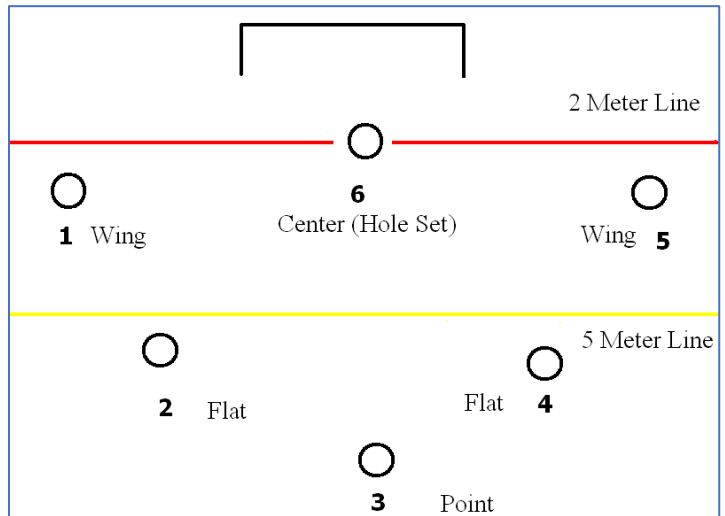


# Player Guide to Water Polo

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## 1. Basics

- 6 field players, 1 goalie
- There are four 7-minute quarters. 2 mins between quarters and 4 mins at the half. Shot clocks are 35 seconds each.
- Each team gets three 1-minute time outs: taken only when they have possession of the ball
  - Coaches are permitted to have a noise-maker (not a whistle) to get the attention of the ref to call a time out: air horns suggested
- There are 2 types of fouls:
  - An ordinary foul: results in a free throw or a turn over
  - An exclusion foul: results in the player being excluded from the game for 20 seconds, and an advantage situation for the team attacking
- There is live time and dead time. Live time is when the ball is in play. Dead time is when the ball is not in play: time outs, between periods, after goals
  - During live time a player can only exit or enter the pool through a re-entry area: an injured player who cannot continue, however, can exit the pool wherever
  - During dead time a player can exit and enter the pool wherever
- Hand signals and whistles are the way a ref communicates with the pool
- Refs should follow the same hand signals and whistle sounds, though there will be slight variation from ref to ref



Attacking diagram. Numbered players are attacking goal. Plays are commonly called by using the player numbers involved in the play.

