



OPEN WATER SWIMMING RULES

January 2020

SWIMMING AUSTRALIA OPEN WATER SWIMMING RULES

All Swimming Australia Open Water Swimming Championships and Open Water Swimming competitions shall be governed by Swimming Australia Open Water Swimming Rules and By-Laws.

NOTE: (Swimming Australia has crossed referenced FINA rules by sub-text where its rule and that of FINA are identical. Where the rule is prefaced by "A" it is a Swimming Australia rule or does not follow FINA Rule sequence).

OWS1

FINA OWS1

OWS1.1.

DEFINITIONS

OPEN WATER SWIMMING shall be defined as any competition that takes place in rivers, lakes, oceans or water channels, dams, or rowing courses except for 10km events.

OWS1.1.1

FINA OWS1.1.1

MARATHON SWIMMING shall be defined as any 10km event in open water competitions.

AOWS1.2

All age swimmers for Australian Open Water Championships shall have their age determined as at 31 December of the year of the competition.

AOWS1.2.1

All open swimmers for Australian Open Water Championships shall have their age determined as at the first day of competition.

AOWS2

FINA OWS5

AOWS2.1

THE VENUE

Swimming Australia Open Water Swimming Championships shall be conducted over distances and at a venue and course approved by Swimming Australia.

AOWS2.2

FINA OWS5.2

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

AOWS2.3

FINA OWS5.3

All available precautions will be implemented to ensure the suitability and safety of swimmers at the chosen venue. A certificate of suitability for use of the venue shall be issued by the appropriate local health and safety authorities. In general terms the certification must relate to water purity and to physical safety from other considerations.

AOWS2.4

FINA OWS5.4

The minimum depth of water at any point on the course shall be 1.40 metres.

AOWS2.5

FINA OWS5.5

The water temperature should be a minimum of 16°C and a maximum of 31°C. It should be checked the day of the race, two hours before the start, in the middle of the course at a depth of 40cm. This control should be done in the presence of a commission made up of the following persons present: a referee, a member of the organising committee and one coach from the teams present designated during the technical meeting.

AOWS2.5.1

FINA OWS5.5.1

The Safety Officer shall monitor temperature conditions periodically during the race.

AOWS2.6

FINA OWS5.6

All turns/alterations of course shall be clearly indicated. Directional buoys which are alterations of the course shall be of a different colour to guidance buoys.

AOWS2.7
FINA OWS5.7 A clearly marked craft or platform, containing a Turn Judge, shall be positioned at all alterations of course in such a manner as not to obstruct a swimmer's visibility of the turn.

AOWS2.8
FINA OWS5.8 All feeding platforms, turning apparatus and Turn Judges craft /platforms shall be securely fixed in a position and not be subject to tidal, wind or other movements.

AOWS2.9
FINA OWS5.9 The final approach to the finish shall be clearly defined with markers of a distinctive colour, and, shall comprise the boundary of the course.

AOWS2.10
FINA OWS5.10 The finish shall be clearly defined and marked by a vertical face.

AOWS3
FINA OWS2

AOWS3.1
FINA OWS2

OFFICIALS

The following officials shall be appointed at Open Water Swimming competitions:

- A Chief Referee (one per race)
- Referees (two minimum, additional Referees proportional to race entries)
- Chief Timekeeper plus two Timekeepers
- Chief Finish Judge plus two Finish Judges
- Safety Officer
- Medical Officer
- Course Officer
- Clerk of the Course
- Recorder
- Race Judges (one per swimmer) except for events with a course of 10km or less
- Turn Judges (one per alteration of course)
- Feeding Platform Judge (when feeding platforms are used)
- Starter
- Announcer

NOTE: No official can act in more than one role simultaneously. They may only undertake a new role after all of the obligations of their previous role have been fulfilled.

AOWS3.2 For events of 10km or less the Safety Officer and Course Officer's positions and duties may be combined.

AOWS4
FINA OWS3

DUTIES OF OFFICIALS

THE CHIEF REFEREE shall:

AOWS4.1
FINA OWS3.1

Have full control and authority over all officials and shall approve their assignments and instruct them regarding all special features or regulations related to the competition. The Chief Referee shall enforce all the rules and decisions of Swimming Australia and shall decide all questions relating to the actual conduct of the competition, the final settlement of which is not otherwise covered by these rules.

AOWS4.2
FINA OWS3.2

Have authority to intervene in the competition at any stage to ensure that the rules are observed.

AOWS4.2.1
FINA OWS3.2.1 In case of hazardous conditions that jeopardise the safety of the swimmers and the officials, in conjunction with the Safety Officer, the Chief Referee can stop the race.

