

**FAIRFIELD COUNTY SWIMMING LEAGUE**  
**Swimming Rules (excerpt)**

**Article VI - FCSL SAFETY RULES**

**Teaching Racing Starts**

At its meeting held on January 24, 2009, the USA Swimming Board of Directors adopted an amendment to Article 103.2.2 of the USA Swimming Rules. The amendment was modified on March 16, 2009 to be effective on May 1 2009. The amendment was adopted pursuant to the provisions of Article 504.8 which provides their Board of Directors, with the advice and consent of the Safety Education Committee, the Rules & Regulations Committee and legal counsel, the authority to amend their Rules if they determine it is necessary for safety considerations. The USA Swimming Safety Education Committee, the Rules & Regulations Committee and their legal counsel have all approved the amendment.

The amendment specifically defines the term “teaching racing starts” and provides that teaching racing starts can take place only under the direct supervision of a Head Swim Coach.

Prior to the adoption of this amendment and the associated Racing Start Certification Checklist, USA Swimming worked with the American Red Cross to update and modify its Safety Training for Swim Coaches Manual. The updated materials emphasize the importance of appropriate safety measures in teaching racing starts, including the proper progression for novice swimmers.

FCSL amended **MANDATORY** provisions read as follows:

**WATER DEPTH**

1. **Teaching Racing Starts** - Minimum water depth for teaching racing starts in any setting from any height starting blocks or the deck shall be 6 feet (1.84 meters) measured for a distance of 3 feet 3 1/2 inches (1.0 meter) to 16 feet 5 inches (5.0 meters) from the end wall. (Effective February 15, 2007)

**“Teaching racing starts” shall include:**

- 1) **all racing start instruction until a swimmer has been certified by his or her FCSL Head Swim Coach as proficient in performing a racing start, and**
- 2) **All instruction, subsequent to certification, which seeks to alter a swimmer’s basic technique in performing a racing start**

**Teaching racing starts shall only take place under the direct supervision of a FCSL Head Swim Coach.**

The FCSL definition of teaching racing starts now includes a requirement that a FCSL Head Swim Coach “certify” that a swimmer is proficient in performing racing starts. The certification process includes the completion of a Racing Start Certification Checklist which is included in the following pages of this notice.

**Included as additional information and explanation of this change are the following:**

1. **FCSL Safety Notice to Parents.** This provides basic information to parents and emphasizes their responsibilities. In making sure their swimmer does not attempt to perform a racing start in less than six feet of water if they have not been properly certified. A copy of this Notice should be given to the parents of every swimmer and should be displayed prominently and regularly on team bulletin boards, in newsletters and in any new members packets.
2. **Safety Notice to All Member Clubs and Coaches.** This provides additional background and the basis for adopting the amendment and the certification process.
3. **Racing Start Certification Checklist.** This process will be required to be completed for every swimmer. Additional Information and requirements are shown on the checklist form.

This amendment and the certification process is very important to the *safety* of our FCSL athletes

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**1. FCSL Safety Notice to Parents**

To avoid risk of serious injury, no swimmer who has not been properly trained should attempt to perform a racing start from either a starting block or the side of the pool, into less than six feet of water.

Following USA Swimming rules, the FCSL has implemented a racing start certification program where a swimmer's coach documents his or her professional judgment that a swimmer has demonstrated sufficient skill to safely perform a racing start into four feet of water.

Swimmers do not always participate in swimming competitions under the supervision of a certified coach. It is the parent's responsibility to make sure the swimmer does not attempt to perform a racing start in less than six feet of water if the swimmer has not been properly certified by the swimmers coach to do so.

## 2. Safety Notice to All Member Clubs and Coaches

In its experience, United States Sports Insurance Company (“USSIC”) has observed that the greatest risk of serious head injury in swimming occurs in connection with teaching racing starts. In response, USSIC engaged Indiana University to conduct a racing start study. Several important observations from that study are:

- A swimmer who is told to dive straight down with arms at the side may well have sufficient head velocity at a six-foot depth to cause serious injury.
- Racing starts from the side of the pool are typically not more shallow than racing starts off the starting blocks.
- Experienced swimmers can always control the depth of their racing starts (unless they are trying a new technique). Most, but not all inexperienced swimmers can control the depth of their racing starts.

USA Swimming has taken the following steps in response to these observations:

- The American Red Cross Safety Training for Swim Coaches Manual and training course have been modified to emphasize the importance of appropriate safety measures in teaching racing starts, including the use of a proper progression for novice swimmers and the elimination of any technique that involves diving with arms at the side, over sticks, or through hoops, unless that technique is performed in a diving well. The revised version of the Safety Training for Swim Coaches Manual is now available. It can be found at [www.usaswimming.org](http://www.usaswimming.org). (See Chapter 2: Head-first Entries and Racing Start Safety.)
- Effective May 1, 2009, USA Swimming’s Board of Directors has modified the racing start rule, 103.2.2 (which already provides that racing starts should only be taught in at least six feet of water) to further clarify that racing starts should only be taught under the direct supervision of a swim coach, and to expand the definition of teaching racing starts to make clear that no swimmer who has not been certified as proficient by his or her coach should be performing racing starts into less than six feet of water (revised Rule 103.2.2 ).
- The certification process is described on the Racing Start Certification Checklist which was also approved by the USA Swimming Board. That document requires that for swimmers age 10 years and under or swimmers with less than one year of experience, the coach must certify that the swimmer has been trained according to the progression set forth on the form. (That progression is based on the revised Safety Training Manual). For older or more experienced swimmers, the checklist requires the coach to certify appropriate skill level based on the coach’s observation. The required certification is based on the coach’s professional judgment and must be recorded in writing for each swimmer.

### Racing Start Certification Checklist

Check the appropriate box as each step is satisfactorily demonstrated. Steps 1 through 5 are described with accompanying photos in the American Red Cross Safety Training for Swim Coaches Manual. Access the manual on the coaches' tab at [www.usaswimming.org](http://www.usaswimming.org). (See Chapter 2: Head-first Entries and Racing Start Safety.)

**Step 1-5 must be observed by the undersigned coach for all swimmers with less than one year of competitive experience or who are 10 years of age or younger**

Progression: The swimmer satisfactorily demonstrated the ability to safely enter the water using:

- Step 1; The sitting position
- Step 2: The kneeling position
- Step 3: The compact position
- Step 4; The stride position
- Step 5: A shallow head-first entry

**Step 6 must be completed by the coach for all swimmers, regardless of age or experience.**

**Check either one of the boxes below depending on the age and experience of the swimmer:**

- For swimmers age 10 years and under and/or swimmers with less than one year of experience: The swimmer has satisfactorily completed the racing start learning progression and demonstrated the ability to safely execute a shallow racing start from a starting block.
- For swimmers age 11 years and older with more than one year experience; Based on prior competitive experience, he swimmer is capable of safely controlling the depth of his or her racing starts.

OR

Based on personal observation, it is the professional judgment of the undersigned coach that the swimmer identified below is capable of performing a shallow racing start on demand and can safely perform a racing start in four feet of water.

Name of the Swimmer	Age	Name of the Coach (Please Print)
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Club Name	Signature of the Coach	Date
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- Record keeping options:
  - An individual form signed by the coach for each swimmer
  - An attached roster signed by the coach documenting each swimmer (sample attached).
- This document must be maintained on file with the club listed above for three years.
- Prior to teaching racing starts check and understand the local and state laws regarding water depth.
- Keep up to date on all FCSL & USA Swimming rules and information in teaching racing starts.