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**2017  
U.S. MASTERS SWIMMING  
CODE OF REGULATIONS  
AND  
RULES OF COMPETITION**

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The most up-to-date version of this rule book is available online at:  
**[usms.org/rules](http://usms.org/rules)**

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**Cover Image:** Swimmers leap off the blocks at the start of a race during the 2016 Nationwide Spring National Championship held at the Greensboro Aquatic Center in Greensboro, N.C. Photo by Peter H. Bick.

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## Rule Book Dedication

The 2017 USMS Rule Book is dedicated to technology contractor Tom Taylor, longtime friend of USMS and cofounder of HY-TEK, which features Tom's groundbreaking software platform, Meet Manager. Meet Manager is used in more than 100 countries, in competitive swimming at all levels, from summer league to national and international championship events.

In the 1980s, when their kids were swimming on their local summer league team, Tom and his neighbor, Bob Mroz, noticed that there wasn't any viable means to capture results at their kids' swim meets and keep track of team scores. Tom, a computer science and math teacher at a small college in Maryland, wrote a small program using Quick Basic, which became known as Team Manager. Realizing the potential for managing the entire technology process at a swim meet, Tom followed that with Meet Manager.



*Tom Taylor*

In 1995, Tom brought Meet Manager to USMS Long Course Nationals in Gresham, Ore., and USMS was hooked. Tom has presided over computer operations at nearly every USMS National Championship since then. His products and services have made it possible for USMS to offer the highest quality event experience and his work has benefitted the thousands of swimmers who've taken flight from the blocks at our marquee events. He's now officially retired; his last meet was the 2016 USMS Summer National Championship held in Gresham, where his relationship with USMS began.

Over the past two decades, Tom has worked with USMS leaders and meet directors to modify Meet Manager to meet our unique needs. This is no small feat, with USMS's numerous age groups, 52 LMSCs, custom registration system, championship seeding requirements, and national and world records. Tom's dedication to quality, creative problem-solving skills, and unflappable, friendly demeanor has endeared him to meet directors and USMS volunteers everywhere. Tom was recognized with the National Championship Meet Award in 2008.

We extend our gratitude for Tom's contributions to Masters Swimming and wish him the very best in his retirement.

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## Previous Rule Book Dedications

1989	June Krauser	2004	Joanne Tingley
1992	Mary Lee Watson	2005	Walt Reid
1993	Kathrine Casey and Gail Dummer	2006	Pieter Cath
1994	All USMS volunteers	2007	Pacific Masters XI FINA World Masters Championships Organizing Committee
1995	E. Kevin Kelly		
1996	Dorothy Donnelly		
1997	Jack Geoghegan	2008	Steve Schofield
1998	USMS All-Americans	2009	Meg Smath
1999	F.H. "Ted" Haartz	2010	Bill Volckening
2000	Jim Matysek	2011	Tracy Grilli
2001	Gene Donner and the staff of Gateway Printing	2012	Esther Lyman
2002	Nancy Ridout	2013	Rob Copeland
2003	Tom Boak	2015	June Krauser
		2016	Rob Butcher

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# Organizing Principles

## Preamble

United States Masters Swimming is an organization of sportswomen and sportsmen founded in 1970 and dedicated to the premise that the lives of participants will be enhanced through aquatic physical conditioning. USMS supports and encourages competitions among its members and those of other nations. This book establishes certain rules and regulations for the conduct of the organization, the participants and the competitors in the spirit of good sportsmanship.

## Mission Statement

To promote health, wellness, fitness and competition for adults through swimming.

## Vision Statement

USMS will be the premier resource for adult aquatic fitness in the United States and will make fitness through swimming available for as many adults as possible.

## Goals and Objectives

- A** To encourage and promote improved physical fitness and health in adults.
- B** To offer adults the opportunity to participate in a lifelong fitness and/or competitive swimming program.
- C** To encourage organizations and communities to establish and sponsor Masters Swimming programs.
- D** To enhance fellowship and camaraderie among Masters swimmers.
- E** To stimulate research in the sociology, psychology, and physiology of Masters swimming.

## Core Objectives

Service the membership.  
Educate the membership.  
Build the membership.

