

“YOU DON’T HAVE TO TOUCH THE WALL FIRST TO WIN THE RACE; YOU JUST HAVE TO APPLY SEVEN POUNDS OF PRESSURE TO THE TOUCHPAD.”

MARK SCHUBERT, NATIONAL COACH US SWIMMING,
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APPROACH

The ‘finish’ starts quite a distance before the end of the race. The technique and effort over the final 5, 10 or even 15m of swimming (“the approach”) can change the ranking order of swimmers and can definitely change the time. The approach is the most important part of a race finish. A strong, aggressive and well timed approach followed by a forceful touch can make **at least 0.3 – 0.5 seconds** difference to a race time and, often, even more.

BREASTSTROKE

The finish for breaststroke races is exactly the same as the approach and touch at the turns.

The swimmer must ‘spot’ the wall from at least 5 meters before the finish so that the touch is made with perfect stroke timing – the final thrust taking the hands forcefully onto the touchpad or wall at almost full extension and with no time-wasting and speed-sapping glide.

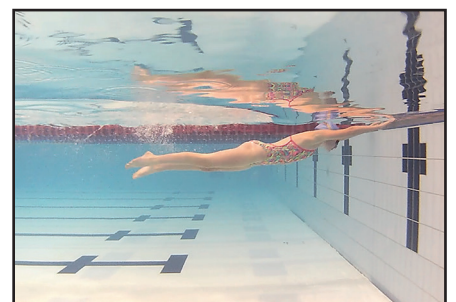
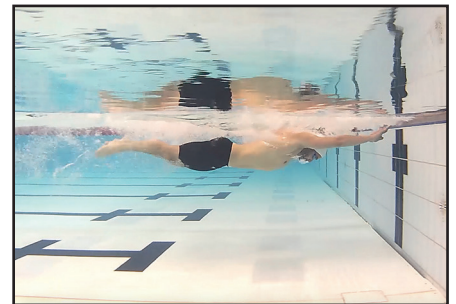
Both hands should hit the wall simultaneously. They must be separated, i.e. they cannot overlap with one hand on top of the other (otherwise only one hand has ‘finished’) but they do not need to be at the same height as each other; one could be above the waterline and the other below the waterline. However, if the swimmer is swimming with even-height shoulders it is likely that the hands will hit the wall pretty much level with each other at the finish.

A finishing ‘stand-alone’ arm stroke is permitted on breaststroke, i.e. one that is not followed by a kick. The elbows are allowed to be clear of the surface on the lunge to the wall. The swimmer can be completely submerged when they touch.

These allowances for turns and finishes are contrary to the rules in effect during the rest of the race.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

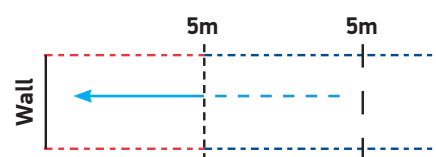
- Anaerobic ability to ‘lift’ the effort at the last stages of the race.
- Shoulder flexibility for long reach.
- Spatial awareness of the relative positions of the body and the wall and of the swim speed.



TESTING & MONITORING

- 5m timed finishes (time is taken from the head passing the backstroke flag pole to the hand touch).
- 8-10 x 10m/15m swim in at full speed – score how many touches are made with 'perfect' stroke timing. Vary the start point somewhat from swim to swim.

BREASTSTROKE FINISHES



THE RULES

- **SW 7.6 (BREASTSTROKE)** At each turn and at the finish of the race, the touch shall be made with both hands separated and simultaneously at, above, or below the water level. At the last stroke before the turn and at the finish an arm stroke not followed by a leg kick is permitted. The head may be submerged after the last arm pull prior to the touch, provided it breaks the surface of the water at some point during the last complete or incomplete cycle preceding the touch.

COACHING PROCESS & CONTROL

- Once the swimmer has 'finished' the race there are no more opportunities to chase someone, overtake, make up for lost time, or try harder. That's it. It's over. Best to make the best of it.
- *"The swimmer's responsibility is to activate the touchpad at the earliest possible opportunity."*
- Insist on legal, purposeful finishes on every swim of every set, every day.
- Backstroke flags must be 5m from the wall and must be 1.8m above the water. If your measurements are different your swimmers will have problems when they swim in regulation pools.

LAND EXERCISES

- Shoulder flexibility

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Practice, practice, practice.
 - Practice 'spotting' from the flags (5m before the finish), from 10m and from 15m from the finish. The markings are standard in 25m pools. Learn to adjust the final few strokes (not just the last one) so that the touch is made at almost full extension and with force.
- interpreting the rules

COMMON FAULTS & FIXES

- Not 'spotting' the wall.
- Stretching the arms while doing an extra kick.
- Gliding/kicking in.
- Finishing with a 'short' arm stroke on any stroke.
- Finishing on the top of the wall (instead of the flat wall).

DESCRIPTIVE WORDS & IMAGERY

Strong, determined, purposeful, forceful, hit the touchpad, stop the clock, lunge.

SEE ALSO

- British Swimming: britishswimming.org
- ASA: swimming.org
- SASA: scottishswimming.com
- WASA: swimwales.org
- BSCA: gbswimcoaches.co.uk