

# Synchronized Swimming - Overview

Synchronized swimming is a game where a group of athletes perform dance steps in combination with swimming. The dance is performed according to the tune played in background. This tutorial explains the basics of synchronized swimming and how to become a professional synchronised swimmer.

Like other events in swimming, players can perform solos, duets, combos or team. There are two routines in synchronized swimming –

- **Technical routine** – In technical routine, the players perform according to a set of predetermined steps. It should be performed strictly according to certain guidelines.
- **Free routine** – Here, the steps are not predetermined, so the players are free to choose their own steps. In free routine, the players have to show their creativity in choreography, dancing, and coordination.



## A Little History of Synchronized Swimming

Synchronised swimming was very famous before it was included in Olympics. For the first time, it was played in 1891 as recorded in history. At that time, it was played in Berlin, Germany. After seeing the event, many countries became interested in playing this sport and many clubs were formed. Simultaneously, this sport became popular in US and Canada.

For the first time, synchronised swimming was included in Los Angeles Olympics in 1984. Between 1984 and 1992, it was played with two events **solo** and **duet**. In 1996 Atlanta Olympics, only team event was included. But from 2000 Olympics held in Sydney, two events i.e. duet and team events were held and now synchronised swimming has become a crowd pulling sport.

## Participating Countries

Since its inception, the game became very famous in many Asian and Non-Asian countries. Performers from different countries perform every year in world aquatic championships. Recent world championship (2015) was held at Kazan, Russia.

The following countries have dominated the sport in case of medals.

- United States
- China
- Russia
- Australia
- East Germany

## Synchronized Swimming - Equipment

Synchronised swimming is a form of rhythmic swimming where the athletes have to respond according to the music and have to swim or dance in water accordingly. Hence, the equipment used in this sport are quite different from other swimming sports.

Before moving on to the equipment used by the athletes, let us first get to know about the playing environment where synchronized swimming is performed.

## Playing Environment

Synchronized swimming is played in a specially designed pool. The water in the pool must be clean and the temperature of the water must be around 25 degree Celsius. The size of the pool must be a minimum of 20m by 30m, and within that a 12m by 12m area must be at least 3 m deep.

Let us now discuss the equipment used in synchronized swimming.

## Nose clip



In synchronized swimming, the athletes have to perform a lot of underwater movements. There are chances of water entering into the nose of the players. In order to avoid that, the athletes use a small clip of hard plastic or wire. It also has a thin rubber coating.

## Goggles



Goggles provide safety to the eyes. Due to underwater movement, water may enter in the eyes. It is important to note that the goggles are not allowed for routine competitions.

Athletes can use goggles only for trainings. This is only used for figure test. Like goggles, athletes also cannot use the bathing caps during routine competitions. During figure test, only a white or black bathing cap is worn by athletes.

## Underwater Speakers



The most important equipment for synchronized swimming is the underwater speakers. Swimmers cannot perform under water if the music is not audible. Music plays an important role in synchronized swimming because it is a rhythmic sport.

We know that impedance of water is 3600 times more than that of air. There is also a 62 dB (decibel) offset between the sound that travels in air and that in water. To overcome this problem, the underwater speakers used in synchronized swimming depend on **Piezoelectric Technology**.

## Swimsuit



One of the most important aspects of the swimsuit is that it must be comfortable for the athletes and it must be non-transparent. During the figure test, a black swimsuit is recommended for the athletes and during routine competition, a routine suit for each athlete that suits the music is recommended.

It may also happen that athletes perform in two events like duet and team event. In such a situation, the athletes will be provided with two different swimsuits.

## How to Play Synchronized Swimming?

In earlier days, synchronised swimming was known as **Water Ballet**. History says that the first recorded international competition was held in Berlin, Germany in 1891. After that event, many countries shown interest and clubs from respective countries were formed to play and organise competitive matches. Some of the skills performed in this sport are as follows –

### Eggbeater

All the synchronised swimmers must have a clear idea about the eggbeater skill. It is one of the most fundamental skills in this sport. In this skill, a swimmer can

attain stability and reach to a height above the water. Then she can leave the hands free to perform other acts. An athlete can reach as much height as possible but the average height is around chest level.

Though, this is a sport, but it is choreographed because of music and dance. By eggbeater, the athlete comes above the water level and is upright. At the same time, she has to put either both of her arms or at least a single arm in the air. It does not end with this. If a swimmer wants to go up vertically in the air above the water, there is boost technique. This is performed by an eggbeater build-up followed by a strong team effort by legs to propel the swimmer out of the water vertically.



## Sculls

Eggbeater skill is normally performed by legs but, on the contrary, sculls mainly depend on hands. The hands of the other supporting athletes are used to propel the body of an athlete. There are different types of sculls used in synchronised swimming.





The famous and most used scull techniques are **support scull**, **torpedo scull**, and **propeller scull**.

The other techniques which are also widely performed are **stationary scull**, **alligator scull**, **paddle scull**, **barrel scull**, and **split arm scull**.

There are also other sculls like **reverse scull** and **direct propeller** which are used in training.

## Positions

In synchronized swimming, there are a number of positions which will not allow you to blink your eyes. These are very famous and overall look very charming and graceful when athletes perform.



Following are some of the positions –

**Tub** – In this position, both of the legs are raised up to the chest. The shins and top of the feet should be parallel to the water.

**Split Position** – One of the legs of the swimmer is extended back and one is stretched forward along the surface but the swimmer has to be in vertical position.

**Knight** – Here the legs are flat on the surface of water and to make a knight's posture the head is vertically in line with the hips. At the same time, the body is arched on the surface.