AOWS4.3
FINA OWS3.3 Adjudicate on all protests related to the competition in progress.

AOWS4.4
FINA OWS3.4 Give a decision in cases where the Judges' decisions and times recorded do not agree.

AOWS4.5
FINA OWS3.5 Signal to swimmers, by raised flag and short blasts on a whistle, that the start is imminent and when satisfied indicate by pointing the flag at the Starter that the competition may commence.

AOWS4.6
FINA OWS3.6 Disqualify any swimmer for any violation of the Rules that the Chief Referee personally observes or which is reported to the Chief Referee by other authorised officials. Notwithstanding the provisions of OWS6.3 hereof the Chief Referee may decide to enforce the disqualification at the end of the race.

AOWS4.7
FINA OWS3.7 Ensure that all necessary officials for the conduct of the competition are at their respective posts. The Chief Referee may appoint substitutes for any who are absent, incapable of acting or found to be inefficient. The Chief Referee may appoint additional officials if considered necessary.

OWS4.8
FINA OWS3.8 Receive all reports prior to the start of the race and at the conclusion of the race from the Clerk of the course, Recorder, Course Officer and Safety Officer; to ensure all swimmers are accounted for.

THE REFEREES shall:

AOWS4.9
FINA OWS3.9 Have authority to intervene in competition at any stage to ensure that Swimming Australia rules are observed.

AOWS4.10
FINA OWS3.10 Disqualify any swimmer for any violation of the rules that the Referee personally observes.

THE STARTER shall:

AOWS4.11
FINA OWS3.11 Start the race in accordance with AOWS5 following the signal by the Chief Referee.

THE CHIEF TIMEKEEPER shall:

AOWS4.12
FINA OWS3.12 Assign at least two Timekeepers to their positions for the start and finish.

AOWS4.13
FINA OWS3.13 Ensure that a time check is made to allow all persons to synchronise their watches with the official running clocks fifteen minutes before start time.

AOWS4.14
FINA OWS3.14 Collect from each Timekeeper a card showing the time recorded for each swimmer, and, if necessary, inspect their watches.

AOWS4.15
FINA OWS3.15 Record or examine the official time on the card for each swimmer.

TIMEKEEPERS shall:

AOWS4.16
FINA OWS3.16 Take the time of each of swimmer/s assigned. The watches must have memory and print out capability and shall be certified correct to the satisfaction of the Management Committee.

AOWS4.17
FINA OWS3.17 Start their watches at the starting signal, and only stop their watches when instructed by the Chief Timekeeper.

AOWS4.18
FINA OWS3.18 Promptly after each finish record the time and swimmer's number on the time card and turn it over to the Chief Timekeeper.

NOTE: When Automatic Officiating Equipment is used, the same complement of hand timers is to be used.

THE CHIEF FINISH JUDGE shall:

AOWS4.19
FINA OWS3.19 Assign each Judge to a position.

AOWS4.20
FINA OWS3.20 Record and communicate any decision received from the Referees during the competition.

OWS4.21
FINA OWS3.21 Collect after the race, signed results sheets from each Finish Judge and establish the result and placings which shall be sent directly to the Chief Referee.

AOWS4.22
FINA OWS3.22 Confirm to each Race Judge their escort boat and instruct them in their duties.

NOTE: FINA OWS3.23 omitted as it is a duplication of FINA OWS3.20

AOWS4.23
FINA OWS3.24 Collect after the race, signed sheets from each Race Judge of their observations during the race which shall be sent directly to the Chief Referee.

FINISH JUDGES, (two) shall:

AOWS4.25
FINA OWS3.25 Be positioned in line with the finish where they shall have at all times a clear view of the finish.

AOWS4.26
FINA OWS3.26 Record after each finish the placing of the swimmers according to the assignment given.

NOTE: Finish Judges shall not act as Timekeepers in the same event.

EACH RACE JUDGE shall:

AOWS4.27
FINA OWS3.27 Be positioned in an escort safety craft (where applicable), assigned by random draw prior to the start, so as to be able to observe, at all times, their appointed swimmer.

AOWS4.28
FINA OWS3.28 Ensure at all times that the rules of competition are complied with, violations being recorded in writing and reported to a Referee at the earliest opportunity.

AOWS4.29
FINA OWS3.29 Have the power to order a swimmer from the water upon expiry of any time limit so ordered by the Chief Referee.

AOWS4.30
FINA OWS3.30 Ensure that the Race Judge's appointed swimmer does not take unfair advantage or commit unsporting impediment on another swimmer and if the situation requires, instruct a swimmer to maintain clearance from any other swimmer.

