

S&T Situations & Resolutions for 2026
NVSL Clinic



Backstroke Situations:

Question 1: In a backstroke event, a swimmer touches the wall at the turn while on his back then stands up in the pool. The swimmer then pushes off with their feet from the wall at the turn end, leaving the wall on their back. Is there a disqualification?

(Ans.) No. Although the swimmer is no longer on their back, as required by *U.S. Swimming Rules and Regulations* Article 101.4.2, this action is considered part of the turn and is thus legal.

Question 2: A swimmer has gone past the vertical with the shoulder to execute a backstroke turn but is so close to the wall that he touches it ***without ever executing a somersault***. He then pulls himself into the wall and hangs there, resting, before pushing off from the wall on his back. Is he disqualified because he did not somersault?

(Ans.) No. He is not required to make a somersault as part of the turning action. Once he has touched the wall with any part of his body, the turning action is finished. Therefore, if he does that any time before his pulling hand, in the water, gets back to his legs, there is no need to take some other turning action, such as a somersault.

Question 3: A swimmer who has gone past vertical with the shoulder completes the backstroke turn but has failed to touch the wall; so, he sculls back to the wall, pushes off (losing 0.3 second), and continues. The turn judge reports this as a disqualification. Is this a valid DQ?

(Ans.) Yes. Article 101.4.2 says, "Upon completion of each length, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall," however, the turn must be continuous. Sculling back is not permitted in a continuous turn.

Question 4: A swimmer starts her race and surfaces prior to the 15 meter mark. She then resubmerges and resurfaces, again prior to the 15 meter mark. Is this legal?

(Ans.) No. Once the head breaks the surface of the water by the 15 meter mark, the swimmer may not resubmerge regardless of the fact that the swimmer resurfaces again within the 15 meter mark. The rule states, "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 and for a distance of not more



than 15 meters after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface of the water.” Once the surface has been reached, the start or turn has ended, and the requirement of remaining on the surface throughout the race is applicable. Applicable Rule: 101.4.2

Question 5: A Stroke and Turn Judge makes a resubmerged call at the finish of the backstroke. The Team Rep speaks with the Referee mentioning that the swimmer was inside the flags when they submerged. The Referee investigates the call with the Judge, where he learns that the Judge did not observe the location of the swimmers head when they submerged. Should the call be upheld?

(Ans.) No, the call should not be upheld. Once some part of the swimmers head passes the 5-meter mark immediately prior to reaching the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged prior to the touch. Even if they resurface, as long as they do not take another stroke they are legal.
Applicable Rule: 101.4.2

Question 6: A swimmer in a pool with a wide ledge stands on it at the start and his feet are underwater but his hands are above the knees of the swimmer who is acting as his “legs.” Neither the referee nor the starter correct the swimmer; however, after the start, the Stroke and Turn Judge calls the swimmer for a stroke violation since the athlete’s toes were curled over the lip of the gutter after the start. Is this a valid disqualification?

(Ans.) No. In the NVSL, swimmers may curl their toes over the gutter for the start. The referee and/or starter should have corrected the swimmer during the start for the hands above the “leg’s” knees infraction or disqualified him if he “stood” in the gutter after the start. The S&T Judge does not have jurisdiction over either of these calls.

Question 7: In a backstroke event, a swimmer stands up in the middle of the course. He does not walk or spring off from the pool bottom, but rests and then resumes swimming. Is there a disqualification?

(Ans.): Yes. Once the swimmer stands, he is no longer on his back. The rulebook states "The swimmer shall push off on his back and continue swimming on the back throughout the race." Moreover, a swimmer is not permitted to stand on the bottom during any stroke other than freestyle. *Applicable Rules:* 102.22.5

Question 8: After passing under the flags and preparing for a turn during a 50-meter backstroke event, a swimmer turns past the vertical towards the breast and extends his arm while kicking. He does not take an arm pull but continues to kick into the wall then executes a flip turn, leaving the wall on his back. Should he be disqualified?