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## Major Changes for 2017

**Continuous Warm-Up:** In pools of five lanes or more, a separate warm-up area must be made available to swimmers during the competition. However, if the meet is a dual-sanctioned meet with USA Swimming, this requirement may be adjusted depending on availability of warm-up space at the venue by agreement between the LMSC and LSC host clubs. If a continuous warm-up/warm-down lane(s) or area is not available in pools of five lanes or more, the entry information shall clearly state the availability of warm-up for USMS athletes. Once the entry information is published, changes which further restrict the availability of continuous warm-up/warm-down space are not permitted. (Articles 102.4.1 and 102.4.2)

**Events:** The order of events must be published in the meet announcement prior to the meet. Events may be repeated with the same stroke and distance as different event numbers at a meet. (Articles 102.5.2 and 102.5.6)

**Alternative Formats:** All short course meters events, long course meters events, and national championships shall be conducted on a timed-finals basis. Other short course yards events may be conducted on a timed-finals basis or another basis (e.g., preliminary heats and finals). (Article 102.5.4)

**Time Trials:** Independent attempts to establish official times (“time trials”) are permitted only in USMS-sanctioned short course yards meets other than national championship meets. Time trials are not permitted in USMS national championship meets, short course meters, or long course meters meets. If time trials are offered, the meet announcement must state the events being offered and the format for the time trials. (Articles 102.5.5 and 102.10.1A)

**Event Limits:** A swimmer may compete in not more than six individual events per day. A swimmer shall not compete more than once in the same numbered individual event. Any nonconforming events swum shall be included in the daily event limit. If events are conducted in formats other than timed finals that require multiple swims (e.g., preliminary heats and finals), the limit is three events per day. For events that require multiple swims (e.g., preliminary heats and finals), all swims (e.g., preliminary heats) are considered as part of the same individual event, not as multiple individual events. If time trials are offered in short course yards meets, any time trial events swum shall be included in the daily event limit. A swimmer may repeat, as a time trial, an individual event already swum during the meet on the same day or in the same meet. (Article 102.6)

**Place Judges:** One or two place judges may be positioned on the side of the course near the finish to judge the order of finish of all swimmers. Judging may not be used to change the results produced by ranking the official times. (Article 103.10.4)

**Official Time for Malfunction on a Lane:** Timing system adjustments to backup times for individual lane malfunctions have been eliminated. In the

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event of a lane malfunction, the official time is calculated using valid times reported by the secondary timing system (or the tertiary system) in accordance with 103.17.3B and integrated with the accurate primary times in determining the results. (Article 103.17,3C-G)

**Requirements for USMS Records and Top 10 Times:** USMS records and Top 10 times may be established with a three, two, or one valid semiautomatic backup time in the event of an automatic timing system (touchpad) failure. USMS records may be established with two valid watch times in the event of both automatic primary and semiautomatic backup system failure. USMS Top 10 times may be established with one valid watch time in the event of both automatic primary and semiautomatic backup system failure. USMS records may be established with two valid watches if the semiautomatic primary timing system fails. USMS Top 10 times may be established with one valid watch if the semiautomatic primary timing system fails. (Articles 103.18.5 and .6 and 103.18.10)

**Splits:** The referee may assign additional watch timers to record splits for USMS Top 10 times regardless of the primary timing system. The referee may approve automatic recording of splits, with the concurrence of the meet host, without the need for a written request with the exception of backstroke events or initial splits within a backstroke leadoff distance. (Articles 103.6.6, 103.18.2, and 105.2.2)

**Fresh Water:** USMS records and Top 10 times can only be made in fresh water. No records or Top 10 times will be recognized in any kind of sea or ocean water. (Articles 105.2.4 and 105.3.5)

**Health and Safety Regulations for USMS Competition:** Article 106 (medical examinations, medical equipment) is eliminated.

**Age Determining Date for Open Water and Postal Swims:** “In open water and postal swims, the eligibility of a swimmer shall be determined by the age of the swimmer on December 31 of the year of competition, except for 18-year-olds, who must be 18 on the day that they swim.” This mirrors the birthdate rule used by FINA and USA Triathlon. The relay age rules for open water and long distance/postal swims (303.1.3B & 305.6) remain unchanged. (Article 301.5)

**Water Conditions:** Temperature guidelines have been amended for swimmer safety in swims with very warm water. “A swim of 5 kilometers or greater shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 29.45° C. (85° F.). A swim of less than 5 kilometers shall not begin if the water temperature exceeds 31° C. (87.8° F.).” This mirrors the FINA general standard of 31° C, and the USA-Swimming exception to that rule of 29.45° C for swims 5-km or longer. (Article 302.2.2)

