USA SWIMMING

AMERICA'S SWIM TEAM™

2011 RULEBOOK

USASWIMMING.ORG

PART SEVEN

OPEN WATER SWIMMING

USA Swimming Rules and Regulations apply to open water competition, unless specifically indicated otherwise in Part Seven. Swimmers, coaches, clubs, and local public entities should address safety considerations where events are held. Some safety provisions are contained in the USA Swimming Open Water Meet Directors Guidelines.

ARTICLE 701
CONDUCT AND OFFICIATING OF THE COMPETITION

701.1 EVENTS/MEETS

.1 Recommended individual events are listed in 102.1.3.

.2 Wet-Suit Events — Meet directors may request permission from their LSCs to allow the use of wet-suits in any non-championship event. If approved, there shall be separate classification for wet-suit swimmers which shall be clearly stated in the meet announcement and on the accompanying entry form. Swimmers using wet-suits shall be scored separately from swimmers competing without wet-suits.

.3 Team Events — Team events may be conducted in various formats concurrently with individual events, with the results achieved in the individual event used to compute the team scoring as announced in the meet announcement.

.4 Internet Distance Challenge

A A National Internet Distance Challenge shall be conducted annually. Except for .4C(4) below, swims must take place between September 1 and August 1.

B Times submitted from a 25-meter course shall be converted and integrated with yard times.

C Events

(1) Age-Group in 25-yard/meter pools — Swim own age in following distances: 9,10-year-olds–1000 yards/800 meters; 11,12-year-olds–2000 yards/1600 meters; 13,14, 15,16, 17,18-year-olds–3000 yards/2400 meters;

(2) Senior — 5000 yards/4000 meters in 25 yard/meter pools;

(3) One-Hour Swim for Distance (Age-Group and Senior) in 25 yard/meter pools;

(4) Ten-Kilometer Swim (Age-Group starting with the 13-14 age group, and Senior) in 50 meter pools (may be contested anytime from April 16 of the current year through April 15 of the next year).

D Awards

(1) Age-Group — First through sixth places;

(2) Senior — First through tenth places;

(3) Teams (Clubs) — First three places using 16-place scoring based on the composite score of any club's individual members' scores;

(4) With the concurrence of USA Swimming, meet hosts may offer additional awards and incentives.

701.2 RULES

.1 All open water competitions shall be freestyle events.

.2 The Host Committee shall include in the meet information the policy for abandonment and whether the race will be an "escorted" or "unescorted" swim.

.3 The Start

A Events may be started either:

(1) In-water – competitors stand or tread water in a depth sufficient for them to commence swimming on the start signal;

(2) From the beach – contestants line up and run into the water from the shore on the Starter's signal; or

(3) From a fixed platform – competitors' positions on the platform are determined by random draw and they commence racing on the start signal (See 103.2.3-Water Depth).

B In all starts, the start signal shall be both audible and visible. For fixed platform starts, the Starter shall give the command, "Take your mark," at which time the swimmers will assume a starting position with at least one foot at the front of the starting platform. When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.

C When the start for Men's and Women's competitions is staggered, the Men's events shall always start before the Women's events.

D If, in the opinion of the Referee, an unfair advantage has been gained by someone at the start, that swimmer may be disqualified.

E Prior to the start all escort safety crafts shall be stationed so as to avoid interference with any competitor. If catching up to their swimmers from behind, the craft shall navigate in such a way as to avoid maneuvering through the field of swimmers.

.4 The Finish

A Where in-water finish apparatus is not available, an on-shore finish where contestants run from the water to a finish point is permitted.

B The finish should be filmed and recorded by video system with slow motion and recall facilities including timing equipment.

.5 Escort Safety Craft

A Escort safety craft shall maintain a constant position at the sides of their swimmers and shall maneuver so as to avoid obstructing or placing themselves directly in front of another swimmer.

B Each escort safety craft shall contain a race judge, a person of the swimmer's choosing, and the minimum crew required to operate the escort safety craft.

C Coaching and the giving of instructions by a swimmer's representative on escort safety

craft or platforms is permitted. No whistles may be used by coaches.

.6 Time Limits — In all Open Water events, time limits shall be published in the meet announcement and shall apply as follows from the finish time of the first swimmer. Events with age group divisions will have the time applied by age group.

A	Events under 25KM	not less than 30 minutes
B	Events of 25 KM	not less than 60 minutes
C	Events of over 25 KM	not less than 120 minutes

.7 In events where feed poles are permitted, feed poles are not to exceed 5m (16 feet 5 inches) in length when extended. No objects, rope or wire may hang off of feed poles except banners or flags not to exceed 20cm x 30cm (8 inches x 12 inches).