(Ans.) The swimmer should be disqualified for a non-continuous turning action. As there is no initiation of the turning action after the shoulders pass vertical, the turning action is not continuous. The fact that the swimmer was kicking has no bearing on the disqualification. *Applicable Rules:* 101.4.3

Question 9: In an 8 & under 25-meter backstroke event, the stroke judge recommends a disqualification based on the fact that the swimmer swam elementary backstroke and not a "crawl" backstroke. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

(Ans.) The swimmer should not be disqualified. The backstroke rules do not specify any particular stroke or kick requirements, only that the race be swum on the back. There is no requirement that the stroke must be "crawl" or that the kick be a flutter kick. *Applicable Rules:* 101.4.2

Question 10: A swimmer was disqualified in a backstroke event when she stopped using the butterfly kick after the start and after each turn of this event. Was this DQ correct?

(Ans.) The swimmer should not be disqualified. A backstroke swimmer can use any kind of kick while they are on their back. *Applicable Rules:* 101.4.2

Instructor: Pause and ask if any of the attendees have experienced any situations in the backstroke that were unique or left them with questions on how to properly judge the backstroke. Ask if any one has any questions on the backstroke.



Butterfly Situations

Question 1: At the start of a butterfly event, a swimmer incorrectly believes that there has been a false start. She stands up in the pool but, realizing that no one else has stopped, she resumes swimming. Is there a disqualification?

(Ans.) Yes. *U.S. Swimming Rules and Regulations* Article 102.22.5 says that any swimmer who stands up in a stroke other than freestyle will be disqualified.

Question 2: In the butterfly event, a swimmer misjudges the wall. He finishes the race with his head only. Should he be disqualified?

(Ans.) Yes. *U.S. Swimming Rules and Regulations* Article 101.3.5 states that a two-hand touch is required for the finish of the butterfly event.

Question 3: Near the finish in a butterfly race, a swimmer starts his final stroke and finds himself too close to the wall to make a full recovery, so he ducks his head under and reaches forward simultaneously with both hands under water from the breast to touch. Is this legal?

(Ans.) No, this is illegal according to *USA Swimming Rules and Regulations* Article 101.3.2. “Both arms must be brought forward over the water....”

Question 4: In the 15-18 Boys Butterfly, a swimmer comes off the turn on his back with his arms fully extended and does two dolphin kicks (streamlined) before rolling onto his breast and taking his first arm pull. Is he disqualified?

(Ans.) Yes. While Article 101.3.2 indicates that a swimmer “is permitted one or more leg kicks” after the start and each turn, Article 101.3.4 stipulates that “the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall”.

Question 5: During the 13-14 Boys Butterfly, the swimmer in Lane 3 dives in at the start and swims 20 meters underwater with only his dolphin kick propelling him. Should he be disqualified?

(Ans.) Yes. Article 101.3.2 requires that the head must break the surface of the water by the 15-meter mark in the butterfly. This holds true for the freestyle and backstroke as well.



Question 6: A swimmer in a 11 -12 50 butterfly with insufficient strength to lift her arms completely over the water during the recovery phase of her stroke, pushes her arms forward with her elbow and part of her forearm remaining in the water, but with the remainder of her forearm, her wrists, and her hands clearly out of the water. The Stroke Judge signals a disqualification for failure to “bring the arms forward over the water” as required by Rule 101.3.2. The Referee overrules the call and explains that as long as any part of the arm recovers over the water the recovery requirement is met. Correct ruling?

(Ans.) No. First, the arm is defined as that body part running from the tip of one’s shoulder to the wrist. So, by definition, this swimmer’s arms did not recover over the water. The Referee erred by saying that the rule was satisfied if any part of the arm recovered over the water. In fact, the entire arm must recover over the water. However, there is no requirement that there be a visible space between the water and the recovering arms. Thus, had this swimmer been able to lift the arms sufficiently so that during the recovery the entire arms were above the water, or broke the surface of the water even though not completely clearing the water, the swim would have been legal. *Applicable Rules:* 101.3.2

Question 7: A swimmer likes to keep his feet separated while kicking to the surface of the water at the beginning of the butterfly. He was disqualified for not having his feet and legs together while he was doing the butterfly kick. Is this a valid disqualification?

