

The Rules of Water Polo

(at least the important ones)

Field of Play & Equipment

1. The goal line (the front plane of the goal) and the half court line is marked with a white line, the 2 meter line red, and the 5 meter line yellow.
2. The ejection (also called the re-entry) area is located in the corner on your goalie's end on the side opposite the table, generally in the corner by your team's bench.
3. The home team will wear the blue, or dark caps, and the visiting team will wear white caps.
4. Swimming caps worn under the water polo caps must be of like color.
5. Suits must be non-transparent and women's suits must be one piece.

Teams

1. 7 players, one of which is the goalie, play at one time.
2. Players must remove any articles likely to cause injury (finger and toe nails cut and smooth before game, jewelry, earrings, necklaces, etc.).
3. Players can not have grease or similar substance on the body.
4. Before the game and in the presence of the captains, the referees will toss a coin, the winner will have choice of ends.
5. The team bench will be located on the defensive end and each team will change ends after each quarter (at the half for games in all deep pools).

Substitutes

1. A player may only be substituted at the following times, except as otherwise stated in the Rules:
 - a. between periods.
 - b. during a time out.
 - c. after a goal has been scored.
 - d. During the game through the re-entry area.
 - d. During an ejection. The substitute may only enter the pool in the ejection area at the appropriate time.

Duration of the Game

1. Games are typically four periods each of 7 minutes (except in some tournaments where it could be 5 or 6 minute quarters).
2. If the score is equal at the end of regulation there will be two periods of 3 minutes each. If it is still tied after that there will be a "shootout". There are exceptions in some leagues and tournaments.

Method of Scoring

1. A goal is scored when the entire ball has passed fully over the goal line, between the goal posts and underneath the crossbar.
2. At least two players must have intentionally played or touched the ball before a goal can be scored, except in the case of a shot after a foul outside 5 meters. (this is why you can't shoot a free throw)
3. A player may shoot a free throw if it is more than 5 meters away from their goal and it is done immediately without hesitation.

Starting Play

1. At the start of each period, the players must take up positions on their defensive wall, goal line, or 2 M line, depending on the pool.
2. After a goal has been scored, the players must take up positions anywhere within their respective halves of the field of play. A referee shall blow the whistle to restart the game and a player from the team not having scored the goal is awarded a free throw from anywhere within their defensive half.
3. After a timeout, the ball will be put into play on or behind the half court line by anyone of the team who took the timeout. The other players can be positioned anywhere. (So set up in half court)

Free Throws

1. The referee shall blow his/her whistle to declare fouls and signal towards the direction of attack of the team who was awarded the free throw. Anyone on the team may take the free throw.
2. The free throw must be taken from where the ball is after the foul (unless the ball is closer to the offensive team's goal, then it must be brought out to the line of the foul). Also, for fouls that occurred inside the 2 meter line - the ball must be brought to the 2 first).
3. The time allowed for a player to take a free throw is at the discretion of the referee (usually about 3 seconds). It is a foul (free throw to the other team) if the free throw is not taken in a reasonable amount of time.
4. There are four ways to take a free throw (put the ball in play):
 - a. Pass it.
 - b. Throw it in the air and let it drop on the water.
 - c. Raise the ball above your head and let it drop on the water.
 - d. Dribble with it.
5. A free throw taken in the wrong place shall be retaken.

Goal Throws

1. This is a free throw taken by anyone on the team that was awarded a free throw after the ball went out of bounds behind the goal line having been last touched by any player other than the goalie of the defending team. The throw must be taken inside the 2.

Corner Throw

1. This is a free throw taken by anyone on the attacking team after the ball went out of bounds behind the goal line having last been touched by the goalie of the defending team or when a defending player deliberately sends the ball over the goal line. The throw must be taken on the 2 meter line on the side of the pool nearest to which the ball crossed the goal line.

Ordinary Fouls

1. All of the following are ordinary fouls punished by the award of a free throw to the opposing team:
 - a. To impede or otherwise prevent the free movement of an opponent who is not holding the ball. (This can be while on defense or offense).
 - b. To push or push off from an opponent.
 - c. To hold on to or push off of the bottom or sides of the pool or the goal

posts (except if you use the bottom to block a shot which could result in a penalty shot).

