

BACKSTROKE

With one exception, backstroke rules are very simple – “freestyle on the back”:

- 1. Backward start in the water, with no toes on, or past lip of gutter (if any):** “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.” – Starter responsible if in violation before or at start.
- 2. Swim and finish on the back – any kind of arm stroke and kick allowed:** “The swimmer shall push off on his back and continue swimming on the back throughout the race.” (101.4.2) “Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back” (101.4.4)
- 3. Swim on surface, except at finish, during turns, and during first 15 meters of each length:** “Some part of the swimmer must break the surface of the water throughout the race, except it is permissible for the swimmer to be completely submerged during the turn, at the finish and for a distance of not more than 15 meters (16.4 yards) after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface of the water.” (101.4.2)
- 4. “Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall.” (101.4.3)**
- 5. During the Turn:** After passing the flags, the swimmer may turn past vertical to the breast. Optional Single or Simultaneous double arm pull is permitted. Before or after the completion of the optional arm pull, kicking and gliding is permitted.
- 6. Examples of LEGAL backstroke turns (finish must be on back):**
 - a. Stay on the back, touch the wall, push off on the back.
 - b. Roll toward the breast, immediately contact the wall, push off on the back.
 - c. Roll toward breast, immediately execute flip turn ending in touch of wall, push off on back. NOTE: A small head, arm, or hand movement used as leverage to execute the flip turn is usually considered part of that rotation and not an independent action – this is a judgment call.
 - d. Roll toward breast, immediately take a single arm pull (using one or both arms), followed immediately by flip turn and/or touch of wall, push off on back.
 - e. The head passes under the flags and the swimmer goes to their breast and kicks into the wall while only using a one/two are simultaneous pull.

7. Most common backstroke DQ:

- a. Roll past vertical toward breast, then rolling back to their back prior to the turn.
- b. Two or more arm pulls while toward breast.
- c. No touch of wall- but may come back to the wall if they stay on their back.

Another frequent DQ: not on back off wall or at finish. Judges should observe relative position of shoulders after feet leave the wall and at (not after) finish touch.

Submersion before the finish: If you can't see the entire body, you can't make the call. “If the swimmer completely submerges prior to the turn judge having to shift 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.”