701.3 MARKING — Prior to the start, entrants shall be marked with their race numbers on both upper arms and their upper backs. The competitors shall be numbered vertically down the arms and horizontally across the upper backs. Depending on the finish system used, the Referee may also require numbering elsewhere on the body (hands or thighs). Paddlers and escort boats for escorted swims shall also be marked on both sides with the swimmer's race number so it is easily seen from either side.

701.4 SWIMWEAR

.1 No swimmer shall be allowed to use or wear any device that may be an aid to his/her speed, endurance, or buoyancy. A maximum of two (2) caps may be used.

.2 Except as provided in 701.1.2, wet-suits, flotation aids or any similar items, and anything used to maintain body heat, except a reasonable application of body grease, are not allowed.

.3 Only swimsuits complying with FINA Open Water swimsuit specifications may be worn in any USA Swimming sanctioned or approved open water competition.

.4 Swimsuits for both men and women shall not cover the neck, extend past the shoulder, nor extend below the ankle.

701.5 DISQUALIFICATIONS

.1 Red Flag – A swimmer shall receive a Red Flag and be disqualified from further competition for:

A Accumulating two yellow flag infractions for any combination of rules violations. The Red Flag will be issued at the time of the second infraction;

B Failing to swim or complete the prescribed course. Competitors who do not finish the course within the time limit shall be removed from the water except that the Referee may allow a competitor outside the time limit to complete the course but not participate in any points or prizes awarded;

C Receiving assistance by pulling on the cables, line markers, buoys, or buoy lines (Note: Incidental contact shall not be a basis for disqualification.);

D Receiving propulsive aid from anyone in boats or other escort craft of any kind;

E Walking or pushing off the bottom or objects thereon. (Note: Pushing off at the start or walking at the finish where an on-shore finish is employed is permitted.);

F Receiving support from any fixed or floating object or touching or being touched by his/her escort safety craft or the crew. (Standing on the bottom during the race shall not disqualify the swimmer. Incidental physical contact while giving food or liquid to a swimmer

shall not result in disqualification.) Being touched by water safety personnel will not necessarily result in disqualification;

G Unsporting conduct. Swimmers will be disqualified if they, their support craft, or support personnel, commit an act that is deemed unsporting by the Referee. Examples of unsporting conduct include intentionally striking another swimmer, refusing to re-round a turn mark and intentional interference with another swimmer while approaching the finish; or

H Violating the swimwear rules. No swimmer shall be permitted to use or wear any device which may be an aid to his/her speed, endurance, or buoyancy. Goggles, a maximum of two (2) caps, nose clip and earplugs may be used.

.2 Yellow Flag – A swimmer shall receive a Yellow Flag caution for:

A Gaining an unfair advantage at the start. If in the opinion of the Referee, an unfair advantage has been gained at the start, the offending competitor will be given a Yellow Flag or a Red Flag as determined by the Referee;

B Receiving aid from a non-competing person in the form of pacing;

C Taking an unfair advantage by slipstreaming an escort safety craft. (Race judges shall instruct swimmers who are taking unfair advantage by pacing or, slipstreaming with escort safety craft to move clear.);

D Actions of his/her escort craft that interfere with another swimmer's progress or for failure of his/her craft or coach to heed the instruction of an assigned official; or

E Intentional contact with another swimmer or contact which causes interference.

701.6 DISQUALIFICATION PROCEDURE

.1 Yellow Flag — A swimmer who commits an infraction listed in 701.5.2 shall receive a Yellow Flag. The Referee will display a Yellow Flag and a card bearing the number of the swimmer being charged with the infraction. The Referee may use a whistle to attempt to get the swimmer's attention in order to notify the swimmer being charged with an infraction. There is no requirement for the swimmer to acknowledge the infraction.

.2 Red Flag — A swimmer who commits an infraction as listed in 701.5.1 shall receive a Red Flag (Disqualification). The Referee will display a Red Flag and a card bearing the number of the swimmer being charged with the infraction. The Referee may use a whistle to get the swimmer's attention in order to notify the swimmer of the disqualification. The disqualified swimmer must leave the water immediately.

701.7 THE MEET DIRECTOR shall determine the course for an open water event.

701.8 OFFICIALS — There should be no fewer than the following officiating positions filled. The positions of Referee, Safety Officer, Finish Judge and Timer shall not be combined with the duties of any other official.

