

Competitive Swimming Glossary

Taken from USA Swimming

THE FOUR STROKES

The four competitive swimming strokes are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. The combination of all four strokes is called individual medley. In freestyle events, the competitor may swim any stroke. The stroke most commonly used is sometimes called the crawl, which is characterized by the alternate stroking of the arms over the surface of the water surface and an alternating (up-and-down) flutter kick.

Backstroke consists of an alternating motion of the arms with a flutter kick while on the back. On turns, swimmers may rotate to the stomach and perform a flip turn and some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. The swimmer must finish on the back. The breaststroke requires simultaneous movements of the arms on the same horizontal plane. The hands are pressed out from in front of the breast in a heart shaped pattern and recovered under or on the surface of the water. The kick is a simultaneous somewhat circular motion similar to the action of a frog. On turns and at the finish, the swimmer must touch the wall with both hands simultaneously at, above or below the water surface. Some consider the butterfly to be the most beautiful of the strokes. It features a simultaneous recovery of the arms over the water combined with an undulating dolphin kick. In the kick, the swimmer must keep both legs together and may not flutter, scissors or use the breaststroke kick. Both hands must touch the wall simultaneously on the turns and the finish.

The individual medley, commonly referred to as the IM, features all four strokes. In the IM, the swimmer begins with the butterfly, then changes after one-fourth of the race to backstroke, then breaststroke and finally freestyle.

COMPETITION 101

RULES

The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition and to promote uniformity in the sport. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair competitive advantage over another swimmer.

COURSE

Competition pools may be short course (25 yards or 25 meters), or long course (50 meters). The international standard (as used in the Olympics) is 50 meters. World records are accomplished in 25 and 50 meter pools. USA Swimming maintains records for 25 yard, 25 meter and 50 meter pools.

COMPETITION

Participants compete in different age groups and meets depending on their achievement level and how old they are on the age cutoff date designated by the meet organizer. Traditionally recognized age groups are 10 and under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18. Many local meets feature 6 and under, 8 and under, single age groups, or senior events.

OFFICIALS

Officials are present at all competitions to enforce the technical rules of swimming so the competition is fair and equitable. Officials attend clinics, pass a written test and work meets before being certified. All parents are encouraged to get involved with some form of officiating.

SWIM MEET BASICS

Swim meets are a great family experience. They're a place where the whole family can spend time together.

Listed below are some very in-depth guidelines geared to help you through your first couple of swim meets. It may seem a little overwhelming, but we tried to be as specific and as detailed as we possibly could. If you have any questions, please ask your coach.

BEFORE THE MEET STARTS

1. Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information handed out to all swimmers and also in the team newsletter.
2. Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's blankets, swim bags and/or sleeping bags. The team usually sits in one place together, so look for some familiar faces.
3. Find the check-in place. Usually, parents are not allowed on deck so this may be a responsibility of your swimmer or your swimmer's coach. Make sure your swimmer checks in with his or her coach! Check for special posted instructions in the check-in area.
4. Write or have the swimmers write each event-number on his or her hand in ink. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen or watch for.
5. Your swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the pool and/or coach for warm-up instructions. It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team. A swimmer's body is just like a car on a cold day-he/she needs to

get the engine going and warmed-up before he/she can go all out.

6. After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her team is sitting and wait there until his first event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled in.

7. The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after warm-ups are over.

8. According to USA Swimming rules (because of insurance purposes), parents are not allowed on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity. Similarly, all questions concerning meet results, an officiating call, or the conduct of a meet, should be referred to a coach. He or she in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.

9. Heat Sheets. A heat sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. It lists all swimmers in each event in order of "seed time". When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time (up to the date that the entry was submitted) in that event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as a "no-time" or "NT". A "no-time" swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats of the event.

MEET STARTS

10. It is important for any swimmer to know what event numbers he/she is swimming (again, why they should have the numbers on their hand). He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.

11. Most meets are computerized. There are generally two ways a swimmer gets to his/her lane:

- A swimmer usually reports directly to his/her lane for competition a number of heats before he/she actually swims. Check with your swimmer's coach for specific instructions.

In some novice meets, a swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and he/she will be asked to report to the "clerk of course" or "bullpen". Swimmers should report with his/her cap and goggle.

Generally, girls events are odd-numbered and boys events are even-numbered. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 50 freestyle, report to Clerk of Course." The "Clerk of Course" or "bullpen" area is usually where all swimmers checked in before the warm-up.

The clerk will usually line up all the swimmers and take them down to the pool in correct order. You can expect at least 4-8 heats of each event.

12. The swimmer swims his or her race.

13. After each swim:

- He/she is to ask the timers (people behind the blocks at each lane) his/her time.

