



## Brief Summary of the Rules of Water Polo

This document aims to set out the most important aspects of the rules on just one sheet of paper. The full rules are available at the [www.fina.org](http://www.fina.org) web site. The starting-point is the distinction between **Ordinary Fouls** and the more serious **Exclusion & Penalty Fouls**.

**Ordinary Fouls** are punished by the award of a free throw. This free throw can be a pass or a direct shot at goal provided it is taken immediately and is for a foul committed outside the 5m area. The free throw is taken wherever the ball is, provided this is at or behind where the foul was committed. Should the ball be in front of where the foul was committed then it must be returned to where the foul took place or further back than this and the free throw is taken there. Free throws must be taken without delay but players are permitted to play the ball to themselves.

In summary the **Ordinary Fouls** are:

- To advance beyond the goal line at the start prior to the referee's signal.
- To assist a player (*includes a helpful push to the player swimming for the ball!*).
- To hold or push off the goal posts, sides or end of the pool.
- For an outfield player to take an active part in the game while standing or to jump to play the ball. (*Goalies have a 5m area where they can stand and also play the ball with two hands or a clenched fist.*)
- To touch the ball with two hands at the same time or with a clenched fist.
- To take the ball under the water when tackled (*even if an opponent pushes you under!*).
- To push or push off a player who is not holding the ball (*note the vital words not holding the ball*).
- To be within the opponents' 2m area unless you are behind the line of the ball.
- To take a penalty throw incorrectly (*it must be immediate and with uninterrupted movement*).
- To delay the taking of a free throw, a goal throw or a corner (*it is required to be taken "immediately"*)
- For the goalie to go beyond the halfway line (*goalies can throw the ball anywhere, including scoring goals*).
- To send the ball out of play, including rebounding from the side above water level.
- To waste time or to retain possession for more than 30 seconds without shooting at goal.
- To simulate being fouled.

**Exclusion Fouls** result in a free throw to the opposition and in addition the offender is sent out for 20 seconds or until a goal is scored or their team regains possession. The main ones are:

- To leave the water or to sit or stand on the steps or side of the pool during play except in the case of accident, injury, illness, or with the referee's permission.
- To interfere intentionally with a free, goal or corner throw (*This includes throwing away the ball or blocking the pass or shot at goal if you are within 1 metre of the player taking the throw. A player who commits a foul must move back from the fouled player before raising an arm to block the ball*).
- To splash in the face of an opponent intentionally.
- To hold, sink, pull back or impede the free movement of a player who is not holding the ball. (*Holding is lifting, carrying or touching the ball but does not include dribbling the ball*)
- To use two hands to hold an opponent anywhere in the field of play.
- On a change of possession for a defending player to foul an attacking player situated anywhere inside the attacking player's half of the pool. (*This is to stop fouls aimed at delaying the counter-attack*)
- To kick, strike an opponent intentionally or make disproportionate movements with that intent.
- For an excluded player or a substitute to enter the field of play improperly.
- To attempt to play or block a shot with two hands outside the 5m area.
- To interfere with the taking of a penalty.
- To be guilty of misconduct such as: foul language; disrespect to a referee or other official; behaviour against the spirit of the rules; persistent foul play.
- To commit an act of brutality against a player or official at any time during the game.

Note that for brutality the offender is sent out for the remainder of the game with no substitution until after 4 minutes of actual play and in addition a penalty throw is awarded irrespective of where the offence was committed. For the 2 exclusion fouls listed prior to brutality the offender is excluded for the remainder of the game but with substitution. In any case, players take no further part in the game after their 3<sup>rd</sup> exclusion/penalty foul.

On exclusion, the excluded player must move to the re-entry area without leaving the water. Note, however, that in some baths where we play it is necessary to leave the water at this point in order to make it clear that you have left the field of play. If there is any doubt players should confirm with the referees the exact "house rules" prior to the start of any game.

**Penalty Fouls**, punished by the award of a penalty shot taken from 5m in front of goal, are given in the following situations for fouls committed within the 5m area:

- To commit any foul but for which a goal would probably have resulted. (*This includes situations where a defender blocks or attempts to block a shot or pass with two hands or a clenched fist or where a goalkeeper or defender takes the ball under when tackled*).
- For a defender to kick or strike an opponent.
- For an excluded player or a substitute to enter the field of play improperly if their team is not in possession of the ball.
- For any player to pull down the goal with the object of preventing a goal. (*Should a player completely pull down the goal they are excluded for the remainder of the game but with substitution*)
- For a player not entitled so to do, to enter the field of play.
- For an excluded player intentionally to interfere with play (*a penalty is awarded for this foul wherever it is committed and interference includes affecting the alignment of the goal*).
- For the coach of the team not in possession to request a timeout or take any action with the intent of preventing a probable goal.

Finally, **Corners** are only awarded if the goalkeeper deflects the ball behind or if the ball is put out of play deliberately. A goal throw is awarded if a defender deflects a shot to behind the goal line.