(Ans.) No. The legs or the feet do not need to be on the same level. *Applicable Rules:* 101.3.3

Question 8: When swimming the butterfly, a swimmer’s right leg is slightly higher than her left leg. The legs move upward and downward simultaneously and do not alternate in relation to each other. Is this legal?

(Ans.) Yes, this is legal. The rule states, “All up and down movements of the legs and feet must be simultaneous. The position of the legs or the feet need not be on the same level, but they shall not alternate in relation to each other.” For the kick to be considered alternating, the official must observe one foot moving up while the other foot is moving down. *Applicable Rule:* 101.3.3

Question 9: The team rep and coach hang up the proposed entry list for Divisionals. The swimmers are directed to double check the list before it is turned in at the divisional seeding meeting and becomes the firm entry list. A swimmer does not follow the directions and is entered in butterfly rather than the breaststroke. She should have been seeded first in breaststroke. Since the firm entry list cannot be changed, she says she will swim the fly event. When her race begins, she swims breaststroke and throws off the other swimmers in her heat. How should this be handled?



(Ans.) As a minimum, the S&T Judge should disqualify her for “an underwater recovery” and “a breaststroke kicking movement”. In addition, the Referee has the option to disqualify her for poor sportsmanship and offer the other swimmers the option to swim the event again.

Question 10: A swimmer in the 50 yard butterfly takes a simultaneous two-arm pull, kicks several times with her arms at her sides, brings both arms simultaneously forward over the water, keeps her arms stretched out in front of her for several kicks and then does another simultaneous two-arm pull. She repeats this process throughout the swim. Should she be disqualified?

(Ans.) There should be no disqualification. There is no rule requiring an arm stroke between leg kicks. The swimmer may kick as many times as desired between strokes as long as both legs kick simultaneously. Applicable Rules: 101.3.2, 101.3.3.

Question 11: A swimmer in the 50 meter butterfly enters the water at the start and swims on her side without going past vertical toward the back. She performs a kick with both legs moving simultaneously without alternating but moving from side to side. The turn judge at the start end calls a disqualification stating that the swimmer did not perform a kick with an up and down motion. Should the DQ be accepted?

(Ans.) The DQ should not be accepted. The view of the kick as up and down is relative to the swimmer’s body. Applicable Rules: 101.3.2, 101.3.3

Instructor: Pause and ask if any of the attendees have experienced any situations in the butterfly that were unique or left them with questions on how to properly judge the butterfly. Ask if anyone has any questions on the butterfly.

Breaststroke Situations:

Question 1: A swimmer swims breaststroke the entire length of the pool crossing his arms in front each time he pulls. He is consistent in his pulling technique. Is this legal?

(Ans.) Yes, Changes to rule 101.2.2 removed the requirement for arms to be in the same horizontal plane. (*USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Article 101.2.2.*)

Question 2: A breaststroke swimmer moves his hands in a sculling or flipper movement at the end of the first arm stroke after the start and also after the turn. Should he be disqualified?

(Ans.) No, he should not be disqualified. This is legal provided “The arms shall move simultaneously and in the same horizontal plane without any alternating movement.” A sculling motion of the hands only as part of the arm stroke is not considered the beginning of a new stroke. (*USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Article 101.2.2.*)

Question 3: A swimmer with a partial paralysis is swimming breaststroke. Because of his disability, he is unable to turn his toes out when he kicks. How should he be judged?

(Ans.) A swimmer should not be judged by an inability to conform to the able bodied definition. Swimmers should be judged in the areas where they can compete.

Question 4: During the 9-10 Girls Breaststroke, the swimmer in Lane 4 drops her shoulder before the turn, but touches simultaneously with both hands, but on different levels. The Stroke and Turn Judge disqualifies her for her shoulders not being in line with the water. Will the Referee accept this call?