TURN JUDGES shall:

AOWS4.31
FINA OWS3.31 Be positioned so as to ensure all swimmers execute the alterations in course as indicated in the competition information documents and as given at the pre-race briefing.

AOWS4.32
FINA OWS3.32 Record any infringement of the turn procedures on the record sheets provided and indicate the infringement at the time by blasts on a whistle; then immediately communicate the infringement to the Chief Referee.

AOWS4.33
FINA OWS3.33 Promptly upon completion of the event deliver the signed record sheet to the Chief Finish Judge.

THE SAFETY OFFICER shall:

AOWS4.34
FINA OWS3.34 Be responsible to the Chief Referee for all aspects of safety related to the conduct of the competition.

AOWS4.35
FINA OWS3.35 Check that the entire course, with special regard to the start and finish areas, is safe, suitable, and free of any obstruction.

AOWS4.36
FINA OWS3.36 Be responsible for ensuring that sufficient powered safety craft are available during the competition so as to provide full safety backup to the escort safety craft.

AOWS4.37
FINA OWS3.37 Provide prior to the competitions to all swimmers a tide/current chart clearly indicating the time of tide changes on the course and showing the effect of tides or current on a swimmer's progress along the course.

AOWS4.38
FINA OWS3.38 In conjunction with the Medical Officer, advise the Chief Referee if, in their opinion, conditions are unsuitable for staging the competition and make recommendations for the modification of the course or the manner in which the competition is conducted.

THE MEDICAL OFFICER shall:

AOWS4.39
FINA OWS3.39 Be responsible to the Chief Referee for all medical aspects related to the competition and swimmers.

AOWS4.40
FINA OWS3.40 Inform the local medical facilities of the nature of the competition and ensure that any casualties can be evacuated to medical facilities at the earliest opportunity.

AOWS4.41
FINA OWS3.41 In conjunction with the Safety Officer, advise the Chief Referee if, in their opinion, conditions are unsuitable for staging the competition and make recommendations for the modification of the course or the manner in which the competition is conducted.

THE COURSE OFFICER shall:

- AOWS4.42
FINA OWS3.42 Be responsible to the Management Committee for the correct survey of the course.
- AOWS4.43
FINA OWS3.43 Ensure the start and finish areas are correctly marked and all equipment has been correctly installed and, where applicable, is in working order.
- AOWS4.44
FINA OWS3.44 Ensure all course alteration points are correctly marked, and manned prior to the commencement of the competition.
- AOWS4.45
FINA OWS3.45 With the Referee and Safety Officer inspect the course and markings prior to the commencement of competition.
- AOWS4.46
FINA OWS3.46 Ensure that Turn Judges are in position prior to the start of the competition and report this to the Chief Referee.

THE CLERK OF THE COURSE shall:

- AOWS4.47
FINA OWS3.47 Assemble and prepare competitors prior to each event and ensure proper reception facilities at the finish are available for all swimmers.
- AOWS4.48
FINA OWS3.48 Ensure each swimmer is identified correctly with their race number and that all swimmers have trimmed fingernails and toenails and are not wearing any jewellery, including watches.
- AOWS4.49
FINA OWS3.49 Be certain all swimmers are present in the assembly area at the required time prior to the start.
- AOWS4.50
FINA OWS3.50 Keep swimmers and officials informed of the time remaining before the start at suitable intervals until the last five minutes, during which one-minute warnings shall be given.
- AOWS4.51
FINA OWS3.51 Be responsible for ensuring that all clothing and equipment left in the start area is transported to the finish area and kept in safekeeping.
- AOWS4.52
FINA OWS3.52 Ensure that all swimmers leaving the water at the finish have the basic equipment required for their wellbeing should their own attendants not be present at that time.

THE RECORDER shall:

- AOWS4.53
FINA OWS3.53 Record withdrawals from the competition, enter results on official forms, and maintain record for team awards as appropriate.
- AOWS4.54
FINA OWS3.54 Report any violation to the Chief Referee on a signed card detailing the event, the swimmer's number and rule infringement.

EACH FEEDING PLATFORM JUDGE shall:

- AOWS 4.55
FINA OWS3.55 Be responsible for the management of the activity and the swimmers' authorised representatives present on the platform, in accordance with Swimming Australia rules.

AOWS5

FINA OWS4

OWS5.1

FINA OWS4.1

THE START

All Open Water competitions shall start with all swimmers standing on a fixed platform or in water depth sufficient for them to commence swimming on the start signal.

AOWS5.1.1

FINA OWS4.1.1

When starting from a fixed platform, swimmers shall be assigned a position on the platform as determined by random draw.

