

Four Strokes Judges Manual

Match operations and training

Four Strokes LLC | Version 1 | September 10 2026

Working draft based on Official Tournament Rules Version 1

Use this manual to prepare a match, administer each challenge, record evidence, and certify results. It is written for Main Judges and Timing Judges holding current Four Strokes Judge Certification. Reading this manual alone does not confer certification.

Document status. The underlying Tournament Rules are a review draft. This manual translates them into working procedures; it does not approve unresolved rules or authorize an event. Sections 15 and 16 identify decisions Four Strokes must close before operational release. The forms are recommended working records, not new conditions for participation or protest.

How to use this manual

Keep the approved Tournament Rules, full card texts, event instructions, and current swimming technical references available. References marked **Rules** point to sections of Four Strokes Official Tournament Rules V1. Follow the approved Rules if a manual instruction conflicts with them. The Event Page controls event details; the Tournament Terms control legal and payment matters. Safety requirements remain controlling.

Need	Manual section
Assign officials and prepare the deck	1 and 2
Check rosters and substitutions	3
Run cards, dice, timing, and scoring	4 through 7
Resolve time expiration and swim-offs	8 and 9
Handle interruptions and penalties	10 and 11
Certify results and administer advancement	12 and 13
Train judges and resolve remaining decisions	14 through 16
Print working records	Forms A through D

Core match settings

Two to four teams compete. Each team has four active swimmers and up to two registered substitutes. Every match starts at zero. The score target and cap are **1,650 in SCY** and **1,500 in SCM**. The match clock is **60 minutes** including ordinary decisions and preparation. Each team starts with **four Action Cards** and may use **one per challenge**.

SCY means a 25-yard pool; SCM means a 25-meter pool. Use the pool's unit for the distance die. A challenge is one selected card and its generated task. A match contains challenges. A swim-off resolves a specified tie and must be identified separately in the record.

1 Officials and responsibilities

Rules 1 and 6

Main Judge

Lead the officials' briefing, shuffle the decks, reveal Challenge Cards, approve the Base Interval and stroke adjustments, and explain approved facility modifications. Control the start signal, match clock, official interruptions, and resumption. Resolve scoring protests and certify the match totals. Conduct the championship semifinal draw when assigned.

Timing Judges

Time assigned teams, observe assigned aspects of the challenge, document facts, and enter results in the app. Use one stopwatch in each hand when assigned two teams, with one watch dedicated to each team. Send disputed evidence and proposed scoring consequences to the Main Judge. Do not silently change another judge's entry.

Teams racing	Timing Judges	Separate Main Judge
2	1	1
3	2	1
4	2	1

A Timing Judge covers no more than two teams under this assignment model. The Main Judge does not fill a team's timing assignment. Identify responsibility for observing starts, strokes, turns, finishes, and exchanges before swimming. Two occupied hands and two team watches do not establish that every swimmer can also be observed adequately.

Host and Four Strokes

The Host verifies identity at check-in and manages the facility, safety personnel, emergency response, payments, and refunds. Four Strokes verifies accounts and administers eligibility and qualification decisions within its authority. Direct questions to the responsible party instead of promising an exception outside the judge's role.

Working standards for officials

- Apply the same published rule to every team and give instructions audibly to all affected captains.
- Describe what you observed, the relevant rule or card, and the resulting ruling. Distinguish a witnessed fact from an allegation or inference.
- Disclose team, family, coaching, or financial connections to the Main Judge and Host before assignment so the approved conflict procedure can be used.
- Keep team information within the event's authorized record system. Refer sensitive identity or medical issues to the Host privately.
- Remain within your training and assigned duties. A judge assignment does not replace lifeguard coverage or give medical clearance authority.

Working method. Before the match, agree on a simple signal for a timing problem, a possible violation, and an immediate safety stop. Practice the signals together; do not invent a signal during an emergency.

2 Prepare the match

Rules 2, 5 through 8, and 18

Before teams report

- Obtain the event's rules versions, full official card texts, approved card interpretations, roster list, divisions, schedule, and protest receiving procedure.
- Verify each judge's current Four Strokes certification and assign teams, watches, observation positions, and the match-clock operator under Main Judge supervision.
- Confirm the pool course, assigned lanes, starting arrangements, deck access, approved equipment, and Host safety contact. Review the Host's stop and emergency procedures.
- Check the approved Base Interval, stroke adjustments, and any SCM Yards-card value schedule. Prepare these for announcement before the match.
- Inspect the Challenge and Action decks, four dice, rolling area, score display, timing devices, and app access. Have the approved backup recording method ready.
- Check that scheduling provides at least 30 minutes of rest between team matches and a report time 15 minutes before the next match.

Timing practice. Label each watch with its assigned team or lane. Perform a dry start, stop the watches in different orders, and read both results back. Reset only after each practice reading is acknowledged. Arrange score entry so entering data does not distract from live observation.

At required check-in

Use Host-verified identity and Four Strokes account status to reconcile the roster. Confirm four eligible active swimmers, substitutes, captain, category, and completed participation requirements. Refer unresolved status to the Host and Four Strokes. Late, absent, or incomplete teams have no automatic grace period under the chosen Terms.

