

VFCAL Routine Referee Packet

Revised 2025

BASIC ROLE OF OFFICIALS

Head Referee: The referee has full control of the event. He/She will instruct all other officials. The referee enforces all the rules and has the authority to make a decision on all questions relating to the actual conduct of the competition and is responsible for the final settlement of any matter not otherwise covered by the rules.

The referee has to make sure that all the necessary officials are in their respective positions. He/She also ensures that the competitors are ready and signal for the start of the performance.

Assistant Referee: The assistant referee (s) carries out duties assigned by the referee.

Head Judge: The Head Judge is in charge of coordinating and organizing all the on-site logistics around the judges attending the meet. He/She also organizes the Judges Meeting prior to the event and works closely with the Head Referee and the Meet Manager to make sure the Judges receive all the necessary information around the meet.

Assistant Head Judge: The assistant Head Judge (s) carries out duties assigned by the Head Judge

Judges: Assess Routines and Figures, by giving marks, following pre-determined standards. For Routines - Judges assess both Technical Merit and Artistic Impression.

Scorers: The scorer records the marks on the figure & routine sheets and makes the necessary computations needed to produce the results.

Readers: In Figure competition the reader greets each swimmer and confirms his/her assigned entry number **prior** to sending them out to perform. This ensures that the swimmers are in the proper order and that no swimmer misses his/her turn.

The reader is also responsible for calling out the scores given by the judges and making sure that the scorers at the tables have heard them all and in the correct order.

REFEREE - Duties/Responsibilities of the Referees:

A. The Meet Referee shall have full jurisdiction over the event and shall:

- (1) Enforce all rules and decisions of VFCAL.
- (2) Decide all questions relating to the actual conduct of the competition, the final settlement of which is not otherwise assigned by said rules.
- (3) Have authority to interfere in a competition at any stage to ensure that the rules are observed.
- (4) Have the power to call off or postpone to a future date any event, even though the same has started, if the competition cannot be conducted or completed in a satisfactory manner and in fairness to the competitors.
 - (a) At the discretion of the Meet Committee, such postponed events can be conducted with the competitors who reported on the first date, at a future date as though the competition had never started.

B. The Event Referee shall:

- (1) Be given a list of the officials and shall assign specific duties.
- (2) Ensure that each assigned official understands all responsibilities as indicated by the rules.
- (3) Have the authority to change any assignments of duty.
- (4) In emergencies, be authorized to assign alternate judges from the accredited list.
- (5) Penalize competitors(s) for any violations of the rules and shall inform the coach and competitor of the infraction before the completion of the event.
- (6) Ascertain that all judges are in place and their needs are tended to as necessary.
- (7) Intervene in the event at any stage to ensure that the rules are observed and that the safety of the competitor(s) is not compromised.

4. Duties/Responsibilities of the Event Vice Referee:

- a. Obtain an order of draw and ascertain that the competitors are in readiness 1 routine preceding their competitive turn.
- (1) Ascertain that the number and names listed for Teams are the same as those who swim.
- (2) Notify the Event Referee of any variations from the entry.
- b. Keep order on the deck during the competition.
- c. Carry out any further duties as assigned by the Event Referee.
- d. Perform any other duties as assigned by the Event Referee.

Application of Penalties

Routine Competition:

(1) One-half Point Penalties:

- (a) If one or more competitors fail to perform a required element from the Technical Routine.
- (b) If one or more competitors perform a required element out of order from the Technical Routine.
- (c) If two or more competitors perform one or more mirror actions in Technical Routines. (See USA Synchronized Swimming Rules, Appendix L)
- (d) For Novice and Intermediate Routines: a one-half (0.5) point deduction from the total score for each occurrence in which one or more competitors omit an element or perform an element out of order.
- (e) If one or more competitors fail to begin and/or finish with the accompaniment.
- (f) Exceeds 10 seconds limit for deck movements.
- (g) Exceeds specified time limit for routine (see table below).

	<u>Novice</u>	<u>Intermediate</u>
Solo Time Limit	2:00	2:15
Duet/Trio Time Limit	2:45	3:00
Team Time Limit	3:30	3:45
Combo Time Limit	4:30	4:30

- (h) For any routine which is under time (1:25) at competitions.
- (i) If one or more competitors interrupt the routine during deck movements and make a new start.
(If of technical nature (music, weather, something unforeseen etc.) no penalty.)

