

MERMAID SWIM CLUB

**2027**  
**CHICAGO MERMAID**  
**CHAMPIONSHIP**  
**COMPETITION RULES**



*Official Mermaid Artistic Swimming Competition Standards*

Edition / Effective Date: September 2026

[www.mermaidswimclub.org](http://www.mermaidswimclub.org)

Ver 1.2

## REFERENCE

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## USING THIS RULEBOOK

Athletes are responsible for reviewing all applicable competition, safety, and scoring requirements before participating.

Judges should use the judging sections together with the individual technical figure requirements.

## PART I

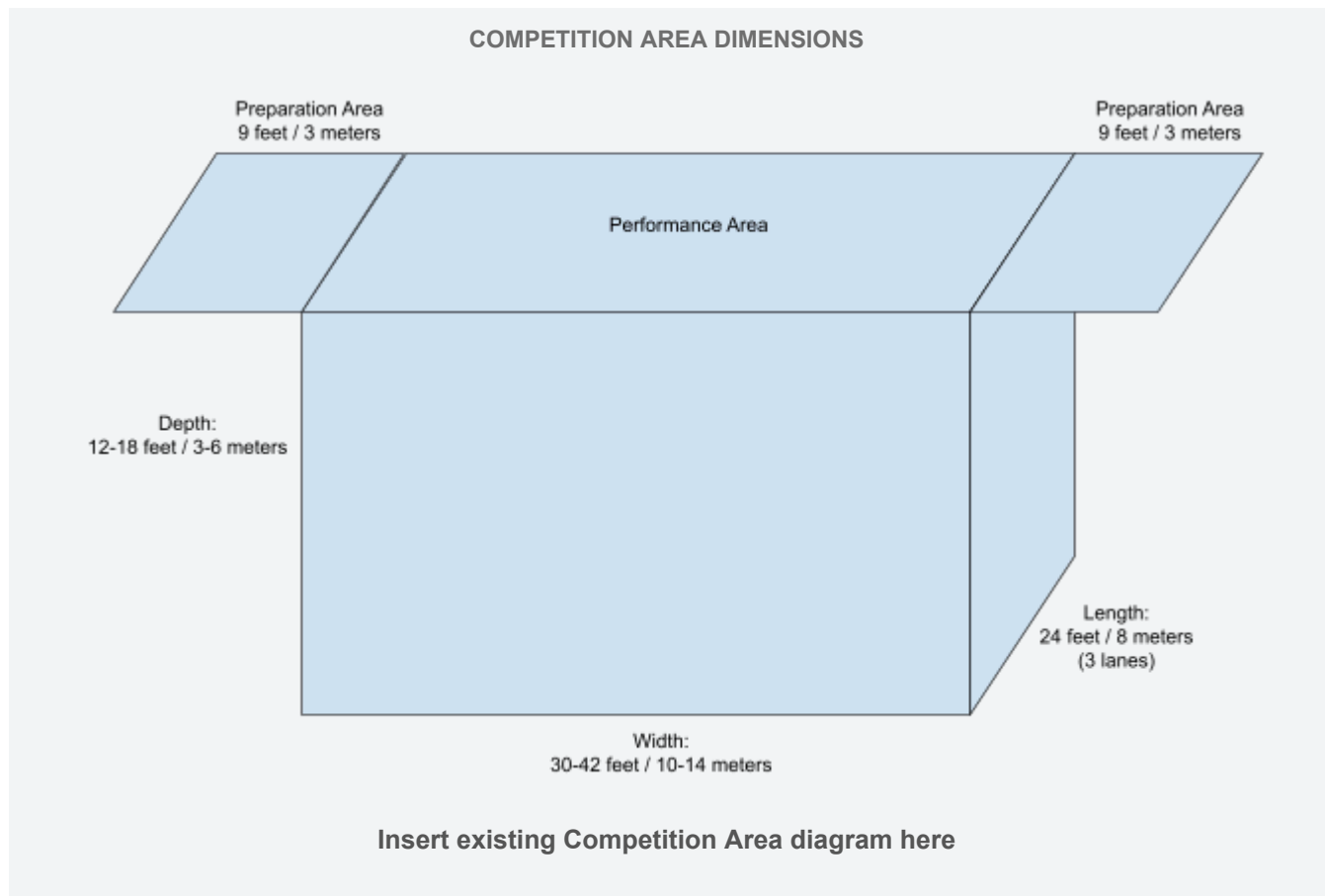
# Competition Structure

Venue, athlete eligibility, equipment, safety, and competition disciplines

## 1. Competition Area Requirements

| Element                 | Requirement                                       |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Depth                   | 12–18 ft / 3–6 m (competitive diving pool depth). |
| Width                   | 10–14 yd (30–42 ft) / 10–14 m.                    |
| Preparation / Exit Area | 3–5 yd (9–15 ft) / 3–5 m.                         |
| Performance Area Length | 24 ft / 8 m (approximately 3 swimming lanes).     |
| Athlete Area            | 16 ft / 5 m.                                      |
| Underwater Camera Area  | 8 ft / 3 m.                                       |

For a regular competition-style 25 yd / 25 m swimming pool with a deep end of approximately 12–18 ft / 4–6 m, three lanes at the deep wall should be sufficient for a mermaid competition.



## PART I

## 2. Participant Prerequisites

| Requirement                    | Standard                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Minimum Age                    | 18                                                                                                                                     |
| Medical Paperwork              | Required                                                                                                                               |
| Liability Release              | Required                                                                                                                               |
| Certification                  | Full Mermaid or Freediving confined-water certification from PADI, NAUI, SSI, or another agency approved by the competition organizer. |
| Without Accepted Certification | Athlete is subject to a swim test: pool entry, 50 yd surface swim in monofin and tail, and pool exit.                                  |

PART I

# Equipment, Safety & Dynamic Apnea

## 3. Equipment Requirements

- Athletes must provide their own swimming equipment.