Captain briefing before the clock starts

Announce the course and score cap, Base Interval and stroke adjustments, SCM fixed card values if applicable, lane assignments, challenge completion method, and any approved facility modification. Explain decision periods, one Action Card per challenge, substitution reporting, safety signals, and where the captain submits a protest.

Suggested briefing. "Every match starts at zero. The match clock starts with the first card-selection period. We complete the last challenge only if its card was selected before time expires. Follow the announced card instructions and safety signals. Tell us about a substitution before the next challenge begins. Only your captain may protest a scoring result; the deadline is 15 minutes after the match ends."

Have the Main Judge shuffle both decks, deal four Action Cards per team, and establish the initial dice order. Record the order on Form A. Do not start the match clock during this setup.

3 Rosters captains and substitutions

Rules 2 and 3

Verify the correct division

Competition age is age on the first day of the applicable tournament. Every rostered swimmer, including substitutes, must be in the same division: **11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, or 19 and older**. Swimming up is not allowed. Use approved account and Host checks; judges do not improvise age or category verification methods.

All-male and all-female rosters must fit their category. A mixed active lineup must always contain two male and two female swimmers. Mixed-team substitutes may have either composition, provided every resulting active lineup preserves two and two.

Confirm the captain

Any registered active swimmer, including a minor, may be captain. The same captain serves throughout the match and represents the team for card choices, dice rolls, protests, and voluntary forfeits. Coaches may advise before swimming but do not acquire captain-only protest authority. The in-match captain and the adult prize recipient are separate administrative issues.

If the captain must leave or be substituted, use the approved captain-replacement procedure. V1 has not yet supplied that procedure; an official cannot silently appoint a new captain under a rule that says the captain remains fixed.

Process each substitution

1. Receive the captain's proposed outgoing and incoming swimmers before a challenge begins.
2. Verify the incoming swimmer is a registered eligible substitute and has not already been replaced in this match.
3. Recheck age division, category, and the four-person active lineup. For mixed teams, count two male and two female active swimmers.
4. Record the outgoing swimmer, incoming swimmer, and challenge number. Mark the outgoing swimmer as unable to re-enter this match.
5. Tell the relevant Timing Judge which lineup is now active. Update the swim-off rotation record using the approved substitution rule.

No swimmer enters midway through an active challenge. An injury interruption may allow a substitute before the rerun. A team unable to field four eligible swimmers with its available substitutes forfeits the match.

Championship continuity

At least three original active swimmers must remain on semifinal and final rosters. "Original" refers to the four swimmers in the team's first preliminary win of the calendar year. They need not all swim in every championship lineup. Retained originals must still satisfy the championship's age and category rules. Use Four Strokes' approved original-roster record; unresolved lineup changes within that first win need a ruling before the championship.

Example. A mixed team starts with two male and two female swimmers. Replacing one female swimmer with a male substitute would create three male and one female active swimmers. That proposed lineup is ineligible even if the six-person registered roster was permitted.

4 Generate each challenge

Rules 7 through 9

Establish who chooses

Before the first challenge, captains roll the repetition die. Record a highest-to-lowest order, rerolling ties among the tied teams. The highest initial roll controls the first choice.

For later challenges, the team with the highest current match score chooses and rolls the required dice. If teams are tied for the lead, those teams roll a die; the highest roll controls that choice. Keep this separate from the original order, which is still needed for missed choices and equal-score swim-off Choice results.

Choosing and rolling sequence

1. Main Judge reveals four eligible Challenge Cards and identifies the team entitled to choose.
2. Start its 60-second selection period. Start the 60-minute match clock at the first such period of the match.
3. Record the chosen card and the moment it was selected. This determines whether it can be completed if the match clock expires before swimming starts.
4. Shuffle the three unselected cards back into the Challenge deck. Keep the selected card available to the officials.
5. The selecting captain rolls every die required by the chosen card. Record the readable results. Reroll a die that leaves the rolling area, is cocked, or cannot be read clearly.
6. Read back repetitions, distance, stroke, effort, intervals, minimum and maximum distance, winning condition, completion event, and point value.
7. Announce any approved facility modification identically to all teams. Proceed to the Action Card phase.

Distance and card checks

Freestyle is the default if neither the card nor a die specifies otherwise. Increase repetitions when required to meet the card's minimum distance. For example, two repetitions of 75 satisfy a minimum of 100 when one repetition of 75 does not. Do not ignore a printed maximum to make the calculation fit. An incompatible result requires the approved card interpretation.

All teams receive the same generated challenge and race simultaneously. All four active swimmers participate in the arrangement required by the card. A relay or sequential drill does not require all four to start at once.

Missed choice or depleted deck

At a missed selection deadline, remove that team's choice and pass it to the next team in the recorded initial order. Use the approved transferred-choice timer and wraparound procedure; those details remain open in V1.

When the Challenge draw deck runs out, reshuffle eligible unclaimed cards. Do not return cards already claimed by teams merely to refill it. If fewer than four eligible cards remain, follow the preapproved shortage rule. The Main Judge has no general permission to invent a smaller selection row.