Referee	Assistant Referee
Administrative Referee	Announcer
Safety Officer	Medical Officer
Course Officer	Clerk of Course
Starter	Chief Timer and 3 timers
Chief Finish Judge and 2 finish judges	Recorder
Race Judge (one per competitor in escorted races)	
Turn Judge (one at each change in the direction of the course)	

701.9 THE REFEREE

.1 Shall ensure that all participants, coaches, and event support personnel are briefed about the course, safety procedures and any site-specific rules applying to the event;

.2 Shall have the authority to stop the race or to change the distance and/or race course due to safety concerns or unforeseen circumstances;

.3 Shall have the authority to use any video or electronic or mechanical judging devices in judging the finish order or in making other rulings.

.4 Shall conduct a random draw for assignment of the Race Judges in escorted swims.

.5 Shall signal by a raised flag and a series of short blasts on a whistle that the start is imminent and when satisfied that the swimmers are ready, indicate by pointing the flag at the Starter that the competition may commence;

.6 May elect to start the race in waves whereby each wave (heat) is separated at the start from the previous wave by a set time interval. Swimmers' times shall be adjusted by the starting time interval and their order of finish shall be determined on the basis of the adjusted time.

.7 May segregate competitors into the men's and women's or other classifications (e.g., by age group), either by the position at the starting line or by separate time of start.

701.10 THE ASSISTANT REFEREE shall perform all duties assigned by the Referee.

701.11 THE ADMINISTRATIVE REFEREE shall be responsible for all administrative matters assigned by the Referee.

701.12 THE SAFETY OFFICER

.1 Shall be responsible to the Referee for all aspects of safety related to the conduct of the competition;

.2 Shall ensure that each escort craft is suitable;

.3 Shall check that the entire course and especially the start and finish areas are safe and free of all obstructions;

.4 Shall ensure that a sufficient number of powered craft are available during the competition to provide safety backup for the escort boats;

.5 When applicable, shall provide to all swimmers a tide and/or current charts indicating the time of tide changes on the course and showing the relationship between tides or current and swimmers' progress along the course; and

.6 In conjunction with the Medical Officer, shall advise the Referee if conditions are unsuitable for staging the competition and/or make recommendations for the modification of the course or the manner in which the competition is conducted.

701.13 THE MEDICAL OFFICER

.1 Shall be responsible to the Referee for all medical aspects related to the competition and competitors;

.2 Shall inform the local medical facilities of the nature of the competition and ensure that all casualties can be evacuated to them at the earliest opportunity;

.3 Shall advise the Referee in conjunction with the Safety Officer, if conditions are unsuitable for staging the competition and/or make recommendations for the modification of the course or the manner in which the competition is conducted.

701.14 THE COURSE OFFICER

.1 Shall be responsible for the accuracy of the survey establishing the distance of the course;

.2 Prior to the commencement of competition, shall inspect with the Referee and Safety Officer the course to ensure that all points are correctly marked and all equipment has been correctly installed and is in working order;

.3 Shall ensure that Turn Judges are in position prior to the start of the competition and report this to the Assistant Referee; and

.4 Shall serve as pilot in the lead boat when one is used.

701.15 THE CLERK OF COURSE

.1 Shall assemble and instruct the competitors prior to the competition and ensure proper reception for the competitors at the finish;

.2 Shall ensure that each competitor is correctly marked with his/her race number and that all swimmers have trimmed fingernails and are not wearing any jewelry including watches;

.3 Shall be certain all swimmers are present, in the assembly area, at the required time prior to the start; and

.4 Shall keep competitors and officials informed of the time remaining before the start at suitable intervals and at one minute intervals for the last five minutes.

701.16 THE STARTER

.1 Shall assume a position clearly visible to all competitors;

.2 On a signal from the Referee, shall raise a distinctive flag to a vertical position;

.3 Holding the arm straight, shall simultaneously bring the arm holding the flag down and shall activate an audible signal to signify the start; and

.4 When swimmers are starting from a fixed platform, the Starter shall give the command, “Take your mark,” at which time the swimmers will assume a starting position with at least one foot at the front of the starting platform. When all swimmers are stationary, the Starter shall give the starting signal.

