



Swimming

Glossary



To help our new families better understand the 'lingo' within the swimming community, we are providing a glossary containing many of the terms used in our sport.

A-Meet	Swim meet which requires swimmers to have previously achieved an "A" time standard in the events they wish to enter.
Aggregate Time	Times achieved by 4 swimmers in individual events which are added together to arrive at a provable relay entry time.
Age Group	Division of swimmers according to age. The National Age Group divisions are: 10-under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-up. These are used to categorize swimmers in sessions/events during meets. (Some LSCs have divided the swimmers into more convenient divisions specific to their situations: (i.e.) 8-under, 13-Over, 15-Over, Junior, Senior).
Alternate	In a Prelims/Finals meet, after the finalists are decided, the next two fastest swimmers other than the finalist are designated as alternates. The faster of the 2 being first alternate and the next being second alternate. If a finalist cannot participate, the alternates are called to take their place, often on a moments notice.
Anchor	The final swimmer in a relay.
Approved Meet	A meet conducted with sufficient USA Swimming officials to certify conformance to USA Swimming rules. <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The meet may include competitors who are not USA Swimming members.- The meet may be a competition sanctioned at the LSC level with the added approval of USA Swimming because both member and non-member athletes will be competing.
Beep	The starting sound from an electronic, computerized timing system.
Bell Lap	The part of a distance freestyle race (400 meters or longer) signaling the swimmer when the swimmer has 2 lengths to go. <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The starter rings a bell over the lane of the lead swimmer.
Blocks	The starting platforms, permanent or removable, located behind each lane. Blocks have a variety of designs and heights.
Bonus Heat	The heat held during the finals session of a Prelims/Finals meet that is slower than the swimmers participating in Finals. <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Bonus Heat may refer to Consolation Finals or and extra heat in addition to Consolation finals.
Bottom	The floor of the pool. Bottom depths are usually marked on the walls or sides of the pool.
Breaststroke	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Breaststroke is swum as the second stroke in the Medley Relay and the third stroke in the Individual Medley.

Bulk Head	A, fixed or floating, wall constructed to divide a pool into different courses, such as a 50 meter pool into two 25 yard courses.
Bull Pen	The staging area where swimmers wait to receive their lane and heat assignments for a swimming event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area is usually away from the pool and has rows of chairs for the swimmers to sit. - The Clerk of the Course is in charge of the Bull Pen.
<u>Bulletin Board</u>	One of the most important communication devices for a swim club. Bulletin boards are usually in the entrance ways of pools and have timely information posted for swimmers and parents to read.
Butterfly	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed FLY) is swam as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and first stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yards/meter, 100 yards/meter, and 200 yards/meter. (LSCs with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yard butterfly)
Cap	The latex or Lycra covering worn on the head of swimmers. Used as a way to keep swimmers hair out of face and as recognition for swimmer/team.
Cards	A card that may either be handed to the swimmer in the bull pen or given to the timer behind the lane. Cards usually list the swimmers name, USA-S number, seed time, event number, event description, and the lane and heat number the swimmer will swim in. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gives swimmers and order/stroke for relays. - Backup times are written on these cards. - Each event will have a separate card.
Championship Meet	A meet held at the end of a season. Qualification times are usually necessary to enter meet.
Championship Finals	The fastest swimmers (6 or 8 depending on the # of pool lanes) in Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return o the Finals.
Check-In	The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded event/meet. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sometimes referred to as "positive check-in", the swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host at clerk of course.
Circle Seeding	A method of seeding swimmers when they are participating in a prelims/finals event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The fastest swimmers are seeded staggered in the fastest lanes of the last three heats. - See USA Swimming rule book for exact method for seeding depending on the lanes in the pool.
Clinic	A scheduled meeting for the purpose of instruction; i.e. Officials' clinic, Coaches clinic.
Closed Competition	Swim meet which is open only to specified members of designated organization/team. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summer club swim meets are considered to be "Closed Competition".
Club	A registered swim team that is a dues paying member of United States Swimming and the Local Swim Committee.
Code	A set of rules that have been officially published.