5 Intervals and Action Cards

Rules 7, 8, and 10

Announce the approved interval

The Host proposes the Base Interval; the Main Judge approves it and sets all stroke adjustments before the match. Record the units and resulting intervals clearly. Apply any interval change expressly required by a Challenge or Action Card and record its scope and duration.

Do not adjust the Base Interval simply because the match is running slowly. A safety concern follows the stop and modification procedures. The base rulebook's ordinary stroke additions do not replace the Main Judge's approved pre-match settings.

Administer the Action Card window

After the challenge is generated, announce the ordinary 60-second Action Card period and the order of play. Teams play openly, highest current match score first. Equal-score teams play in lower-numbered lane order. Later teams may react to earlier cards.

Team	Score	Lane	Action order
A	600	4	1
B	450	2	2
C	450	3	3
D	200	1	4

For each play, read the card, verify its permitted timing and effect, record the playing team and any target, and mark that team's one-card allowance as used. Apply only the printed effect and approved interpretation. A team may decline to play.

The current Rules establish a 60-second ordinary period but leave its precise allocation across the open sequence for confirmation. The event procedure must state how the clock is administered; do not grant each team a fresh minute or shorten its opportunity by assumption.

Exceptions and limits

A card may expressly permit another play window. That timing exception does not create a second Action Card allowance. Once the applicable deadline is missed, the team loses the right to play in that window. The default consequence is not a point deduction.

During a swim-off, an Action Card is permitted only if its own text expressly allows that use. Apply the approved interaction with any card already played on the underlying challenge. An Action Card cannot override safety requirements.

Manage hands and discards

There is no maximum hand size. Used Action Cards remain discarded. When a team collects two Challenge Cards of the same category, every other team draws one Action Card if available. Use the approved repeat-trigger and partial-deck allocation rules. When the Action deck is exhausted, stop further draws; do not reshuffle its discards.

For a voided challenge, played Action Cards remain in effect for the rerun and remain discarded afterward. The rerun does not create a fresh ordinary allowance.

6 Observe and time the swim

Rules 1, 6, 9, and 11

Before the starting signal

Main Judge confirms the active lineups, starting positions, legal start method, challenge instructions, Action Card effects, and observer coverage. Timing Judges confirm watch-to-team assignments and the exact event that stops each watch. Resolve uncertainty before starting.

The Challenge Card determines completion. It may be a final swimmer's finish, completion of a specified task, or another stated event. Do not automatically stop a team's watch when its first swimmer touches. Time is not the sole winning measure for every card; honor counts and elimination conditions need their own observations.

Two-watch method

1. Hold the assigned watch for one team in each hand. Keep assignments unchanged during the attempt.
2. Start both watches on the applicable official start signal.
3. Observe each assigned completion event and stop the corresponding watch independently.
4. Record both readings and any observation issue before resetting either watch.
5. Read the team identities and results back to the scorer or Main Judge. Enter the results for the correct challenge and attempt.

Record the actual displayed time using the approved timing precision. Do not add estimated hundredths, average unrelated watches, or present an inferred placing as a measured time. Raw readings and the Main Judge's finishing-order determination are separate records.

Missing or disputed time

Notify the Main Judge promptly and preserve the watch reading, notes, and available evidence. A certified judge may determine finishing order using reliable available evidence. Explain the evidence used and mark a missing time as missing. If equipment failure interrupted the challenge, apply the void-and-rerun rule. A result discrepancy alone does not justify inventing a replacement time.

Technical observation

Use the applicable USA Swimming technical provisions for starts, strokes, turns, finishes, and exchanges, with the express Four Strokes variations and approved card exceptions. Have the current text and effective amendments at the venue. The 2026 Rules and Policies page states that listed amendments supersede corresponding printed and PDF text. [S1, S2]

Record a suspected violation factually: team, swimmer, challenge and attempt, location or length, observed action, observer, and applicable rule or card. "Missed simultaneous finish touch" is more useful than "bad technique" when that requirement applies. Report observation limits honestly; do not manufacture certainty.

Technical reference scope. This manual does not reproduce the full swimming stroke code. Judges must study the governing technical text. Four Strokes certification and the selected timing method do not by themselves establish USA Swimming sanctioning or official time recognition.

7 Score the challenge

Rules 11, 12, 16, and 18

Scoring sequence

Confirm that the attempt is valid. Collect timing, completion, honor-count, and violation evidence. Apply the card's winning condition and the relevant tournament consequences. Resolve a challenge tie by swim-off, then award the applicable card points and valid effects using the approved scoring order. Announce and record the updated totals before the next challenge.

Record the prior score, ordinary award or Bet change, Action Card effects, penalties, floor or cap adjustment, and new total. Preserve raw challenge performance even when the final match score is capped. A scoring record must explain the arithmetic, not merely display a new total.

Ordinary challenges

The winner claims the Challenge Card and receives its point value. If any active swimmer cannot legally complete a standard challenge, the whole team receives zero points for that challenge. That is not an instruction to erase its prior match total. Last-team-standing cards and losing Bet stakes require the unresolved interactions in Section 15 to be settled before use.

