

Strokes & Turns Training



Agenda

- GRAL Handbook
 - Strokes & Turns Judge Description
 - Training and Recertification
 - Trainee Requirements
- General Guidelines
- Paperwork
- USA Swimming Videos



GRAL HANDBOOK



The Strokes & Turns Judge observes that the technical rules of swimming are followed.

- Rules are described primarily in article 101 of USA Swimming (“USA-S”) Rulebook
- The rule book may be downloaded from USA Swimming website: https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/governance/governance-lsc-website/rules_policies/2022-rulebook-updated-v2.pdf
- The Strokes & Turns Judge observes each swimmer to ensure that the designated strokes and turns for the event are being performed in accordance with USA-S rules.



Section XIII of GRAL Handbook – Strokes & Turns Judge Description

- Four or more qualified adults shall serve as Strokes & Turns Judges at all regular season meets.
- A Strokes & Turns Judge must raise his/her arm when an infraction is seen.
- Strokes & Turns Judges must sign or initial each disqualification card, specifying the infraction.
- Strokes & Turns Judges are required to sign in at the Referee meeting prior to the meet start in order to get credit on the cover sheet for working.
- If a Judge will be late and not make the meeting, the Parent Representative should notify the Referee, and the Judge should check in with the Referee prior to working. This also applies to new Judges who are walking a meet.
- It is the responsibility of the person who is working or walking to make sure s/he is listed on the cover sheet for credit.
- For a new Judge, it is his or her responsibility to make sure the Referee signs his or her card (walking record).



Section XIII of the Handbook – Training and Recertification

- TRAINING – The Strokes and Turns Judges must complete the GRAL training courses and pass the written test during the first year of service, then every other year thereafter. To complete League training requirements, applicants are required to walk the first half of an even meet, the second half of any meet, and another half meet, for a total of three halves where all strokes (IM, Free, Back, Breast, Fly, Relays) have been walked. The League also strongly encourages these volunteers to be supervised for another entire meet by a certified Strokes & Turns Judge prior to working completely alone.
- Recertification
 - Work a minimum of 2 halves during the previous year either as a Strokes and Turns Judge or a Referee
 - Complete GRAL training course every other year
 - Pass GRAL written test every other year



Responsibilities of the Trainee

- Take this class and embedded test
- Pass the test PRIOR to walking
- If you walk prior to passing the test, that walk will NOT count



Responsibilities of the Trainee

- You can walk at either a home meet or an away meet
 - Walk the first half of an even meet (meet 2, 4, or 6) to see the medley events
 - Walk the second half of any meet
 - Walk any other half
 - The idea is for you to see ALL events
- Print a “card” from the [GRAL Officials website](#) to use to keep track of training. Get the back of your card initialed by the Referee (and for the third half, the experienced S&T Judge)
- Make sure your name is on the cover sheet at each meet you walk
 - The cover sheets are posted on the GRAL Web site shortly after the meet. ***It is your responsibility to make sure you are on it.*** If not, contact officials@gralva.com as soon as possible!



The final walk

- The third walk for a strokes and turns training Judge will be a live walk
- Experienced strokes and turns Judges will shadow trainees and sign off on their card
- There will be a list of those who can certify the final walk on the GRAL web site (those who have worked at least 8 GRAL halves in the past four years as Strokes and Turns Judge or Referee, or are USA-S certified)
- The experienced person will not wear white and blue; the trainee will wear white and blue
- Both the trainee and the experienced “shadow” should have their names in the working location on the cover sheet



When Walking a Position . . .

Model

Watch the experienced worker in the position. Ask questions when you can.

Practice

In your mind, go over the calls that you would make.

Feedback

Ask lots of questions and feel free to discuss calls with the experienced worker.

Only the working Strokes and Turns Judge can make calls and write cards. If a walker/shadow sees something a worker missed (this will happen because no one can see everything when you have multiple lanes), discuss it for learning purposes, but the worker won't write a card for something s/he didn't see or for which s/he did not raise his/her hand.