AOWS5.2

FINA OWS4.2

The Clerk of the course shall keep swimmers and officials informed of the time before the start at suitable intervals and at one-minute intervals for the last five minutes.

AOWS5.3

FINA OWS4.3

When the numbers of entries dictate, the start shall be segregated in the men's and women's competitions. The men's event shall always start before the women's event.

AOWS5.4

FINA OWS4.4

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

AOWS5.5

FINA OWS4.5

The Chief Referee shall indicate by a flag held upright and short blasts on a whistle when the start is imminent and indicate that the competition is under Starter's orders by pointing the flag at the Starter.

AOWS5.6

FINA OWS4.6

The Starter shall be positioned so as to be clearly visible to all swimmers.

AOWS5.6.1

FINA OWS4.6.1

On the Starter's command "take your marks" they shall take up a starting position immediately in line with the start line where a platform is not used, or with at least one foot at the front of the platform.

AOWS5.6.2

FINA OWS4.6.2

The Starter will give the starting signal when he/she considers all swimmers are ready.

AOWS5.7

FINA OWS4.7

The start signal shall be both audible and visual.

AOWS5.8

FINA OWS4.8

If in the opinion of the Chief Referee unfair advantage has been gained at the start, the offending swimmer will be given a yellow or red flag in accordance with OWS 6.3.

AOWS5.9

FINA OWS4.9

All escort safety craft shall be stationed prior to the start so as not to interfere with any swimmer, and if picking up their swimmer from behind shall navigate in such a way as not to manoeuvre through the field of swimmers.

AOWS5.10

FINA OWS4.10.

Although they may start together, in all other respects the men's and women's competitions shall be treated as separate events.

OWS6

FINA OWS6

OWS6.1

FINA OWS6.1

THE RACE

All open water competitions shall be freestyle events and swimmers are required to complete the whole course, respecting all designated turning buoys and course boundaries.

OWS6.2
FINA OWS6.2 Race Judges shall instruct any swimmer who is, in their opinion, taking unfair advantage by pacing or slip streaming with the escort craft to move clear.

OWS6.3
FINA OWS6.3 **Disqualification Procedure**

OWS6.3.1
FINA OWS6.3.1 If in the opinion of the Chief Referee or Referees any swimmer, or swimmer's approved representative, or escort safety craft, takes advantage by committing any violation of the rules by making intentional contact with any swimmer, the following proceeding shall apply:

1st Infringement:

A yellow flag and a card bearing the swimmer's number shall be raised to indicate and to inform the swimmer that he is in violation of the rules.

2nd Infringement:

A red flag and a card bearing the swimmer's number shall be raised by the Referee (AOWS4.6, AOWS4.10) to indicate and to inform the swimmer that the swimmer is for the second time in violation of the rules. The swimmer shall be disqualified. The swimmer must leave the water immediately and be placed in an escort craft and take no further part in the race.

OWS6.3.2
FINA OWS6.3.2 If in the opinion of the Referee, an action of a swimmer or an escort safety craft, or a swimmer's approved representative is deemed to be "unsporting", the Referee shall disqualify the swimmer concerned immediately.

OWS6.4
FINA OWS6.4 Escort safety craft shall manoeuvre so as not to obstruct or place themselves directly ahead of any swimmer and not take unfair advantage by pacing or slip streaming.

OWS6.5
FINA OWS6.5 Escort safety craft shall attempt to maintain a constant position so as to station the swimmer at, or forward of, the mid-point of the escort safety craft.

OWS6.6
FINA OWS6.6 Standing on the bottom during a race shall not disqualify a swimmer, but they may not walk or jump.

OWS6.7
FINA OWS6.7 With the exception of Rule OWS6.6 above, swimmers shall not receive support from any fixed or floating object and shall not intentionally touch or be touched by their escort safety craft or crew therein.

OWS6.7.1
FINA OWS6.7.1 Rendering assistance by an official Medical Officer to a swimmer in apparent distress should always supersede official rules of disqualification through "intentional contact" with a swimmer (Rule OWS6.7).

OWS6.8
FINA OWS6.8 For races where escort boats are used, each escort safety craft shall contain: a Race Judge, a person of the swimmer's choice and the minimum crew required to operate the escort safety craft.

OWS 6.8.1
FINA OWS6.8.1 Each escort safety craft shall display the swimmer's competition number so as to be easily seen from either side of the escort safety craft.

OWS6.9
FINA OWS6.9 Each safety craft shall contain appropriately qualified safety personnel and the minimum crew required to operate the safety craft.

