

A Swimmer's Glossary

AAA Zone qualifying time standard for a swimmer. Michigan is part of the Central Zone.

AAAA National Reportable Time (NRT) qualifying time standard for a swimmer. This is the fastest time standard listed on the NAGT chart. Times faster than this are approaching National cuts or Top Times consideration.

add up aggregate time Times achieved by four swimmers in individual events, which are added together to arrive at a provable relay entry time

aerobic base A swimmer's fitness level built up by swimming yardage at a progressive and intensive level

age group Division of swimmers according to age. The National Age Group divisions are: 10-under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18. Some LSCs have divided the swimmers into more convenient divisions specific to their situations: 8-under, 13-Over, 15-Over.

age group meet All USA registered swimmers, 18 years of age and younger, who have met the qualifying time standard for a specific event(s) are eligible to participate in their age category. A swimmer's age on the first day of competition shall govern for the entire meet.

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 two is first alternate and the next is second alternate. If a finalist cannot participate, the alternates are called to take their place, often while the heat is behind the blocks.

anchor The final swimmer in a relay

approved meet Swim meets conducted by organizations (other than USS member clubs or LSCs) that have applied to USS or the local LSC for approval. If approval is granted, swimmers may use times achieved as USS qualifying times.

backstroke One of the four competitive racing strokes, basically any style of swimming on your back. Backstroke is the first stroke in the medley relay, the second in the individual medley.

blocks The starting platforms located behind each lane. Some pools have blocks at the deeper end of the pool, and some pools have blocks at both ends. Blocks have a variety of designs and can be permanent or removable.

bonus heat The heat held during the finals session of a Prelims/Finals meet that is slower than the swimmers participating in Big Finals. The bonus heat may refer to consolation finals or an extra heat in addition to consolation finals.

breaststroke One of the four competitive racing strokes. It is the second stroke in the medley relay and the third stroke in the individual medley.

butterfly One of the four competitive racing strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed "fly") is the third stroke in the medley relay and first stroke in the individual medley.

championship finals The top six or eight swimmers (depending on the number of pool lanes) in a Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals

championship meet The meet held at the end of a season. Qualification times are usually necessary to enter meet.

check-in The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck-seeded meet. Sometimes referred to as positive check-in, the swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host.

circle seeding A method of seeding swimmers when they are participating in a prelims/finals event. The fastest 18 to 24 swimmers are seeded in the last three heats, with the fastest swimmers being in the inside lanes.

Clerk of Course The meet official who handles most of the administrative duties on the day of the meet such as deck entries, scratches, etc.

consolation finals After the fastest six or eight swimmers, the next six or eight swimmers (depending on the number of pool lanes) in a Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals. 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. Long Course = 50 meters / Short Course = 25 yards or 25 meters.

deck entries Accepting entries into swimming events on the first day or later day of a meet

deck seeding A procedure for assigning swimmers to the proper lanes and heats before each event, after all scratches are determined

dehydration The abnormal depletion of body fluids (water), the most common cause of swimmer's cramps and sick feelings

developmental A classification of meet or competition that is usually held early in the season. The purpose of a developmental meet is to allow all levels of swimmers to compete in a low-pressure environment.

disqualification A swimmer's performance is not counted because of a rules infraction. A disqualification is shown by an official raising one arm with open hand above their head.

dolphin kick Kick used in butterfly

drill Technique used to focus on certain aspects of strokes

dryland The exercises and various strength programs swimmers do out of the water

entry An individual, relay team, or club roster's event list into a swim competition

entry Chairperson The host club's 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. Each meet will usually have a limit of total swimmers they can accept (entry limit), or a time limit they cannot exceed. Once an entry limit has been reached, a meet will be closed and all other entries returned.

electronic timing Timing system operated on DC current (battery). The timing system usually has touchpads in the water, junction boxes on the deck with hookup cables, buttons for backup timing, and a computer console that prints out the results of each race. Some systems are hooked up to a scoreboard that displays swimmers' times.

event A race or stroke over a given distance. An event equals one preliminary with its final, or 1 timed final.

false start When a swimmer leaves the starting block before the horn or gun. One false start will disqualify a swimmer or a relay team, although the starter or referee may disallow the false start due to unusual circumstances.