701.17 THE RACE JUDGE

.1 Shall be positioned in the escort boat so as to be able to observe his or her appointed swimmer at all times to ensure compliance with the rules of competition and that any violations are recorded and reported to the Referee;

.2 Shall have the authority to order a swimmer from the water upon expiration of the time limit or when so ordered by the Referee;

.3 Shall ensure that the assigned swimmer does not take unfair advantage or commit unsportsmanlike impedance of another swimmer and, if the situation requires, instruct the swimmer to maintain clearance from any other swimmer; and

.4 Shall immediately inform the Referee if the assigned swimmer withdraws from the event and

shall record the completed distance and the time of the withdrawal.

.5 In unescorted races, the Referee may assign Race Judges to monitor specific areas of the competition such as the feed station. These judges shall report observation of rules violations to the Referee immediately.

701.18 THE TURN JUDGE

.1 Shall be positioned so as to ensure that all swimmers comply with the turn and other change-of-course procedures.

.2 Shall record any violation of the turn procedures and indicate to the Referee any infraction at the time it is observed.

701.19 THE CHIEF TIMER

.1 Shall assign at least three Timers to their positions for the start and finish;

.2 Shall brief the Timers on their duties and the details of their assignment;.

.3 Shall ensure that a time check is made to allow all persons to synchronize their watches with the official race clock, if applicable, at least 15 minutes before start time; and

.4 May arrange for the use of automatic or semi-automatic timing devices in addition to watches.

701.20 THE CHIEF FINISH JUDGE

.1 Shall assign each Finish Judge to a position;

.2 Shall brief Finish Judges on their duties and the details of their assignment; and

.3 After the race, shall collect the signed results sheets from each Finish Judge and determine the order of finish and deliver the results to the Referee or his or her designee.

701.21 THE FINISH JUDGE

.1 Shall be positioned in line with and where he/she can have a clear view of the finish, and

.2 Shall record the finish place of each swimmer.

701.22 THE RECORDER shall record withdrawals from the competition, enter results on official forms, and maintain the record for team awards as appropriate.

ARTICLE 702
VENUE STANDARDS

702.1 THE COURSE

.1 The course shall be measured as accurately as possible with the available navigational or survey equipment.

.2 The course shall be in water that is subject to only minor currents or tide and may be salt or fresh water.

.3 With the exception of beach starts and beach finishes, the minimum depth of water at any point on the course shall be 1.4 meters.

.4 Guide Buoy - A distinctively marked colored float in the water, anchored to provide naviga-

tional guidance for swimmers, may be used. Guide buoys shall be non-directional in nature and swimmers may pass on either side of the buoy. Guide buoys must be colored differently from turn buoys.

702.2 WATER TEMPERATURE — The water temperature should be a minimum of 16°C (60° F).

702.3 THE START

.1 The start line shall be clearly defined by either overhead apparatus or by removable equipment at water level.

.2 If the race is started from a fixed platform, the water depth requirements of 103.2.3 must be met. Additionally, the Course Officer and Referee shall have the start area inspected for hidden underwater obstacles or obstructions. If there is any doubt as to the condition of the start area, an in-water or beach start shall be used.

702.4 TURNS/CHANGES IN COURSE

.1 Turn Buoys - All turns and other changes in direction on the course shall be clearly indicated by turn buoys which shall be distinctively marked colored floats, anchored to mark the course for swimmers. Turn buoys shall be directional in nature and must be passed with a right shoulder turn or left shoulder turn, as stated in the pre-race instructions.

.2 A clearly marked craft or platform for a turn judge shall be securely fixed in position at all locations where alterations in direction on the course occur and in such a manner as not to obstruct the swimmers' view or negotiation of the turn, while providing a clear view of the swimmers' turns for the officials.

702.5 THE FINISH

.1 The final approach to the finish shall be clearly defined with markers of a distinctive color. The area leading to the finish apparatus should be clearly marked by rows of buoys which narrow as they get closer to the finish wall. Escort safety craft should be stationed at the approach to and entrance of the finish lane to ensure that only the escort craft authorized to do so enter or cross this entrance.

.2 The finish line shall be clearly defined and marked by a vertical surface at least five meters wide. The finish apparatus, where possible, should be a stationary panel securely fastened in place so as to not be moved by wind, tide, or force of the swimmer striking it.

.3 When Automatic Officiating Equipment (microchip technology) is used for timing of the race, the official time for the finish shall be recorded in tenths of seconds. Actual finish placement shall be determined by manual finish judging and/or video replay of the finish.

ARTICLE 703
RECORDS

703.1 Because of differences in courses, currents and other physical factors, records for open water events are not maintained. For long distance events swum in a pool, records are maintained as U.S. Open Records.

