

HEAT SHEET BASICS

To understand how to read a heat sheet, you first need to understand some basic terminology.

BASIC SWIMMING TERMINOLOGY

Events

What your child swims is called an event. There are two types of events: individual events and relay events.

Individual Events

Individual events are those events in which swimmers compete against each other individually.

Relay Events

Relay events involve 4 swimmers. Collectively they are called a relay team. In general, each member of the relay team will swim 25% or a quarter of the distance for that relay. For example, if the total distance for the relay is 100 yards, each swimmer will swim 25 yards; if the total distance is 200 yards, each swimmer will swim 50 yards; and if the total distance is 400 yards each swimmer will swim 100 yards.

Each member of the relay team will swim their portion of the relay in a specific order designated by and told to them by their coach. Hence, one member of the relay team will be designated to swim first (often referred to as the lead-off swimmer); one will be designated to swim second; one will be designated to swim third; and one designated to swim fourth (often referred to as the anchor).

When the first member of the relay finishes their leg of the race, the second member of the relay swims their leg of the race. When they finish, the third member goes and then when they finish, the fourth member goes. The relay ends when the fourth swimmer touches the wall at the end of their leg.

The second, third and fourth members of the relay do not have to wait until the person swimming the leg before them touches the wall before they start their leg of the race. They can start moving before that swimmer touches the wall, however, some part of their body (usually their toes) must be touching either the starting block if they start from the blocks or the wall if they start in the water when the preceding swimmer touches the wall at the end of their swim. If they leave to swim their portion of the relay before the preceding swimmer touches the wall, they will have left early, which is called false starting. If they false start, the relay will be disqualified, which means the race doesn't count.

For some meets, a team can enter more than one relay in a relay event. Multiple relays from the same team are usually designated with letters: A, B, C, D, etc. In general, the A relay is the fastest relay entered, the B relay is the second fastest relay entered and so on.

Strokes

In addition to being designated as either a relay event or individual event, swimming events are also designated by stroke. There are four competitive strokes: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle. Each stroke has its own set of rules that govern how they are to be swum and

swimmers must adhere to them when racing or risk getting disqualified (often abbreviated DQ). As mentioned before, if a swimmer is disqualified during a race, the race will not be counted as an official swim.

In addition to being swum separately, all four strokes can be combined into a single event called a medley. For individual events, the term we use is individual medley, which we typically abbreviate as I.M. For relay events, the term we use is medley relay.

The order in which the strokes are swum in an I.M. differs from the order in which they are swum in a medley relay. For an I.M., the order is butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle. For a medley relay, the order is backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, freestyle.

Distances

Another way in which events are classified is by distance. During the Short Course season, which essentially parallels the school year, swimmers compete in a pool that is 25 yards long so the distances swimmers race are in 25 yard increments. Typically, individual short course races for each stroke are 25, 50, 100 and 200 yards long. There are also 500, 1000, and 1650 yard freestyle races and 200 and 400 yard I.M. races. For relays, the distances are usually 100, 200, and 400 yards long plus there is also an 800 yard freestyle relay option. The younger swimmers tend to race the shorter events while the older swimmers race the longer events.

During the summer, we compete in a pool that is 50 meters long so the distances the swimmers race are in 50 meter increments. We call this the Long Course season. Typically, swimmers compete individually in races of each stroke that are 50, 100 and 200 meters long. There are also 200 and 400 meter I.M. races and 400, 800 and 1500 meter freestyle races. Relays are usually swum in distances of 200 and 400 meters and include an 800 meter freestyle relay.

Genders

Swimming events are also designated as either single gender events (boys or girls) or as mixed events, which means boys and girls compete against one another in the same event.

Age Groups

Yet another way swimming events get classified is by age group. Some typical age groups you will encounter at a meet will be 10 & under (meaning 10 years of age and younger), 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, and 17-18. Depending on how many teams and swimmers participate in a meet, you may see other variations such as 11 & under and 12 & over. If you see the word Open, it means any age swimmer can compete in that event.

Event Numbers

Lastly, at a swim meet the events are numbered, usually chronologically starting with 1. If the meet consists of 23 events, then each event will be numbered from 1 through 23. Keep in mind that because each meet your child attends will consist of its own unique set of events, event number 1 at one meet will likely not be the same event as event number 1 at another meet.

Heats

Because the pools in which we compete have a limited number of lanes (typically 6 or 8 but sometimes 10), if more swimmers are entered in an event than there are available lanes, the swimmers compete in groups we call heats. The number of heats an event has depends on the number of swimmers entered in that event along with the number of available lanes. For

example, if 6 lanes are available and a total of 36 swimmers are entered in the event, then there will be 6 heats of 6 swimmers.