(Ans.) No. There is no requirement that the shoulders be in line with the water. (*USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Article 101.2.2.*)

Question 5: A S/T Judge watches a very good 12 year old girl in breaststroke and notices, after the turn, she is barely past vertical toward the breast when her feet leave the wall, she comes to a position on the breast just as she takes the first arm pull, and her head surfaces just before her hands turn inward at the widest part of the second stroke. He goes to the swimmer after the race, informs her of these observations and warns her that, in each case, she was “almost illegal.”

Comment: It is not illegal to be almost illegal—in fact, it may be desirable. S/T judges are reminded that they are judges of legality not style. (*USA Swimming Rules and Regulations* Article 101.2.2.) A Stroke & Turn judge should never speak to a swimmer, rep, coach or parent.

Question 6: In a breaststroke turn, the swimmer touches with his left hand and then touches immediately after with his right hand. The S&T judge raises a hand, signaling a disqualification. The team rep argues that the turn is legal because both hands were on the wall at the same time. Does the disqualification stand?

(Ans.) Yes, the rule is very clear. *USA Swimming Rules and Regulations* Article 101.2.4 states, “At each turn, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously....” Therefore, the hands must touch at the same time, not one after the other.

Question 7: After the swimmer dives in at the start, takes a legal arm pull, followed by a downward butterfly kick, followed by another arm pull that brings the swimmer to the surface, completes with a legal breaststroke kick, at which point the swimmer begins the normal breaststroke pull/kick cycle. Is this legal?

(Ans.) No. *USA Swimming Rules and Regulations* Article 101.2.3 states, “After the start and each turn a single butterfly kick which must be followed by a breaststroke kick is permitted.” The swimmer did not follow the butterfly kick with a breaststroke kick so they should be disqualified.

Question 8: A swimmer says he sprained his ankle and cannot turn his foot out in the breaststroke kick. Should he be disqualified if he does not turn his toes out in the propulsive part of the kick?

(Ans.) Yes. This does not qualify as a disability, which is defined in Article 105 as “a permanent physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.” No exception to the breaststroke rule is, therefore, warranted. Applicable Rules: 101.2.3, 105.1, 105.5

Question 9: While swimming the breaststroke, a swimmer touches the wall at the turn with both hands at the same time. However, the swimmer’s left hand was at the top of the wall while his right hand touched well below the surface of the water. The turn judge raised her hand and the swimmer was disqualified. Was the call correct?



(Ans.) No. the call was not correct. The breaststroke turn rule states that “the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface.” This allows the swimmers hands to be on different levels when they touch the wall. They still need to touch the wall at the same time. The same is true for the touch at the finish of the race. **(Note: in most NVSL pools there is a small lip that extends slightly beyond the pool wall, a simultaneous touch of the lip and the wall below it meets the requirement of this rule.)**

Applicable Rules: 101.2.4

Question 10: Coach Smith is teaching his swimmers to do what he believes is a faster technique of getting to the wall on the breaststroke finish. He wants his swimmers, when they are inside of the backstroke flags, to stay completely under the water and not take any breaths. It takes several complete cycles while wholly submerged before the swimmers touch. Is this legal?

(Ans.) No. During the swim some part of the swimmer’s head shall break the surface of the water at least once during each complete cycle of one arm stroke and one leg kick. Also, at the turn and finish, the head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the surface of the water at some point during any part of the last complete or incomplete cycle preceding the touch. Applicable Rules: 101.2.2, 101.2.4

Question 11: When a swimmer left the wall at the first turn of the 50-yard breaststroke he was on his back and was disqualified. Should the swimmer have been disqualified?

(Ans.) Yes, because the swimmer needs to be on his breast when he leaves the wall. This should be judged by observing when the feet leave the wall, and then looking at the position of the shoulders which should be at or past vertical towards the breast. Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

Question 12: Although a breaststroker’s head breaks the surface of the water during each cycle, she was disqualified at a recent meet for not taking a breath during each cycle. Is this a valid DQ?