- Equipment must not contain loose small particles or components that may detach during swimming.
- All swimwear and accessories are subject to inspection and approval by the competition organizer.
- Weights are allowed.
- Masks, goggles, and nose clips are allowed. No extra points are awarded for performing without a mask, goggles, or nose clip.

## 4. Competition Safety Standards

### MINIMUM SAFETY PRESENCE

At least one designated fully certified freediver or mermaid with open-water certification must be present in the preparation area whenever a competitor is in the competition area.

## 5. Competition Disciplines

### 5.1 Dynamic Apnea

- Start swimming within 15 seconds of the official start.
- Maintain the entire body underwater for the duration of the attempt.
- Touching the water surface with the head is considered an exit for breathing and therefore ends the dynamic apnea attempt.
- Touching the water surface with the monofin is allowed.

### REQUIRED DYNAMIC APNEA FINISH PROCEDURE

1. Remove mask, goggles, or nose clip.
2. Give the OK hand signal.
3. Say: "I AM OK."
4. Show no signs or symptoms of blackout.

## PART I

## 5.2 Nine Figures

Each athlete performs nine underwater swimming figures in the specified order. All nine figures are executed as a **continuous, uninterrupted sequence**, with a **single breath refill between figures**. Each figure must be completed on one breath to receive the maximum points available for that figure.

**Exception — Buoyancy Control and Infinity Loop portions:** During these figures, the athlete may take multiple breaths while swimming on the surface to reposition. The athlete swims from the side of the performance area to center stage before performing Buoyancy Control and Infinity figures and returns to the side stage afterward. Once the underwater figure begins, it must be completed on a single breath.

## Figures 1–4

Horizontal swimming control and body-line fundamentals

### FIGURE 1 — SWIM ON THE FRONT

Regular (Duck dive) water entry. One length.

- Constant speed.
- Controlled buoyancy: maintain a constant depth for the full length.
- Dolphin kick: smooth full-body undulation (wave) with minimal knee bending.
- Horizontal body position with the front of the body facing the pool bottom.

### FIGURE 2 — SWIM ON THE BACK

One Refill breath. Reverse (Back) water entry. One length.

- Constant speed.
- Controlled buoyancy: maintain a constant depth for the full length.
- Dolphin kick: smooth full-body undulation (wave) with minimal knee bending.
- Horizontal body position facing the water surface.