FINA Founded in 1908, the international federation governing aquatic sports, including swimming, diving, water polo, and synchronized swimming

final results The printed copy of the results of each race of a swim meet.

finals The session of a meet where qualifying rounds (prelims) were held previously to determine the finalists (usually 6-16 depending on pool size and whether or not consolation finals are conducted). Results of the finals determine the ultimate placements in a given event. Most "final" types of meets are at the championship level (i.e. State, and Nationals, USA Junior and Senior Nationals).

flip turn A somersault used to turn from one lap to another in freestyle and backstroke

format The order of events and type of swim meet being conducted.

freestyle One of the four competitive racing strokes. Freestyle (nicknamed "free") is the fourth stroke in the medley relay and fourth stroke in the individual medley.

goal set A set of 100's, usually 10, on the fastest time a swimmer can make

gun lap The part of a freestyle distance race (400 meters or longer) when the swimmer has 2 lengths plus 5 yards to go. The starter fires a gun (or rings a bell) over the lane of the lead swimmer when swimmer is at the backstroke flags.

heats A division of an event when there are too many swimmers to compete at the same time. The results are compiled by swimmer's time, after all heats of the event are completed.

heat sheet The pre-meet printed listings of swimmers seed times in the various events at a swim meet. Heat sheets are sold at the admissions table and are used mainly to make sure the swimmer has been properly entered in all the events they signed up for.

High Point An award given to the swimmer scoring the most points in a given age group at a swim meet. All meets do not offer high point awards; check the pre-meet information.

individual medley (IM) A swimming event using all four of the competitive strokes in consecutive lengths of the race. The order must be: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle. Equal distances must be swam of each stroke.

interval A specific elapsed time for swimming or rest used during swim practice.

Junior Olympics An age group championship meet conducted by the LSC.

jump An illegal start done by the second, third, or fourth member of a relay team. The swimmer on the block breaks contact with the block before the swimmer in the water touches the wall.

lactate set Set of 50s, 100s or 200s on an eight-minute send off at maximum effort

lead off First swimmer on a relay team. A time achieved by a lead off swimmer is official if there is 1) an electronic time or 2) three hand-held times.

long course A 50-meter (LCM) pool

Local Swim Committee (LSC) The local level administrative division of the corporation (USS) with supervisory responsibilities within certain geographic boundaries designated by the Corporation

marshaling area An area at the meet where swimmers report before their event to be arranged into their heat and lane assignments

Meet Director The official in charge of the administration of the meet

meters The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the metric system. Long course meters is 50 meters; short course meters is 25 meters.

mile The slang referring to the 1500 meter or the 1650 yard freestyle, both of which are slightly short of a mile.

National Reportable Time (NRT) Motivational time standards that, if achieved, indicate a swimmer is in contention for a national Top 16 time. All NRT-qualifying swims are ranked at end of season and the official Top 16 list is published.

negative split A race strategy in the distance freestyle events in which a swimmer covers the second half of the race faster than the first half.

nonconforming time A short-course time submitted to qualify for a long course meet, or vice versa

No Time (NT) The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer has not swum that event before

Official Time (OT) The swimmer's event time recorded to one hundredth of a second (.01)

Official Verification Card (OVC) A three-copy form for certifying a national qualifying time made by a swimmer and issued only by a verification official of the area in which the meet was held

open turn A means of grabbing the wall with one hand (freestyle and backstroke) or two hands (breaststroke and butterfly) to turn from one lap to another

pace The speed at which one swims. Speed and strategy vary according to distance.

piemaster Tristan Peitz, club record holder in the 15 & Over 100 yard freestyle

positive check-in The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck-seeded or pre-seeded meet. The swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host.

prelims In certain meets, the qualifying rounds held for each (Preliminary Heats) event to determine the finalists

pre-seeded A meet conducted without a bull pen in which a swimmer knows what lane and heat they are in by looking at the meet heat sheet, or posted meet program

proof of time A requirement at some meets to ensure that all swimmers entered have legally met the time standards for the meet

psych sheet Another name for a "heat sheet" or meet program

pull buoy Training tool used to keep the legs still so that more focus may be placed on the arms

Q1 Designation of state championship qualifying time cuts; a new designation in 2003, this qualifying time is equivalent to the former "AA" time cuts.