- OWS6.10
FINA OWS6.10 No swimmer shall be permitted to use or wear any device which may be an aid to their speed, endurance or buoyancy. An approved swimsuit, goggles, a maximum of two caps, nose clip and earplugs may be used.
- OWS6.11
FINA OWS6.11 Swimmers shall be allowed to use grease or other such substances providing these are not, in the opinion of the Chief Referee, excessive.
- OWS6.12
FINA OWS6.12 The pacing of a swimmer by another person entering the water is not permitted.
- OWS6.13
FINA OWS6.13 Coaching and the giving of instructions by the approved swimmer's representative on the feeding platform or in the escort safety craft is permitted. No whistle shall be allowed.
- OWS6.14
FINA OWS6.14 When taking sustenance swimmers may use Rule OWS6.6 provided Rule OWS6.7 is not infringed.
- OWS6.15
FINA OWS6.15 No objects can be thrown from the feeding platform to the swimmers, including sustenance. The swimmers shall receive their feeding directly from their representative by a feeding pole or by hand.
- OWS6.16
FINA OWS6.16 Feeding poles are not to exceed 5 metres in length when extended. No objects, rope or wire may hang off the end of feeding poles except for swimmers' identification, which is allowed to be attached to the feeding pole but may not exceed the size of 30cm x 20cm.
- OWS6.17
FINA OWS6.17 In all events, time limits shall apply as follows from the finish time of the first swimmers:
15 minutes per 5km (or part thereof) up to a maximum time limit of 120 minutes.
- OWS6.17.1
FINA OWS6.17.1 Swimmers who do not finish the course within the time limit shall be removed from the water except that the Chief Referee may allow a swimmer outside the time limit to complete the course but not be eligible for any points or prizes.
- OWS6.18
FINA OWS6.18 **Emergency Abandonment**
- OWS6.18.1
FINA OWS6.18.1 In cases of emergency abandonment of races of 10km or less, the race will be restarted from the beginning at the earliest possible moment.
- OWS6.18.2
FINA OWS6.18.2 In cases of emergency abandonment for any race of longer than 10km, where the race has been underway for at least three hours, the final ranking will be as reported by the Chief Referee. If three hours of the race has not been completed, it will be restarted from the beginning at the earliest moment possible.
- AOWS6.19
SAL OWS6.17.2 Where circumstances do not permit the provisions of OWS 6.18 to apply, the Chief Referee may declare a result of a race if the lead swimmer has completed at least three quarters of the race, the final ranking will be as reported by the Chief Referee.

OWS7**THE FINISH OF THE RACE**

OWS7.1
SAL OWS7.1

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 safety craft authorised to do so enter or cross this entrance.

OWS7.2
SAL OWS7.2

The finish apparatus should, where possible, be a vertical wall at least 5 metres wide, fixed if necessary, to floatation devices, securely fastened in place so as not to be moved by wind, tide or force of a swimmer striking the wall. The finish should be filmed and recorded from each side and above by video system with slow motion and recall facilities including timing equipment.

OWS7.2.1
FINA OWS7.2.1

When Automatic Officiating Equipment is used for timing of competitions in accordance with Rule SW11, microchip transponder technology capable of providing split times is mandatory and should be added to the equipment. Microchip transponder timing technology will be recorded officially in tenths of seconds. The final places will be determined by the Chief Referee based upon the Finish Judges' report and the finish video tape.

OWS7.2.2
SAL OWS7.2.2

Where microchip transponder technology is used, it is mandatory for all swimmers to wear a microchip transponder on each wrist throughout the race. If a swimmer loses a transponder the Race Judge or other authorised official, will immediately inform the Chief Referee who will instruct the responsible official on the water to issue a replacement transponder. Any swimmer who finishes the race without at least one transponder will be disqualified.

OWS7.2.3
FINA OWS7.2.3

When, at the finish of an Open Water Swimming competition, a vertical wall is available, swimmers must touch the vertical wall to finish the race. Any swimmer who does not touch the vertical wall will be disqualified.

OWS7.3
FINA OWS7.3

The Finish Judges and Timekeepers shall be placed so as to be able to observe the finish at all times. The area in which they are stationed should be for their exclusive use.

OWS7.4
FINA OWS7.4

Every effort should be made to ensure that the swimmers' representative can get from the escort safety craft to meet the swimmer as they leave the water.

OWS7.5
FINA OWS7.5

Upon leaving the water some swimmers may require assistance. Swimmers should only be touched or handled if they clearly display a need or ask for assistance.

OWS7.6
FINA OWS7.6

A member of the medical team should inspect the swimmers as they leave the water. A chair, in which the swimmer can sit while an assessment is made, should be provided.

OWS7.7
FINA OWS7.7

Once cleared by the medical member, swimmers should be given access to refreshment.