### FIGURE 3 — SWIM SIDEWAYS

One Refill breath. Regular water entry. One length.

- Controlled buoyancy: maintain a constant depth for the entire swim.
- Dolphin kick: smooth full-body undulation (wave) with minimal knee bending.
- Horizontal body position with the full body facing the front window / camera.

### FIGURE 4 — TORPEDO / BARREL

One Refill breath. Regular water entry. One length.

- Midwater entry into the performance area.
- Controlled buoyancy: maintain a constant depth for the entire swim.
- Full 360° rotation while maintaining a horizontal swim.

## PART I

### TECHNICAL FIGURES

# Figures 5–7

Neutral-buoyancy control with Rotation.

Neutral buoyancy control is a technical skill to maintain constant depth position underwater.

- Weights are allowed.
- If using descent with an exhale technique, the air must be exhaled above the water.

### FIGURE 5 — BUOYANCY CONTROL — VERTICAL HEAD UP WITH 360° TURN

Angel dive entry at the center stage.

- Head aligned with the body; legs and feet aligned with the trunk.
- Complete one full 360° rotation using hand sculling.
- Maintain neutral buoyancy for the entire 360 turn.

### FIGURE 6 — BUOYANCY CONTROL — VERTICAL HEAD DOWN WITH 360° TURN

Regular (Duck dive) entry at the center stage.

- Head aligned with the body; legs and feet aligned with the trunk.
- Complete one full 360° rotation using hand sculling.
- Maintain neutral buoyancy for the entire 360 turn.

### FIGURE 7 — SCORPION

Regular (Duck dive) entry at the center stage.

- Abdomen faces the bottom; head is vertical; knees are bent; tail is above the head.
- Complete a 360° horizontal turn in place using hand sculling.
- Maintain neutral buoyancy for the entire 360 turn.

### JUDGING FOCUS

Vertical alignment and controlled in-place rotation with no change in depth position.

Clean body lines, buoyancy control, completion of rotation, spatial control, figure accuracy, confidence, and elegance.

### PENALTY POINTS — FIGURE 5-7 Buoyancy Control

- Any extra exhales underwater.
- Touching the pool bottom or water surface.

