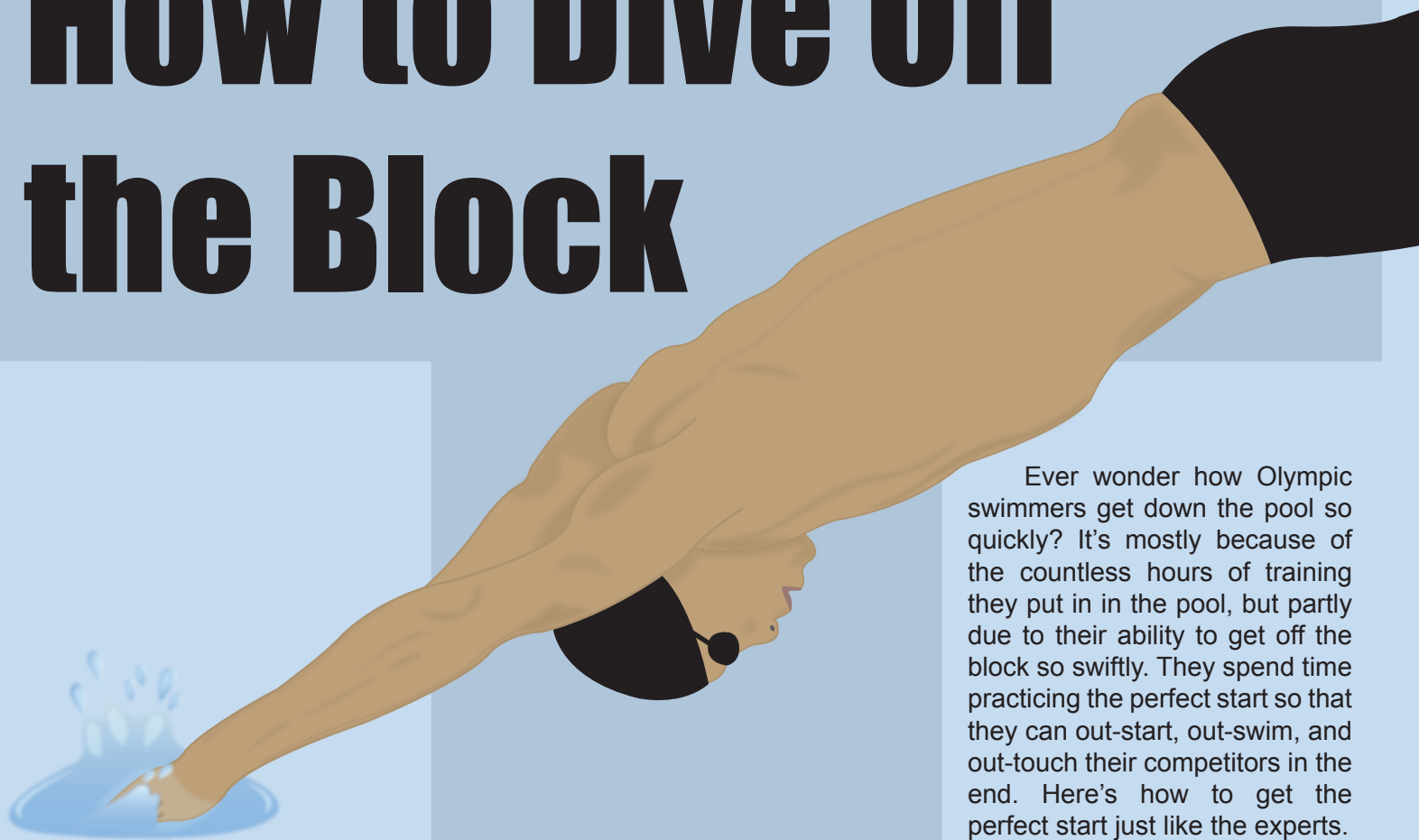


How to Dive Off the Block



Ever wonder how Olympic swimmers get down the pool so quickly? It's mostly because of the countless hours of training they put in in the pool, but partly due to their ability to get off the block so swiftly. They spend time practicing the perfect start so that they can out-start, out-swim, and out-touch their competitors in the end. Here's how to get the perfect start just like the experts.

1

Step up on the block

When it's time for your race, you will hear a beep or someone say "Swimmers up" to signal that it's time for you to step up on the block. You want to do this quickly so that you will have enough time to get situated. Breathe deeply and don't think about anything other than getting off the block quickly and powerfully. Use this time to stay focused on your race.



