

Valley-Foothill Competitive Aquatics League
Swim Division

Stroke and Turn Judge Handbook





Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for taking an interest in volunteering as a Stroke and Turn Judge with the Valley Foothill Competitive Aquatics League. This handbook was designed for new and veteran Stroke and Turn Judges alike.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a simple introduction to the roles and responsibilities of judges as well as the rules for swimming in VFCAL. Please note that the information in this handbook is provided as a second resource to stroke and turn judges. For a complete set of rules governing VFCAL swimming, please refer to VFCAL, Article II: Competitive Swimming.

Please take some time to read through this entire handbook prior to attending the VFCAL Stroke and Turn Judge Clinic. All Judges are encouraged to bring any additional questions to the Clinic as well. Throughout the season, if you should have any concerns, please feel free to contact your team's League Representative or me. We are looking forward to working with you.

Have a great season!

Sincerely,

Sheryl Petersen
VFCAL Swimming Chairperson

THE ROLE OF A STROKE AND TURN JUDGE

“The benefit of the doubt always goes to the swimmer.” Stroke and Turn Judges in VFCAL work with a partner during races to identify any number of common violations, and disqualify swimmers if necessary. Their role is NOT, however, to closely scrutinize the technique of each individual swimmer. Coaches and League Representatives have worked to identify those violations, which should result in a disqualification. While some of these include technical mistakes, many of these violations are those that give one swimmer an unfair advantage over another. It is the position of VFCAL Coaches and Representatives that when a Judge is in doubt, give the benefit to the swimmer.

The ideal Stroke and Turn Judge is somebody who has knowledge of swimming, is fair and impartial, demonstrates consistency and is willing to ask questions and confer with others when making a call.

REQUIREMENTS

Stroke and Turn Judges are required to attend the League training clinic, typically held in mid-May. This clinic consists of classroom discussion followed by poolside training. The League compiles a master list of judges meeting these requirements and only these individuals are able to judge at meets. If a potential judge is unable to attend the League clinic, they must participate in a training session with their League Representative in order to be included on the master list.

Following the clinic, all new judges are strongly encouraged to shadow an experienced judge for one or more meets.

Most teams designate a “Head Stroke and Turn Judge” who is responsible to keep track of the meets and events that each judge has worked. Stroke and Turn judges must work a minimum of two meets, judging the same events, AND be recommended by their League Representative, to be eligible to work as an official at Championships.

DURING THE MEET

Stroke and Turn Judges have jurisdiction over the swimmers immediately after the race has begun. Judges are located in pairs on both sides of the pool, usually walking along side the swimmers and are responsible for observing the swimmers in lanes on their half of the pool. At pools where walking alongside the swimmers is not possible, the Stroke and Turn judges are placed at opposite ends of the pool. Whenever possible, Stroke and Turn Judges must be in the correct position when judging an infraction. (When determining a violation at the turn, for example, the judge must be located near the end of the pool.) The Meet Referee may elect to override a Judge if he or she determines the judge was not adequately positioned to clearly see the violation.

➤ Do I have any responsibilities before the meet begins?

Yes. Each pool is slightly different. Prior to each meet, the Meet Referee will bring together the Stroke and Turn Judges from both teams. During this meeting, they will discuss issues specific to that pool including the areas of stroke and turn responsibility. This is also an opportunity for judges to clarify any questions they may have about the rules and disqualifications.

➤ Who is the meet referee?

For most teams, the meet referee is the League Representative of the home team. The referee is responsible to insure that all swimmers have fair and consistent judging. Usually, the referee will conduct a Stroke and Turn orientation prior to the start of the meet. Be sure to know who the meet referee is at each meet you are judging.

MAKING A DISQUALIFICATION (DQ)

If a judge observes a violation in their area of responsibility, they should immediately raise one hand overhead to alert their partner and the Meet Referee. Whenever possible, the partner and/or Meet Referee should witness the infraction as well.

The official making a disqualification will use the League DQ slip (which is in triplicate). It is important that the DQ slip be filled out completely with correct event number, age group, and lane. Incomplete or inaccurate DQ slips will be thrown out. Any designated official who sees the violation should sign the DQ slip. The Meet Referee will initial the DQ slip indicating that he or she saw the infraction and/or discussed it with the Judge making the disqualification. The Meet Referee provides one copy to a coach from each team and one copy to the scorer's table.

