

Santa Barbara Channel Swimming Association



Swim Rules and Logistical Guidelines

v. 2015-1

I. Swim Categories

A. Marathon Swim

A swim that follows the traditional rules of marathon swimming, which have remained in large part unchanged since 1875, when Capt. Matthew Webb first swam across the English Channel. Swimmers are permitted to wear a standard textile swimsuit, one standard cap, goggles, ear plugs, a nose clip, and grease. Artificial aids – which are considered to be anything that improves speed, buoyancy, or heat retention – are prohibited.

B. Assisted Swim

A swim that follows all the rules of a Category A (marathon) swim, with the exception that the swimmer may wear a swimsuit and cap of any material, thickness, and coverage (e.g., wetsuit). Assisted swims are not eligible for course records or “firsts.”

II. Swim Rules

These rules will be read aloud by the observer before every swim attempt.

A. General Rules

1. The boat captain has the ultimate authority on the boat. (S)he may call off a swim at any time because (s)he perceives that anyone’s safety may be in jeopardy.
2. The observer is in sole charge of interpreting the rules during a swim. (S)he may call off a swim at any time because of failure to comply with the rules or danger to the swimmer. Failure to follow the observer’s instructions by the swimmer or any support person will result in disqualification.
3. If the swim is called off by the captain or observer, the swimmer must immediately exit the water.
4. The swimmer is permitted to wear one standard swimsuit, one standard cap, goggles, ear plugs, a nose clip, and may grease their body.
5. The swimmer may not use or be assisted by artificial aids of any kind.
6. For any part of the swim that occurs after sunset or before sunrise, the swimmer must wear sufficient illumination (glow sticks or LED lights) to be visible from the boat.
7. The swimmer must be aged 14 years or older on the day of the swim attempt.
8. During the swim, the swimmer may not make supporting contact with any person or object.
9. The swimmer may be escorted by one or more support paddlers.
10. The swimmer may be escorted by one or more support swimmers. A support swimmer may swim for up to two hours at a time, at which point (s)he must exit the water for at least fifteen minutes before re-entering the water.
11. The swimmer may not intentionally draft off either the escort boat or the support swimmer.
12. The swimmer must start from one natural connecting shore, either standing above the water line or touching a cliff face, and finish on the opposite natural connecting shore, either standing above the water line or touching a cliff face.
13. The timing of the swim starts when the swimmer enters the water or releases contact with the cliff face, and ends when the swimmer clears the water or touches a cliff face on the opposite shore. The observer is in sole charge of timing the swim.
14. No alcoholic beverages may be consumed by anybody associated with the swim or the escort

vessel, from dock to dock.

15. A swimmer must not take any drugs that are on the U.S. Olympic Committee's list of prohibited medications.
16. The swimmer or crew may not intentionally pollute the ocean with trash or debris (including but not limited to feed cups and gel packs) at any point before, during, or after the swim, from dock to dock.

B. Double/Multiple Crossings (if applicable)

17. Each single crossing (called a “leg”) must conform to each of the General Rules above.
18. After completing one leg of a multiple-crossing by clearing the water, the swimmer must re- enter the water to begin the subsequent leg (if applicable) no more than ten minutes later.
19. During this time between legs (the “interlude”), the swimmer may be handed food, medicines, swimming apparel, and grease, but (s)he cannot be touched by anyone.
20. The elapsed time of the swim continues running during the interlude.

C. Relays (if applicable)

21. A relay team may be comprised of any number of swimmers between two and six. Up to two alternates may be listed in the application, in case one of the relay members becomes unavailable to participate.
22. The relay must designate a non-swimming crew leader.
23. Each relay member shall swim for a set time period – called a “leg” – each time he or she enters the water. The team shall choose its own leg duration (recommended one hour, but no less than 30 minutes), but it must be the same for each swimmer, and must remain constant throughout the duration of the relay.
24. The order of rotation must remain the same throughout the duration of the relay.
25. Swimmer exchange: The new swimmer must approach the preceding swimmer from behind, pass him or her, and touch hands above the water. The exchange must not exceed five minutes.
26. A relay team may substitute an “alternate” in place of a core team member, provided: (a) the alternate was listed in the original application, and (b) the core member has not yet entered the water to begin a leg. No more than two alternate substitutions are allowed. (This circumstance may arise if, for example, a team member fails to show up at the dock, or a team member becomes sick or otherwise disabled on the ride to the starting point.)
27. Any relay member who has swum any part of any leg is not eligible to be replaced with an alternate.
28. If any swimmer exits the water before his or her leg is completed, or does not enter the water when his or her leg is scheduled to begin, the relay is disqualified.
29. If a relay is disqualified, the swim is over. Swimmers must exit the water immediately, and the escort boat must return to the harbor.

D. Circumnavigation swims (if applicable)

30. For a circumnavigation swim, the swimmer may choose any starting point along the natural connecting shore of the island. The swim starts when the swimmer either clears the water and re-enters, or touches and releases from a cliff face.
31. To complete the circumnavigation, the swimmer must swim all the way around the island, and then clear the water or touch a cliff face beyond the starting point – thus “closing the loop.”

E. Assisted swims (if applicable)

32. Assisted Swims must conform to all of the above-listed rules, with the exception that the swimmer is permitted to wear a swimsuit and cap of any material, thickness, and coverage.