Bet and Yards cards

For a Bet card, captains privately declare game-point stakes to the judge. The base minimum is 100; a team with fewer than 100 points stakes exactly 100. The winner adds its declared stake and each loser subtracts its own stake. Record a zero floor and the course cap. The maximum stake and effect order need an approved interpretation. Do not accept money or prize interests as a card stake.

In SCM, use the fixed tournament Yards-card value announced before the match. Do not convert meters to yards or invent a value at scoring. In SCY, apply the approved distance-linked card measure. Confirm whether that measure is per swimmer or another defined amount in the card instructions.

Example with no other effects	Recorded result
SCY score 1,600 plus a 200-point award	1,650; target reached
SCM score 1,450 plus a 100-point award	1,500; target reached
Score 60; lose a required 100-point Bet stake	0; not minus 40
Score 500; one swimmer fails an ordinary challenge	No award; 500 remains
Match-deciding swim-off at equal final scores	Record winner separately; no invented extra points

These examples isolate one effect. Where several effects interact, apply the approved sequence; do not extrapolate a new sequence from an example.

Retained records. Forfeit and match disqualification retain earned points under V1, but remove advancement and prize entitlement from that match. Mark status separately from score. Authorized correction of an erroneous or falsified entry is handled through the correction process.

8 Control the match clock

Rules 9, 11, 15, and 17

Start the 60-minute clock when the first Challenge Card selection period begins. It runs through ordinary selection, dice, Action Card decisions, preparation, and swimming. A separate decision timer measures each applicable 60-second decision period; it does not reset the match clock.

Pause for an emergency or official interruption. Record the remaining time, reason, and Main Judge's authorization to resume. Do not pause for ordinary coaching, card deliberation, or routine preparation simply to extend the match.

Situation at expiration	Main Judge action
Four cards revealed; none selected	End ordinary play. Do not allow a late selection.
Card selected; dice or Action decisions underway	Complete that selected challenge and score it.
Swimming underway on a selected card	Complete and score the challenge.
Final challenge has an unresolved tie	Conduct the required swim-off to determine its award.
First place remains tied after final scoring	Conduct a match-deciding swim-off.
Official interruption while time remains	Keep the clock paused until authorized resumption.

Target reached

The target and recorded cap are 1,650 in SCY and 1,500 in SCM. Once the authorized scoring sequence reaches the match-ending condition, end ordinary play and resolve any required first-place tie. Do not start another ordinary challenge to give trailing teams an extra chance. Where competing effects could change the threshold result, use the approved scoring-order interpretation.

Record when the match actually ends

Time expiration and match end may occur at different moments. A selected final challenge or required swim-off can continue after 60 minutes. Record the Main Judge's actual match-end announcement using the approved end-time procedure. Use that event to administer the 15-minute protest deadline, not automatically the instant the clock reached zero.

Suggested announcement. "Ordinary play is complete. The provisional scores are [scores]. [Team] is the provisional winner. The match-end time is [time]; the captain's protest deadline is [time]. Results become final after the protest window and Main Judge certification."

Clock examples

A card selected at 59:50 remains eligible when the clock reaches 60:00 during permitted Action Card decisions. Finish that challenge. If the card was only revealed at 59:50 and had not been selected by 60:00, no new challenge begins.

An official interruption at 42:10 elapsed leaves 17:50 on the competition clock. Record the interruption separately; restart from the preserved remaining time when the Main Judge authorizes resumption.

9 Conduct a swim off

Rules 10, 12, and 13

Identify whether the swim-off decides a challenge award, match win, or qualification place. Record the tied teams and applicable scores. Two, three, or four tied teams race simultaneously, with **one active swimmer per team**. This is not a four-swimmer relay.

1. Check each tied team's rotation record. Every active swimmer must participate once before anyone repeats.
2. Have each captain secretly select an eligible active swimmer before the dice are rolled. Record the selections without revealing them early to opponents.
3. Roll only the stroke and distance dice. Repetition and effort dice are not used. Apply the normal invalid-die reroll rule.
4. Resolve Choice, announce the common stroke and distance, and confirm any expressly permitted Action Card use under the approved card interpretation.
5. Confirm starting arrangements, observers, watches, and required recovery. Start all tied teams together and record times and legal completion.
6. Award the relevant win or position to the fastest legal swimmer's team. Record the swim-off result separately from ordinary challenge points.

Choice and shortened IM

If Choice is rolled, the tied team with the lowest current match score chooses the stroke for everyone. If those scores are equal, the first tied team in the recorded initial dice order chooses. A qualification swim-off without a shared match order needs a separately approved initial-order procedure.

IM distance	Sequence in yards for SCY or meters for SCM
25	25 butterfly
50	25 butterfly, then 25 backstroke
75	25 butterfly, then 25 backstroke, then 25 breaststroke
100	25 butterfly, 25 backstroke, 25 breaststroke, 25 freestyle

Violations and further ties

A technical violation immediately disqualifies the team from that swim-off. V1 treats this separately from the first-warning ordinary false-start rule; confirm the false-start hierarchy before operational release.

