

From: Officials News officials.news@swimmingresults.org  
Subject: Starting in the Water
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NO

Following a number of recent queries on the above topic, please find reproduced below guidance that was originally issued in May 2011 and to which there has been no subsequent change.

Starting in the water

The FINA Technical Rule SW4 provides for 2 starts:

SW 4.1 *The start in Freestyle, Breaststroke, Butterfly and Individual Medley races shall be with a dive. On the long whistle (SW 2.1.5) from the referee the swimmers shall step onto the starting platform and remain there. 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.*

SW 4.2 *The start in Backstroke and Medley Relay races shall be from the water. At the referee's first long whistle (SW 2.1.5), the swimmers shall immediately enter the water. At the Referee's second long whistle the swimmers shall return without undue delay to the starting position (SW 6.1). When all swimmers have assumed their starting positions, the starter shall give the command "take your marks". When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal.*

Questions have been asked about what to do with the swimmer who for a variety of reasons may not be able or may not be permitted to start as defined above. Provision for starting in the water is contained within the FINA Masters Technical rules.

MSW 3.2 *When using the forward start, the referee's whistle shall indicate that the swimmers may take their positions with at least one foot at the front of the starting platform or pool deck, or in the water with one hand having contact with the starting wall.*

For all forward starts, as in SW4.1, where the swimmer must start in the water the swimmer must be stationary in the water with one hand in contact with the starting wall when the starting signal is given. For relay races the hand of the swimmer starting in the water must remain in contact with the starting wall until the incoming swimmer has completed their length and touched the wall. The team of the swimmer whose hand loses contact with the starting wall before the preceding swimmer touches the wall should be disqualified.

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