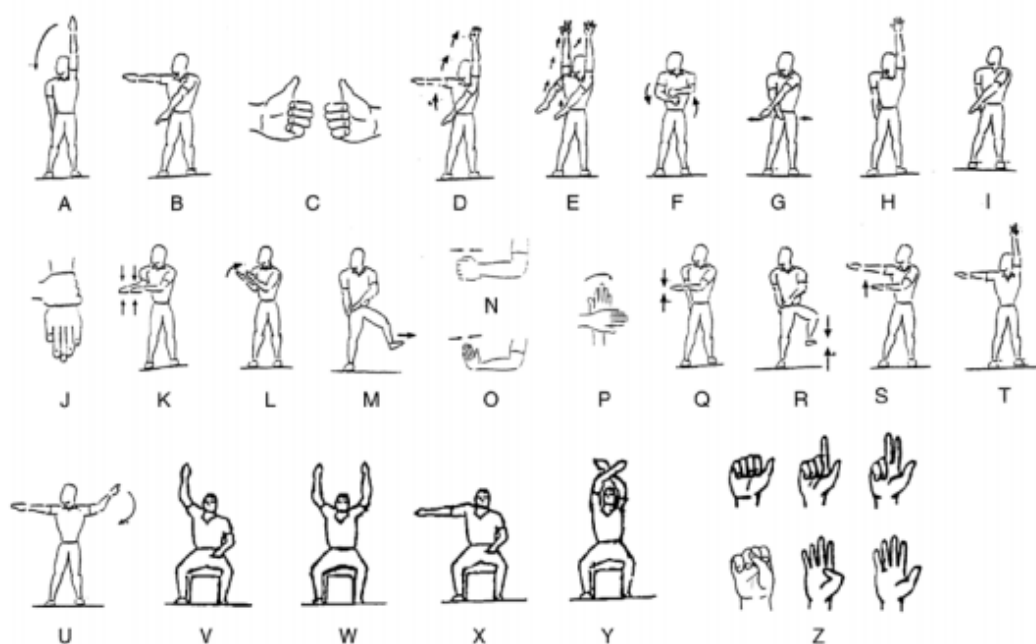
## Common Whistle Sounds

- Start Game/Restart Ball: One Whistle: TWEEET: Ball continues in same direction
- Turn Over: Two Whistles: TWEEET TWEEET: Ball changes directions
- Exclusion: Multi-Part Whistle: TWEET-TWEET TWEEET TWEEEEEEEEET: "Hey you, you're out" (lots of whistles back to back along with pointing and showing a number to the pool)
- Goal: One Long Fading Whistle: TWEEEEEEEEEEET
- Penalty Foul: One Long Sustained Whistle: TWEEEEEEEEET: and holding the number 5 at the pool and the offenders number

## Common Hand Signals

- A.** Lowering the arm: starts the ball
- B.** Pointing the direction the ball is to advance: used for ordinary fouls. One whistle and this arm signal.
- C.** Neutral throw, used when possession is disputed.
- D.** Exclusion foul. Ref will point at the player and then point at the exclusion box. The ref will then signal the number to the player.

- E.** Double exclusion foul. Players from opposite teams are ejected at the same time and must go to their own penalty area.
- F.** “Rolling” a player. Hands roll around each other. Signals exclusion of a player for the rest of the game (a rolling motion with only one arm indicates a “Minor Act of Misconduct” call).
- G.** Crossing the arms down signals a call of misconduct.
- H.** Awarding a 5-meter penalty throw. One long whistle and displaying the number 5 to the field.
- I.** Goal is scored: ref will point to the center of the pool.
- J.** Signal for holding: an exclusion foul.
- K.** Signal for sinking (like dunking): an exclusion foul.
- L.** Signal for pulling back: an exclusion foul. A grabbing and pulling back motion is done with one or both hands.
- M.** Kicking an opponent: an exclusion foul.
- N.** Striking: an exclusion foul or worse. Ref makes a punching motion.
- O.** Pushing off: an ordinary foul: usually a turn over. Ref will commonly push the forearm out.
- P.** Impeding: stopping a person from moving freely in the pool: an ordinary foul.
- Q.** Ball under: ref pushes their hand down straight: an ordinary foul.
- R.** Standing on the bottom/Pushing off the bottom: ordinary foul: commonly seen in shallow bottom pools.
- S.** Delay in taking a free throw
- T.** 2 blows on the whistle to turn over the ball and holding 2 fingers in the air to indicate a turn over due to a 2-meter infraction
- U.** Shot clock expires, ref will whistle the ball in the other direction with one arm and rotate their other arm in a winding motion.
- V-Y:** signals a goal judge uses: commonly seen in state tournaments: most important signal is **Y** which signals a goal.
- Z.** How the refs signal numbers to the pool: starting on the right hand. Largest number will always be on the right hand. A closed fist is the number 10.



**Referees** Captains and Coaches should be the only players addressing the referee. Captains can call time outs from the field but they must know that there are consequences if a time out is called at the wrong time or with no time outs remaining.