❑ What happens if a parent, coach, or swimmer disagrees with my decision?

First of all, league rules state the parents, coaches and swimmers may NOT approach a stroke and turn official to harass, question, complain or persuade them to change a judgment. If this should happen, judges should refer the person to the Meet Referee and then make sure that the Meet Referee is aware of the situation.

STROKE DESCRIPTIONS AND DISQUALIFICATIONS

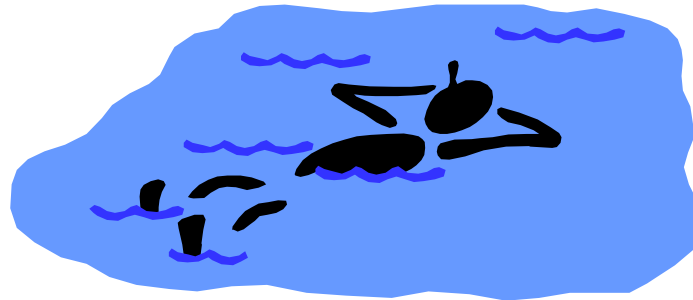
The VFCAL has worked closely with coaches to develop specific criteria for each of the strokes. This specific information is also summarized in the "Stroke and Turn Judge Cheat Sheet" shown later in this handbook. These Cheat Sheets are also provided poolside for Judges to use at swim meets.

Freestyle

The forward start is used. Freestyle means that the swimmer may swim any style. The only exception is that during a medley relay or individual medley event, freestyle means any style other than butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke. At the finish and at each turn, it is sufficient if any part of the swimmer touches the wall.

Freestyle Disqualifications

There are no disqualifications unique to this stroke.



Backstroke

At the start, swimmers line up in the water facing the starting end, with both hands resting either on the end or edge of the pool, or any part of the starting platform or block, or 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. Swimmers push off on their back and continue swimming on the back throughout the race.

At each turn, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. During the turn, the swimmer may turn over onto their stomach to perform a flip turn. The swimmer is allowed only one continuous arm stroke while on their stomach and must return to a position on the back before their feet leave the wall.

After the start and each turn, the swimmer may remain underwater up to 15 yards and must resurface before reaching the 2nd set of backstroke flags. The swimmer has finished the race when any part of the body touches the wall at the end of the pool.

Butterfly

The race begins with a forward start. Following the start (and turns), the swimmer is permitted one or more dolphin kicks, but only one arm pull underwater. Both arms are brought forward together over the water and brought backward simultaneously. The swimmer must remain on his/her stomach and shoulders should be in line with the water surface throughout the stroke.

The dolphin kick is used with this stroke. All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous. The position of the legs and feet may not alternate (no flutter kick action). The use of the scissor or breaststroke kick is not permitted.

At each turn and at the finish, the swimmer must touch the wall simultaneously with both hands while remaining on the stomach. It is legal to touch at, above or below the surface of the water.



Breaststroke

The forward start is used. The swimmers remain on their stomach throughout the race. Arms move simultaneously in the same horizontal plane, without any alternating action. The hands are pushed forward from the breast and are brought back on or under the surface of the water. The hands cannot be brought beyond the hip line, except during the first stroke after the start and each turn. Some part of the swimmer's head must break the surface of the water at least once during each complete cycle (one arm stroke and one leg kick) except at the start and each turn where the swimmer can remain submerged for once complete cycle. At the start and at each turn, the swimmer's head breaks the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.

After the start and each turn, a single downward butterfly kick followed by a breaststroke kick is permitted while wholly submerged. Following which all movements of the legs shall be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane without alternating movement.

All leg movements are simultaneous. Toes are turned outward during the propulsive part of the kick. A scissors, flutter or downward butterfly kick is not allowed. The feet may break the surface of the water.

At the finish and each turn, a two-hand touch is used. A legal touch may be made at, above or below the surface of the water.

Individual Medley

The order of strokes for this event is: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle. The stroke and turns for each stroke follow the rules for that stroke. The turns from one stroke to another are considered turns, not finishes and are as follows:

Butterfly to Backstroke: After a legal touch, the swimmer may turn in any manner desired, but must be past vertical on their back before their feet leave the wall.

Backstroke to Breaststroke: The swimmer must touch the wall while on their back, and then may turn in any manner. The swimmer must be past vertical on their stomach when their feet leave the wall.