(Ans.) There is no requirement to breathe at any specific point of any swim. The rulebook states, “some part of the swimmer’s head shall break the surface of the water at least once during each complete cycle of one arm stroke and one leg kick, in that order, except after the start and each turn the swimmer may take



one arm stroke completely back to the legs and one leg kick while wholly submerged.” There should be no disqualification. Applicable Rules: 101.2.2

Question 13: An 8-year-old approaches the first turn in the 50-meter breaststroke. Prior to touching, he does a flip turn and pushes off the wall with both feet. Is this legal?

(Ans.) No. The swimmer must touch the wall at the end of each length with both hands separated and simultaneously. The swimmer should be disqualified. Applicable Rules: 101.2.4

Question 14: After the start of the breaststroke, a swimmer realizes that his suit has come loose. He reaches back with both arms simultaneously to adjust his suit and brings his hands forward. He then takes a breaststroke kick. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

(Ans.) He should not be disqualified. His act of adjusting the suit, as described above, meets all of the requirements of the first legal breaststroke stroke. However, had this instead happened after the first stroke, it would be illegal if his hands were brought back beyond the hip line. Applicable Rule: 101.2.2

Question 15: When a swimmer swims the breaststroke, after each breaststroke kick, his feet travel downward as he recovers and draws the knees forward. Is this legal?

(Ans.) Yes. This is a natural part of the swimmer’s recovery and is not a separate kick. Applicable Rule: 101.2.3

Question 16: A Stroke and Turn Judge observes the touch of a swimmer during the turn of the 50 meter breaststroke. A couple of fingers are overlapping between the hands when the touch is made. The turn judge raises his hand to signal a disqualification, on the basis of the hands not being separated at the touch. Should the referee accept the call?

(Ans.) The referee should not accept the call. USA Swimming’s interpretation of the rule provides that incidental contact of the fingers at the touch is permitted. Applicable Rules: 101.2.4, “Breaststroke and Butterfly Hands Separated Interpretation”

Instructor: Pause and ask if any of the attendees have experienced any situations in the breaststroke that were unique or left them with questions on how to properly judge the breaststroke. Ask if anyone has any questions on the breaststroke.

Freestyle Situations

Question 1: In the freestyle, an 8-under swimmer gets tired, stops, and hangs on to the lane line to rest. After a few breaths, the swimmer yanks forward on the lane line to get started again and finishes the races. The S&T Judge raises a hand signaling a disqualification. Does the disqualification stand?

(Ans.) Yes. Article 102.22.10 states “Gripping lane dividers to assist forward motion is not permitted”.

Question 2: In the 50-meter freestyle event, after making the turn, the swimmer surfaces in the wrong lane. Because there was not a swimmer in that lane, the swimmer does not realize that s/he is in the wrong lane and finishes the race in the wrong lane. Should s/he be disqualified? Had the swimmer realized that s/he was in the wrong lane and switched back to the correct lane thus finishing the race in the proper lane, should s/he been disqualified?

(Ans.) Article 102.22.4 states “A swimmer must start and finish in the same lane.” In the first example, the S&T Judge should disqualify the swimmer for completing the race in the wrong lane. In the second example, the swimmer should not be disqualified even though s/he swam in the wrong lane (s/he finished in the proper lane).

Question 3: A swimmer got very tired on her 50-yard freestyle. She decided to stop and rest. By resting, her feet touched the bottom of the pool. After the short rest, she sprang from the bottom of the pool and completed the race. Should she have been disqualified?

(Ans.) Yes. Standing on the bottom during a freestyle race shall not disqualify a swimmer, but a swimmer must not leave the pool, or walk, or spring from the bottom. Standing on the bottom during any other stroke shall result in disqualification. Applicable Rules: 102.22.5

Question 4: A young “freestyler” just completed the only turn in the 50-yard freestyle, but didn't touch the wall. She started to swim and got as far as the middle of the pool when she decided to return to the turn end of the pool and touch without doing a flip turn. In the meantime, the official raised his hand and wrote a disqualification slip. Was this a valid disqualification?