GRAL Officials Facebook Group

- GRAL has a Facebook group for officials!
- All GRAL officials, trainees and coaches are invited and encouraged to participate
- Group discussion can include:
 - Questions on rules or rule interpretations
 - Share lessons learned and observations
- Intent is to promote consistency among GRAL officials
- Discussion on FB group does not constitute official guidance on rules
- To join:
 - Go to this link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GRALOfficials>
 - Please share with other officials at your club, but note that only current officials will be accepted



GENERAL GUIDELINES



Swimmers always get the benefit of the doubt

- Unlike other sports, swimming has only one sanction for violation of technical rules - disqualification
- Therefore, we give swimmers the benefit of the doubt about possible violations of rules
- For example:
 - Referee reviews and approves disqualifications
 - Recommend dual confirmation to call early take-off during relays
 - S&T should “call what you see, not what you don’t see” - e.g. if you call a one-hand touch in butterfly or breaststroke, you should actually see the other hand and know that it didn’t touch



The Professional Judge

- Required Uniform
 - White shirt and dark shorts, pants, or skirt, preferably dark blue. No team identifying logos or labels. **DO NOT WEAR THIS WHEN WALKING OR SHADOWING.**
 - This makes it easier for the Coaches and Referee to notice you and it adds to your credibility and professionalism
 - A Referee may send you home to get your uniform if you forget it
- The rules are enforced across all age groups and levels of ability.
 - By judging swimmers, you are helping the coaches teach them the correct way to swim.
 - You are not doing anyone any favors if you do not disqualify a swimmer who has made a clear infraction. You are also affecting the swimmers who did the stroke correctly.



The other officials and volunteers

- Referee - has authority over other officials and shall assign and instruct them. Decides questions relating to conduct of meet.
- Starter - performs start of each heat
- Clerk of Course - seeds events and relays; assists swimmers to arrive on course
- Runners - collect timer slips and DQ cards
- Table Workers - assemble timer results and DQ cards, label ribbons, post scores
- Computer Rep - records meet times, scores meet, and communicates results to GRAL



Working with Coaches

- Coaches should not be discussing calls with Strokes and Turns Judges; instead they should go to the Referee
- A coach is allowed to ask two questions that a Strokes & Turns Judge will answer:
 - What lane?
 - What was the infraction?
- You are also not required to answer parent questions or challenges, you can refer them to their Parent Rep or Coach who can go to the Referee



Judge's Jurisdiction

- During the pre-meet meeting Judges are assigned jurisdictions
 - Normally you will be observing swimmers in $\frac{1}{4}$ of the pool, possibly from the side, possibly from the end, or both
 - You may make calls only when observing swimmers while in your jurisdiction
 - The Referee should make it clear where you should be positioned to view your jurisdiction; be sure to ask the Referee if you have any questions
- Typically, Judges rotate positions around the pools clockwise between each major stroke grouping. The Referee will go over this in the meeting.
- If there are empty lanes in your jurisdiction, do not stare at the swimmer(s) who are swimming, but rather look elsewhere or at the empty lanes so that you are not giving a swimmer undue focus.
- Where you stand is very important and can affect what you see. For example:
 - It's often necessary to lean over edge of pool to observe a turn or finish
 - It is difficult to see one-hand touch from the side of the pool
 - When standing at the end of the pool, it can be difficult to observe butterfly kicks immediately after the start
 - Etc.



Working with the Referee

- The Referee will hold a meeting before the meet.
 - All Judges (*first and second half*) must attend
 - If you cannot attend, make sure you check in with the Referee when you arrive
- During this meeting, the Referee will assign jurisdictions, identify specific practices and judging of swimmers with special needs, if any.
- The Referee may discuss specific stroke and turn rules and will specify how relay take-off judging will be handled.
- During this meeting you should verify your name is on the meet cover sheet.
- If you have any questions, you should ask them during this meeting so that all Judges will benefit from the question and the answer.



Working with the Referee (cont.)

- During the meet, the Referee has the responsibility to review and approve disqualifications
- As an S&T Judge, you should expect the Referee to discuss calls - and missed calls -with you and other officials:
 - Ensures swimmers get the benefit of the doubt
 - Helps reinforce rules for S&T officials and ensures consistency
 - It does not mean the Referee doubts your judgment or expertise
- Avoid getting defensive when the Referee approaches you to discuss a call
- Focus on answering the three key questions from the Referee:
 - Where were you?
 - What did you observe?
 - What rule was violated?
- You may (and should) discuss any questions you have with the Referee prior to writing the DQ Card.
- It's okay to raise your hand and not write a card!