2

Move your strongest foot forward to the edge of the block

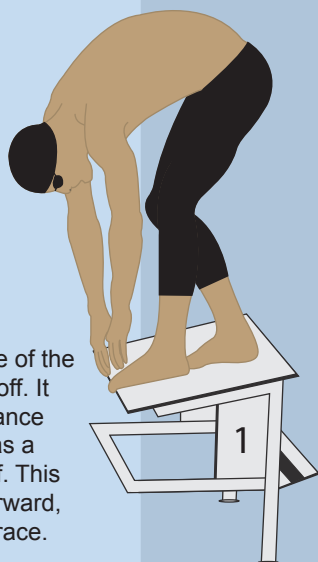
This is known as the track start. You want your strongest foot to be at the edge of the block because you will use it to push off with. Some swimmers are more comfortable with both feet at the edge of the block, known as the grab start, so that they can use both feet equally to push off. Even though the grab start may get you off the block quicker, the track start will help to propel you out further for a better start to your race.



3

Curl your toes over the edge of the block

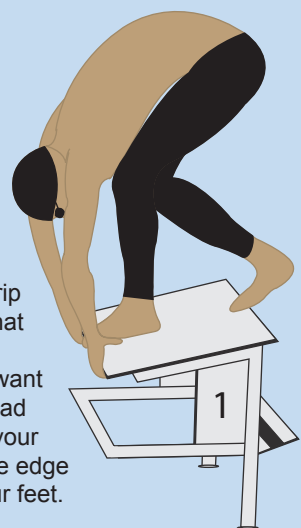
Curling your toes over the edge of the block will help when you push off. It allows you to have greater balance and grip on the block, as well as a greater push when you take off. This will help you propel yourself forward, which is an essential part of a race.



4

Grab the edge of the block with both hands

When the starter says "Take your mark," grip the edge of the block with both hands so that you can use your arms to propel yourself forward in addition to using your legs. You want to pull up with your arms and keep your head down. Lean slightly back to get tension in your arms. If you choose to have both feet at the edge of the block, grab the block in between your feet.



5

Propel yourself out and forward

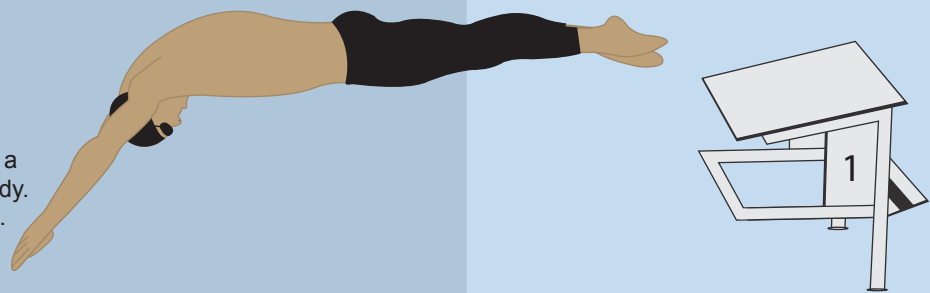
Using your arms and legs, push off the block with as much force as possible when you hear the beep or "Go!" signaling you to start. Bring your head up to help propel yourself out and forward. Your legs will be split apart, so that when you bring them together, it will propel you forward even more. You want to have a fast reaction to the buzzer, or reaction time. If you warm up your body before the race with light jogging and stretching, your reaction time will improve.



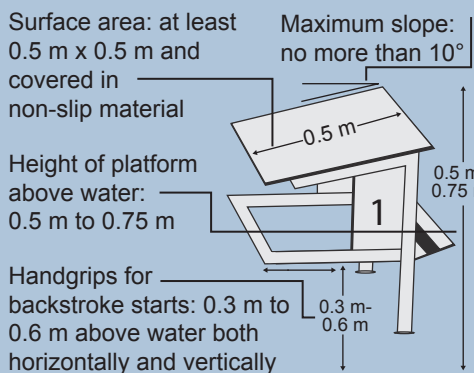
6

Streamline

As you propel yourself forward, bring your arms up to a streamline position and your head in line with your body. Your head should be squeezed in between your arms. Keep your legs straight, toes pointed, and arms stretched as far out as you can. By keeping everything aligned, you will be able to make a clean entry into the water.

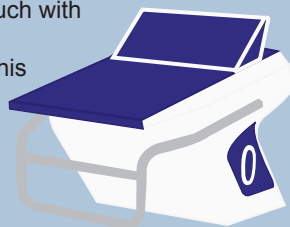


FINA block regulations



A new kind of block

In the 2012 London Olympics, a new style of starting block was used. This track-style starting block has an inclined surface and a lip at the back. These blocks let swimmers push off from a crouch with their back leg at a 90-degree angle. This makes their start more powerful. This new kind of block can also detect false starts.



The parts of the block