PART I

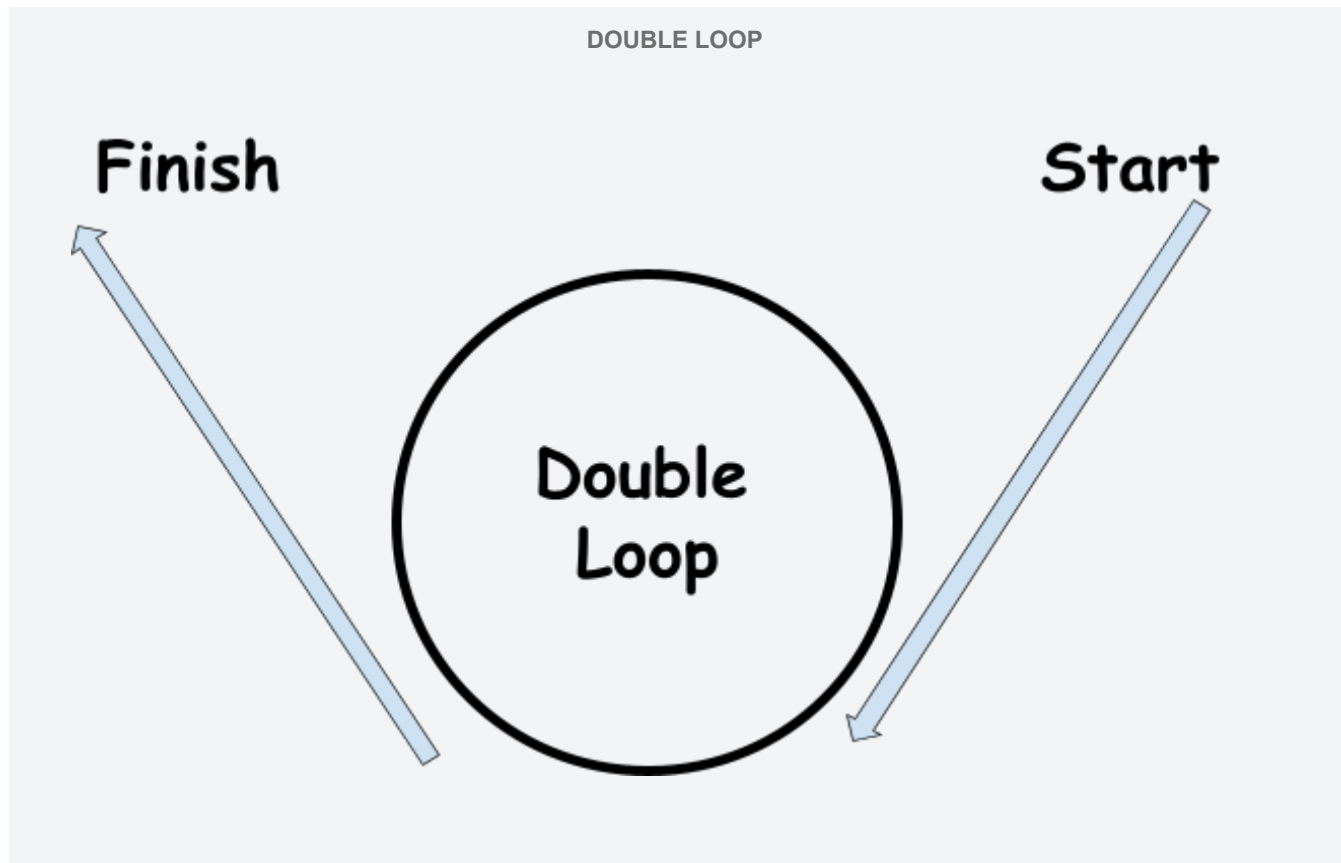
TECHNICAL FIGURES

## Figures 8–9

Circular trajectory, space use, symmetry, level, and fluidity

### FIGURE 8 — DOUBLE LOOP

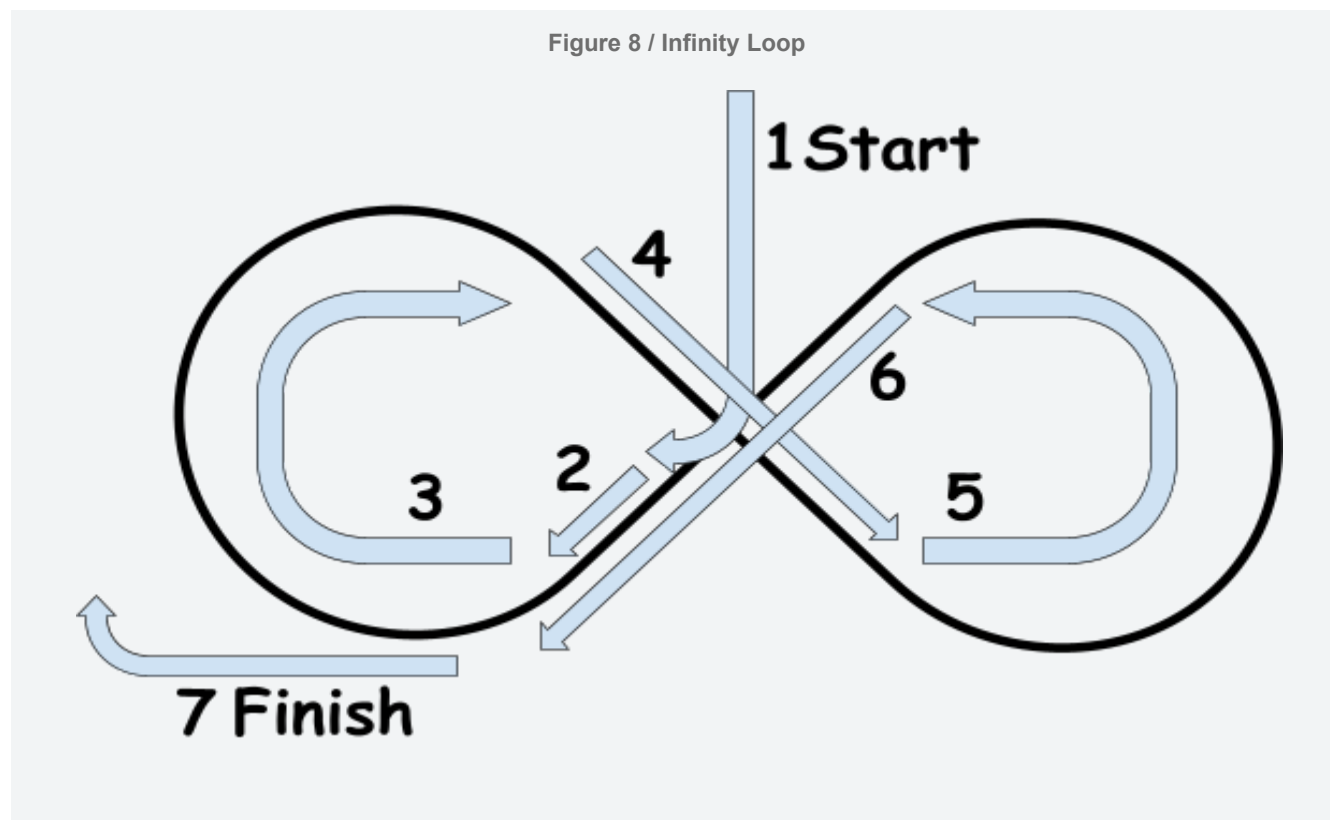
- Regular entry from the side of the performance area.
- Swim in a smooth, round trajectory making one circle.
- Maintain constant speed.
- This is a **wider circular swim (hence LOOP)** that is different from the Backflip figure, which is a tight turn rather than linear swim.