Consolation Finals	The in a Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals session. Consolations are the second fastest heat of finals when multiple heats are held and are conducted before the Championship heat.
Course	Designated distance (length of pool) for swimming competition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long Course (Summer Season) = 50 meters - Short Course = 25 yards or 25 meters.
Cut	Slang for a qualifying time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event.
Deadline	The date meet entries must be "postmarked" by, to be accepted by the meet host. Making the meet deadline does not guarantee acceptance into a meet since many meets are "full" weeks before the entry deadline. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coaches usually assign sign-up deadlines for participation in meet to allow time to prepare team's entries.
Deck	The area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only "authorized" USA Swimming members may be on the deck during a competition.
Deck Entries	Accepting entries into swimming events on the first day or during running of meet.
Deck Seeding	Swimmers are seeded after confirmation of intent to swim by initialing/checking entry/scratch list.
Distance	How far a swimmer swims by lengths of pool to be completed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distances for short course are: 25 yards (1 length), 50 yards (2 lengths), 100 yards (4 lengths), 200 yards (8 lengths), 500 yards (20 lengths), 1000 yards (40 lengths), and 1650 yards (66 lengths). - Distances for long course are: 50 meters (1 length), 100 meters (2 lengths), 200 meters (4 lengths), 400 meters (8 lengths), 800 meters (16 lengths), and 1500 meters (30 lengths).
Disqualification	Also know as "DQ" a swimmers time is not scored because of a rules infraction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A disqualification is shown by an official raising one arm with open hand above their head. - A form specifying each infraction is completed and approved by deck referee. - The coach is given a copy of each "DQ" given.
Dive	Entering the water head first. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diving is not allowed during warm-ups except at the designated time, in specific lanes, monitored by the swimmer's coach.
Diving Well	A separate pool or area set aside from that of the competition pool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This pool has deeper water and diving boards/platforms. - During a meet, this area may be designated as a warm-down pool with proper supervision.
Division I, II, III	NCAA member colleges and universities are assigned divisions to compete in, depending on the schools enrollment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Division I being the largest universities and Division III being the smallest colleges.
Dual Meet	Type of meet where two (2) teams/clubs compete against each other.
Draw	Random selection by chance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used in prelim/final meets when more than one swimmer has the same qualifying time in swim-off for seeding events in finals session of meet.

Drill	An exercise involving a portion or part of a stroke, used to improve specific aspects of stroke execution.
Drop Time	When a swimmer goes faster than their seed (previous fastest) time they are said to have "dropped time".
Drylands	Exercises and various strength programs swimmers do out of the water.
Entry	Individual swimmers, Relay, or Club events to swim in a competition.
Entry Chairperson	The host clubs designated person who is responsible for receiving, and making sure the entries have met the deadline, or returning the entries if the meet is full.
Entry Fees	The amount per event a swimmer or relay is charged. - This varies depending on the LSC and type of meet.
Entry Limit	Each meet will usually have a limited number of swimmers they can accept. Once an entry limit has been reached, the meet will be closed and all other entries/fees returned.
Electronic Timing	The timing system usually has touch pads in the water, junction boxes on the deck, buttons for backup timing, and a computer type console that displays and prints the results of each race.
Eligible to compete	Status of swimmers that are registered and have met all the sanctioning requirements.
Equipment	The items necessary to conduct a swim practice or a swim competition.
Event	A race (stroke) over a given distance.
False Start	When a swimmer leaves (or motions toward the water on the starting block) before the start is initiated by horn or gun. - If the command to "stand" is given prior to movement there is no infraction. - Dual confirmation by the starter and referee is required (although no hand will be raised when infraction/ruling takes place). - One false start will disqualify a swimmer or a relay, although the starter or referee may disallow the false start due to unusual circumstances.
False Start Rope	A recall rope across the width of the racing pool for the purpose of stopping swimmers who were not aware of a false start. - The rope is about 1/2 ways on yard pools and about 50 feet from the starting end on meter pools.
FINA	The international sanctioning (rule-making organization) for the sport of swimming.
Finals	Top 6 or 8 swimmers (depending on the # of pool lanes) in Prelims/Finals meet. After the Prelims, Finals are the fastest qualifying swimmers when multiple heats are held.
Final Results	The printed copy of the results of each race of a swim meet.
Fine	The monetary penalty assessed a swimmer or club when a swimmer does not achieve the necessary qualifying time (and cannot provide proof of previously swimming event time) required to swim in an event.
Flags	Pennants that are suspended over the width of each end of the pool approximately 15 feet from the wall.