703.2 Open Water and Long Distance U.S. Open individual and team records for men and women may only be achieved in a sanctioned or approved event and will be maintained as indicated below:

.1 Time/Distance Events:

A One-Hour Swim (25 Yard Pool)

B 12- and 24-Hour Swim (50 Meter Pool)

.2 Set Distances:

A Five-mile increments (5, 10, 15 miles, etc.) (25 Yard Pool)

B Five kilometer increments (5, 10, 15..... 50.....100 Kilometers) (50 meter Pool)

C Age Group 1000-2000-3000 Yard (25 yard pool)

D Senior 5000 Yard (25 yard pool)

ARTICLE 704
USA SWIMMING OPEN WATER NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

See sections 207.1, 207.3, 207.6, 207.8, 207.10, 207.12 for additional rules pertaining to Open Water National Championships.

704.1 START AND FINISH

.1 An in-water start and an in-water finish are required.

.2 Video taping of the finish shall be provided for meets from which National Teams are selected.

704.2 ABANDONMENT — Where emergency conditions require a race to be halted before it is completed, the following shall apply:

.1 Races of 10K or shorter: In the event of abandonment, the race shall be re-started from the beginning at the earliest possible time and the full distance completed.

.2 Races longer than 10K: If the race is abandoned prior to the lead swimmer completing three-fourths of the distance of the event, the race shall be re-started from the beginning at the most appropriate time, as decided by the meet committee, and the full distance completed. If the race is abandoned when the lead swimmer has completed at least three-fourths of the race, the race shall be considered complete. The final placings of all swimmers shall be determined by the Meet Referee.

.3 Situations not covered above shall be determined by the Meet Committee.

704.3 ENTRY FEES — The entry fees shall be determined by the Meet Director with the concurrence of Program Operations.

704.4 ENTRY PROCESS AND MEET INFORMATION BOOK — The entry procedure shall be stated in the meet announcement. The meet announcement shall be prepared under joint direction of and approved by the Steering Committee, the Meet Director, Program Operations, and the USA Swimming Executive Director or his/her representative.

704.5 RESULTS — shall be submitted to the Steering Committee, USA Swimming, and posted on the USA Swimming web site.

704.6 TEAM EVENT ENTRIES

.1 Clubs may enter more than one team in each category. Prior to the start of the competition coaches shall designate the category (men's, women's, mixed) and the team (A, B, C, etc.) in which their swimmers will compete.

.2 When participating concurrently in individual and team events, no participant shall compete in more than two team events, one of which may be as a member of his/her gender-specific team and the other as a member of a mixed-gender team.

704.7 SCORING — Scoring of individual events will be on a sixteen (16) place basis: 20, 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 9, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

.1 Team Events - team events shall be scored in men's, women's and mixed-gender categories.

.2 National Event Club Championship

A A club champion shall be determined by totaling the scores of individual club members in the event. Club champions will be named in the following categories: Women's, Men's and Combined.

B To be eligible for the Combined Men's and Women's Club Championship, a club must have scored points in both the men's and women's events.

704.8 AWARDS

.1 Individual champions shall be determined and awarded in women's and men's competitions. Medals shall be awarded to all first through eighth place finishers in each individual event.

.2 The male and female swimmers 18 years of age and younger attaining the highest finish position shall be designated as the USA Swimming 18 and under Open Water Swimming Champion in each contested event and shall receive the appropriate USA Swimming Championship medals.

.3 The American male and female swimmers ages 16 and younger and the American male and female swimmers ages 17-18 years placing highest in the 5k and 10k events shall be designated the USA Swimming Age Group National Champion in their respective age group and shall receive the appropriate USA Swimming Championship medals.

.4 Team Event medals shall be awarded to team event members placing first through third.

.5 Awards shall be given to the top three clubs: men's, women's and combined where the following criteria are met:

A Men's or Women's — In order for awards to be given within a specific gender, that gender shall have a minimum of 16 competitors from at least three clubs starting the race.

B Combined — To be eligible for this award, a club must have scored points in both the men's and women's races, and there must have been a minimum of three clubs participating in each gender's race.

.6 The Meet Host may present additional individual and team awards with approval from Program Operations.

704.9 ELIGIBILITY — Qualifying times and/or qualifying criteria may be established by the Meet Director with the concurrence of the Steering Committee.

704.10 PROOF OF TIME — A swimmer entered in any USA Swimming National Championships shall be required to show proof of having met the qualification standards as set forth in the meet announcement.