- Remember: A ref has jurisdiction 30 mins before a game and 5 mins after a game

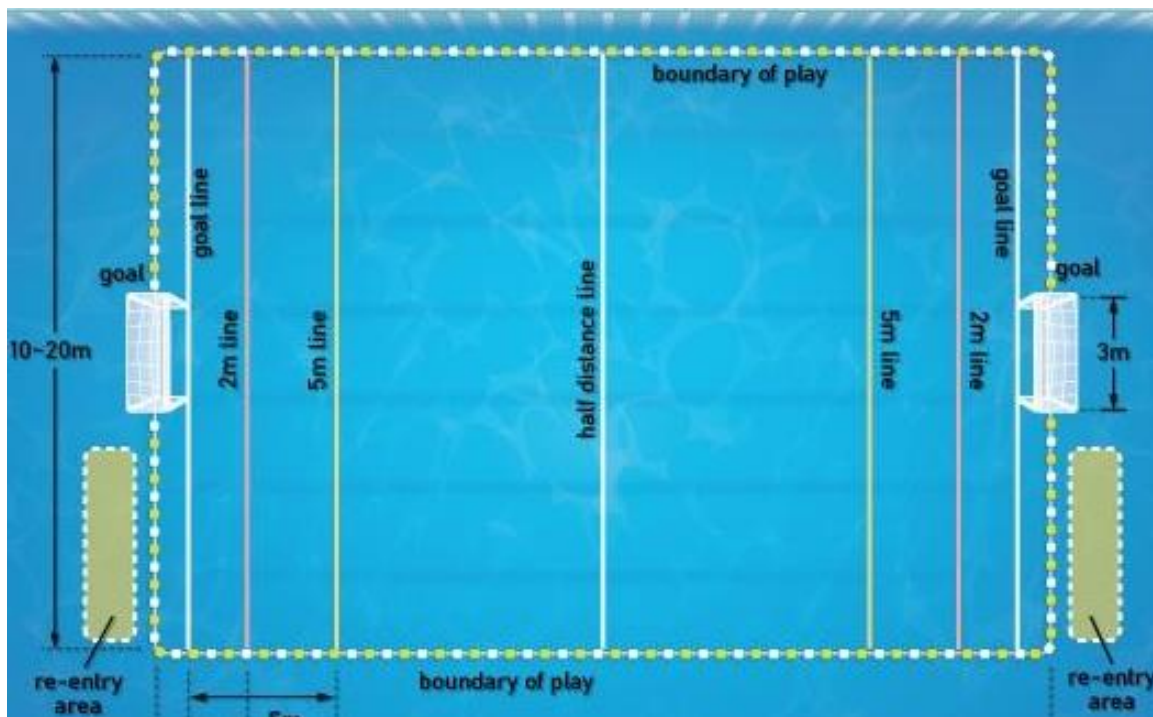
## Types of Throws

- Passing: passing from player to player
- Free Throw: throws taken after ordinary fouls: the defense must back off 1m from the throw
- 5m Penalty: a throw taken at the 5m line after a penalty is awarded
- Corner (2m) Throw In: a throw taken by the offense at the 2m line near the side after a goalie tips the ball over the back line, or a defender intentionally puts the ball over the back line
- Goal Throw: the goalie (or any other player behind the 2m line) puts the ball in play after it goes out over the end

## Putting the Ball in Play:

- The ball is considered in play when the ref drops their hand or when a player executes a “water polo move”
- This includes: swimming with the ball, treading with the ball, pump faking the ball, picking up and dropping the ball, or another movement that advances the play
- Simply picking up the ball does not put it in play

## 2. Pool Layout



- Team benches are at the ends they are defending
  - The corner at the bench's feet is considered the re-entry area: players must go in and out of this area during live time
  - This corner is also used as the exclusion area where a player must reside for their exclusion penalty

- When re-entering the pool, a player must not push off the wall
- Re-entry is signaled by the table holding up a white or dark flag (corresponding to cap color) to the re-entry area or the ref waiving the player in
- Players must remain seated on the bench during live time. Only the coach may be on their feet during live time
- The ball is not out of bounds or counted as a goal unless it is all the way over an out of bound line or the goal line
- Half court is where the ball is dropped for the sprint and where players line up after a goal is scored
- 2m line: An attacking player cannot be within the 2m area without the ball. Defenders can move freely around this area. Other attacking players can enter the 2m area if the ball had moved in there first.
- 5m line: 5 m from the goal, where penalty shots are taken after specific fouls take place within the 5 m area

### 3. Players

- There are six field players and one goalie
- Field players can only handle the ball with one hand- 2 hands will result in an ordinary foul or 5m depending on location
- Goalies can handle the ball with 2 hands within the 5m area
  - A goalie cannot pass the half