If the swim-off remains tied, roll a new challenge and repeat with swimmer rotation. If all teams are disqualified in a **match-deciding** swim-off, all of those tied teams may enter a new dice-generated swim-off, following rotation. V1 does not expressly extend that all-disqualified reset to every other type of tie.

Record each swimmer who participated, including an attempt ending in disqualification. If substitutions disrupt the rotation, use the approved rotation procedure. Do not waive rotation or recovery to hurry the schedule.

10 Interruptions and safe resumption

Rules 14 and 15

Immediate response

The Main Judge or Host safety personnel may stop swimming for an immediate safety concern. A swimmer may stop their own participation and seek help. Alert the Host's safety personnel and follow the facility emergency plan. Keep access clear and act within your assigned training. Recording a result must not delay emergency assistance.

Pause the match clock and note the remaining time when practicable. Preserve the challenge card, dice results, Action Card effects, and existing scores. Record observations without diagnosing the swimmer. Use the Host's incident process for medical details rather than placing them on public score sheets.

What must be rerun

An injury or illness during the challenge stops it for everyone. An equipment failure, outside disturbance, or material accidental interference requires the attempt to be voided and rerun for all teams. The same selected card and dice result remain in place unless the Main Judge approves a necessary uniform facility or safety modification.

Item	Treatment on a voided attempt and rerun
Attempt result	Void it; do not count it and the rerun twice
Challenge Card and dice	Preserve the same generated challenge
Action Cards already played	Effects remain; cards remain discarded afterward
Ordinary Action allowance	No additional allowance for the rerun
False-start warnings	Clear them; start a fresh warning count
Already-imposed disqualification	Follow approved ruling; a warning reset alone does not settle it
Match clock	Paused during interruption; Main Judge authorizes restart
Injury substitution	Eligible substitute may enter before the rerun

Before resumption

Confirm that the Host's safety response has addressed the concern. Recheck the active lineups, equipment, observation positions, unchanged card effects, warning status, and recovery requirements. Explain the rerun to all teams. The Main Judge may authorize competition to resume but cannot override an active safety stop or supply medical clearance.

A team with fewer than four eligible swimmers and no available substitute forfeits. If only one team remains because opponents forfeit, that team wins immediately at its existing score.

If the facility cannot safely resume, preserve the record and refer the match to the approved abandonment procedure. Do not fabricate a completed challenge or certify an invented finish. Before using the deck, the Host and qualified aquatic safety personnel must review actual card requirements, including any breath-control task. Unsafe breath-holding competition must not be created by a card interpretation. [S3]

11 Penalties and match status

Rules 9 through 13 and 16

Identify the rule, record the facts, notify the captain, and apply the consequence at the correct scope. **Zero challenge points, disqualification from a challenge, and disqualification from a match are different outcomes.** Use those words rather than an unexplained “DQ.”

Event	Consequence under V1	Reset or scope
Missed Challenge Card selection deadline	Lose choice; transfer by initial order	That selection opportunity
Missed Action Card deadline	Lose right to play in that window	Applicable window
First ordinary false start by a team	Warning	Each challenge; cleared on voided rerun
Second ordinary false start by that team	Disqualified from challenge	Same challenge
Not ready when called	Warning; repeated failure gives zero challenge points	Reset period still needs approval
One swimmer cannot legally finish a standard challenge	Whole team receives zero points for that challenge	Prior total remains; card interactions need approval
Honor System lie or intentional cheating	Zero challenge points; repeats may cause match disqualification	No invented fixed repeat count
Intentional interference	First warning; second match disqualification	Warning resets at match end
Material accidental interference	Void and rerun for every team	Same generated challenge
Swim-off technical violation	Immediate disqualification from that swim-off	Specific swim-off procedure

Forfeit and disqualification records

A captain may voluntarily forfeit the entire match. A team unable to field four eligible active swimmers must forfeit. Keep earned points but mark that the team cannot advance or receive a prize from that match.

Match disqualification also retains earned points in the cumulative preliminary record under V1. Remove the match win and advancement or prize entitlement. A valid prior win in another match is a separate record; do not create an unapproved season ban.

If a winning team is later disqualified, the next-highest eligible team in that match receives the win or advancement place. If that next position is itself tied or later stages have been played, use the applicable tie procedure or refer to Four Strokes as required.

Safety authority remains immediate. The first-warning interference sequence does not require officials or the Host to let dangerous conduct continue. Stop the activity and use the Host's protective procedures while documenting the sporting ruling separately.

12 Protests and certification

Rules 17 and 18

Receive a protest

Only the Team Captain may submit a scoring or challenge-result protest, within 15 minutes after the match ends. Use the event's published receiving method. Form D is a suggested evidence record; it must not become an unannounced prerequisite or shorten the deadline. Record the actual receipt time even if the judge reviews it later.

Identify the captain and team, match and challenge, disputed result, requested correction, and available evidence. Preserve the original entry and observations. Refer the matter to the Main Judge, who makes the final ordinary scoring-protest decision.