PART I

**FIGURE 9 — FIGURE 8 / INFINITY LOOP**

- Start at the center with a regular duck dive.
- SPACE: use the full space of the performance area.
- SHAPE: maintain congruency in all aspects of the figure.
- FLUIDITY: maintain constant speed for the full figure with no pause.



## PART I

# Artistic, Catwalk & Group Performance

## 5.3 Artistic Solo

| Element      | Requirement                                                               |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Format       | Single / solo choreography.                                               |
| Duration     | 1–2 minutes.                                                              |
| Breathing    | Breath refills are allowed as defined in this rulebook.                   |
| Presentation | Underwater apnea swimming with music, focused on a balanced artistic act. |

## 5.4 Single Catwalk

Improvisation performed on a single breath hold.

## 5.5 Group Performance (For Future Use)

| Element      | Requirement                                                                           |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Format       | Group choreography.                                                                   |
| Duration     | 2–3 minutes.                                                                          |
| Presentation | Partner coordination / synchronization is part of the future group scoring structure. |

## 5.6 Music

Competitors are strongly encouraged to use copyright-free music. Copyrighted music may be used; however, if the music results in a copyright claim or restriction during future social media publication, the original track may be replaced with copyright-free music in the published video.

### ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE

Artistic performance may be enhanced by costume, makeup, props, and other artistic elements. Breath refills are allowed.

## PART II

# Judging & Scoring

Scoring criteria and judging areas by discipline

## 1. Dynamic Apnea Scoring

- One point is awarded each time the athlete crosses the midpoint or touches the wall.

### ZERO SCORE

Failure to follow the required end-of-apnea procedure, or any signs of blackout, results in a score of zero for the Dynamic Apnea portion of the competition.

## 2. 9 Figures — Evaluation Areas

| Evaluation Area                       | What Judges Observe                                     |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Cleanliness of Lines                  | Horizontal, vertical, and circular lines.               |
| Undulation                            | Minimal knee bend dolphin kick; Entire body wave.       |
| Buoyancy Control                      | Ability to maintain intended depth and position.        |
| Complete 360° Turns                   | Completion and control of required rotations.           |
| Figure / Pose Accuracy                | Accuracy of the specified figure or pose execution.     |
| Congruence / Symmetry / Level Horizon | Shape consistency, balance, and alignment.              |
| Center Spatial Awareness              | Control of position within the performance area.        |
| Confidence                            | Controlled, deliberate execution.                       |
| Elegance                              | Overall fluidity and aesthetic quality of the movement. |

## Scoring of the 9 Figures

Each of the 9 Figures is evaluated using **five specific performance criteria**. Each criterion is scored as **Yes or No**:

- Yes = 1 point**
- No = 0 points**

A competitor may therefore receive a maximum of **5 points for each figure**. The judge adds the points earned for all five criteria to determine the score for that figure.