(2) One Point Penalties:

- (a) For failure to end routine in the water.
- (b) For each infraction for deliberate walking on the bottom of the pool up to a maximum of 2 points per routine.
- (c) For each infraction of deliberate contact with the pool deck up to a maximum of 2 points per routine.
- (d) For each infraction for deliberate use of the bottom of the pool to assist another swimmer(s) up to a maximum of 2 points per routine.
- (e) For each part of a required element or action omitted by all competitors, a 1 point penalty shall be deducted from the Execution score.

(3) Two Point Penalty:

- (a) A competitor who competes out of the order of draw shall be given a penalty of 2 points off the Total Routine Score, except for unusual circumstances as determined by the Event Referee.

(4) Disqualification:

- (a) Failure to complete the routine after entering the water, unless caused by circumstances beyond the control of the competitor. If the cessation is caused by circumstances beyond the control of the competitor(s), the Event Referee may allow the routine to be re-swum during the session. Loss of swimwear or swimming aid is considered the responsibility of the competitor.
- (b) Failure to notify the Scoring Chair and/or the Event Referee, in writing, before swimming, of all changes or scratches will result in disqualification of the routine.
- (c) A team shall consist of at least 4 but not more than 8 competitors. The number of team members may not increase between the Preliminary and Semifinal event or the Semifinal and Final event, or between Technical and Free Routines.

Technical Elements Basics

It is extremely important for the judges and referees to be familiar with the descriptions of the technical elements in order to correctly evaluate them.

What do JUDGES look at?

It is the Judge's job to EVALUATE the technical elements, not to determine whether or not they are there. Judges do not penalize the swimmers for missing technical elements or putting them in the wrong order, they simply evaluate them using the same criteria as figure judging.

What do REFEREES look at?

It is the Referee's job to determine:

- Are all the elements included in the routine?
NOTE: Each element must be performed correctly, and by all members of the routine, for it to count as being included.
- Are all the elements in the right order?

Uniform Motion

- The tempo of the elements must be equal
- The element may be slow or fast to fit the tempo of the music. In not all cases is the tempo slow.
- Elements must be performed without pauses or tempo changes. (This rule does not apply to the Cadence Action.)

Technical Element Mini-Chart

<i>Novice</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>
Crane Join, followed by Vertical Descent	Crane Join, followed by a Spinning 180 and a Vertical Descent
Boost (jump-up) with one arm optional	Boost (jump-up) with arms optional
Split Position, followed by a Front Walkout	Split Position, followed by a Front Walkout
Traveling Propulsion	Traveling Propulsion
Traveling Eggbeater with one arm extended out of the water	Traveling Eggbeater with both arms extended out of the water
Traveling Ballet Leg Combination To include the following 2 surface positions in any order: Ballet Leg Position with Right Leg Ballet Leg Position with Left Leg	Traveling Ballet Leg Combination To include the following 3 surface positions in any order: Ballet Leg Position with Right Leg Ballet Leg Position with Left Leg Flamingo Position
Thrust to Vertical Position, followed by a Vertical Descent at the same tempo as the Thrust	Thrust to Airborne Split Position, followed by a Vertical Descent at the same tempo as the Thrust
<i>Team Elements</i> (to be added to team routine only)	<i>Team Elements</i> (to be added to team routine only)
Cadence Action (may be performed anywhere in the routine)	Cadence Action (may be performed anywhere in the routine)
A Minimum of Four Different Pattern Formations, one must be a straight line and one a circle (may be performed anywhere in the routine)	A Minimum of Four Different Pattern Formations, one must be a straight line and one a circle (may be performed anywhere in the routine)