Q2 Designation of Junior Olympic qualifying time cuts

Q3 Designation of district championship qualifying time cuts

qualifying time A published time necessary to enter certain meets, or the time necessary to achieve a specific category of swimmer.

referee The official who has authority over all other officials at a meet; enforces all rules, decides all questions about conduct of the meet, and is responsible for the efficient running of the meet

sanction A permit issued by an LSC to a USS group member to conduct an event or meet

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, a swimmer can be disqualified from remaining events.

Sectional meet Short-course and long-course championships offered by USA Swimming (not age-group events). Michigan is part of Section III within the Central Zone.

seeding The process by which a swimmer is assigned a certain lane and heat in an event. Competitors are assigned to lanes based on their seed times as follows:

Six-lane pool: Lanes 3,4,2,5,1,6 (with the fastest swimmer in lane 3)

Eight-lane pool: Lanes 4,5,3,6,2,7,1,8 (with the fastest swimmer in lane 4)

set A repetitive series of swims

Senior national championship meet World-class championship meet (not age-group) offered by USA Swimming

short course A 25-yard (SCY) or 25-meter (SCM) pool

split Any portion of a race that is timed. Usually, all portions will be an equal distance. During individual swims, coaches take splits to gauge a swimmer's pace. Splits taken during relays allow each swimmer to know their approximate time. Splits for the second, third and fourth swimmers are generally faster than their individual best times due to the relay start.

STAR database The national times database of USA Swimming, which includes swim results of all USA Swimming competitions. STAR times are used to compute national Top 16 times for a season.

start A race's official beginning. There are several variations of starts: Grab - Swimmer grabs front of block to pull forward. This allows a swimmer to enter more quickly. Track - Swimmer stands with one foot back. For many, this may mean better balance. Swing - Swimmer swings arms to build up momentum. Slower than a grab start but carries a swimmer out farther. Most often used in relays. Step up - A relay start where the swimmer steps forward while swinging their arms. Timing is more difficult than the swing start but speed is increased.

starter The official at a meet responsible for the proper, legal start of each race

stroke judge The official positioned at the side of the pool, walking the length of the course as the swimmers race. If the stroke judge sees something illegal, they report to the referee and the swimmer may be disqualified.

Swimmer ID The unique identification number assigned each swimmer by USA Swimming. The number is a combination of date of birth and firstname-lastname

swim-off In a Prelims/Finals competition, a race after the scheduled event to break a tie. The only circumstance that warrants a swim-off is to determine which swimmer makes finals or an alternate; otherwise ties stand.

taper The resting phase of a swimmer at the end of the season before the championship meet

timed finals Competition in which only heats are swum and final placings are determined by the those times

time standard A time set by a meet, LSC, or USS that a swimmer must achieve for qualification or recognition

time trial Events offered optionally at some swim meets, usually at end of selected sessions and usually as the season nears championships, that provide swimmers an opportunity to "reswim" a particular event. Times achieved count as official times.

Top 16 A national tabulation of the top 16 times in every age group and every event of all USA Swimming competitions from the previous season. The short course Top 16 are published in August, and the long course Top 16 are published every March.

unattached The status assigned to a swimmer when switching from one USA club to another or when not affiliated with any club. A swimmer must be unattached for 120 days from their last competition with their previous club. During this time, the swimmer may compete individually, but not in relays.

USA Swimming The governing body for amateur swimming in the United States. National headquarters is in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

warm-down The loosening a swimmer does after a race when pool space is available, also called "cool down."

warm-up The practice and loosening session a swimmer does before the meet or their event is swum

Zone championship meet Highest level of age-group competition conducted by USA Swimming. Michigan is part of the Central Zone.