Format	The order of events and type of swim meet being conducted.
Fund Raiser	A money making endeavor by a swim team/club usually involving both parents and swimmers.
Freestyle	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes (nicknamed Free). - Swam as the fourth stroke in the Medley Relay and Individual Medley.
Gallery	The viewing/seating area for spectators during the swimming competition.
Goals	The short and long range targets for swimmers to aim for.
Goggles	Glasses type devices worn by swimmers to protect their eyes.
Gun	The blank firing pistol that may be used by the starter to start the races or signal the final lap of a distance freestyle event.
Gun Lap	The part of a freestyle distance race (400 meters or longer) when the swimmer has 2 lengths to go. - The starter fires a gun shot over the lane of the lead swimmer when swimmer is at the backstroke flags.
Gutter	The area along the edge of the pool in which water overflows and re-circulated through the filtration system.
Handbook	A reference manual published by teams/clubs and LSCs or other swimming organizations.
Heat	A division of an event when there are too many swimmers to compete at the same time. The results are after all heats of the specific event are completed.
Heat Sheet	The pre-printed listing of swimmers seed times and order of racing for individual events at a swim meet. - Heat sheets are sold by host team. - Swimmers can tell the order events will be conducted and know what order of events will occur they will be swimming.
High Point	An award given to the swimmer scoring the most points per age group at a swim meets. - All meets do not offer high point awards; check the pre meet information.
Horn	A sounding device used to initiate swim race.
Individual Medley.	"IM", slang for Individual Medley, is a swimming event using all 4 of the competitive strokes on consecutive lengths of the race. - The order must be: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle. - Equal distances of each stroke are swum.
Interval	A specific elapsed time for swimming or resting used during training.
Invitational	Meet that requires a club to be given or request an invitation to attend the meet.
Jump	An illegal start done by the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th member of a relay team. - The swimmer on the block breaks contact with the block before the swimmer in the water touches the wall.
Junior Nationals	USA-S Championship Meet for swimmers 18 years old or less. - Qualification times are necessary.

Kick	The leg movements of a swimmer.
Kick Board	A flotation device used by swimmers during training.
Lane Lane Lines	The specific area in pool divided by ropes in which a swimmer is assigned to swim. Continuous floating markers attached to a cable stretched from the starting end to the turning end for the purpose of separating each lane and quieting the waves caused by racing swimmers.
Lap Counter	The numbered cards (or the person turning the cards) used during distance freestyle events (eight laps or more). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Counting is done on the wall opposite the starting end. - Odd Numbered laps are shown to help swimmer "count" laps swum during progression of the race. - The final lap is designated by a bright orange or red card.
Late Entries	Meet entries from a club or individual received by the meet host after the entry deadline. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These entries are usually not accepted or are charged an additional fee to process.
Long Course	Season of competition (usually April through July) in which events are swum in a 50 meter pool.
LSC	Local Swim Committee, governing body for USA Swimming on the local level.
Mark	The command communicating to swimmers to assume the starting position.
Marshall	The official designated to control the access to pool deck at a swim meet.
Meet Director	The official in charge of the administrative aspects of a meet. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Computers, records, sanction, etc.
Mile	The slang term referring to the 1500 meter or 1650 yard freestyle event.
NAIA/NCAA	National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics/ National Collegiate Athletic Association
National Age Group Time Standards	"NAGTS", Time classifications for a swimmer to determine where race times fall among swimmers throughout the United States; "AAAA" is the fastest followed by "AAA" "AA", "A", "BB", "B", "C". <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Age Group Time Standards - the list of "C" through "AAAA" times published each year.
Nationals	USA Swimming Qualifying National Championship meet conducted in March/April and August.
Natatorium	A building constructed for the purpose of housing a swimming pool and related equipment.
Negative Split	Swimming the second half of the race equal to or faster than the first half.
Novice	A beginner or inexperienced swimmer.
Observed Meet	A meet that is not conducted according to USA Swimming rules (high school, YMCA) where a request for observation has been processed and approved in advance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet will comply with required standards designated by USA Swimming.