REFEREE

TECHNICAL ELEMENT - TRACKING SHEET

Novice	(√) Done	Comments	Penalty
Crane Join, followed by a Vertical Descent From Crane Position , without movement of the vertical leg or trunk, the horizontal leg is lifted to meet the vertical leg to assume a Vertical Position . Maintaining a Vertical position , the body descends along its longitudinal axis until the toes are submerged. (The action must end completely under the water.)			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Boost (jump-up) with one arm optional A rapid headfirst rise with a maximum amount of the body above the surface of the water. The height and any required or optional arm action must be simultaneous. The action must begin and end completely under the water.			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Split Position, followed by a Front Walkout From the Split position , the hips remain stationary as the front leg moves in an arc over the surface to meet the other leg in a Surface Arch position . From the Surface Arch Position , with continuous foot first movement, the hips, chest and face surface sequentially, assuming a Back Layout Position . (Be aware of where travel may occur. From the Split position, to the Surface Arch position, movement to the surface is executed without travel. Travel is allowed following the surface arch position, and is not limited to the head replacing the hips as in a figure.)			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Traveling Propulsion Traveling Eggbeater with one arm extended out of the water The swimmer must be traveling while at least one arm is extended out of the water.			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Traveling Ballet Leg Combination To include the following 2 surface POSITIONS in any order: Ballet Leg Position with right leg Ballet Leg Position with left leg In the Ballet Leg position , the body is extended with the face, chest and one thigh and foot at the surface. One leg is extended vertically with the thigh perpendicular to the surface. (These elements may be in any order and may be separated by other ballet leg movements.)			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Thrust to Vertical Position, followed by a Vertical Descent at the same tempo as the thrust From a Back Pike Position , with legs remaining perpendicular to the surface, a vertical upward movement of the hips is rapidly executed as the body unrolls to assume a Vertical Position . Maintaining a Vertical position , the body descends along its longitudinal axis until the toes are submerged. (In the Back Pike Position the toes may be at, under, or above the surface prior to the Thrust. Maximum height and speed is desirable. The descent should be at the same speed as the thrust. The action must end completely under the water.)			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Team elements - (to be added to team routine only) Cadence Action - (may be performed anywhere in the routine) Identical movement(s) performed sequentially one-by-one by all team members. The Cadence movement must be performed in the exact same way by all team members. The Cadence Action may be performed in any pattern. A Minimum of Four Different Pattern Formations, one must be a straight line and one a circle and may be performed anywhere in the routine.			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ

Intermediate	(√) Done	Comments	Penalty
Crane Join, followed by a Spinning 180 and a Vertical Descent From Crane Position , without movement of the vertical leg or trunk, the horizontal leg is lifted to meet the vertical leg to assume a Vertical Position . From the height of the Vertical Position , the body remains on the same vertical line as the body simultaneously descends and rotates 180 degrees. The specified rotation must be completed as the heels reach the surface. Maintaining a Vertical position , the body descends along its longitudinal axis until the toes are submerged. (Uniform motion is required; no stopping and starting or pausing at walls. The action must end completely under the water.)			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Boost (jump-up) arms optional A rapid headfirst rise with a maximum amount of the body above the surface of the water. The height and any required or optional arm action must be simultaneous. The action must begin and end completely under the water.			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Split Position, followed by a Front Walkout From the Split position , the hips remain stationary as the front leg moves in an arc over the surface to meet the other leg in a Surface Arch position . From the Surface Arch Position , with continuous foot first movement, the hips, chest and face surface sequentially, assuming a Back Layout Position . (Be aware of where travel may occur. From the Split position, to the Surface Arch position, movement to the surface is executed without travel. Travel is allowed following the surface arch position, and is not limited to the head replacing the hips as in a figure.)			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Traveling Propulsion Traveling Eggbeater with both arms extended out of the water The swimmer must be traveling while both arms are extended out of the water.			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Traveling Ballet Leg Combination To include the following 3 surface POSITIONS in any order: Ballet Leg Position with right leg, Ballet Leg Position with left leg Flamingo In the Ballet Leg position , the body is extended with the face, chest and one thigh and foot at the surface. One leg is extended vertically with the thigh perpendicular to the surface. In the Flamingo position , one leg is extended perpendicular to the surface. The other leg is drawn toward the chest, with its mid-calf opposite the vertical leg, and its foot and knee at and parallel to the surface. The face is at the surface. (These elements may be in any order and may be separated by other ballet leg movements.)			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Thrust to Vertical Airborne Split Position (Rocket Split), followed by a Vertical Descent at the same tempo as the Thrust From a submerged Back Pike Position , with legs remaining perpendicular to the surface, a vertical upward movement of the hips is rapidly executed as the body unrolls to assume a Vertical Position . Maximum height and speed is desirable. Maintaining maximum height, the legs are split rapidly to assume an Airborne Split Position . Legs should be split evenly forward and back and parallel to the surface. The legs rejoin rapidly to a Vertical Position , followed by a Vertical Descent. The descent should be at the same speed as the thrust. The action must end completely under the water.			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ
Team elements - (to be added to team routine only) Cadence Action - (may be performed anywhere in the routine) Identical movement(s) performed sequentially one-by-one by all team members. The Cadence movement must be performed in the exact same way by all team members. The Cadence Action may be performed in any pattern. A Minimum of Four Different Pattern Formations, one must be a straight line and one a circle - (may be performed anywhere in the routine)			0.5 Point 1.0 Point 2.0 Point DQ