**Swimwear:** For Category I open water swimwear, clasps and zippers are now

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excluded. This mirrors the FINA swimwear rule, and will make it easier for event staff to identify legal swimwear at each venue. (Article 102.4 and 303.7)

**Officials:** The roles and authorities of open water event director, safety director and referee have been defined, particularly the authority to postpone the start, stop a swim in progress, and cancel an event. (Articles 308.1 & 303.12.1)

**Independent Safety Monitors:** The requirement to have a USMS-approved Independent Safety Monitor at all USMS open water swims has been removed. In its place, as part of event supervision, each sanctioning LMSC should develop oversight procedures to assure that the approved safety plan is implemented and that adequate safety precautions are in place for existing conditions. (Article 303.8)

**Solo Open Water Swims:** Because USMS no longer sanctions solo swims, all reference to solo swims have been removed from the rulebook. (Article 302.4, etc.)

**1-Hour ePostal (OHeP):** The Long Distance Committee is extending the closing date for the 2017 and future OHeP events to be the last day of February. This will give more people a chance to swim and minimize the impact of major winter weather.

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## Glossary

- Administrative Referee**—an official certified as an administrative referee who supervises entries, seeding, determination of official times, results, and meet personnel assisting with these duties.
- Aggregate Time**—times achieved by four individuals in separate starts that are added together to arrive at a relay time for entry purposes.
- Anchored (Starting Platform)**—stable at all times without human aid.
- Arm**—that part of the body that extends from the shoulder to the wrist.
- Bulkhead**—moveable end wall of a course.
- Cable Swim**—a type of straightaway swim defined by a cable.
- Club**—an organization or group of permanent character that is a member of USMS, registered through an LMSC, and that actively promotes and/or participates in Masters Swimming.
- Corporation**—United States Masters Swimming Inc. (USMS).
- Course**—designated distance over which the competition is conducted.
- Long Course**—50 meters.
- Short Course**—25 yards or 25 meters.
- Deck-Entered**—all entries are accepted on the first or later day of that meet and subsequently seeded into events.
- Deck-Seeding**—with or without check-in, events seeded at the time of the event using entries received prior to or at the meet.
- Drafting**—in open water and long distance events, an individual swimming behind or next to a single swimmer or support craft for the purpose of taking advantage of the reduced water resistance.
- Dual Meet**—competition between two clubs.
- Electronic Timing Chip**—used to trigger the timing system and may not be used as an audible pacing device in swimming.
- End of the Course**—designated wall for racing turns or finishes.
- Escort Craft**—boats or paddle boards that accompany swimmers in an open water swim for safety and logistical support, including the person or people that staff them.
- Event**—any clinic, demonstration, series of races in a given stroke and distance, or meet: including pool, long distance, and open water.
- Event Director**—the person responsible for the administration and conduct of the event.
- Ex Officio Member**—a committee member, appointed by virtue of an office or position held, who has participatory rights of membership but no vote.
- FINA**—Fédération International de Natation (International Federation of Swimming).

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**Finish**—the instant that a swimmer touches the wall at the end of the prescribed distance.

**Finish Point**—the physical location where the race terminates.

**Fitness Events**—events designed to encourage and enhance fitness.

**First Day of Meet**—day on which first competitive swimming event is conducted.

**Foreign Swimmer**—athlete member of a FINA member federation other than USMS.

**Forward Start**—an entry made while facing the course or a start made while in the water either facing the course or not facing the course.

**Foul**—an instance of obstruction, interference, collision, or equipment malfunction that prevents the successful completion of a race.

**Grease**—a substance used by swimmers to reduce friction or reduce the loss of body heat during a swim.

**Heat**—a division of an event in which there are too many swimmers to compete at one time.

**Horizontal**—parallel to the level surface of the water.

**IOC**—International Olympic Committee.

**Initial Distance**—that first portion of a race for which an official time may be recorded but which is not itself a completed event.

**Lane**—the specific area in which the swimmer is assigned to swim.

**Lane Line**—continuous floating markers attached to a line stretched from one end of the course to the other for the purpose of separating adjacent lanes.

**Lane Markers**—the guide lines on the bottom of the pool and in the center of the lanes running from one end of the course to the other.