Observed Swim	A swim observed by assigned USA Swimming officials for conformance with USA Swimming technical rules in a meet conducted under other than USA Swimming rules. - Normally requested when qualifying time is trying to be achieved.
Officials	The certified adult volunteers, who operate the many facets of a swim competition. - Some different types of officials include the meet referee, starter, and stroke & turn judge.
Open Competition	Competition which any qualified club, organization, or individual may enter.
Pace Clock	The electronic clock (large clock) with highly visible numbers and second hands, positioned at the ends or sides of a swimming pool. - Used by swimmers during training to check pace or maintain intervals.
Paddles	Colored flat plastic devices used on the swimmers hands during training.
Parka	Large 3/4 length lined coats worn by swimmers. - Usually are in team colors with logo or team name.
Positive Check In	The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded event. - - The swimmer must mark/sign their name on a list posted by the meet host indicating intent to swim that event. - Once signed in if swimmer does not show (without acceptable excuse) they are penalized.
Practice	The scheduled workouts a swimmer attends with their swim team/club.
Prelims	Session of a Prelims/Finals meet in which the qualification heats are conducted.
Prelims-Finals	Meet with two sessions. The preliminary heats, usually held in the morning, acts as qualification session for the Finals session held later in the day. - The fastest 6 or 8 swimmers are in the Championship Heat. - The next fastest 6 or 8 swimmers are in the Consolation Heat. - A swimmer who has only qualified to swim in the Consolation Finals may not place in the Championship Finals even if their finals time would place them so. (The converse also applies.)
Pre-seeded	A meet in which a swimmer knows what lane and heat they are in by looking at the heat sheet or posted program.
Psyche Sheet	An entry sheet showing all swimmers entered into each individual event.
Pull Buoy	A flotation device used for pulling by swimmers in training.
Qualifying Times	Published times necessary to enter certain meets.
Recall Rope	A rope across the width of the racing pool for the purpose of stopping swimmers who were not aware of a false start. - The rope is suspended approximately half the distance down the pool.
Referee	The head official, over all other officials, at a meet. - Responsible for: Approving any judging calls Notifying coaches of disqualifications Ensuring meet facilities comply with USA Swimming standards Efficient running of the meet

Registered	Enrolled and paid as a member of USA Swimming.
Relays	Event in which 4 swimmers participate as a team and swims an equal distance of the race. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are two types of relays: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Medley relay - One swimmer swims Backstroke, one Breaststroke, one Butterfly, and one Freestyle (in that order). 2.) Freestyle relay - Each swimmer swims freestyle.
Rest Area	A designated area (such as a gymnasium) set aside for swimmers to rest between events during a meet.
Sanction	A permit issued by an LSC to a USA-S group member to conduct an event or meet.
Sanction Fee	The amount paid by a USA-S group member to an LSC for issuing a sanction.
Sanctioned Meet	A meet that is approved by USA Swimming for the LSC in which it is held. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet must be conducted according to USA Swimming rules. - All participants, including coaches, athletes and officials, must be USA Swimming members.
Schedule	USA-Swimming or LSC list of meets released each season with dates, meet host, meet location, type of meet, and contacts address and phone.
Scratch	To withdraw from an event after having declared an intention to participate. Some meets have scratch deadlines and specific scratch rules, and if not followed, swimmer can be disqualified from remaining events.
Sectionals	A qualifying Championship Meet (with faster qualifying times than LSCs) that includes swimmers from teams located within specific geographic regions.
Seeding	Assigning swimmers to heats and lanes according by their submitted or preliminary times. "Seed Time" is the time used to enter a swimmer into a meet; usually the swimmer's personal best time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deck Seeding swimmers are to report to the Clerk of the Course. After scratches are determined, the event is seeded. - Pre Seeding - swimmers are arranged in heats according to submitted times, usually a day prior to the meet.
Senior Meet	A meet that is for senior level swimmers and is not divided into age groups. Qualification times are usually necessary and will vary depending on the level of the meet.
Senior Nationals	A USA-Swimming National Championship Meet for swimmers of any age with specific qualification times.
Session	Meets are separated into groupings to manage events and age groups to complete the competition according to USA Swimming time guidelines.
Set	A group of drills put together to form a training regimen.
Shave	The process of removing all arm, leg, and exposed torso hair to decrease "drag" or resistance of the body moving through the water. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Normally only done by elite swimmers at very important (Championship) meets.
Short Course	Specific season in competitive swimming (September through March) during which the meets are held in a 25 yard or 25 meter pool.
Simultaneous	A term used in the rules of butterfly and breaststroke, meaning at the same time.

