

MEET GLOSSARY



AGE GROUP

Swimmers compete within roughly similar groups: 8 & under, 9 – 10 (or 10 & under), 11 -12, 13 – 14, 15 – 16, and 17 – 18.

BLOCK / STARTING BLOCK

The starting platforms located behind each lane. Blocks have a variety of designs and can be permanent or removable, but also incorporate a bar to allow swimmers to perform backstroke starts.

DECK

The area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches. Parents who are not working in an official capacity (e.g., certified official, lane timer) are not allowed on deck during a meet.

DQ (disqualification)

At most meets, stroke-and-turn judges observe the swimmers to ensure that the starts, strokes, turns, and finishes are performed according to the rules. A DQ is a disqualification from an event. If you are disqualified in a race, it means that you have broken one or more of the rules designated for that stroke or for that event. The judge will raise their arm, then fill out a DQ slip. You will be notified of your DQ after your race, and you will not be able to place to win a ribbon or medal. Examples include: jumping off the diving block before the horn is blown, wearing illegal equipment like fins, swimming the wrong stroke in a heat, doing a flutter kick in a breaststroke event, or grabbing on to a lane line. Disqualifications should be seen as a great learning experience and big motivation to learn how to compete properly.

EVENT

An event is a portion of a meet competition broken down by distance (50, 100, 200, 500, 1,000, 1 mile), stroke (freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly or I.M.) and oftentimes by age, gender and relay type. An event is the type of swim race you'll be competing in. You will typically swim 1-5 events in a swim meet. You will never swim every event in a swim meet.

FLAGS

Backstroke flags are placed at both ends of the pool 15 feet from the end to serve as a warning to backstroke swimmers that they are nearing the wall for a turn or finish.

HEAT

In each event, there can be many swimmers competing. Depending on the size of the pool, only a limited number of swimmers can race at a time. If a pool has 6 lanes, then 6 swimmers will race in the event at a time, which is called a "heat." If there are 60 swimmers competing in the 100-freestyle event, then there will be 10 heats.

HEAT SHEETS

Listing of the swimmers competing in each event, including the heat and lane assignments. Most meets print these out and tape them on the pool walls. Some even sell them at the door for a few extra dollars.

HEAT WINNER

This is the swimmer who comes in first in a particular heat of an event. This does not automatically mean that the swimmer has also won the event, since there are usually multiple heats for any event.

I.M.

Slang for individual medley, an event in which the swimmer uses all four competitive strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle.

LANE NUMBER

This is your assigned lane in the pool that you will be racing in, during your heat.

LEG

A portion, normally one-quarter, of an individual event or relay event, of the event.

LONG COURSE POOL

A pool configured for swimming with a 50-meter long race course.

OFFICIAL/REFEREE

The folks in white and blue: These ladies and gentlemen are certified adult volunteers who work at a meet. They watch the swimmers in the pool to ensure that their strokes, wall touches and turns are legal. If their arm goes up, it means that a swimmer has been disqualified from the event. Don't worry if your swimmer gets disqualified. Everyone does at one point or another. It's part of the learning process. After each race, your swimmer will talk to the coach to get feedback. The coaches are great at communicating with the swimmers what they did great and what to adjust for next time.

RELAY

You can either compete in an individual event, where you swim a race alone, or you can compete as part of a relay. A relay is typically a combination of 4 swimmers on the same team. Each swimmer takes turns completing parts of the race, typically 1/4 of the total distance. Relays are usually either freestyle, or a medley. A 200-freestyle medley means that swimmer #1 swims 50 yards freestyle, then swimmer #2 immediately swims the second leg, then swimmers #3 and #4 swim legs 3 and 4 consecutively. The entire group's time is the final result of the race. A medley is similar, but each swimmer is responsible for completing a different stroke of the I.M. Swimmer #1 does backstroke, swimmer #2 does breaststroke, swimmer #3 does butterfly, and swimmer #4 does freestyle.

SCRATCH

Scratching an event is declaring that, while you are at the meet and intend to race, you will not be participating in a particular race.

SHORT COURSE (SCM, or SCY) POOL

The term short course (SCM) is used globally, to identify a pool that is 25 meters (27.34 yd) in length. In the United States, the term "short course" (SCY) is commonly applied to 25 yards (22.86m) in length.

- 25: One length of the pool

- 50: Two lengths of the pool
- 100: Four lengths of the pool

SPLIT

A split is the exact second that divides one lap from another. Split time is the amount of time that adds up between two splits. A timer can record a split after one lap — the length of the pool; two laps — down and back — or any other distance he chooses. Calculating split times in swimming is a means of calculating an individual swimmer's or relay team's pace over a series of laps. Recording splits and calculating times is useful in determining what legs of the race are covered in what amount of time. Example: if your final time for a 100 freestyle is 1:10, your 1st split (first 50 yards) can be :30 seconds, and your 2nd split (second 50 yards) would be :40 seconds.

STARTER

The official in charge of signaling the beginning of the race.

STROKES

- Butterfly - double arm and double kick with body moving in a wave like motion and straight arm recovery
- Backstroke - alternating arm and kick with pronounced roll on each pull
- Breaststroke - double arm and kick, underwater recovery, modified frog kick
- Freestyle - alternating arm and kick, breathing to side, standard stroke used by all

STROKE AND TURN JUDGE

The official positioned at the edge of the pool watching swimmers during the event. If the Stroke and Turn Judge sees a stroke infraction, they report to the Referee and the swimmer may be disqualified.

TIMER

One of the volunteers behind each lane responsible for getting stop watch times for each race and activating the backup buttons for the automatic timing system. There are typically 2 to 3 timers assigned to each lane.

TOUCHPAD

The touchpad is the area at the end of each lane in the pool where a swimmer's time is registered and sent electronically to the timing system and the scoreboard. This touchpad is very sensitive and works best when you push your fingers into it aggressively at the end of your race to ensure your split is recorded.

WARM UP

A planned period prior to a meet for swimmers to get their muscles loose and ready to race.

WATCH TIME

The recorded time from a watch started and stopped manually by a lane timer.