**Last Day of the Meet**—day on which last competitive swimming event is conducted.

**Leadoff**—the first part of the relay event that is swum by a single team member.

**Leg (Relay)**—the part of the relay event that is swum by a single team member.

**Length**—the extent of the course from end to end.

**LMSC**—Local Masters Swimming Committee.

**Malfunction**—a mechanical or electronic equipment failure; not a human failure by the swimmer.

**Manual Start**—the start of any timing device by an individual in response to the same starting signal given to the swimmers.

**Mark**—(take your) starting position.

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**Masters Swimming**—a program including training, competition, and other activities affiliated with United States Masters Swimming through the participation of USMS members or through a USMS sanction.

**May**—permissive, not mandatory.

**Medical Identification Item**—an item worn by a swimmer that identifies medical conditions, emergency contacts, or other information necessary to protect the health of the swimmer. Medical identification items are not considered part of swimwear.

**Meet**—an event or series of events held under a single sanction or recognition and conducted within 10 consecutive days, except for postal meets.

**Member**—an individual, club, or organization registered with USMS.

**Must**—mandatory.

**On the back**—position of the body when the shoulders are at or past the vertical towards the back.

**On the breast**—position of the body when the shoulders are at or past the vertical towards the breast.

**Paddler**—a person on a paddle board or manually propelled craft who supports a swimmer or group of swimmers.

**Pool**—the physical facility in which the competition is conducted.

**Postal Event**—a swimming competition conducted in multiple pool locations with results compiled in a central location.

**Preliminary Heats**—competition in which a number of heats are swum to qualify the fastest swimmers for the finals.

**Preseeding**—events are seeded prior to the day of competition.

**Propulsive**—having the power to propel.

**Recognized Events**—the written acknowledgment by an LMSC for a designated competition conducted in conformance with relevant USMS rules, or a demonstration, clinic, or exhibition conducted by USMS member clubs, individual members, or organizations other than USMS in which both members and nonmembers may participate. Times or distances achieved by members at recognized competitions will be considered for recording purposes by USMS.

**Register**—enroll as a member of USMS through an LMSC.

**Safety Plans**—written plans for the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency or need for medical intervention.

**Sanction**—the written authorization of an LMSC to permit members to participate in a specific competition, demonstration, clinic, exhibition, or Swim-A-Thon®.

**Scissors Kick**—use of the top of the instep of one foot and the bottom of the other foot in the propulsive part of the kick.

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- Scratch**—withdraw an entry from an event or fail to report to the assigned lane in the assigned heat.
- Seeding**—distributing swimmers among the required number of heats and/or lanes, based on submitted times.
- Session**—any portion of a pool meet distinctly separated from other portions of the meet by locale, time, day, or type of competition; i.e., first day and second day, morning and evening, etc., exclusive of a short break between events such as before the start of distance events or relays.
- Shall**—mandatory.
- Should**—recommended but not mandatory.
- Soft Touch**—a swimmer’s touch that does not register a time at the point of contact with the touchpad.
- Split Time**—time recorded from official start to completion of an initial distance within a longer event.
- Still Water**—water contained within four walls or landlocked, having no perceptible current or movement other than that caused by wind or by swimmers.
- Straightaway Swim**—any swim of any length where the course shall be a straight, measured distance in stationary open water and defined by a cable with floats or a continuous marking system visible to the swimmer.
- Submitted Times**—those filed with an entry as having been previously achieved or reasonably estimated; also known as seed times.
- Time Trial**—a timed heat conducted within a meet where the swimmer races against the clock to establish an official time.
- Timed Finals**—competition in which only heats are swum and final placings are determined by the times achieved in the heats.
- Touch**—contact with the end of the course.
- Turn**—a point on the course where the swimmers reverse or change direction of the swim.
- USA-S**—USA Swimming Inc.
- USAS**—United States Aquatic Sports Inc.
- USMS**—United States Masters Swimming Inc.
- Venue**—geographical area and environs where a swim event is conducted.
- Wall**—the vertical portion of the pool, the contiguous surface of the deck and overflow gutters, the front portion of the starting block or platform, or the touchpad at the end of the course.
- Warning Signal**—a bell, whistle, air horn, or other appropriate audible device.
- Wave**—the second or subsequent start used if the start area cannot accommodate all contestants at the same time.



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**Will**—consent to do, an expectation.

**Workout Group**—a subordinate organization (subgroup) of a USMS-registered club.

**Zone**—a geographic section of the country that includes all LMSCs within that section.