Decide and explain

Review the relevant card, tournament provision, and reliable evidence. Give a short reason connecting the observed facts to the rule. Record any changed points or placing and communicate the outcome to affected captains. A different opinion alone is not evidence of fraud. The Main Judge's sporting decision does not replace the legal dispute process in the Tournament Terms.

Certify the match

1. Timing Judges finish assigned-team entries and reconcile the underlying records.
2. Main Judge checks challenge totals, caps and floors, status codes, any swim-off, and the provisional winner.
3. Confirm the 15-minute protest window has expired and all timely protests are resolved.
4. Record the certified scores and winner, judge identity, certification time, and any relevant decision reference.
5. Submit through the authorized app workflow. If the app is unavailable, use only the approved backup and later verification process; do not claim an upload occurred.
6. Return unused Action Cards and collected Challenge Cards to the official decks. Preserve the match record for the event's authorized retention process.

Corrections after certification

Four Strokes may correct clerical errors within seven days; the exact start and time zone must be defined in the release instructions. Fraud, ineligibility, and later-discovered misconduct have no fixed correction deadline under V1.

Before changing results on those allegations, Four Strokes gives the affected team written notice and seven days to submit evidence. A judge forwards the evidence and preserves the record; the judge does not silently rewrite a certified result through an ordinary app edit.

If advancement should change after the next stage has been played, Four Strokes decides whether to replay competition or adjust standings and gives written reasons. Preserve both the original certified record and the authorized correction so the change can be understood.

Contact routing. The legal claims URL is <https://swim4strokes.com/claims>. It is not automatically the on-deck protest channel. Confirm the sporting protest receiver before the match begins.

13 Preliminary records and championships

Rules 3 through 5 and 16 through 18

Submit the correct preliminary record

Every completed preliminary match contributes its recorded score to the team's calendar-year total in its age-group and male, female, or mixed category. Combine SCY and SCM raw scores without conversion. Preserve the course, division, date, and match status so Four Strokes can apply the correct leaderboard.

There is no fixed maximum number of preliminary matches; participation depends on availability. A team needs at least one valid preliminary win to be invitation-eligible. Rank eligible teams by cumulative score, including nonwinning matches. Retained points from a disqualified match do not restore its invalidated win.

At the published qualification cutoff, the top four eligible teams per leaderboard are invited. Resolve a tie at the cutoff through the established swim-off procedure. Four Strokes selects replacements for declined or missed invitations from eligible teams on the same leaderboard, considering rank and availability. A judge does not promise the vacancy to the next-ranked team.

Prepare the championship draw

Before the draw, confirm the four accepted eligible teams, division, category, and required original-roster continuity. A shared swimmer whose teams both qualify for the same championship division must choose one team before the bracket draw. Each other team must still field an eligible roster.

Suggested draw method. Immediately before competition, the Main Judge may use four identical opaque slips bearing the team IDs. Show the entries, mix them, draw two for semifinal 1 and the remaining two for semifinal 2, and record the outcome in front of captains. The required rule is a random draw; this is a practical method, not a new seeding policy.

Run the championship bracket

Two teams race in each semifinal. Each winner advances to the two-team final. Losing semifinalists race a separate third-place match. All matches begin at zero; earlier scores remain records. Provide at least 30 minutes of team rest between matches and report times 15 minutes before starts under the approved scheduling interpretation.

The standard four-team bracket already gives both semifinal winners a final position. Only an expressly authorized alternative with excess semifinal winners invokes selection by highest semifinal score. Do not apply that contingency to eliminate a winner from the standard bracket.

Hand over results

Certify each match before treating its outcome as final. Provide Four Strokes with the score, status, winner, roster continuity record, and any decision affecting advancement. Prize payments and recipient verification remain subject to the Tournament Terms and organizer procedures; a Main Judge's score certification is not a payment authorization.

14 Training examples

Use these as discussion exercises. They apply V1 and do not establish an examination passing score or a certification requirement.

1 Equal scores and card order

Teams in lanes 1 and 3 both have 400 points, tied for the lead. For Challenge Card control, have the tied leaders roll a die. For ordinary Action Card order, lane 1 precedes lane 3. These use different tie rules. **Rules 8.3 and 10.2.**

2 Expiration before swimming

The card is selected at 59:55. Time expires during dice generation. Complete the selected challenge, its permitted decisions, and its required result-deciding swim-off. Do not start another ordinary challenge. **Rules 11.6.**

3 Capped scores tie

In a lawful multi-effect scoring outcome, two teams finish at the SCY cap of 1,650. Use a first-place swim-off. Do not use uncapped arithmetic as an unapproved tiebreaker. **Rules 11.7 and 12.6.**

4 Choice in a tied match

The tied finalists both have 1,200 points. Their original order was Team B before Team A. Choice is rolled. Team B chooses the stroke for both. Do not use lower lane number for this decision. **Rules 13.4.**

5 Shortened IM

The dice show IM and 50 in SCM. Swim 25 meters butterfly followed by 25 meters backstroke. The race finishes after backstroke; the distance is not divided into four 12.5-meter legs. **Rules 13.5.**