**Heron or Bent Knee** – Here also the body will be in a vertical position and, as the name suggests, one leg will be bent and the other one will be straight.

**Crane** – Here the body of the swimmer should be in vertical position and being in this position, one leg should be in vertical position and other should be parallel to the surface.

**Side Fishtail** – This is similar like a crane position but a side Y posture is additional in this position.

**Back Layout** – This a normal basic swimming position where a swimmer lies and swims on surface looking up and sculling under her hips.

**Front Layout** – In this position, the swimmer's face will be under the surface and the back is up. The swimmer has to perform sculling by her chest and no breathing shall be done.

**Flamingo** – In this position, the bottom leg has to be pulled up to the chest in such a way that its shin touches the knee of the vertical leg.

**Ballet Leg** – Here one leg is extended and held perpendicular to the body and the other one is parallel to the surface.

## Synchronized Swimming - Rules

FINA or Federation Internationale de Natation or (International Swimming Federation) is the governing body for synchronized swimming. FINA is recognized by international Olympic Committee (IOC) for administration and control over international competitions on aquatics. Its head office is based in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Currently, there are five aquatics competitions which are held during Summer Olympics. These include swimming, diving, water polo, open water swimming, and synchronized swimming. FINA looks after all these competitions. On 24 July 2009, Julio Maglione of Uruguay was elected as FINA president.





Some of the important rules of synchronized swimming are as follows –

- Before participating in the Olympics, the swimmers must clear the qualifying competitions

- If we focus on Olympics, there are only two events played in each Olympics i.e. team and duet
- There are two routines included here one is free routine and one is technical routine
- Players can perform both in team and duets
- Technical routine is predetermined and should be performed strictly according to certain elements
- Free routine is not predetermined so the players are free to do their performance and in free routine, they have to show their creativity in choreography, dancing, and coordination
- In duet event, there are two swimmers and one alternate swimmer. In free routine, the time limit is 3:30 minutes and in technical routine time limit is 2:20 minutes
- In team event, there are eight swimmers and one alternate swimmer. Time limit in free routine is 4:00 minutes and 2:50 minutes in technical routine
- In each event, there is relaxation of utmost 15 seconds
- The judges give points according to the level of difficulty of the performance shown by the players
- Marks awarded ranges from 0.0 to 10.0

## Synchronized Swimming - Champions

FINA or Federation Internationale de Natation or (International Swimming Federation) is the governing body for synchronized swimming. This regulates the international championships all over the world. Apart from this, every country has its own governing body to regulate the game. The list of some of the important championships is as follows.

- World Aquatic Championships
- FINA World Junior Synchronized Swimming Championships
- USA Synchronized Swimming Championships
- European Synchronized Swimming Championships
- European Aquatics Championships

Synchronized swimming is an adventurous sport where the players have to play their tricks while being in water. Some of the champions of this sport are as follows

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## Olga Brusnikina



Olga Brusnikina is a synchronized swimmer from Russia, who has won Olympics three times. At the starting of her career, she took part in solo routine in 1993 World Junior Synchro Championships. In the year 2000, she won a gold medal in duet and her partner was Mariya Kiselyova.

In 2004 Summer Olympics, she won a gold medal. She got married in 2001 and lived in Italy. She also coached this sport in Moscow Oblast. Currently, she has been elected as member of government commission in physical education and sport of Russian Olympics.

## Carolyn Waldo



Carolyn Waldo is a synchronized swimmer from Canada who has competed as solo and duet in international Competitions. She has the record of winning two golds in one Olympics. She has done this in 1988 where she has won both solo and duet competitions. In 1984 Olympics, she was a winner of silver medal. In 1985, she participated in Rome Open and Spanish Open and won both of them.

In the same year, she also won FINA World Cup. In 1986 also, she won Spanish Open. In 1986, she also took part in Commonwealth Games and World Championships and won both of them. In 1987, she won Pan Pacific Championship and FINA World Cup. She announced her retirement in 1988.

## Tracie Ruiz



Tracie Ruiz is a synchronized swimmer from United States who has won Olympics three times. In her whole career, she has won 41 gold medals in various competitions. In 1983 and 1987 Pan Games, she won one gold in each.

In 1984 Summer Olympics, she won a gold and in 1988 Olympics, she won silver. In 1982 World Aquatic Championships, she won a silver in duet with her partner Candy Costie. At the national level, she has won all the US Competitions from 1981 to 1986.

## Angelika Timanina



Angelika Timanina is a synchronized swimmer from Russia She has won European Championships seven times and World Championships eight times. Along with this, she has also won a gold medal in 2012 Summer Olympics.

She liked this sport since her childhood so she moved to Moscow to get training in the Sport School of preparation of Olympic Reserve – Trud. In 2008 FINA World Cup, she won bronze medal in duet with her partner Daria Korobova.

In 2009, she took part in World Cup and won two gold medals in free and technical routines. In 2010, she took part in European Aquatic Championship and her team won gold medals.

## Anna Kozlova



Anna Kozlova is a synchronized swimmer from Soviet Union. At the starting of her career, she took part in 1989 World Cup but could not win any medal. But in 1991 World Cup, she won a bronze medal for Soviet Union. In the same he she won a gold medal with her partner Olga Sedakova in duet routine.

In 1993, she took part in European Aquatics Championships with her partner and won gold in duet. After 1993 championship, she went to USA and got her green card in 1994. After that she took part in many championships but failed to receive any medal. But in 2002 World Cup, 2003 Pan Games, and 2004 Summer Olympics she won a bronze medal, two gold medals, and a bronze medal respectively.