



## Schools' Team Championships – Technical Rules of Swimming

### 1) Regulations (Effective from February 2023)

The Schools' Team Relay Championships take place annually under Swim England Judicial Regulations and Technical Rules of Swimming as amended by the following:

A Technical Jury of Appeal shall be appointed for all ESSA National Championships.

### 2) Photography/Video

- a) An official photographer may be used during Championship events; selected photographs may be made available for purchase from a password protected website and may be used by ESSA for promotional purposes.
- b) Championship events may be videoed; images will be streamed live to the internet and made available for later playback. Access is not password protected.
- c) Schools must make sure that parents of swimmers are made aware and any welfare or privacy issues raised with the organisers and/or the ESSA welfare officer as required on the entry details for each gala.
- d) Any child welfare/protection issues that arise subsequent to the gala should be raised to the attention of the ESSA welfare officer at the earliest opportunity.

## The Rules of Swimming for ESSA Team Championships

It is ESSA policy to promote and organise events and competitions, and to make awards, in furtherance of its objective of the advancement of the physical education of school children through the medium of swimming. ESSA is committed to treating everyone equally within the context of its activity and with due respect to the differences of individuals.

For Primary Schools' Teams Championships there has been much disappointment for this young and relatively inexperienced age group swimmers of travelling some distance and not being able to swim due to a technical infraction. **ESSA wishes to maximise the participation and enjoyment of swimmers, while respecting the competitive ethos of the sport of swimming.**

In this context ESSA the rules of swimming as set out by FINA<sup>1</sup> and adopted by Swim England are to be applied during all stages of the championships with the following adaptions:

The next page gives the summary of the changes made to adapt the FINA rules to ESSA team Championships. Full details of the changes are included in the appendix.

<sup>1</sup> Based on the FINA (World Aquatics) Swimming Rules valid as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 ( <https://www.fina.org/swimming/rules> ). Rule numbers for the 2017-2023 version are provided in **[square braces - bold italic]** where different for convenience in the transition period.

**FINA Rule SW 4.1** is adapted to allow starting in the water:

This has the effect of permitting starting from on the starting blocks, the pool deck next to the block, or in the water. This is common practice for younger swimmers that have yet to achieve the ability or confidence to dive safely into the pool. Further guidance and interpretation is provided to address common misunderstandings in the application of this rule when starting in the water (at the beginning of a race or for a takeover in a relay race).

**FINA Rule SW 4.4** shall be applied as modified to allow a disqualified team to swim regardless of when the disqualification is determined (Primary Schools' events only – discretion remains with the referee for all other events).

This has the effect that a disqualified swimmer/team is still allowed to swim, but will not be placed or achieve a time. The adaptation of the rule allows participation of all swimmers in the events without disadvantaging any team that has competed with due starting procedure.

**Fina Rule SW 10.13 [10.11]** shall be applied as modified to allow relay takeovers by a swimmer in the water.

This rule adaption works in conjunction with the adaptions to rule SW 4.1. Further guidance and interpretation is provided based on common misunderstandings in the application of this rule when starting in the water (at the beginning of a race or for a takeover in a relay race).

**FINA Rule SW 10.14 [10.12]** shall not be applied and **FINA Rule SW 10.15 [10.13]** shall be applied as modified to remove the need to specify the order of swimmers in a team event.

Due to the operational constraints and nature of the championships, it is not practical to consistently collate and distribute a full list of swimmers participation order such that the designated swimmer can be determined by officials. Furthermore, it is common for the swimmer taking over from the swimmer completing their length to enter the water to start, rather than use a dive.

**FINA Rule SW 10.16 [10.14]** shall be applied as modified to permit a swimmer that has completed the race to remain in their lane until requested to leave the pool by the referee or starter.

It is conventional for Referees to ask swimmers who have completed the race (the 4<sup>th</sup> swimmer in a relay) to remain in their lane until requested to leave the pool by the referee or starter. Failure to observe this convention is not a contravention on the rules and, for the avoidance of doubt, no swimmer or team shall be disqualified if the last swimmer in a team leaves their lane prior to such instruction.