6 Interrupted attempt

A material outside disturbance causes the Main Judge to void a challenge. Preserve its card, dice, and played Action Card effects. Clear false-start warnings. Rerun for every team after authorized resumption. Do not automatically erase an already-imposed disqualification; its treatment needs the approved ruling. **Rules 15.**

7 Opponents forfeit

Team A has 350 points when all opponents forfeit; Team B had 600 before its forfeit. Team A wins immediately with 350 recorded points. Team B retains its earned 600 but cannot win, advance, or receive a prize from that match. **Rules 16.1 and 16.2.**

8 Protest received before the deadline

The captain submits through the published method 14 minutes after match end. The Main Judge begins reviewing it at minute 18. Receipt was timely. Resolve it before certification; review time does not retroactively make the submission late. **Rules 17.1 and 17.2.**

9 All swimmers disqualified in the deciding swim off

Every tied team commits a technical violation in a match-deciding swim-off. Allow those teams into a new dice-generated swim-off, following swimmer rotation and recovery requirements. Do not award the win to the fastest illegal finish. **Rules 13.8.**

15 Decisions required before operational release

Rules Appendix B

These are open items carried forward from the Rules draft. They are not discretionary powers for an individual judge. Four Strokes should issue a dated interpretation or revised rule and include it in the officials' and captains' briefing. If an unaddressed issue arises during a match, preserve the record and seek an authorized ruling; use an official interruption where needed rather than inventing a penalty.

Cards and scoring

- Supply the full approved Challenge and Action Card texts. Identify winning conditions, exact completion events, permitted exceptions, effort requirements, and safe facility adaptations.
- Supply fixed SCM Yards-card values and identify their approver. Set whether values are uniform across Hosts. Clarify the SCY distance measure used for Yards points.
- Resolve the blanket zero-points rule against last-team-standing cards and losing Bet stakes. Set maximum Bet stakes and the order of awards, effects, penalties, floors, caps, and match-ending checks.
- Define the two-category-card bonus repeat trigger and distribution if too few Action Cards remain. Define selection with fewer than four eligible Challenge Cards, unclaimed cards after no winner, and incompatible minimum/maximum dice results.
- Set the transferred-choice time and wraparound rule. Confirm how the 60-second open Action Card period is allocated and how exceptional timing interacts with a used allowance. List cards that expressly permit swim-off use.

Starts timing and interruptions

- Confirm whether every false start in a swim-off is an immediate technical disqualification. Define how the first ordinary false start is recalled and restarted.
- Assign technical observation coverage alongside two-watch timing. Set timing precision and the evidence procedure when a time is missing or conflicting; validate that judges can carry out their assigned duties.
- Set readiness-warning resets and the treatment of a prior disqualification after a voided attempt. Define the minimum recovery for reruns and repeat swim-offs.
- Define when the 30-minute team rest period begins and how shared swimmers receive appropriate recovery. Set captain replacement and swim-off rotation after substitution or injury.
- Adopt a match-abandonment procedure if safe resumption is impossible. Preserve the separate event cancellation and refund rules.

Qualification and result administration

- Establish an initial order and logistics for cutoff swim-offs between teams without a shared match. Address more than four tied qualifiers, no legal finisher in a non-match-deciding swim-off, and fewer than four eligible championship teams.
- Identify the original four when substitutions occur during the first preliminary win, and what happens if that win is later invalidated. Fix replacement deadlines and first-day age treatment for standalone preliminaries.
- Publish the qualification year, cutoff time zone, year-end match treatment, protest receiver, actual match-end timestamp procedure, app-outage process, and clerical-correction start time. Define notice delivery and interim handling of disputed advancement or prizes.

16 Release review and source documents

Organizer release record

Before the manual is used as an official event operating document, Four Strokes should confirm that the Rules version, resolved interpretations, card set, registration process, and Host instructions agree. The existing age-13 Tournament Terms still need alignment with the age-11 Rules decision. This manual does not amend the Terms or the Privacy Policy.

Resolve the adult prize-recipient process for youth teams separately from the minor in-match captain. Carry forward the Rules' legal review items for participation documents and paid prizes. Judges should receive an operational clearance status from the organizer rather than deciding those legal questions on deck.

The Host and qualified aquatic safety personnel should review actual card requirements and the observation and timing plan. No card title establishes the safety of its exercise. USA Swimming's safety material warns against extended breath-holding competitions and pressure or penalties tied to breath-holding performance. Follow the Host's emergency plan and approved safety restrictions. [S3]

Sources used for this manual

F1 Four Strokes Official Tournament Rules V1, September 10 2026. Primary source for match and tournament procedures. "Rules" references in this manual refer to that document's numbered sections.

F2 Four Strokes Rulebook, supplied nine-page PDF. Source for base-game card handling, dice, ordinary awards, Bet mechanics, and swim-off selection. F1 controls its express tournament variations. The supplied PDF describes card mechanics but does not contain every full card text.