### 4. Line-Up and Sprint

- A ref may call each team for a “nail check”: they will examine players for untrimmed finger and toenails as well as jewelry or other banned objects.
  - Prescription sports glasses can be worn but must be approved by a ref before every game (ASTM F803)
- The Ref will call for a Captains’ Meeting by whistling and holding up the letter “C” with their hands
  - They will talk about things they’re looking for, where the exclusion areas are, and anything else they thing is important. This can change from game to game.
  - This is where a coin-flip can be requested or captains may request switching at every quarter: this is commonly done in shallow/deep bottom pools, or pools where light conditions are difficult
- The ref will then whistle numerous times and point to the ends of the pool, indicating both teams need to get in the water to line up
  - Depending on pool, players will line up on the 2-meter line, rest their head on the lane rope, or be able to push off the wall
- Refs will ensure players are lined up fairly and the ref dropping the ball will check with the two sprinting players if they are ready.
  - The refs will raise their arms and then the ref with the ball will whistle and drop their arm. This starts the sprint.
  - Sprinting players will race to the ball and first one there gains possession and the clock starts
  - Jump-starting the whistle will result in the ball being given to the team that did not false-start
  - If the players end up tied for the ball/no clear possession is determined the ref can award a neutral throw
    - The ref chooses two players to participate in the neutral throw
    - The neutral throw works like a jump ball in basketball: the players face each other and the ball is tossed in between them. The players jump up without touching each other and tip the ball towards their team.

- When the clock sounds at the end of each quarter the ref will blow one long whistle and point to either side of the pool, indicating that the teams separate back to their sides

## 5. The Advantage Rule

- The advantage rule can be tricky to apply and may result in some calls not being called even if they're expected
- A ref applies the advantage rule to most ordinary fouls and exclusion fouls
- In general: if calling a foul takes away an offense's chance (advantage) to score, the foul will not be called. If there is no advantage or the foul is taking away the offensive advantage, the foul is awarded

## 6. The Ordinary Foul

- Most commonly called fouls in water polo
- Player who commits the foul must back off 1m from the fouled player
- Once the ball is put into play, or the ref drops their hand to indicate the ball is in play, the defense may attack the player.
- Ordinaries Outside of 5m: the ball can be shot immediately at the goal. The shot must be one movement without undue delay. If the player otherwise puts the ball into play it must be passed before scoring.
- Ordinaries inside of 5m: the ball cannot be shot without first passing the ball
- In the following, commonly seen fouls are marked with \*\*, there are some fouls that are rarely/never seen
- There are 16 ordinary fouls:
  1. Early Start: a false start at the sprint will result in the ball being given to the team that did not false start at the half
  2. Assisting a Player: giving the sprinting a boost will result in a turn over
  3. Holding/Pushing off From Pool(\*\*): aside from at the start of a sprint, pushing off any part of the pool will result in an ordinary.
  4. Using the Bottom(\*\*):
    - a) In Deep Pools: using the bottom to tackle, gain advantage, or become part of the play is an ordinary
    - b) In Shallow Pools: if a defense player uses the bottom to tackle/gain advantage this becomes an exclusion foul
  5. Taking Ball Under(\*\*): if a field player takes the ball is taken under water while a player is being tackled the ball is turned over. This call is not immediate. A ball that dips under slightly is not ball under.
    - a) If a goalie takes the ball under the water within the goalie box (inside 5m) while "under attack"/tackled it results in a 5m penalty shot
    - b) If the goalie is outside the 5m and does the same thing, it is a turn over (an ordinary)
  6. Using Clenched Fist: using a fist to strike at the ball. A goalie can use closed fists within the 5m area.
    - a) Players must be aware that a closed fist, even accidental, could look like striking or fighting to a referee and could result in removal from the rest of the game, a red card, suspension of next game, and a 5m penalty shot against them.
  7. Using Two Hands(\*\*): touching the ball with two hands as a field player on offense results in a turn over. On defense, it is an exclusion or 5m penalty shot.
  8. Impeding(\*\*): stopping a player from moving who is not holding the ball.
  9. Pushing Off(\*\*): when an attacking player visibly pushes off their defense to create space between them
  10. Inside 2m(\*\*): an attacking player enters the 2m area without the ball or remains in the 2 m area after the ball leaves. This call is not immediate. A player that remains momentarily in the 2m is not an infraction.

