



# MOWSA Solo Swims

## OFFICIAL RULES

The Massachusetts Open Water Swimming Association's rules are largely the same as the generally accepted Rules of Marathon Swimming as detailed by the **Marathon Swimmers Federation** in 2014 to govern unassisted open water marathon swims.

### **MOWSA RULES STATE THAT:**

1. No swimmer shall use or be assisted by artificial aids of any kind.
2. Swimmers are permitted to grease the body before a swim and may use goggles, wear one latex or silicone cap, and wear one textile swimsuit with standard coverage, i.e. no sleeves or long legs. Jammers are permissible. This swimsuit may not be designed to retain heat or aid in buoyancy. No wetsuits are permitted.
3. During the swim, the swimmer may receive no supporting contact from any person or object.
4. For a swim to be officially recognized, a swimmer must cross the body of water starting from the natural connecting shore, touch the opposite natural connecting shore and clear the water. If rocks or a cliff wall prevent the swimmer from walking into the water safely at the start, the swimmer may begin the swim by touching and releasing from part of the natural shore, such as a cliff face.
5. The swim will be declared completed when the swimmer clears the water on the natural shore, beyond which there is no navigable water. If rocks or other obstacles prevent the swimmer from clearing the water at the finish, the swimmer will reach above the water line at the natural shore.
6. The clock starts the moment the swimmer enters the water and continues without pause until they touch the opposite natural connecting shore.
7. The official observer shall be in sole charge of the timing of the swim, and shall be responsible for the interpretation of the rules, including the right to cancel the swim in adverse conditions and/or danger to the swimmer. Failure to follow the observer's directions by any swimmer, pace swimmer, paddler, or other support crew members will result in disqualification.
8. A Shark Shield is required for all Cape Cod Bay swim attempts and may be provided for other swims where sharks have been sighted. MOWSA will supply these devices.
9. If a shark is sighted and approaches the swimmer and escort boat, the swimmer must abandon the swim. Details are spelled out in the Shark Protocol.
10. Paddlers and/or pacers are legal as long as they are not used as physical support by the swimmer. Pace swimmers will be allowed to swim no more than one hour at a time and for no more than a total of three hours across the entirety of the swim. Pace swimmers stay out of the water for at least one hour after a pace swim.
11. The swimmer may not intentionally draft behind a pace swimmer or escort vessel.
12. The observer is responsible for documenting the swim, keeping official time, and interpreting the swim rules. The pilot retains the ultimate authority in all other matters. The pilot may cancel the swim at any time for any reason such as safety concerns. The pilot must follow all relevant local maritime regulations.
13. The swimmer or crew may not intentionally pollute the ocean with trash or debris (including but not limited to feed cups and gel packs) at any point before, during, or after the swim, from dock to dock. Everyone involved with the swim must avoid preventable harm to marine wildlife.
14. No alcoholic beverages shall be consumed by any swimmer, observer, boat crew member, or anyone associated with the swim from dock to dock.
15. A swimmer must not take any drugs that are on the U.S. Olympic Committee's list of prohibited medications. This list is available from the Olympic Drug Reference Line at (800) 233-0393 (operational on business days.) Information also at [globaldro.com](http://globaldro.com).
16. Swimmers must be aged 18 or older to undertake a MOWSA marathon swim. No one under the age of 18 shall be allowed on the boat to accompany any swim.
17. Every application for recognition of a swim must be accompanied by the official observer's log (which includes the official time, any incidents, times, tides, methods of feeding, and other pertinent details), completed forms and fees. Additional evidence may be requested by MOWSA at its discretion.
18. For double or multi-way crossings, the swimmer must cross from the natural connecting shore, touch the opposite natural connecting shore, and fully clear the water. Once they have cleared the water, the swimmer must immediately return to knee-deep or deeper water. The swimmer has no more than 10 minutes before they must be underway swimming the next segment of the crossing.
19. If any situation arises that is not covered by the rules, MSF rules will be in force. MOWSA is in charge of interpretations of the rules prior to a swim. The observer is in charge of interpretation of the rules during a swim.
20. Any variation from the applicable rules without prior approval of MOWSA will negate the crossing.

**For more information or questions visit:**  
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