S1 USA Swimming Rules and Policies, including effective amendments. Consult the current page before each event rather than assuming a printed rulebook remains unchanged.

<https://www.usaswimming.org/about-usas/governance/rules-policies>

S2 USA Swimming 2026 Mini Rulebook, Part One. Study Article 101 for technical swimming rules and the relevant officiating and timing provisions. Apply the F1 variations only within the authorized Four Strokes format.

https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/governance/governance-lsc-website/rules_policies/rulebooks/2026-mini-rulebook.pdf

S3 USA Swimming Operational Risk Safety Manual, including its breath-holding discussion and joint hypoxic-training statement. Supports the safety review instructions; it does not supply Four Strokes event approval.

<https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/risk-management/safety-and-operational-risk/operational-risk-safety-manual.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

External references checked September 10 2026. Four Strokes Judge Certification is separate from USA Swimming officiating credentials. Event sanctioning, insurance, and recognition of times require their own applicable authorization.

Manual approval: _____ **Date:** _____

Effective Rules version and interpretation notices: _____

Form A Match setup record

Recommended working form | Complete before the first selection period

Event and match ID: _____

Date and scheduled start: _____

Division and category: _____

Course and cap: SCY / 1,650 SCM / 1,500

Main Judge and certification reference: _____

Timing Judges and certification references: _____

Host safety contact and stop signal: _____

Rules and interpretation versions: _____

Protest receiver and method: _____

Team ID	Lane	Captain ID	Timing Judge	Initial order

Base Interval and units: _____

Stroke adjustments: _____

SCM Yards-value schedule reference: _____

Uniform facility modifications: _____

Prestart check

- ☐ Host identity and participation-clearance statuses reconciled with the roster.
- ☐ Four eligible active swimmers per team; eligible substitutes and category checked.
- ☐ Championship original-roster continuity checked where applicable.
- ☐ Timing devices practiced; observation responsibilities and clock operator assigned.
- ☐ Host safety arrangements and approved starts reviewed.
- ☐ Main Judge shuffled decks; four Action Cards issued per team.
- ☐ Initial dice order recorded; lanes, intervals, values, and instructions announced.
- ☐ Protest method, 15-minute deadline, and safety signals explained.

First selection and match-clock start: _____

Main Judge initials: _____ Attached roster record: _____

Form B Challenge and attempt record

Recommended working form | One sheet per challenge with linked rerun sheets

Match ID: _____ Challenge number: _____

Attempt number: _____ Ordinary / rerun: _____

Card name or ID and category: _____

Choosing team: _____ Card selected at: _____

Dice results: Reps _____ Distance _____ Stroke _____ Effort _____

Approved task and interval: _____

Completion event and winning measure: _____

Point value or scoring-schedule reference: _____

Facility modification or interpretation reference: _____

Team	Action played and target	Time or other result	Violation or evidence reference

Team	Prior score	Award or Bet	Other effects	Floor or cap adjustment	New total

Outcome: Valid / void Challenge winner: _____

Swim-off sheet reference if needed: _____

Pause reason and clock remaining: _____

Resumption time and Main Judge authorization: _____

Rerun effects and warning status confirmed: _____

Timing Judge initials: _____ Main Judge check: _____

Keep private Bet declarations in an attached restricted judge record until disclosure is permitted by the approved card procedure. Mark missing times as missing. Do not use a zero as a substitute for a missing measurement.

Form C Lineup and swim off record

Recommended working form | Attach to the match record

Match ID: _____ **Team ID:** _____

Use swimmer IDs from the verified roster. Keep identity documents and medical details out of this sheet.

Active swimmer at match start	Registered substitute	Original qualifier if applicable
	Substitute 1	
	Substitute 2	
	No additional slot	
	No additional slot	

Substitution record

Before challenge or rerun	Swimmer out	Swimmer in	Eligibility and category checked by

Once replaced, the outgoing swimmer cannot re-enter this match. Update rotation only under the approved interpretation.

Swim off attempts

Purpose and tied teams: _____

Applicable scores and Choice order reference: _____

Attempt	Swimmer ID	Stroke and distance	Result or violation	Rotation cycle

Choice selected by and stroke: _____

Expressly permitted Action Card and interpretation: _____

Winner or required repeat and reason: _____

Judge initials: _____

Form D Protest and certification record

Recommended working form | Does not replace the published submission method

Event and match ID: _____

Actual match-end time and time zone: _____

Protest deadline: _____

Protest record

Captain and team: _____

Received at and by: _____

Challenge or result disputed: _____

Requested correction and evidence references:

Main Judge findings and applicable rule or card:

Decision and score or placing changes:

Decision communicated at and to: _____

Main Judge signature: _____

Match certification

Team	Final score	Completed / forfeit / match DQ	Winner or placing

[] Timing entries reconciled; score calculations and status checked.

[] Required swim-off completed and result attached.

[] Protest window expired and every timely protest resolved.

[] Authorized submission completed or approved backup status documented.

App record or approved backup reference: _____

Certified by Main Judge: _____ At: _____

Correction notice reference if later amended: _____

Preserve the original certification and link any authorized later correction.