

USA Swimming Technical Rules - FAQs

Q: What are the significant Changes we will encounter with the adoption of the USA Swimming Technical Rules?

A: There are four significant changes that are summarized below:

Backstroke Turn – USA Swimming Technical Rules are more restrictive in prohibiting gliding after the crossover or flip turn is initiated. Once the swimmer leaves his/her back, any arm pull or kick must be part of a continuous turning action. (USA-S Rule 101.3.3)

Breaststroke – There is no prohibition on sculling with the hands during the first stroke in the USA Swimming Technical Rules. (NCAA Rule 2.2.2b; USA-S Rule 101.1.2)

Whistle Starts – The USA Swimming starting protocol provides for a series of short whistle chirps to alert the swimmers to get ready before the long whistle that instructs them to step on the blocks or step into the water. (NCAA starting protocol only requires the long whistle.) Both protocols require a second whistle for backstroke starts to bring the swimmers to the wall.

False Starts – The USA Swimming starting protocol does not recall false starts. If the starter and referee agree that a swimmer false started, the swimmer is disqualified and notified at the end of the race, as with any other disqualification.

Q: Does this change mean that we will no longer hold YMCA dual meets and championship meets, as we have done in the past, but rather only attend invitational meets as many USA Swimming teams do?

A: No, the YMCA program of dual meets, invitational meets and championship meets (e.g., state, area and field championships) will continue as it has in the past. Only the technical rules under which we conduct these meets will change. Moreover, our emphasis on the YMCA core values and our team orientation will not change; they are integral parts of our program and will be maintained. In fact, the requirements to compete at the YMCA National Short and Long Course Championships (the required number of closed competition meets and the required participation in state/area/field meets) remain unchanged!

Q: Does adoption of USA Technical Rules change the YMCA requirement of a minimum 5 feet of water depth for racing starts from a starting platform or deck starts?

A: No! The YMCA requirement of a minimum depth of 5 feet at the starting end remains in effect. In addition, if local statutes require more stringent depth requirements,

they must be followed. In fact, the USA Swimming Technical Rules recognize that more stringent requirements may exist and must be followed.

Q: Since USA Swimming Technical Rules do not specifically mention swimmers younger than 10 & Under, does this mean we can no longer have 8 & Under age groups in YMCA meets?

A: No, The USA Swimming Technical Rules are meant to provide guidance in scheduling events for a meet, but they specifically allow for other combinations, including other age groups. In fact, USA Swimming LSCs run many “Mini-Meets” for swimmers 8 & Under.

Q: Under YMCA rules, age of a swimmer is determined as of December 1 of the current swim season (05-06) for that entire swim season. USA Technical Rules state that a swimmer’s age is determined on the first day of any meet. Which rule will apply to YMCA dual, invitational and/or championship meets?

A: There is no provision in the NCAA rules for age groups or birth dates. The current YMCA rule governing the ages of swimmers is regularly reviewed by the National Swimming and Diving Advisory Committee and at this time no changes are proposed.

Q: Does this change mean that all YMCA certified officials would automatically become USA-S certified officials?

A: No. YMCA certified officials desiring to become certified as a USA-S official will have to go through the normal USA-S certification process.

Q: Does this change mean that all USA-S certified officials would automatically become YMCA certified officials able to officiate at YMCA meets?

A: No. The YMCA officials’ certification program is unchanged; anyone, including USA-S certified officials, must still attend a YMCA Officials’ Clinic and pass the required test.

Q: If my YMCA official’s certification does not expire this year, will I nonetheless have to take a clinic and pass the test to continue to be certified as a YMCA official?

A: No. The rule changes are relatively straightforward and no different than any changes we encountered in NCAA rules in the past. We are currently exploring several ways of disseminating these changes to our existing officials.

Q: Why aren't these changes adopted immediately instead of waiting until September 1?

A: September 1 is the traditional start of the new YMCA swim season, and adopting the changes immediately would not give the swimmers, coaches and officials enough time to adjust to the changes before the summer swim season begins.

Q: Where can I find out more about the USA-S Technical Rules?

A: You can go to the USA-Swimming web site and purchase a Mini Rule Book, which contains all of the technical rules. USA-S also has two excellent videos on Officiating Swimming and the Starting Protocol.