Swimmers of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> leg in a relay are expected to leave the pool to the side, without obstructing any other swimmer, as soon as possible. Due to the varied experience of swimmers in the Primary Schools' age group championships swimmers are not always able to make such judgment and may remain in their lane longer than ordinarily permissible.

Rules SW 10.7 (obstructing another swimmer) and SW 10.15 (referee discretion for fouled swimmer) remain in force.

## **Relay start and takeover further information.**

In order to aid the Team Managers to prepare their teams for this event and to attempt to make the interpretation as simple as possible for schools thereby minimising the numbers of disqualifications in Relay take-overs, the following information is provided.

Where multiple galas are used within a division's qualifying stage and one or more of the pools used for those galas has a pool depth that does not permit safe diving for inexperienced swimmers, the division may impose additional conditions to ensure consistency and fairness in the qualification process.

This is the approach taken in the South East Division, where diving is not permitted at the shallow end of the pool in any qualifying stage gala within their Division. Where races are started at the Deep end of the pool and the pool depth is sufficient for it to be safe to do so, swimmers 1 and 3 are permitted to dive as long as they have satisfied the conditions of the Swim England Preliminary Start Award criteria.

### **Interpretation of rules for in the water starts or takeovers:**

- 1: In the following text, the **extended starting platform** is any of the starting block, the pool wall at the end of the lane, or a pad attached to the pool wall at the end of the lane; Where two hands are in contact, they can be with any combination of the block, wall or pad
- 2: For swimmers starting the race in the water (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> leg) at least one hand of the swimmer starting in the water must remain in contact with the **extended starting platform** until the start signal is issued.
- 3: For relay races for swimmers starting their leg (other than 1<sup>st</sup> leg) in the water, at least one hand of the swimmer starting in the water must remain in contact with the **extended starting platform** until the incoming swimmer has completed their length and touched the end of the lane.
- 4: No physical restraint of the outgoing swimmers intended to prevent that swimmer leaving their starting position before the incoming swimmer has touched the wall is permitted. Any such occurrence may result in the team being disqualified for pace-making (SW 10.16). This includes, but is not limited to, holding any part of the body.  
i.e. *The team of the swimmer who is starting their relay leg in the water and has neither hand in contact with the extended starting platform before the preceding swimmer touches the end of the lane (before the start signal is given for 1<sup>st</sup> swimmer if starting in the water) may be disqualified.*

### **Examples:**

When the incoming swimmer touches, if the outgoing swimmer is:

- Holding with one hand = good takeover – No DQ
- Holding with two hands = good takeover – No DQ
- Not holding with either hand = illegal takeover – DQ

Note: The position of the feet is immaterial to the decision for a swimmer starting their leg in the water.

## **Attachment A:**

Adaptions of The Rules of Swimming for these Championships

***Italic bold text*** is used to show the original FINA (World Aquatics) wording that remains unchanged

***Italic bold red text that is struck through*** is used to show FINA text that has been deleted or replaced

***Italic bold blue text*** is used to show new/replacement text

For the purposes of these adaptions, the ***extended starting platform*** is any of the starting block, the pool wall at the end of the lane, or a pad attached to the pool wall at the end of the lane. Any FINA rule that refers to a starting platform shall be considered to have the wording replaced with 'extended starting platform' even if not explicitly indicated below.

**FINA Rule SW 4.1** is adapted to allow starting in the water:

*The start in Freestyle, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Individual Medley races shall be a forward start, with a dive. On the long whistle (SW 2.1.5) from the referee the swimmers shall step onto the take their positions with at least one foot at the front of the extended starting platform or, if starting in the water, with at least one hand having contact with the extended starting platform and remain there<sup>2</sup>. On the starter's command "take your marks", they shall immediately take up a starting position with at least one foot at the front of the starting platforms. The position of the hands is not relevant. When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal.*

This has the effect of permitting starting from on the starting blocks, the pool deck next to the block, or in the water. This is common practice for younger swimmers that have yet to achieve the ability or confidence to dive safely into the pool. Further guidance and interpretation is provided towards the end of this attachment to address common misunderstandings in the application of this rule when starting in the water (at the beginning of a race or for a takeover in a relay race).

