

Basic Guide to IPC Swimming

Swimming is the only sport that combines the conditions of limb loss, cerebral palsy (co-ordination and movement restrictions), spinal cord injury (weakness or paralysis involving any combination of the limbs) and other disabilities (dwarfs and major joint restriction conditions) into a single classification system.

Classes 1 - 10 - Swimmers with a physical impairment

Classes 11 - 13 - Swimmers who are blind or partially sighted

Class 14 - Swimmers with a learning disability

Class 15 - Swimmers who are deaf

The Prefix

S before the Class represents Freestyle, Backstroke and Butterfly

SB before the Class represents Breaststroke

SM before the Class represents Individual Medley

The classes range from swimmers with a severe physical disability (S1, SB1, SM1) to those with a minimal physical disability (S10, SB9, SM10).

In any one class some swimmers may start with a dive or in the water depending on their condition. This is factored in when classifying the swimmer.

The examples are only a guide – some conditions not mentioned may also fit into the following classes.

The Functional Classification System Detailed

S1 SB1 SM1

- Swimmers with very severe co-ordination problems in four limbs or have no use of their legs, trunk, hands and minimal use of their shoulders only
- Swimmers usually only swim on their back
- Swimmers in this class are usually wheelchair users and may be dependent on others for care and support

S2 SB1 SM2

- Swimmers able to use their arms with no use of their hands, legs or trunk or have severe co-ordination problems in four limbs

S3 SB2 SM3

- Swimmers with reasonable arm strokes but no use of their legs or trunk
- Swimmers with severe co-ordination problems in all four limbs
- Swimmers with severe limb loss in four limbs

S4 SB3 SM4

- Swimmers who use their arms and have minimal weakness in their hands but have no use of their trunk or legs
- Swimmers with co-ordination problems affecting all limbs but predominantly in the legs
- Swimmers with limb loss in three limbs

S5 SB4 SM5

- Swimmers who have full use of their arms and hands but no trunk or leg function
- Swimmers with co-ordination problems in all limbs

S6 SB5 SM6

- Swimmers with full use of their arms and hands with some trunk control but no useful leg function
- Swimmers with co-ordination problems (usually these athletes are able to walk)
- Swimmers with major limb loss in two limbs on the same side

Specific type of dwarf (<130cm for women and <137cm for men). The exceptions are dwarfs who fit in to class SB6

S7 SB6 SM7

- Swimmers with full use of their arms and trunk with some leg function
- Co-ordination or weakness problems on the same side of the body
- Major limb loss in two limbs

S8 SB7 SM9

- Swimmers with full use of their arms and trunk with some leg function
- Limb loss of two limbs
- Swimmers without the use of one arm

S9 SB8 SM9

- Swimmers with severe weakness in one leg only
- Swimmers with very slight co-ordination problems
- Swimmers with one limb loss

Unless there is an underlying medical condition swimmers in this class will start out of the water

S10 SB9 SM10

- Swimmers with very minimal weakness affecting the legs
- Swimmers with restriction of hip joint movement
- Swimmers with both feet deformed
- Swimmers with minor limb loss of part in a limb

Visually Impaired Classes**S11 SB11 SM11**

- Swimmers are unable to see at all or have minimal light perception and are considered totally blind
- Swimmers must wear blackened goggles if they swim in this class
- Swimmers will also require someone to tap them when they turn or start.