11. Failing to take Penalty throw correctly: If a throw is taken incorrectly (correct procedure described later) the ball is turned over
12. Delay in taking a throw(\*\*): undue delay in re-starting the ball can result in a turn over
13. Ball out of bounds(\*\*): if a pass or shot goes over the side line or the end line, whichever team tips the ball out (or last had possession), the opposite team gains possession of the ball.
14. Keeping Ball Without Shooting(\*\*): AKA: expiration of the shot clock (35 sec.) and the ball is turned over
15. Team Not Ready to Start: if a team is not ready at the start of a game/quarter the ref may award possession of the ball to the team that is ready
16. Improperly Taken Shot on Goal: the ball will be turned over if a goal is scored but the throw is illegal, the goal will also not be awarded

## 6. Exclusion Fouls

- Exclusion fouls result in a 20-second exclusion from the game and a man up advantage for the other team
- Other more serious fouls include the 20-second exclusion as well as other aspects
- 3 exclusion fouls on one player will result in the player being ineligible to play the rest of the game
- An excluded player may re-enter the water when:
  - The 20-second exclusion has ended
  - A goal has been scored
  - The team with the excluded player obtains possession
  - The team that is man-up commits a foul to turn over the ball
- If a goalie is excluded a field player can step into the goal position but DOES NOT INHERIT a goalie's powers. Meaning: the field player cannot handle or block the ball with 2 hands.
- Commonly seen fouls are marked with \*\*, there are some fouls that are rarely/never seen

### Exclusion Fouls:

1. Leaving/Entering Playing Field Illegally: a player can enter or exit the pool from any area during dead time. During live time a player must go in and out through the re-entry area without pushing off the wall. However, an injured player may exit the field of play at any location. By entering or exiting the pool illegally the player will be excluded. Re-entering from an exclusion by pushing off the wall will result in another exclusion.
2. Interfering with Throw(\*\*): if a player interferes with a free throw (not backing off far enough of attacking the player before the ball is in play), a goal throw, a corner throw, the attacking player is excluded. This includes: throwing the ball away or not allowing the offense the ball, not moving away from the offense, leaning in to block
3. Blocking a Pass/Shot with Two Hands: OUTSIDE THE 5m if a player attempts to block a shot or pass with two hands: player does not actually have to touch the ball. Intent is punished. If this occurs WITHIN the 5m, the call is a penalty foul.
4. Splashing Intentionally: to splash the face of an opponent intentionally. If done within 5m to prevent a goal: the call is a 5m penalty foul
5. Goalie Beyond Half: if the goalie goes beyond half, touches or plays the ball during live time
6. Holding, Sinking, Pulling Back(\*\*): to hold, sink, or pull back an opponent who does not have the ball
7. Breast Exposure: if a defender exposes the breast an attacker, the defender will be excluded. If the breast exposure is caused by the attacker on herself (in an attempt to implicate the defender), the attacker will be excluded. This exclusion is exempt from the advantage rule.
8. Holding with Two Hands(\*\*): holding an opponent with two hands anywhere in the pool

9. Kicking/Striking: to kick or strike another player or flail in a dangerous manner. Overly aggressive fouling. May advance to more serious repercussions if action is violent enough, intent is malicious, or continuous.
10. Interfering with Penalty Throw: by any way interfering with a 5m throw the player will be excluded for the remainder of the game (without a misconduct)
11. Failure for the Goalie to Take Position on Line: if a goalie defending a 5m shot refuses to line up on the goal line, the goalie can be excluded and a field player may take their position.
12. Interfering on Exit: if an excluded player on their way out of the pool interferes with play, the player is given another exclusion penalty and a 5m is awarded

### Misconduct

- A severe kind of exclusion penalty that includes: rude gestures, cursing, refusing to obey the ref, back talking the ref, fouls that are overly aggressive and not in the spirit of the game, taunting opponents
- Consequences: player is excluded for remainder of game, substitute in the re-entry area for a 20 second man-down situation. In dead time, there is immediate substitution with no man-down. Player may or may not be awarded a card