**FINA Rule SW 4.4** shall be applied as modified below:

*SW 4.4 Any swimmer initiating a start before the signal may be disqualified. If the starting signal sounds before the disqualification is declared, the race shall continue and the swimmer or swimmers shall be disqualified upon completion of the race. If the disqualification is declared before the starting signal, the signal shall not be given, but the remaining swimmers shall be called back and start again. The Referee repeats the starting procedure beginning with the long whistle (the second one for Backstroke) as per SW 2.1.5*

This has the effect that a disqualified swimmer/team is still allowed to swim, but will not be placed or achieve a time. The adaptation of the rule allows participation of all swimmers in the events without disadvantaging any team that has competed with due starting procedure.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on Rule MSW 3.2 (<https://www.fina.org/masters/rules>)

**Fina Rule SW 10.13** shall be applied as modified below:

*In relay events, the team of a swimmer whose feet loses touch with the extended starting platform before the preceding team-mate touches the wall shall be disqualified. In the case of a swimmer starting on the out of the water, losing 'touch with the extended starting platform' shall be judged based on the position of the swimmer's feet. In the case of a swimmer starting in the water, losing 'touch with the extended starting platform' shall be judged based on the position of the hands.*

This rule adaption works in conjunction with the adaptions to rule SW 4.1. Further guidance and interpretation is provided towards the end of this attachment based on common misunderstandings in the application of this rule when starting in the water (at the beginning of a race or for a takeover in a relay race).

**FINA Rule SW 10.14** shall not be applied :

*Any relay team shall be disqualified from a race if a team member, other than the swimmer designated to swim that length, enters the water when the race is being conducted, before all swimmers of all teams have finished the race.*

Due to the operational constraints and nature of the championships, it is not practical to consistently collate and distribute a full list of swimmers participation order such that the designated swimmer can be determined by officials. Furthermore, it is common for the swimmer taking over from the swimmer completing their length to enter the water to start, rather than use a dive.

**Fina Rule SW 10.15** shall be applied as modified below:

*~~SW 10.15 The members of a relay team and their order of competing must be nominated before the race. Any relay team member may compete in a race only once. The composition of a relay team may be changed between the heats and finals of an event, provided that it is made up from the list of swimmers properly entered by a Member for that event. Failure to swim in the order listed will result in disqualification. Substitutions may be made only in the case of a documented medical emergency.~~*

Due to the operational constraints and nature of the championships, it is not practical to consistently collate and distribute a full list of swimmers participation order such that the designated swimmer can be determined by officials.

**FINA Rule SW 10.16** shall be applied as modified below:

*~~Any swimmer having finished his race, or his distance in a relay event, must leave the pool as soon as possible without obstructing any other swimmer who has not yet finished his race. Otherwise the swimmer committing the fault, or his relay team, shall be disqualified.~~*

It is conventional for Referees to ask swimmers who have completed the race (the 4<sup>th</sup> swimmer in a relay) to remain in their lane until requested to leave the pool by the referee or starter. Failure to observe this convention is not a contravention on the rules and, for the avoidance of doubt, no swimmer or team shall be disqualified if the last swimmer in a team leaves their lane prior to such instruction.

Swimmers of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> leg in a relay are expected to leave the pool to the side, without obstructing any other swimmer, as soon as possible. Due to the varied experience of swimmers in the Primary Schools' age group championships swimmers are not always able to make such judgment and may remain in their lane longer than ordinarily permissible.

Rules SW 10.7 (obstructing another swimmer) and SW 10.15 (referee discretion for fouled swimmer) remain in force.