(Ans.) No the disqualification should be pulled. Upon completion of each length the swimmer must touch the wall. She should not have been disqualified if she went back and touched the wall at the turn end prior to touching the wall at the finish end. The official was correct in raising their hand, but when the swimmer returned to the wall the DQ was not longer valid. Applicable Rules: 101.5.3



Instructor: Pause and ask if any of the attendees have experienced any situations in the freestyle that were unique or left them with questions on how to properly judge the freestyle. Ask if anyone has any questions on the freestyle.

Individual Medley

Question 1: During the 13-14 Girls 100 Meter Individual Medley in Divisionals, the swimmer in Lane 3 is on her back when she touches the wall at the end of the backstroke leg and remains on her back until after she leaves the wall in the breaststroke leg but immediately turns over onto her breast before making a pull after her feet have left the wall. Should she be disqualified?

(Ans.) Yes. Article 101.6.3 (B2) says that “...the swimmer may turn in any manner but the shoulders must be at or past the vertical toward the breast when the swimmer leaves the wall....”

Question 2: During the 9-10 Boys 100 Meter Individual Medley in Divisionals, the swimmer in Lane 5 rotates past vertical to the breast and executes a beautiful flip turn while transitioning from the backstroke to the breaststroke. The swimmer leaves the wall on his breast and starts a legal breaststroke pull. Should the swimmer be disqualified?

(Ans.) Yes. Article 101.6.3 (B2) also states that “must touch the wall on his back.” The transitions from one stroke to another in the IM are considered finishes and should be judge as such. The legal finish for the backstroke is on the back.

Instructor: Pause and ask if any of the attendees have experienced any situations in the IM that were unique or left them with questions on how properly judge the IM. Ask if anyone has any questions on the IM.

Medley Relay

Question 1: During the 9-10 Boys Medley Relay, the freestyle (4th) swimmer on one of the teams' dives into the water, rolls over and swims backstroke for his leg. A stroke and Turn Judge, citing USS Rule 101.5 (Freestyle) disqualifies the team since, according to that rule, "... in a medley relay or individual medley event, freestyle means any style other than butterfly, breaststroke or backstroke." Is this a valid DQ?

(Ans.) No. This rule has been modified by the NVSL rule 12.c, which stipulates that "In a Medley Relay or Individual Medley event, the Freestyle legs may be swum in any manner or style."

Instructor: Pause and ask if any of the attendees have experienced any situations in the Medley Relay that were unique or left them with questions on how properly judge the Medley Relay. Ask if anyone has any questions on Relays in general.

General Questions

Question 1: An experienced S/T judge hears a referee give an incorrect briefing on the breaststroke. What should he do?

Comment: This can be touchy, but the S/T can ask if the referee didn't mean to say ".." and give the correct rule. If the referee insists on the incorrect interpretation, talk to your team rep and have the team rep talk to the division coordinator. You certainly don't want that referee at Divisionals.

Question 2: A S&T Judge observes a clear flutter kick in butterfly, raises her hand and presents the DQ slip to the Referee at the end of the event. The Referee points out that he did not personally see the infraction but agrees with the Judge's explanation and interpretation. The rep of the affected swimmer's team objects since there was not dual confirmation of the proposed DQ.

Comment: Dual confirmation (meaning observation by Referee and Starter or by two Relay Take-Off Judges) applies only to starting DQs or early take-offs in relays. The DQ stands.



Question 3: S&T Judge A calls an infraction on an experienced swimmer and reports it to the Referee, who finds it hard to believe that the swimmer in question could be guilty, but was not watching this swimmer himself at the time of the call. The Referee calls over the S&T Judge B to ask what he may have seen at the time.

Comment: S&T judgment is subject to overrule only if the Referee personally sees the infraction, or if it is improper rule interpretation. Asking second opinion is not appropriate, since the second judge may not have been in a position to see the same infraction at the same time.

Instructor: Please stress the need to be thorough in completing a DQ slip, writing to the rule, and noting specifics such as where hands/arms are or right and left as appropriate.

Do remember to thank all the attendees for their role as S&T and the time they spend supporting swimming in this capacity.

Collect the clinic cards!
Thank Everyone for Coming Have a Great Summer