### Minor Acts of Misconduct (MAM)

- A less severe exclusion penalty that includes: minor comments to the ref, accidental striking, repeatedly untied cap
- Consequences: 20 second exclusion and player is allowed to re-enter. If a player accrues 2 MAM they are out of the game like they have 3 exclusions. If a player has 1 regular exclusion and is charged with an MAM they can remain in the pool. 2 regular exclusions and an MAM will result in fouling out. Player may or may not be awarded a card

### Flagrant Misconduct

- Most severe exclusion penalty. Includes fighting, playing overly violent, biting, attempting to fight,
- Consequences: player is excluded for remainder of game and is given a red card, a 5m throw is awarded to the opposite team, the offense is awarded a man-up situation, a substitute must wait in the penalty box until after the penalties are meted out. These can be complex especially if multiple people are involved.

### Yellow/Red Cards

- Both coaches and players may receive cards
- Misconducts of all 3 types are usually accompanied by cards: yellow or red
- A yellow card can be given to a coach, the bench, or a player in the water and is given mostly as a warning of inappropriate behavior. There is no additional punitive action when receiving a yellow.
- A red card can be given to the coach, team officials, individual bench players, or players in the water. A red is shown after a person has received a yellow and commits another card-able offense or if the person commits an offense egregious enough they can be shown a straight red without a yellow warning. A red card given to the player will result in being immediately excluded for the rest of the game, and a 1-game suspension. Red cards given to coaches result in the coaches being required to leave the deck, turn over coaching to another adult, and a 1-game suspension.
- In this league, notable card-able events:
  - Continually untied caps: MAM > Yellow Card
  - Profanity: Misconduct + Red Card
  - Striking: Flagrant Misconduct + Red Card



## 7. Penalty Fouls (5m)

- When a penalty throw (5m) is awarded any player except for the goalie can take the throw from anywhere on the 5m line
- The defending team is allowed the positions on either side of the shooter, but must be at least 1m away
- The shooter may hold the ball in any way before the shot is taken
- Depending on which hand the player is dominant, they will watch the ref for the signal: the ref will blow their whistle and drop their hand
- The player must take the shot in one uninterrupted movement towards the goal (may not “sweep” the ball from hand to hand first)
- If the ball rebounds, the original shooter may re-take possession of the ball and shoot again during live time
- Dead time penalty shots involve only the shooter and the goalie. Same rules for taking the shot apply. However, if the ball rebounds, the ball is dead and may not be re-shot.

### Penalty Fouls:

1. Committing a Foul within the 5m Area That Prevents a Goal: any foul that takes away an imminent scoring opportunity within the 5m area will result in a 5m. Including: goalie or defender displacing the goal, defender blocking a shot or pass with two hands, playing the ball with two hands, defender playing ball with a closed fist, goalie taking ball under water, goalie pushing off the wall, a defender jumping off the bottom to block.
2. Fighting/Striking/Misconduct in 5m: any fighting or striking or misconduct within the 5m, with or without blocking a shot, will result in a 5m penalty.
3. Excluded Player Interfering: if a player who has been excluded interferes with the play as they exit the pool, a 5m is awarded.
4. Illegal Player Entering Pool: if a player who is not legal to enter the pool enters on defense, a 5m is awarded. EX: A “rolled” player, an excluded player re-entering early.
5. Improper Time Out/Team Official Preventing Goal: when a captain or coach attempts to call time out when there are none remaining or at the wrong time, a 5m can be awarded.

## 8. Overtime

- If the score is tied at the end of regulation time the game will progress to overtime
- Overtime is 2 x 3-minute periods to be played in full (NOT sudden death)
- If at the end of overtime the score is still tied, the game will end a tie
- Overtime may be different during tournaments or state finals
- Each team receives one extra 1-minute time out for the entire overtime

## 9. End of Game

- Once the end of game whistle is blown, teams will separate to their halves and exit the water
- Commonly a team will cheer their opponent after the game: “Good Game Other Team Name” and then do their own team cheer.
- Teams will then line up to shake hands with the opponent. It is good sportsmanship to keep caps on the head, though they may be untied. Women should keep their suits zipped up, and men should keep their suits tied until after the hand shakes
- Coaches will commonly meet with the team to talk about the game before releasing them back to the stands, parents, their bags, etc. Some teams may also want to warm down if there is space.