F. Non-Freestyle Stroke Swims (if applicable)

The SBCSA recognizes butterfly, backstroke, and breaststroke swims with the following supplemental rules:

33. The swimmer must maintain legal form of the stated stroke for the entire swim (except as noted below). U.S. Masters Swimming definitions of butterfly, backstroke, and breaststroke apply.
34. The swimmer may break stroke during feedings. However, (s)he may not make any forward progress during this time.
35. At the start or finish of the swim, when the water is shallow enough to touch bottom, the swimmer may break stroke in order to stand.
36. For backstroke swims, the swimmer must start and finish the swim backwards:
 - a. for beach starts and finishes, by walking into or out of the ocean backwards;
 - b. for cliff starts and finishes, by touching the cliff while on one's back.

III. Clarification on Allowed Swimwear and Devices

1. Any device or apparel that benefits speed, buoyancy, or warmth other than the listed *standard equipment* is considered to be an artificial aid and is prohibited.
 - a. Standard equipment for Category A (Marathon) swims is listed in Section II / A / #4.
 - b. Standard equipment for Category B (Assisted) swims is the same as for Category A swims, except that neoprene and/or increased-coverage swimwear is allowed.
2. Swimwear definitions:
 - a. Swimsuits for Category A (marathon) swims must be porous and made from textile materials.
 - b. Men's swimsuits must not extend below the knees or above the navel. Jammer-style suits are permissible.
 - c. Women's swimsuits may be in one or two pieces, but must not cover the neck, extend past the shoulder, nor extend below the knees.
 - d. Swim caps must be standard-style and constructed from latex or silicone. Neoprene caps, multiple caps, and caps with chin straps are prohibited.
 - e. Full-body suits of any material, including wetsuits and neoprene caps, are allowed on Category B (Assisted) Swims only.
3. If the swimmer utilizes an electronic shark deterrent, the device may not trail off the swimmer.
4. If the swimmer is uncertain whether a device or apparel item is allowed under these rules, he or she should seek clarification from the SBCSA well in advance of the swim attempt.

IV. Other Regulations

If any of the following pre-swim requirements are not met, the SBCSA reserves the right to cancel the swim attempt (with refund of fees according to the schedule published in the Swim Application).

A. Sanction Applications

1. A complete application package, along with requisite fees, must be received by the SBCSA at least 60 days before the swim attempt.
2. Solo swimmers must demonstrate sufficient open water marathon swimming experience to justify their planned attempt. This information is provided in the "Swim History" section of the Solo Application.

B. Hiring an Escort Boat and Pilot

3. It is solely the swimmer's responsibility to arrange the dates, meeting times, and departure times with the escort boat and to communicate this information to the observer and support crew.
4. The escort boat must be large enough to accommodate the swimmer, observer(s) and support crew. It is the swimmer's responsibility to determine the boat has sufficient capacity before booking. Keep in mind, the swimmer counts toward this capacity even if he or she is in the water.
5. The escort boat must be licensed with the U.S. Coast Guard, and a copy of this license must be on file with the SBCSA.
6. According to the USCG "12 Hour Rule," a commercial boat captain may not work for more than 12 of any 24 hours at sea, except in an emergency when life or property is endangered. If the escort pilot is a commercial captain, and the swim attempt may last more than 12 hours (dock to dock), it

is the swimmer's responsibility to ensure there is a second licensed captain aboard the vessel. Note: If the escort pilot is not a commercial boat captain, this rule does not apply.

7. The boat pilot must be familiar with SBCSA rules. If a pilot has not escorted a SBCSA swim before, (s)he must confirm in writing that (s)he has read and understands the rules.

C. Observers

8. The SBCSA will assign an observer to the swim attempt. Swimmers are not permitted to assign observers. A swimmer may request an observer, or request a change in observers, and the SBCSA may accommodate these requests at its discretion.
9. Within three weeks of a Swim Application being accepted by the SBCSA, the swimmer (or relay) will receive an email identifying the assigned observer for the swim. The swimmer and observer(s) are expected to be in communication with each other at least 30 days before the swim attempt (contact information will be provided in the email).

D. Support Crew

10. It is the swimmer's responsibility to recruit a support crew capable of handling feedings, paddling, and other needs of the swimmer. The observer's job is to observe only, not to act in a support capacity. If the support crew is more than two people, it is recommended to designate a crew chief.
11. The minimum age for support crew is 14 years.

E. Navy Permits (if applicable)

12. If the swim attempt involves San Clemente Island or San Nicolas Island, which are owned and operated by the U.S. Navy, it is the swimmer's responsibility to secure permission from the Navy to land on the island. Written permission from the Navy must be on file with the SBCSA at least two weeks before the swim attempt. If it is not, the SBCSA will cancel the swim.

V. After the Swim

1. Every application for ratification of a swim must be accompanied by an official observer's log, completed forms, and fees. Additional evidence may be requested by the SBCSA at its discretion.
2. Category A (marathon) swims and Category B (assisted) swims are recognized in separate categories. Assisted Swims are not eligible for Records or Firsts.
3. If a swimmer uses a start or finish location substantially different than the typical route, the SBCSA may recognize this in the Swim Successes list. However, for records and firsts we do not distinguish among different start and finish locations.
4. The SBCSA recognizes butterfly, backstroke, and breaststroke swim in the Swim Successes list. However, we do not distinguish among different stroke styles for records or firsts.
5. The SBCSA recognizes one record in each of four categories, per crossing:
 - a. First – overall, female, male
 - b. Fastest – overall, female, male
 - c. Youngest – male, female
 - d. Oldest – male, female