Entry Times

When swimmers enter an event, they are entered into that event using what is called an entry time (also often called a seed time). Usually, their entry time is either the fastest time they have swam that event that season or the fastest time they have ever swam that event. If they enter an event they have never raced before, they obviously won't have an entry time so instead of using an actual time, they will be entered into the event using the initials NT, which stands for No Time.

Entry or seed times are used to determine the heat and lane in which a swimmer will compete in a given event. This is true for both individual and relay events. Typically, in a 6 lane pool, for a particular event, the swimmer with the fastest entry time will compete in the last heat in lane 3. The swimmer with the second fastest entry time will compete in the last heat in lane 4, the swimmer with the third fastest entry time will compete in the last heat in lane 2, the swimmer with the fourth fastest entry time will compete in the last heat in lane 5, the swimmer with the fifth fastest entry time will compete in the last heat in lane 1 and the swimmer with the sixth fastest entry time will compete in the last heat in lane 6.

The swimmer with the seventh fastest entry time will compete in the second to last heat in lane 3, the swimmer with the eight fastest entry time will compete in the second to last heat in lane 4, etc. This pattern will repeat itself until all the swimmers are assigned to their respective heats and lanes depending on their entry times. Hence, swimmers with slower (or no) entry times will compete in the earlier heats, while swimmers with faster entry times will compete in the later heats.

Please note that just because a swimmer wins their heat, it does not necessarily mean they won the entire event. Remember, they are competing against all the swimmers entered in the event. If an event contains 36 swimmers, they will be competing against 35 other athletes, not just the swimmers in their heat. Hence, the swimmer with the fastest overall time is the winner of the event no matter what heat they swim in.

READING A HEAT SHEET

Now that you understand some of the basic terminology, it should be a bit easier for you to read a heat sheet.

Reading Individual Events

Below is how individual events typically appear in a heat sheet.

Event 12 Boys 10 & Under 50 Yard Freestyle

Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
Heat 1 of 3 Finals Starts at 10:00 AM				
1	Bill Smith	9	VS-IE	NT
2	David Jones	10	VAN-IE	:55.67
3	John Doe	10	VAST-PN	:53.12
4	Tim Johnson	9	BISC-PN	:54.78

5	Adam Quick	8	TOSC-PN	:55.99
6	Rob Walker	6	VS-IE	NT

Heat 2 of 3 Finals Starts at 10:03 AM

1	Jon Simmons	10	VS-IE	:52.25
2	Alex Smith	10	VAN-IE	:45.37
3	Damon Jackson	10	VAST-PN	:43.10
4	Allen Finley	9	BISC-PN	:44.71
5	Alfred Simpson	9	TOSC-PN	:45.89
6	Ralph White	10	VS-IE	:53.01

Heat 3 of 3 Finals Starts at 10:06 AM

1	Jon Simmons	10	VS-IE	:41.27
2	Alex Smith	10	VAN-IE	:35.35
3	Damon Jackson	10	VAST-PN	:33.01
4	Allen Finley	10	BISC-PN	:34.74
5	Alfred Simpson	10	TOSC-PN	:35.79
6	Ralph White	10	VS-IE	:42.04

Event 13 Girls 10 & Under 50 Yard Freestyle

Lane	Name	Age	Team	Seed Time
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Heat 1 of 2 Finals Starts at 10:09 AM

2	Andrea Jones	10	VAN-IE	NT
3	Jane Doe	10	VAST-PN	NT
4	Jessica Johnson	9	BISC-PN	NT

Heat 2 of 2 Finals Starts at 10:12 AM

1	Jenna Simmons	10	VS-IE	:58.25
2	Alexa Smith	10	VAN-IE	:55.37
3	Deanna Jackson	10	VAST-PN	:53.10
4	Allison Finley	10	BISC-PN	:54.71
5	Alfreda Simpson	10	TOSC-PN	:55.89
6	Josie White	10	VS-IE	:57.01

For each event, as you read from left to right, the first thing you will see listed is the event number, followed by the gender, the age group, the distance and the stroke for that event. Beneath that you will see the heat number, which usually also includes the total number of heats for that event. Next to the heat number, you will also often see an estimate of when that particular event is supposed to start.

Beneath the heat number, you will see the swimmers' names listed according to their assigned lane number, which will appear to the left of their name. To the right of their name you will see their age, followed by an abbreviation of their swim team's name (Velocity's abbreviation is VS-IE). To the right of the team abbreviation, you will see the swimmer's entry or seed time for that event.