Technical Elements & Full Descriptions

<i>Novice</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>
Crain Join, followed by a Vertical Descent From Crane Position , without movement of the vertical leg or trunk, the horizontal leg is lifted to meet the vertical leg to assume a Vertical Position . Maintaining a Vertical Position , the body descends along its longitudinal axis until the toes are submerged. (The action must end completely under the water.)	Crane Join, followed by a Spinning 180 and a Vertical Descent From Crane Position , without movement of the vertical leg or trunk, the horizontal leg is lifted to meet the vertical leg to assume a Vertical Position . From the height of the Vertical Position , the body remains on the same vertical axis as the body simultaneously descends and rotates 180 degrees. The specified rotation must be completed as the heels reach the surface. Maintaining a Vertical Position , the body descends along its longitudinal axis until the toes are submerged. (Uniform motion is required; no stopping and starting or pausing at walls. The action must end completely under the water.)
Boost (jump-up) with one arm optional A rapid headfirst rise with the maximum amount of the body above the surface of the water. The height and any required or optional arm action must be simultaneous. The action must begin and end completely under the water.	Boost (jump-up) arms optional A rapid headfirst rise with the maximum amount of the body above the surface of the water. The height and any required or optional arm action must be simultaneous. The action must begin and end completely under the water.
Split Position, followed by a Front Walkout From the Split Position , the hips remain stationary as the front leg moves in an arc over the surface to meet the other leg in a Surface Arch Position . From the Surface Arch Position , with continuous foot-first movement, the hips, chest and face surface sequentially, assuming a Back Layout Position . (Be aware of where travel may occur. From the Split Position to the Surface Arch position , movement to the surface is executed without travel. Travel is allowed following the surface arch position, and is not limited to the head replacing the hips as in a figure.)	Split Position, followed by a Front Walkout From the Split Position , the hips remain stationary as the front leg moves in an arc over the surface to meet the other leg in a Surface Arch Position . From the Surface Arch Position , with continuous foot-first movement, the hips, chest and face surface sequentially, assuming a Back Layout Position . (Be aware of where travel may occur. From the Split Position to the Surface Arch position , movement to the surface is executed without travel. Travel is allowed following the surface arch position, and is not limited to the head replacing the hips as in a figure.)
Traveling Eggbeater with one arm extended out of the water The swimmer must be traveling while at least one arm is extended out of the water.	Traveling Eggbeater with both arms extended out of the water The swimmer must be traveling while both arms are extended out of the water.
Traveling Ballet Leg Combination To include the following 2 surface positions in any order: Ballet Leg Position with Right Leg Ballet Leg Position with Left Leg In the Ballet Leg Position , the body is extended with the face, chest and one thigh and foot at the surface. One leg is extended vertically with the thigh perpendicular to the surface. These elements may be in any order and may be separated by other ballet leg movements.	Traveling Ballet Leg Combination To include the following 3 surface positions in any order: Ballet Leg Position with Right Leg Ballet Leg Position with Left Leg Flamingo In the Ballet Leg Position , the body is extended with the face, chest and one thigh and foot at the surface. One leg is extended vertically with the thigh perpendicular to the surface. In the Flamingo Position , one leg is extended perpendicular to the surface. The other leg is drawn toward the chest, with its mid-calf opposite the vertical leg, and its foot and knee at and parallel to the surface. The face is at the surface. These elements may be in any order and may be separated by other ballet leg movements.
Thrust to Vertical Position, followed by a Vertical Descent at the same tempo as the Thrust From a Back Pike Position , with legs remaining perpendicular to the surface, a vertical upward movement of the hips is rapidly executed as the body unrolls to assume a Vertical Position . Maintaining a Vertical Position , the body descends along its longitudinal axis until the toes are submerged. In the Back Pike Position , the toes may be at, under or above the surface prior to the Thrust . Maximum height and speed is desirable. The descent should be at the same speed as the Thrust . The action must end completely under the water.	Thrust to Vertical Airborne Split Position (Rocket Split), followed by a Vertical Descent at the same tempo as the Thrust From a submerged Back Pike Position , with legs remaining perpendicular to the surface, a vertical upward movement of the hips is rapidly executed as the body unrolls to assume a Vertical Position . Maximum height and speed is desirable. Maintaining maximum height, the legs are split rapidly to assume an Airborne Split Position . Legs should be split evenly forward and back and parallel to the surface. The legs rejoin rapidly to a Vertical Position , followed by a Vertical Descent . The descent should be at the same speed as the thrust. The action must end completely under the water.
Team Elements <i>(to be added to team routine only)</i>	Team Elements <i>(to be added to team routine only)</i>
Cadence Action <i>(may be performed anywhere in the routine)</i> Identical movement(s) performed sequentially one-by-one by all team members. The Cadence movement must be performed in the exact same way by all team members. The Cadence Action may be performed in any pattern.	Cadence Action <i>(may be performed anywhere in the routine)</i> Identical movement(s) performed sequentially one-by-one by all team members. The Cadence movement must be performed in the exact same way by all team members. The Cadence Action may be performed in any pattern.
A Minimum of Four Different Patter Formations, one must be a Straight Line and one must be a Circle <i>(may be performed anywhere in the routine)</i>	A Minimum of Four Different Patter Formations, one must be a Straight Line and one must be a Circle <i>(may be performed anywhere in the routine)</i>