PAPERWORK



The Meet Program

- You will receive a meet program (heat sheet) to help you keep track of the event and heat, so that you write the correct numbers on the card. Notes or symbols should be written on the heat sheet for each infraction observed.
- You are ***strongly*** encouraged to take notes on that program in case you are questioned by the Referee about a call.
- Note that you will not always be told about a change in the meet program (missing or moved swimmers). Be flexible and pay attention to the Starter's announcements (number of heats, etc.). Do not write names on the DQ slips for this reason.



Notes, Symbols on the Heat Sheet

- During some events, you may observe multiple infractions in different lanes. Because you are observing swimmers whenever they are in your jurisdiction, it may take several heats to catch up writing DQ cards.
- Writing a DQ card for the wrong event, heat, or lane is about the worst thing a Stroke and Turn Judge could do.
- To make sure you keep track of the proper infraction, the proper event, the proper heat, and the proper lane, a quick note or symbol on the heat sheet can help you keep track of this information.
- The Referee might require you to keep notes, and can reject DQ cards if you don't have a note on your heat sheet to back it up.
- The Swimmer always gets the benefit of any doubt.



Disqualification

- When you see a violation in your jurisdiction, follow these six steps in this order:
 1. Raise one hand above your head
 2. Continue observing all swimmers in your jurisdiction
 3. Make a quick note or symbol on your heat sheet.
 4. Determine whether the violation is valid and if there is any doubt (remember the benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer)
 5. Fill out the DQ card and make it available to the runner
 6. Be prepared to answer the Referee's questions



Hand Raise

- It is important that the official's hand is raised immediately when a potential infraction is observed so the Referee, Coaches, and the Runner are aware of the potential infraction, and because it is a USA Swimming rule.
- When you raise your hand, do so directly without hesitation. Hold it up for about three to five seconds, then bring it back down. If you see another infraction by the same swimmer or other swimmer while your hand is raised, keep your hand up for three to five seconds after that observation. It is not necessary to drop the hand to re-raise it.
- If, after dropping your hand, the swimmer performs a different infraction, you should raise your hand again.
- If the swimmer returns to your jurisdiction and performs the same (or different) infraction, you should raise your hand again.
- Raising your hand does not require you to write a DQ card. The swimmer always gets the benefit of any doubt.



The GRAL Swimming Disqualification Report (DQ Card)

- At the top you will fill in the correct event, heat & lane
 - Don't mix these up
 - Unless the Referee tells you otherwise, you do not need to fill in the name of the swimmer. Table workers will do that in case there has been a change of seeding.
 - Quick notes you make on your heat sheet can help make sure you remember these correctly as you write the cards
 - If you have any doubts regarding the correct event, heat, or lane, do not submit the card
 - If you have any questions about the rule, indicate on the card you would like to talk to the Referee
- Become familiar with the card so that you can easily find what you need when judging
- Remember to sign/initial the bottom or it will be returned to you to sign, or discarded



Relay Takeoffs and Dual Confirmation

- A Referee may ask the S&T to assist with dual confirmation of relay takeoffs
- The proper way to Judge a relay take-off is to confirm that the swimmer on the block has left the block, then shift your focus down to the arriving swimmer to see if s/he has touched the wall (i.e. **feet then touch**)
 - If s/he has not, then mark as an early takeoff (but do not raise your hand); otherwise mark as a legal takeoff
 - You will be asked at the end of relays events if you observed any early take-offs. If you and the other observer (Referee, Starter, or Strokes & Turns Judge) both observed the same early take-off, the other observer will write the card and ask that you sign it as well.