Relays

In the Medley Relay, the order of strokes for this event is: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Freestyle. The stroke and turns for each stroke follow the rules for that stroke. No swimmer may swim more than one leg in any relay event. An early take-off (or false start) is called if a swimmer's feet have lost touch with the starting platform before the preceding teammate touches the wall. Each swimmer must exit the water immediately upon finishing their leg of the race. A relay team can be disqualified if they jump into the water after their race.

Other Rules You Should Know

1. A swimmer may, during their race, accidentally swim into another lane. This will, however, result in a DQ if they obstruct or otherwise disrupt the competitor in that lane. The swimmer must start and finish the race in their assigned lane.
2. Any swimmer not entered in a race that enters the pool where a race is being conducted before all swimmers have completed the race shall be disqualified from their next scheduled competition in that day's session. This includes placing feet in the gutter, getting in to cool off, etc.
3. A 6 & Under swimmer may have an aide in the pool to act as a safety assistant. The safety assistant must remain behind or next to the swimmer and any body contact will result in disqualification.
4. Swimmers with disabilities that may prevent them from swimming a stroke in the prescribed manner will be given leniency if the disability/limitation is presented to the stroke and turn judges at the pre-meet meeting and that the modification to the stroke does not put the swimmer at a greater advantage.

Glossary of Swimming Terms

Block: The starting platform.

Coach: A person who trains and teaches athletes in the sport of swimming.

Competition: An athletic performance by an athlete, either individually or as part of a team or club.

DQ (Disqualify): This occurs when a swimmer has committed an infraction of some kind; e.g., freestyle kick in butterfly. A disqualified swimmer is not eligible to receive awards, nor can the time be used as an official time.

Dual Meet: Competition between two teams.

Event: Any race or series of races in a given stroke and/or distance. For competitive limits, 1 event equals 1 preliminary, or 1 preliminary plus its related final, or 1 timed final, or 1 time trial.

False Start: Occurs when a swimmer is moving at the start. Two false starts will result in disqualification.

Final: Any single race which determines final places and times in an event.

Finals: The concluding session of each day of the meet in which the final race of each event is held.

Finalist: One who swims in a final race.

Finish: The final phase of the race--the touch at the end of the race.

Flags: Backstroke flags placed 5 yards (short course) or 5 meters (long course) from the end of the pool. They enable backstrokers to execute a backstroke turn more efficiently by counting their strokes.

Goal: A specific time achievement a swimmer sets and strives for. Can be short or long-term.

Gutter: The area along the edge of the pool in which water overflows during a race and is re-circulated through the filtration system.

Heats: A division of an event in which there are too many swimmers to compete at one time.

Timed Finals: Competition in which only heats are swum and final places are determined by the times performed in the heats.

I.M.: Slang for Individual Medley, an event in which the swimmer uses all four strokes in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle.

Invitational Meet: A competition for those swimmers, organizations and teams invited by the host.

Lane: The specific area in which the swimmer is assigned to swim; i.e., lane one, lane two, etc.

Lane Line: Continuous floating markers attached to a line stretched from the starting end to the turning end for the purpose of separating each lane.

Lane Markings: The guidelines on the bottom of the pool and in the center of the lanes running from the starting end to the turning end.

Leg (relay): The part of the relay event that is swum by a single team member.

Mark (take your): Command for swimmers to move into a starting position.

Meet: Competition designed to be a learning experience. By implementing what has been learned in practice, the swimmer tests himself against the clock to see how he is improving

No-show: Failure of a swimmer to report to the blocks and compete after checking in.

Program: The order of events, including starting times and intermissions in a meet or portion thereof, sequentially listed by class of competition, sex, age group, distance, and stroke as set forth in meet announcement.

Race: Any single swimming competition, i.e., preliminary, final, timed final.

Relay: An event in which 4 swimmers compete together as a team to achieve one time.

Scissor: Use of the top of the instep of one foot and the bottom of the other foot in the propulsive part of the kick.

Scratch: Withdrawn entry from competition.

Seed: Distribute the swimmers among the required number of heats and/or lanes, according to their submitted or preliminary times.

Simultaneously: Occurring at the same time.

Split: A swimmer's intermediate time in a race. Splits are registered every 50 yards or meters and are used to determine if a swimmer is on record pace. In a relay, the time for one of the four individuals.