APPENDIX L

REQUIRED ELEMENTS FOR TECHNICAL ROUTINES

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

A. Supplementary elements may be added. Placement is optional. Other than that the specified required elements are performed in the order designated, there are no restrictions on content or choreography. Required elements may be separated by optional components.

B. Figure elements shall be executed according to the requirements described in **Figure Rules IV & V**. Unless otherwise specified in the description, all elements shall be executed high and controlled, in uniform motion, with each section clearly defined. Technical Routine figure elements shall be evaluated using the same criteria as for a figure competition. Where uniform motion is required, it may be at the tempo of the music. Pauses which are not allowed in figure/movement description may not be added. Example: A Combined Spin with short pauses after each 180-degree turn to fit with the accents in the music would not meet the requirements.

C. Penalties in Technical Routines: See USSS Rule OD 3.6.2.

D. Procedures:

1. Three Technical Controllers keep track of Technical Routine content, with the Event Referee informing the scoring table if a penalty needs to be applied. Judges do not consider omissions when assigning a score.

2. Any required element which is incomplete, or has a component part missing, (e.g., combined spin without a vertical descent) will be treated as an omitted element.

3. In case of dispute about required elements, video recording may be used for final decision by the Event Referee.

E. Comments:

1. For Technical Duets and Trios, with the exception of the deck work and entry, all elements required and supplementary must be performed simultaneously and all competitors must face the same direction (e.g., they must face the same wall or diagonal). They may not face each other or away from each other. Mirror actions are not permitted (e.g., one swimmer cannot lift her left arm "mirroring" the other swimmer lifting her right arm).

2. For Technical Teams, with the exception of the Cadence Action, the deck work and entry, all elements required and supplementary must be performed simultaneously and facing the same direction by all team members except during the circle pattern and the Platform. Variations in propulsion and direction facing are permitted only during pattern changes. Mirror actions are not permitted.

3. For Duet and Trio Free Routines with Required Technical Elements, all elements must be performed simultaneously and facing the same direction by all swimmers. For Team Free Routines with Required Technical Elements, with the exception of the Cadence Action element, all elements must be performed simultaneously and facing the same direction by all team members except during the circle pattern element and the Platform. Mirror actions are not permitted during technical elements.

4. If more than one cadence action is performed, they may not be separated by another movement done in unison (e.g., a synchronized stroke or hybrid movement cannot separate two cadence actions). However, the 1st cadence action may begin with swimmer 1 and the 2nd action may begin with either swimmer 8 or swimmer 1. A subsequent cadence action may or may not start before the previous one is complete.

APPENDIX L

REQUIRED ELEMENTS FOR TECHNICAL ROUTINES

5. A circle should be well-defined with all swimmers on the circumference of the circle, equidistant from a common center point, demonstrating symmetry in spacing, positions and action (e.g., facing in, facing out or facing around the circle). If all swimmers face the same wall, this pattern might not be recognized as a circle by the Event Referee.

6. In the traveling eggbeater element, arm(s) must be lifted above the water. The arm(s) may be in a variety of positions from just above the surface to maximum height. The eggbeater is performed in an erect sitting position, the lower legs hanging down from the knees toward the pool bottom so that they form a 90 angle with the thighs. With the knees apart as far as possible, the swimmer performs a whip kick with alternating legs by making as large a circle as possible with the foot and lower leg.

7. All elements must be performed in the order listed.