

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO HEAD SWIM COACHES, March 2023

Update on Maximum Effort Rules (MER) Changes for 2023 for Sectionals and State Competition

**Maximum Effort Limit for Sectional Competition will change to 20%.
Maximum Effort Limit for State Games will change to 15%.**

EXCEPTIONS: All events shorter than 25 yards, as well as 25 freestyle, 25 flotation, and the 4 x 25 freestyle relay will remain at the 25% limit for MER.

EXAMPLE: An entry time for an athlete's event is 1 minute. If an athlete at sectionals swims faster than 48 seconds, it will be a disqualification: **CALCULATION:** 20% of 60 seconds is 12 seconds, subtract 12 from 60 for the MER limit of 48 seconds. For a 1 minute divisioning time at state games, the MER limit is 51 seconds.

BACKGROUND:

At the very core of Special Olympics philosophy is that athletes compete against those of **equal ability**. For swimming, "ability" is measured by the athletes' times for each event. The Maximum Effort Rule (MER), which was called the Honest Effort Rule in the past, establishes an improvement limit for timed/scored competitions to ensure that all athletes are participating in fair and honest competitions. The Special Olympics rules for Maximum Effort are linked here: [Section 3.8 Swimming Rulebook \(2022\)](#).

TIPS FOR COACHES AND ATHLETES AVOID DISQUALIFICATIONS

- **Keep accurate records** of your athletes' events and times. Share this record with your athlete. Inspire athletes to improve their times.
- **Provide many opportunities** to measure performance.
 - Hold or attend invitational events prior to sectionals. If there are no invitationals in your area, hold a "time trials" night in a competition atmosphere, where everyone is cheering on the swimmers.
 - Invite a neighboring team to visit your site on a training night for a mini event.
 - Have the school's swim team come to a training session for "races"
- **UPDATE** times before the deadline if athletes continue to improve.
 - Submit updated times by the scratch/activation/update deadline, which is the deadline is Monday before sectional events, and one week before the first day of State events. Check the SOPA competition calendar [here](#) for specific dates.
- **CHECK YOUR DATA** for each swimmer - do the times "look" correct?
 - Make sure the time matches the event and the athlete.
 - A delegation report is sent out prior to sectionals and states; check it carefully to make sure events and times are correct
- **Check preliminary** results when they are posted.
 - If your swimmer has an uncharacteristic bad day at preliminary competition, have the Meet Director use the entry score for final divisioning.
 - Times for swimmers disqualified in prelims revert to the entry time, if you prefer to keep the prelim time for finals you must make that request to the Meet Director.
- **Bring your athlete records** with you to competitions - you may need to refer to them.
- **ALWAYS** teach your swimmers to do their best at every level. Never tell them to "slow down" to avoid a potential disqualification - that is very confusing to all athletes.
- **CELEBRATE SUCCESS!**
 - An athlete swims for a personal BEST TIME ever and is disqualified. Re-focus the athlete on how well they swam, their NEW record, and provide positive feedback.