Speedo Championship Series	Open "senior level" meets held in the spring and summer. Each Zone may hold up to four meets. Qualifying times, sites, dates and meet rules are determined locally.
Split	A portion of an event, shorter than the total distance that is timed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first 50 yards/meters time is taken as the swimmer swims a longer distance race. - The individual splits in a race are commonly used by the coach during training.
Start	The beginning of a race by taking specific positioning at end of pool lane (either on block or on pool deck).
Starter	The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.
Stand-up	Command given by the Starter to release the swimmers from their starting position when indications of possible difficulty for swimmers or equipment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used most often when a swimmer enter blocks late or off balance when assuming starting position. - Allows all swimmers in race to achieve comfortable "ready" position prior to start.
Step-Down	The command given by the Starter for swimmers to step down off the blocks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used when indication there may be problem on the start (equipment malfunctions etc).
Streamline	The position used to gain maximum distance during a start and/or push off from the wall in which the swimmer's body is as tight as it can be.
Strokes	There are 4 competitive strokes: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle.
Stroke and Turn Judge	Official assigned to determine the compliance of swimmer's strokes and turns, according to USA Swimming standards, during a race.
Submitted Time	Times used when swimmers enter meets.
Suit	The racing uniform worn by the swimmer in the water, during competition.
Swim-off	In a Prelims/Finals type competition, a race after the scheduled event to break a tie. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used only in positioning for qualifying placements in prelim/finals meets.
SWIMS	USA Swimming system that tracks swimmers times accomplished in sanctioned meets. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Available through the USA Swimming website.
Taper	Preparation phase, reducing yardage in training to achieve peak physical conditioning and maximum endurance, for swimmers prior to a major competition.
Team	USA Swimming Registered club that has the right to compete in sanctioned meets.
Team Records	The statistics a team keeps, listing the fastest swimmer in the clubs history for each age group/each event.
Timed Finals	Competition in which final placing is determined by times achieved during initial heats swum.
Time Standard	A time set, by a meet or LSC or USA Swimming, for a swimmer to achieve for championship meet qualification or recognition.

Timers	Volunteers behind the starting blocks/finish end of pool, responsible for getting backup watch times and activating the backup buttons for the timing system at completion of each race.
Time Trial	An event or series of events where a swimmer may achieve or better a required time standard.
Top 16	List of race times, compiled by the LSC or USA Swimming, recognizing the top 16 swimmers in each age group (boys & girls) by each event and distance.
Touch Pad	The removable plate (on starting the end of pool) connected to an automatic timing system, to register an official time in a race.
Transfer	The act of leaving one club or LSC and joining another. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Swimmer cannot score team points or swim on team's relays for 120 days after transfer.
Tri-meet	A sanctioned meet with only 3 teams competing against each other.
Unattached	An USA Swimming registered athlete who competes a meet, but does not represent a specific club or team.
Unofficial Time	The time displayed on a read out board immediately after the race. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After the race is approved by officials it can become the official time.
USA-S	The governing body of swimming - USA Swimming.
USA Swimming	The national governing body of the sport headquartered in Colorado Springs.
USA-S ID Number	A unique 16 part number assigned to each swimmer once registered. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first 6 digits are the swimmers birth date: xx/xx/xxxx; the next three letters are the first three letters of athletes legal first name; the next letter is the middle initial, followed by the first four letters of the swimmers last name - Example: Suzanne Eileen Nelson and born Aug.27, 1976 = 082776SUZENELS). - Used tracking swimmer's times and participation in USA Swimming events.
USOTC	United States Olympic Training Center located in Colorado Springs, Colorado.
Warm-down	Low intensity swimming after a race or main practice used by swimmers to rid the body/muscles of excess lactic acid and to gradually reduce heart rate and respiration.
Warm-up	Specific set of training laps utilized to gradually loosen muscles and increase heart rate and respiration prior to competition or practice.
Watch	Hand-held device used by timers and coaches for timing swimmers races and taking splits.
Whistle	The sound(s) a starter and referee uses signaling swimmers preparation for race before giving the command to initiate race.
Yardage	The distance a swimmer swims in practice.
Zones	The country is divided up into 4 major zones: Eastern, Southern, Central, and Western. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Also slang for qualifying championship meet held at the end of the long course season (August). - Participants are decided by points accumulated when competing in Long Course LSC championship meet.