- d. To take or hold the ball under water when tackled (except in the case of the goalie preventing a goal by taking it under water - this is a penalty throw.)
- e. To strike the ball with a clenched fist (does not apply to goalie).
- f. To be within two meters of the opponents goal (and affecting play) except when behind the line of the ball.
- g. To delay in taking a free throw, goal throw, or corner throw.
- h. For a team to retain possession of the ball for more than 30 seconds of actual play without attempting a shot.

Exclusion Fouls (Kickouts)

1. Exclusion fouls are punished by the award of a free throw to the opposing team and the exclusion (kickout) of the player who committed the foul (except as otherwise stated). The excluded player must go to the ejection area, and may re-enter at the earliest occurrence of one of the following:
 - a. when 20 seconds of actual play has elapsed (the secretary at the table shall wave a blue or white flag).
 - b. when a goal has been scored.
 - c. when the excluded player's team has retaken possession of the ball (a referee must signal the change of possession).

NOTE: An excluded player or their substitute may not re-enter until they have reached the re-entry area, even if one of the above has occurred (except if a goal is scored).

2. The excluded player must move to the re-entry area without interfering with play and without leaving the water.
3. The following are exclusion fouls:
 - a. To hold, sink, or pull back an opponent who is not holding the ball.
 - b. To interfere with the taking of a free throw, goal throw, or corner throw, which includes to throw the ball or prevent the opposing team from getting the ball after a free throw has been awarded. Also to attempt any play on the ball or the person making the throw before it has left their hand (so back off from the thrower about 2 yards).
 - c. To intentionally splash in the face of an opponent.
 - d. For an excluded player to re-enter improperly, including pushing off a wall when re-entering, without being waived in by the appropriate person, or re-entering from the wrong place.
 - e. To be guilty of misconduct, including the use of foul language, persistent violent play, refusing obedience to the referee, etc. **The offending player is to be excluded from the remainder of the game with substitution.** The substituted player may re-enter from the re-entry area at the earliest occurrences of number 1 above.
 - f. To interfere with the taking of a penalty throw. **The offending player is to be excluded from the remainder of the game with substitution.** The substituted player may re-enter from the re-entry area at the earliest

occurrences of number 1 above.

- g. To attempt to play or block a shot or pass with 2 hands if outside the 5 meter line.

Brutality Fouls

1. To kick or strike an opponent intentionally or attempt to kick or strike an opponent. **The offending player is to be excluded from the remainder of the game with substitution after 4 minutes of play, and a Penalty Shot is awarded to the opposing team.**

Penalty Fouls

1. All of the following are penalty fouls punished by the award of a penalty throw to the opposing team:
 - a. For a defending player to commit any foul within the 5 meter area but for which a goal would probably have resulted.
 - b. For an excluded player to intentionally interfere with play.
 - c. For a goalie to take the ball under water to prevent a goal.
 - d. For a player other than the goalie to attempt to play or block a shot or pass with 2 hands if inside the 5 meter line.

Penalty Throws

1. A penalty throw (5 meter shot) can be taken by any player of the team to which it is awarded, except the goalie, from any point on the opponents 5 meter line.
2. All other players must be outside the 5 meter area and at least 2 meters away from the player taking the throw.
3. The defending goalie must not have any part of her/his body beyond the goal line at water level with floating goals. If the goals are wall mounted, the goalie's hips must not be beyond the goal line.
4. The referee shall signal the throw by simultaneously blowing their whistle and lowering their hands.
5. The person taking the throw must take it immediately in an uninterrupted manner.
6. If the shooter misses, the ball is in play.

Personal Fouls

1. A personal foul is recorded against any player who commits an exclusion foul or penalty foul.
2. Upon receiving a third personal foul, **the offending player is to be excluded from the remainder of the game with substitution.** The substituted player may re-enter from the re-entry area at the earliest occurrences of number 1 in the Exclusion Fouls section.

Advantage Rule

1. The referees will refrain from calling a foul if, in their opinion, such declaration would be an advantage to the offending player's team. Also, the referees shall not declare an ordinary foul when there is still a possibility to play the ball.