Split Time: Time recorded from official start to completion of an initial distance within a longer event.

Streamline: The position used to gain maximum distance during a start and/or push-off from the wall in which the swimmer's body is as tight as can be.

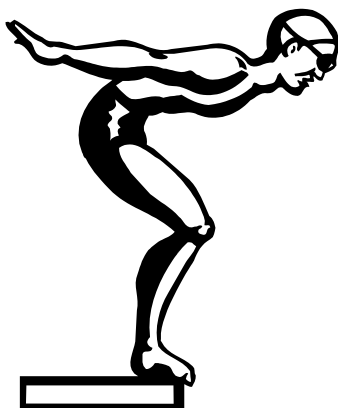
Timed Finals: Competition in which only heats are swum and final places are determined by the time performed in the heats.

Time Trial: A time-only swim which is not part of a regular meet.

Warm Down: Low intensity swimming used by swimmer after a race or main practice set to rid the body of excess lactic acid, and to gradually reduce heart rate and respiration.

Warm-Up: Low intensity swimming used by swimmer prior to a main practice set or race to get muscles loose and warm and gradually increase heart rate and respiration.

Watches: Stopwatches used to time swimmers during a competition, usually electronic. When totally automatic timing equipment is used, watches serve as a back-up method.



GENERAL DISQUALIFICATIONS

Missed Wall / No Touch	Must touch wall - it is okay to go back and touch as long as stroke is performed correctly.
Wrong Stroke	Not OK.
Interference	Parents cannot touch swimmers once they are called to the blocks. Coaches may touch to guide or comfort, but only until the starter calls them to their marks. OK to swim into another lane as long as it doesn't interfere with opponent's race.
Walk/Spring from the bottom of the pool	Not OK.
Pull on the lane line	OK to hit lane line and push away as long as there is no forward progress. It is OK to hold on to the lane line.
Finish in the wrong lane	Not OK. Swimmer must finish in the same lane as they started in.
More than 1 swimmer in lane/water	In relays, swimmer(s) must exit the water before the next swimmer touches or turns.

Relay start interference by parent, coach or swimmer	ONLY coaches can touch swimmers to comfort or guide swimmer until swimmer steps forward, ready to start.
Early take off	Called by starter, designated stroke and turn judges and meet referees only. These officials must be in line with the end of the pool or directly over their assigned lanes.
Jumping in after a race	Not OK.
Individual Medley (Backstroke to Breaststroke)	The swimmer must touch the wall while on the back.

BACKSTROKE DISQUALIFICATIONS

Body past vertical	Except during a legal turn, swimmers cannot go past vertical (must stay more on their back, than their stomach).
2 arm pulls at turn	Not OK. During the turn, the shoulders may be turned past vertical toward the breast after which a continuous single arm pull or a continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used.
Underwater more than 15 yards	Must surface prior to second set of flags. Dolphin kick is OK.
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.

BUTTERFLY DISQUALIFICATIONS

Underwater recovery	Both arms must be brought forward over the water and pulled back simultaneously.
Arms not in unison	Must begin in unison. Recovery may be out of unison.
Flutter/Frog/Scissors Kick	All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous. The position of the legs and the feet need not be on the same level. A scissors or breaststroke kick is not permitted.
One-hand touch	Not OK. At the finish, the body shall be on the breast and the touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface.

BREASTSTROKE DISQUALIFICATIONS

2 strokes underwater	Not OK. The head must break the surface of the water before the hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke.
Head doesn't break surface	Not OK. Some part of the swimmer's head shall break the surface of

	the water at least once during each complete cycle of one arm stroke and one leg kick in that order.
Hands pull past hips	Not OK. 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.
Arms not in unison	The arms shall move in simultaneously and in the same horizontal plane without any alternating movement.
Flutter/Scissors/Dolphin Kick	Not OK. Unless the kick is immediately after the start or turn, during this time a single downward butterfly kick followed by a breaststroke kick is permitted while wholly submerged. Following which, all vertical and lateral movements of the legs shall be simultaneous. A scissors, flutter or downward butterfly kick is not permitted. Breaking the surface with the feet shall not be a DQ unless it's followed by a downward butterfly kick.
1 hand touch	Not OK. At the finish, the body shall be on the breast and the touch shall be made with both hands simultaneously, at, above, or below the water surface.