Dual Confirmation Communication

- When using the dual confirmation method, you may be given a slip of paper that has the event, heat, lane, and swimmer (1-4) information
- Simply place an “X” in the correct square if you see an early takeoff and an “O” if the takeoff is legal
 - Always write something so that no one can tell that it was illegal just because they see you write
- This information will be compared with that of the other Judge
- Both observers must observe the same early take-off to result in a disqualification



Order of Finish

- The Referee may request that you take order of finish data for each race (may be assigned to Starter, a non-working Strokes & Turns Judge, or Head Timer)
- This is not a difficult task, but it may take some time to get used to doing it accurately
- Simply write down the lane numbers of the swimmers in the order they finish (e.g. 3 4 1 6 5 2)
- Write it directly onto your program in case the Computer Rep or Head Table Worker needs the information
- It will take practice to get this information down and be able to start the next race in a timely manner.



USA SWIMMING VIDEOS



USA Officials Training Videos

- The Videos can be found here:
- <https://www.usaswimming.org/officials/how-to-become-an-official>
 - Officiating Backstroke (6:34)
 - Officiating Breaststroke (5:31)
 - Officiating Butterfly (5:46)
 - Officiating Freestyle (2:26)
 - Officiating Individual Medley (2:34)
 - Officiating Relays (2:01)



BACKSTROKE



Judging the Backstroke Turn

GRAL 2019 RULE CHANGE!

- After the swimmer's head passes the backstroke flag, prior to the turn, the swimmer may go past vertical toward the breast:
 - May perform one single or one double arm pull while on the breast
 - Watch for multiple arm pulls
 - **But does not have to continue arm motion; swimmer may continue to kick into wall**
- Must touch the wall, turn *in any manner* desired (including adjusting goggles, standing up, etc.), then leave the wall on back



Additional Rule Clarifications

- In a Backstroke turn, if the swimmer turns past vertical to the breast, and with continuous motion touches the wall prior to a flip, this is not a violation of the rules.
- Except in breaststroke, after the swimmer initially breaks the surface, s/he should not re-submerge; some part of the body must remain above the surface.



BREASTSTROKE



Breaststroke - Timing of Permissible Butterfly Kick After the Start and Turns.

- Issued Nov 2014: Rule 101.2.3 is amended – the underlined passage indicates the affected wording.
- 101.2.3 Kick – After the start and each turn, at any time prior to the first breaststroke kick a single butterfly kick is permitted. 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.



Additional Rule Clarifications

- Breaststroke Rule Reminders:
 - Body should be on the breast in order for arm pull to be in “same horizontal plane.”
 - Only the first arm pull after start and turn can be past the hip line.
 - Toes must be pointed out on kick
 - Head must break surface of water by widest point of second arm pull, and on each cycle thereafter
- This is not a full list of all breaststroke rules, just clarifications of some of the more obscure rules



BUTTERFLY



Additional Rule Clarifications

- In Butterfly, the arm from the wrist to the shoulder must break the surface of the water throughout the recovery.
- Butterfly arm & leg movements are not required to be on the same horizontal plane.
- Except in breaststroke, after the swimmer initially breaks the surface, s/he should not re-submerge; some part of the body must remain above the surface.



FREESTYLE



Additional Rule Clarifications

- Except in breaststroke, after the swimmer initially breaks the surface, s/he should not re-submerge; some part of the body must remain above the surface.



INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY



USA Swimming Rule 101.6 & 101.7 – Freestyle leg of Medley Relay and Individual Medley

- Freestyle leg of Medley Relay and Individual Medley can be in any style except butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke
- Interpretation issued Sep 2017: “For the freestyle distance, the change permits the swimmer to be past vertical towards the back when executing a turn - including after the feet have left the wall. The rule requires that the swimmer’s body must return to the breast before any kick or stroke.”
- What does this mean?
 - Shoulders may be past vertical toward the back when swimmer leaves wall after completing turn
 - Shoulders must be past vertical toward breast when swimmer begins to kick or stroke
 - Swimmer cannot go past vertical toward back at any time during freestyle leg, except during the turn



RELAYS



Additional Rule Clarifications

- For in water starts, including relay starts, one hand must be in contact with the wall.
- For a relay in-water start, if the swimmer's hand loses contact with the wall before the previous swimmer makes contact with the wall, it would be an early take-off unless the swimmer retouches the wall with his/her hand after the previous swimmer has touched the wall.
- In Butterfly, the arm from the wrist to the shoulder must break the surface of the water throughout the recovery.

