

Interpretations Made by the Rules & Regulations Committee (revised January 2010)

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.

September 21, 2005 (relating to 2005 FINA rule change): The official interpretation for the changes to the breaststroke (101.1) is that during, or at the end of the arm pull-down of the first stroke after the start and after each turn, a single downward butterfly kick is allowed, but not required, followed by a breaststroke kick. During the pull-down, if a downward butterfly is taken, it must be followed by a breaststroke kick. The downward butterfly kick is not permissible prior to the arm pull-down. In addition, there is a requirement for all movements of the legs to be "in the same horizontal plane and without alternating movement

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

1. A swimmer who chooses to take a downward butterfly kick after the start or any turn, as provided in Article 101.1.3, 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 plan without alternating movement; the feet must be turned outward during the propulsive part of the kick; and, a scissors, flutter or "downward" butterfly kick is not permitted except as provided in the first paragraph of Article 101.1.3. 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 101.1.3). 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.

December 8, 2008: For purposes of Article 101.2.3, as it relates to what constitutes the initiation of the first arm pull and the allowed single downward butterfly kick, the following applies: After the start and after each turn, any downward or outward lateral movement of the hands or arms is considered to be the initiation of the first arm pull.

Interpretations of Article 101.3 (Butterfly)

May 30, 1998: In view of the March 6, 1998 rule changes by FINA, agreed that the shoulders need not be parallel with the water surface after the last pull into the wall at the turns and finishes.

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 101.4 (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.

Interpretations of Article 102.9 (Swimwear)

September 16, 1999: Adopted the following regarding the use of "full body suits" in competition:

Until FINA determines otherwise, use of the full body suit, designed and marketed for competition, is permissible in USA swimming events. Use of suits of neoprene or other buoyant material, such as wet suits, is not permissible.

January 19, 2009: An exemption to Article 102.9.1 may be granted, on a case by case basis, to swimmers who:

1. Based upon their stated religious beliefs, are required to wear suits that cover more of their body than is permitted under this Rule; or
2. Whose medical conditions require more of their body to be covered than permitted under this Rule.

This exemption does not extend to the use of any swimwear that has ever been promoted by its manufacturer as providing a performance advantage, or has otherwise been described as providing a technological advantage. This exemption applies to both USA Swimming's Rule and to any comparable rule adopted by any LSC and takes precedence over any determination by any member of an LSC.

All requests for any exemption must be submitted to the Chair of the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations Committee, or his/her designee. The request must be communicated in writing, including the use of e-mail, at least ten (10) days in advance of any competition for which the exemption is sought. The request must include:

1. The swimmer's name, registration number and the name of LSC in which they reside;
2. A statement explaining that the exemption is made necessary by the swimmer's religious principles or for medical reasons;
3. A representation by the swimmer that the exemption is being sought for religious reasons and not to increase performance or, in the case of a medical reason, a written statement from a physician specifying the requirement to have parts of the body covered that are not permitted under this Article; and
4. A photo or description of the attire that the swimmer proposes to wear so that the Rules Chair can evaluate whether any technological advantage has been advertised or documented for the suit.

The Rules Chair will then advise the swimmer and the appropriate LSC officials chair whether the exemption has been granted. The Rules Chair shall have the authority to grant the exemption on

a permanent basis in his/her sole discretion. The decision of the Rules Chair can be appealed only to the entire Rules & Regulations Committee whose decision shall be final and binding on all parties.

IT WILL BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SWIMMER TO PROVIDE A COPY OF THE WAIVER TO THE REFEREE OF ANY MEET IN WHICH THE SWIMMER WISHES TO PARTICIPATE.

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.