With **9 figures × 5 possible points**, the maximum score for the 9 Figures portion is **45 points**.

This scoring system evaluates whether the required technical elements were successfully demonstrated rather than assigning an overall 0–5 quality rating to the figure.

## PART II

# Artistic, Catwalk & Group Scoring

## 3. Artistic & Catwalk Performance Scale

| 5       | 4    | 3         | 2            | 1    | 0          |
|---------|------|-----------|--------------|------|------------|
| Perfect | Good | Competent | Satisfactory | Weak | Unfinished |

## 4–6. Scoring Areas by Discipline

Unlike the Technical Figures portion, which uses Yes/No criteria for specific required elements, the Artistic Swim is evaluated using a **quality-based scoring scale** that reflects the strength of the complete performance.

The judge assigns one score to each of the five areas based on the overall quality of the performance in that category.

| Scoring Area              | Artistic  |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Technical Presentation    | 0–5       |
| Smooth Breath-Up / Refill | 0–5       |
| Diversity in Figures      | 0–5       |
| Artistic Expression       | 0–5       |
| Overall Impression        | 0–5       |
| <b>Maximum Total</b>      | <b>25</b> |

With **5 scoring areas × 5 possible points**, the maximum score for the Artistic Solo portion is **25 points**.

| Scoring Area           | Catwalk   |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Technical Presentation | 0–5       |
| Artistic Expression    | 0–5       |
| Overall Impression     | 0–5       |
| Timing / Musicality    | 0–5       |
| <b>Maximum Total</b>   | <b>20</b> |

With **4 scoring areas × 5 possible points**, the maximum score for the Catwalk portion is **20 points**.

## PART II

| Scoring Area                           | Group (Future Use) |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Technical Execution                    | 0–5                |
| Music Interpretation                   | 0–5                |
| General Impression                     | 0–5                |
| Partner Coordination / Synchronization | 0–5                |
| <b>Maximum Total</b>                   | <b>20</b>          |

With **4 scoring areas × 5 possible points**, the maximum score for the Group portion is **20 points**.

## SCORING NOTE

The Group Performance score structure is marked for future use in the current source rules.

## Definitions

**Technical performance:** Underwater apnea swimming without music, focused on precise technical execution of the elements. Breath refills are not allowed.

**Underwater swimming figures:** Various underwater swimming techniques, figures, poses, gestures, and related elements.

**Artistic performance:** Underwater apnea swimming with music, focused on creating a well-balanced artistic act. It may be enhanced by costume, makeup, props, and other artistic elements. Breath refills are allowed. It may be performed as a single / solo or as a group.

**Duck dive / Regular water entry:** A technique for efficient water entry that starts face-down, bends at the waist, pushes the legs out of the water, and descends vertically.

**Reverse / Back water entry:** A technique for efficient water entry that starts face-up, arches the back, pulls down with the hands, and descends vertically.

**Whale / Dolphin / Refill breathing:** A short breathing cycle (breath out – breath in) performed at the water surface during an artistic underwater act. It allows an athlete to continue artistic action with minimal visible interruption for breathing. The source rules identify three variations: with Crawl stroke, with Breast stroke, and with Reverse / Back re-entry.

**Back loop:** Underwater swimming in a round trajectory with the back facing the center of the loop.

**Back flip:** A tight underwater backward rotation around an imaginary horizontal axis. Unlike a Back Loop, the movement is compact and performed mostly in place rather than along a large circular swimming trajectory.

**Scorpion:** Horizontal trunk position with the head vertical above the back, the tail vertical above the head, and arms in front of the chest resembling a scorpion's claws.

**Infinity:** Two back loops swum next to each other in continuous motion.

**Neutral buoyancy:** A stationary underwater body position without physical movement, achieved through the appropriate amount of air in the lungs.

## DEVELOPMENT NOTE

The list of technical elements and techniques is expected to grow with the further development of underwater mermaiding as a sport.