoulders past vertical toward breast
 More than one arm pull on breast into turn
Touch: 2I No touch (turn or finish)
Other:

Breaststroke Start Swim Turn Finish

Arms/Stroke: 3F Non-simultaneous arms
 3G Arms two strokes underwater
 3P Head under for 2 or more strokes
 3Q Incomplete; not one pull & one kick
 3E Hands brought beyond the hipline during stroke
 3I Elbows recovered over water
 3M Not toward the breast off wall
Kick: 3A Alternating kick 3B Non-simultaneous kick
 3C Downward butterfly kick 3D Scissors kick
Touch: 3J One hand touch 3K No touch
 3L Non-simultaneous touch
Other:

Freestyle Start Swim Turn Finish

Start: 4N Head did not break the surface by 15 meters
Touch: 4K No touch (turn or finish)
Other:

Relay

Stroke Infraction swimmer # ⁶¹ 1 ⁶² 2 ⁶³ 3 ⁶⁴ 4
Early take-off swimmer # ⁶⁶ 2 ⁶⁷ 3 ⁶⁸ 4

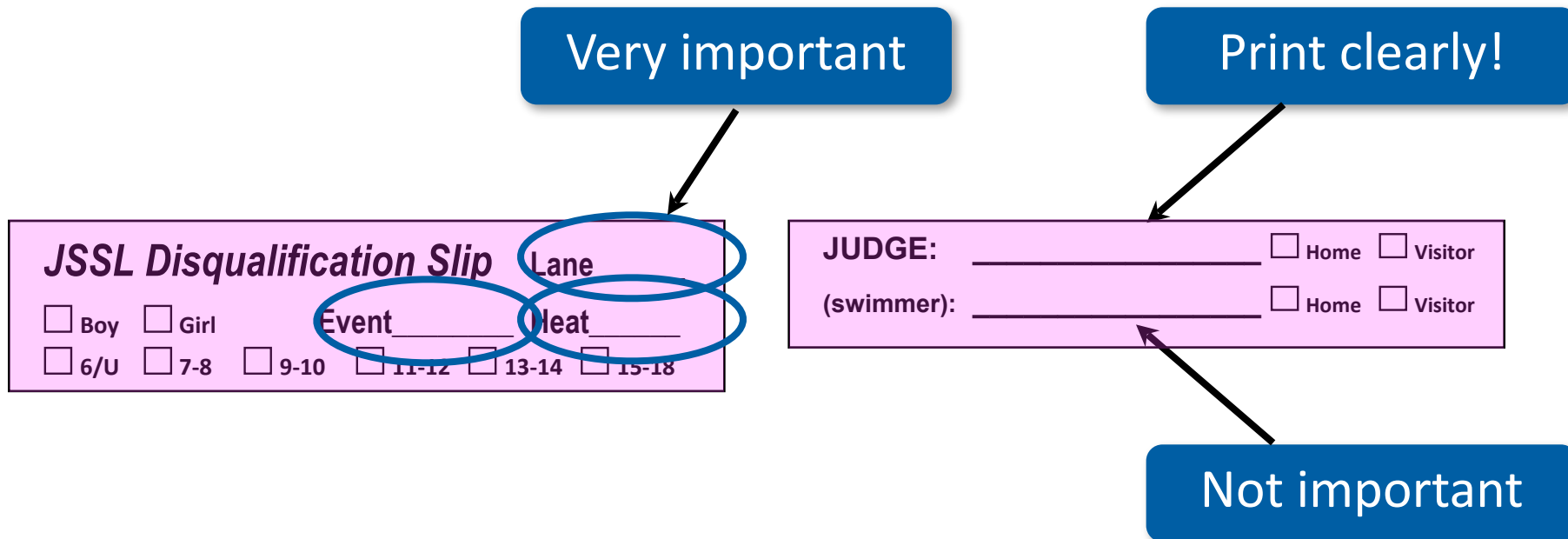
JUDGE: _____ Home Visitor

(swimmer): _____ Home Visitor

Swim Meet Logistics

Disqualifications

- Fill in DQ slips in advance to the extent possible (e.g., your name)
- Develop a system for keeping track of the event, heat, and lane
- If possible, coordinate completing DQ slips with your officiating partner
- “Runners” will circulate the pool deck collecting DQ slips



Swim Meet Logistics

Disqualifications

Butterfly

Start Swim Turn Finish

- Start: 1N Head did not break the surface by 15 meters
Arms: 1E Non-simultaneous 1F Underwater recovery
Kick: 1A Alternating 1B Breast 1C Scissors
Turn: 1M Not toward the breast off wall
Touch: 1J One hand touch 1K No touch
 1L Non-simultaneous touch
Other:

Backstroke

Start Swim Turn Finish

- Start: 2P Toes over lip of gutter after start
 2K Not on back off wall
 2N Head did not break the surface by 15 meters
Turn: 2L Shoulders past vertical toward breast
 More than one arm pull on breast into turn
Touch: 2I No touch (turn or finish)
Other:

Breaststroke

Start Swim Turn Finish

- Arms/Stroke: 3F Non-simultaneous arms
 3G Arms two strokes underwater
 3P Head under for 2 or more strokes
 3Q Incomplete; not one pull & one kick
 3E Hands brought beyond the hipline during stroke
 3I Elbows recovered over water
 3M Not toward the breast off wall
Kick: 3A Alternating kick 3B Non-simultaneous kick
 3C Downward butterfly kick 3D Scissors kick
Touch: 3J One hand touch 3K No touch
 3L Non-simultaneous touch
Other:

Freestyle

Start Swim Turn Finish

- Start: 4N Head did not break the surface by 15 meters
Touch: 4K No touch (turn or finish)
Other:

Relay

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Stroke Infraction swimmer # | <input type="checkbox"/> 61 | <input type="checkbox"/> 62 | <input type="checkbox"/> 63 | <input type="checkbox"/> 64 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| Early take-off swimmer # | | <input type="checkbox"/> 66 | <input type="checkbox"/> 67 | <input type="checkbox"/> 68 |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |

Swim Meet Logistics

Disqualifications

An official should **never** complete a DQ slip without the ability to answer “yes” to the following questions with **100% certainty**:

- 1) Are you absolutely certain of what you saw?
- 2) Can you explain the rule regarding the infraction and describe what you saw?
- 3) Were you in the correct position to see the infraction?
- 4) Was it your call?
- 5) Was it beyond a doubt? (The swimmer always gets the benefit of the doubt!)

- A coach may choose to contest a DQ with the meet director, who will then speak with the official and ask these 5 questions
- If the official responds “yes” to all 5 questions, the DQ will be upheld; if not, then it will be discarded

Swim Meet Logistics

Disqualifications – Do's and Don'ts

- Don't engage a parent in a discussion about a disqualification. Refer parents to their respective swim coach to discuss rules
- Don't discuss previous DQ's when you are supposed to be watching a new heat in progress. A meet director or coach is owed a brief, polite explanation when time permits – refer persistent or rude questioners to the meet director
- Don't allow video footage replay from a spectator's camera or phone to enter into the review process
- Do make the final call on all stroke and turn judging (unless overruled by the meet director – very rare)
- Don't leave the meet until all DQ challenges have been resolved (includes relay start officials). If an official leaves and a DQ is challenged, it will be discarded

JSSL Stroke & Turn Official Training

Questions

Thank you for coming!