- Depending on the coaches instructions, the swimmer may be asked to do some recovery swimming if a "warm down" pool or lanes are available.

- The swimmer should then go immediately to his or her coach. The coach will discuss the swim with each swimmer. Some coaches may wish to talk with the swimmer before her recovery swim.

14. Generally, the coach follows these guidelines when discussing swims:

- Positive comments or praise
- Suggestions for improvement

- Positive comments 15. Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:

- Tell him how great he did! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with him. You need to tell him how proud you are and what a great job he did.

- Take him back to the team area and relax.

- This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, get a drink or something light to eat.

16. The swimmer now waits until his next event is called and starts the procedure again. When a swimmer has completed all of her events she and her parents get to go home. Make sure, however, you, as a parent, check with the coach before leaving to make sure your swimmer is not included on a relay. It is not fair to other swimmers who may have stayed to swim on a relay where your swimmer is expect-ed to be a member and she is not there.

17. Results are usually posted somewhere in the facility. Awards are often gathered for a team and given to the coach at the end of the meet. The coach will give the awards to the swimmers at a later time.

NUTRITION FACTS

Every swimmer should consider creating an account on USA Swimming's Nutrition Tracker.

[Click here](#) to get started!

NUTRITIONAL CHEAT SHEET PART II BY MIKE MEJIA, M.S.,
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There are a couple of steps you can take the day of the meet to help make sure that you perform at your best.

Eat Breakfast

Start out with a proper breakfast. This does not entail grabbing a bagel with cream cheese and eating it in the car with a large orange juice on the way there. The bagel, especially if it's made with white flour can really jack up your blood sugar levels. Granted, the fat in the cream cheese will blunt this affect somewhat, but add in the OJ and you'll be all fired up for warm-ups and likely crash shortly thereafter.

The best-case scenario is to sit down and eat some slow cooked oatmeal (prepared the night before) with fruit, or some eggs and whole grain toast, or whole grain cereal with skim, or low fat milk. If it's an early meet and you must eat on the run, at least make it a whole grain bagel with peanut butter, as the these two foods together make up what is known as a complete protein by providing your body with all the essential amino acids it needs. Trade in the OJ for a lower sugar sports drink and you're good to go. Some more foods to stay away from include bacon, sausage, croissants, doughnuts and sugary breakfast cereals.

As far as what you should have in your bag for snacking, I think the best way to address this is with a list of what you should bring, vs. what you should not bring.

What to Bring:

1. At least 32 oz. of water to drink during and after the meet.
2. No more than 16-20 oz. of sports drinks that meet the above criteria.
3. Energy bars: Try to stick with bars that have less than 10 grams of fat, and less than 35% of their calories from sugar (the lower the better). To calculate this: multiply the number of grams of sugar by 4 and then divide that number into the total calories. Some recommended brands include: Kashi TLC Bars, and Odwalla Bars.

4. Whole grain pretzels, crackers and cereals.
5. Nuts, seeds and dried fruit (in limited quantity due to the relatively high sugar content).
6. Lower Sugar Fruits: Strawberries, Apples, Cantaloupe, Blueberries, Raspberries and peaches.

What not to bring, or bring less of:

1. Chips of any type. Most are loaded with fat and calories.
2. Goldfish, Cheese Nips, or any other types of crackers made with white, enriched flour.
3. White Bagels and Breads.
4. High Sugar Fruits: Bananas, Raisins, Pineapple and Grapes.
5. High Sugar Energy Bars: Many types of Power Bars fall into this category.
6. Fruit Juices of any type: Too high in sugar and don't clear the gut as rapidly as sports drinks, possibly leading to stomach cramping.
7. Soda. This one's an absolute no-no!
8. Cookies, candy, gummy bears, or anything else along those lines.

Safe Sport

USA Swimming is committed to raising awareness about prevention of abuse in sport. We are proud to partner with

Praesidium, an industry expert in abuse prevention, to bring the swimming community customized and comprehensive training tools for coaches, volunteers and parents. Customized training for athletes will also be available.

Our training tools will help you:

- Understand the scope and effects of abuse in sport
- Recognize the signs of grooming behavior and boundary violations
- Understand how to establish boundaries and protect against false allegations
- Know how to react and report when you suspect abuse

Parent Training

While the overwhelming majority of coaches and volunteers join sports for all the right reasons, some have other intentions.

Parents play an important part in USA Swimming's Safe Sport efforts. As part of our parents' commitment to volunteering, we require our parents to complete this free abuse prevention trainings.

For more information about Safe Sport, please access training through our sfyswim.com [Safe Sport](#) section or request training [HERE](#).