

Tech Suits and Young Athletes

It is unclear how much of a performance advantage wearing a tech suit makes at a young age as the greatest performance advantage from such a suit comes from the compression that the suit provides in streamlining the body to reduce frontal resistance. For this to occur, the suit needs to be extremely tight fitting. A tech suit will deteriorate after only a few competitions, depending on how many times it is worn. The more times it is worn, the more it stretches, and the more the compression and water repellent properties degrade

Swim Ireland Rationale

1. Effective stroke technique and high skill levels are a much more important component for swimming fast over and above that of the suit worn and athletes should be encouraged to improve their body position, streamlining, underwater kick speed and technique at a young age in order to continue their progression in later years.
2. The focus for young age group athletes should be less on results and more on developing a love for the sport
3. Children should feel and understand that it is their training, commitment and application to the sport that makes a difference when they compete, not the competition suit that they wear
4. Tech suits are very expensive. We want our sport to be inclusive and this rationale facilitates this

The policy has been introduced to create a cultural shift in our sport to remove the focus on age group success. The policy should be included within all meet conditions and it is the responsibility of Regions, Clubs and Coaches to educate athletes and parents on the spirit of the policy. We can avoid any embarrassment to young people at competitions if Regions, Clubs and Coaches enforce the policy at all levels.

Swim Ireland Ruling (Updated May 2024 and effective for the 2024 Irish Summer National Age Group Championships):

1. Athletes aged 12 years old and younger (age as that prescribed by each meet's entry conditions) will not be permitted to compete in a tech suit in any swimming competition which falls under the jurisdiction of Swim Ireland – all Swim Ireland licensed/sanctioned meets on the island of Ireland
2. There are no tech suit restrictions for athletes aged 13 years old and over in any competition

The following statement must be added to the meet conditions/information for all competitions on the island of Ireland:

“Athletes aged 12 years and younger (age as defined in the meet conditions) will not be permitted to compete at this meet in a tech suit. A tech suit is defined as a suit made of water repellent and compressive materials, with leg grippers and taped seams. A suit with one individual element is not considered a tech suit. Athletes aged 12 years and under will be disqualified if officials observe such an athlete competing in a tech suit.”

The policy has been updated to reflect the change in technology and manufacturing of suits. Many manufacturers have now started producing suits which have leg grippers, but are NOT compressive, are NOT made of water repellent materials, and do not have taped and bonded seams.

To reflect this change in technology, suits that are made of woven material (such as polyester/lycra) which are NOT water repellent and do NOT have bonded or taped seams, will be permitted for swimmers 12 years old and younger.

Swim Ireland Definition of a ‘Tech Suit’

A tech suit is defined as a suit made of water repellent and compressive materials, with leg grippers and taped seams. A suit with one individual element is not considered a tech suit.

Traditional one-piece race suits for females as well as briefs and trunks for male swimmers are not defined as tech suits and will be permitted. Knee length suits and jammers will be permitted provided they are not manufactured using fabric with water-repellent properties or using any bonded or taped seams. The images below show examples of permitted and prohibited swimwear.

<p>Permitted – chlorine resistant fabric but not compressive, raised seams, leg grippers</p>	<p>Permitted – chlorine resistant fabric but not compressive, raised seams, no leg grippers</p>	<p>Prohibited – water repellent and compressive material, with leg grippers, bonded or taped seams</p>	
<p>Permitted – chlorine resistant fabric but not compressive, raised seams, leg grippers</p>	<p>Permitted – chlorine resistant fabric but not compressive, raised seams, no leg grippers</p>	<p>Permitted – chlorine resistant fabric but not compressive, raised seams, no leg grippers</p>	<p>Prohibited – water repellent and compressive material, with leg grippers, bonded or taped seams</p>