In the above example, if your child is Rob Walker, you should see that he is swimming event 12, which is the boys 10 & under 50 yard freestyle. That means he will be racing two lengths of the pool swimming freestyle and will be competing against other boys 10 years of age or younger entered in that event. You should also see that he will be competing in heat 1, lane 6 and has no

entry time. If your child is Allen Finley, he too is swimming event 12, boys 10 & under 50 yard freestyle, but he will be competing in heat 3, lane 4. He does have an entry time, which is :34.74.

Using the same example above, if your child is Andrea Jones, you should see that she is swimming event 13, which is the girls 10 & under 50 yard freestyle. You should also see that she will be competing in heat 1, lane 2. Note that in this example, there are only 3 girls in her heat. Depending on how many swimmers there are entered in an event, not all lanes may end up being used in a particular heat. That is why it is very important to pay attention to the lane number listed to the left of your child's name to determine which lane they will be swimming in.

Reading Relay Events

Below is how a relay event typically appears in a heat sheet.

Event 24 Boys 15-16 200 Yard Freestyle Relay

Lane	Team	Relay	Seed Time
Heat 1 of 1 Finals Starts at 12:00 PM			
2	VS-IE	B	NT
	Jones, A. 15	Doe, B. 15	
	Johnson, C. 16	Quick, S. 16	
3	VS-IE	A	1:33.12
	Timlin, H. 15	Waller, K. 15	
	Shield, R. 15	Michaels, P. 16	
4	BISC-PN	A	1:34.78
	Adams, Q. 16	Smith, A. 16	
	Roberts, W. 16	White, R. 16	

In the example above, you should see that the event number is 24, the gender is boys, the age group is 15-16, the distance is 200 yards and the stroke is freestyle. Because there are 4 people in a relay, in this example each swimmer will swim 50 yards, which when you total it up equals 200 yards.

You should also see that team VS-IE has two relays entered in this event, an "A" relay and a "B" relay. There is only one heat so they will both compete in heat 1, however, the "A" relay will compete in lane 3 while the "B" relay will compete in lane 2.

Also note that in this example the relays include the last names and first initials of the swimmers in each relay. To understand the order in which each swimmer is to swim their leg of the relay, read from left to right starting with the first line of swimmers listed for each team. The first swimmer listed on the first line swims first, the second swimmer listed on the first line swims second, the first swimmer listed on the second line swims third and the second swimmer listed on the second line swims fourth. Looking at BISC-PN's "A" relay, you should see that Q. Adams will swim first, A. Smith will swim second, W. Roberts will swim third and R. White will swim fourth.

Something to keep in mind is that depending on how many teams and swimmers there are entered in a meet, sometimes the heat sheets will not contain the names of the swimmers swimming in the relays. They will simply list the team abbreviations along with the relay letters

(A, B, C, etc.) and entry times. If that is the case, the coaches will tell the swimmers what relay events they will be swimming, what heat and lane they will be swimming in, who their fellow relay members will be and what leg of the relay they will be swimming (1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th).

OBTAINING A HEAT SHEET

There are several ways to obtain a copy of the heat sheet. The methods that are available, however, depend on the meet. Sometimes paper copies are available for purchase, though with the advent of COVID-19, this is a practice some meets have begun to eliminate. Instead, when you arrive at the meet they will provide you with a QR code that you can scan with your phone that will direct you to a website from which you can download a copy of the heat sheet.

Sometimes, meets will make a copy of the heat sheet available on Meet Mobile. Meet Mobile is an app you can download from either the App Store or Google Play depending on which type of mobile phone you have. If a meet does utilize Meet Mobile, in addition to allowing you to download a copy of the heat sheet (sometimes for free, sometimes for an additional charge depending on the meet), they will publish the meet results to the app which you can view in real time. If you want a quick way to find your child's times and the places they finish in the events they swim, then this is an app you will definitely want to add to your phone. To use the app, you do have to pay a subscription, which currently costs \$1.99 per month or \$5.99 per year.

Paper copies of the heat sheet are also often posted on the wall near where the spectators sit and at other locations throughout the building where the meet is held. Using your phone, you can take a picture of it and thus have it readily available when you need it and avoid walking back and forth to the wall to see when your child swims next.

Regardless of how you obtain a copy of the heat sheet, one of the first things you should do is go through it and identify all the events your child is swimming so you can help them get to their events on time, swim in the right heats and in the right lanes. The heat sheet is a very valuable tool that the coaches and officials also use to help get swimmers where they need to be when they need to be there and that helps the meet run smoothly.