

Q. While doing the backstroke, if a swimmer turns onto their breast too far from the wall how do we judge the legality of the turn?

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Rule:

SW 6.4

When executing the turn there must be a touch of the wall with some part of the swimmer's body. During the turn the shoulders may be turned over the vertical to the breast after which a continuous single arm pull or a continuous simultaneous double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. The swimmer must have returned to the position on the back upon leaving a wall.

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A. If a swimmer turns too early they would have to get close enough to the wall to touch it during their turn. We judge the turn in it's entirety but let's break it down into components we consider.

First let's talk about the arms. They are allowed either a continuous single arm pull or a continuous simultaneous double arm pull; the rule doesn't stipulate how the arm pull(s) are done. It can be fast or slow, straight down or in an "S" figure, sweeping outward beside the body (like a breaststroke pull) or under the body (like a freestyle arm pull) or in any manner they choose. As long as the pull is continuous in nature we consider them to be initiating their turn. But if the arm movement does not begin to pull after they turn to the breast, they just stretch out their arm toward the wall, or they finish the pull and they're just coasting to the wall, then we judge them to have failed to initiate the turn-"DQ; failure to initiate the turn".

A second consideration is how long can they coast? We use "one-one thousand, two-one thousand, too long" as a rule of thumb.

Another consideration; what about kicking during the turn? We don't worry about the kick; the rule says nothing about kicking so whether they do it or not is of no concern for us.

And how do we write this up if we do observe a rule infraction? Some officials may use older terminology for the disqualification, stating "non-continuous turn" or "extended layout" but the rule makes no reference to a continuous turn, it speaks to continuous arm pulls. Nor does it say anything about the "layout". The correct wording in this circumstance is "failure to initiate the turn"; even though it refers to the same action we've always disqualified on we're supposed to use the correct terminology as it can apply to the rule.

There's also more info at <http://www.swimming.ca/BackstrokeTurn>