

USA Swimming Rule Changes in Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 adopted by the NVSL



There were several changes to the USA Swimming technical rules since the end of last season: one set in October 2025 and another set in May 2026. Not all of the changes impacted the NVSL. Here are the rule changes that the NVSL will be adopting, and have been incorporated into the 2026 Officials' briefing documents:

- October 2025
 - 101.1.2E. A swimmer shall be disqualified for an illegal starting position at the start if the swimmer moves from a legal starting position to an illegal starting position immediately prior to or after the "take your marks" command provided that the illegal starting position exists when the signal to start the race is given. Enforcement of the correct starting position is the responsibility of the Starter or the Stroke and Turn Judges.

(This rule change now also gives S&T Judges jurisdiction over enforcing the backstroke start. In addition, in the past a swimmer was not disqualified for an illegal starting position if the race was allowed to proceed. With the rule change, a swimmer should be disqualified if they assumed the illegal starting position immediately prior to or after the TYM command and maintain that position at the start.)

- 102.21.5. The swimmer must remain and finish the race in the same lane in which they started.

(In the past, a swimmer could start and finish in the same lane. Now a swimmer must remain in the same lane throughout the race.)

- May 2026
 - Article 101.3 (Butterfly):
 - .5 Finish — At the finish, the body shall be on the breast and the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water surface. Additionally, once some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the final 5-meter mark (long course and short



course meters) or 5-yard mark (short course yards), immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged.

- Article 101.4 (Backstroke):

- .2 Stroke — The swimmer shall push off on their back and continue swimming on the back throughout the race. 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 (16.4 yards) after the start and after each turn. By that point, the head must have broken the surface of the water. Additionally, once some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the final 5-meter mark (long course and short course meters) or 5-yard mark (short course yards), immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged prior to the touch.

- .4 Finish — Upon the finish of the race, the swimmer must touch the wall while on the back. Additionally, once some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the final 5-meter mark (long course and short course meters) or 5-yard mark (short course yards), immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged.

- Article 101.5 (Freestyle):

- .4 Finish — The swimmer shall have finished the race when any part of their person touches the wall after completing the prescribed distance. Additionally, once some part of the head of the swimmer has passed the final 5-meter mark (long course and short course meters) or 5-yard mark (short course yards), immediately prior to reaching for the finish, the swimmer may be completely submerged.