

Glossary of Swim Terms

Administrative Referee – Also called Meet Secretary; responsible for the administrative operation of the meet including entries, swimmer registration, clerk of course, results tabulation and organization of all meet paperwork.

Age Groups – Program through USA Swimming that provides fair and open competition for its younger members. Nationally recognized age groups are 10 and under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18. Local meets may also include events for 8 and Under or single age categories.

Aggregate Time – times achieved by four individuals in separate starts which are added together to arrive at a relay time for entry purposes.

Approved Meet – A meet conducted by a USA Swimming group member or an outside organization in conformance with USA Swimming technical rules. At least two USA Swimming officials (minimum SI Stroke/Turn certified) must be present to attest that the conduct of the competition conforms to all USA Swimming rules and meet standards.

Block – The starting platform

Certified Officials – trained to observe and enforce the technical rules of swimming in a fair, consistent and impartial manner.

Circle-Swimming – Performed at practice and meet warm ups. Swimmers stay to the right of the black line when swimming in a lane to enable more swimmers to safely swim in each lane.

Clerk of Course – Responsible for the conduct of check-in and event seeding operation of the meet.

Closed Competition – A competition open only to the members of one organization or group.

Composite Time – Time achieved in a relay event by four members of one organization or group.

Consols (Consolation) – A level of finishing at a Finals Meet for those who fell short of qualifying for Finals (1st – 8th place) during preliminaries; usually those finishing in places 9 through 16, plus alternates.

Course – designated distance over which the competition is conducted.

Cut – Slang term for qualifying time, a time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event.

DQ'd (Disqualified) - this occurs when a swimmer has committed an infraction of some kind (e.g., freestyle kick in butterfly.) A disqualified swimmer is not eligible to receive awards, nor can the time be used as an official time.

Deck-Seeded – Heat and lane assignments are made after check-in, scratches are determined, and event has been closed by Clerk of Course.

Distance Events – Term used to refer to events over 400 meters/500 yards.

Dryland – Training done out of the water that aids and enhances swimming performance; usually includes stretching, calisthenics, and possibly weight training.

Dual Meet – A Meet with only two teams competing.

Entry Card/Form – Form or card on which a swimmer enters a competition; usually includes swimmer's name, USA registration number, club, age, sex, event numbers, event names, entry times, and fees.

Event – any race or series of races in a given stroke or distance.

False Start – Occurs when a swimmer is moving before the start is sounded; in USA rules, one false start will result in disqualification.

Finals – The concluding session of each day of the meet in which the final race comprised of the fastest preliminary qualifiers of each event is swum. (Championship heat of an event in which the top 8 swimmers from the preliminaries compete.)

Flags – Backstroke flags placed 5 yards (short course yards) or 5 meters (long and short course meters) from the end of the pool; the flags enable backstrokers to execute a backstroke turn safely.

Fly-Over Starts – Starting method where finishing swimmers from one heat do not exit the pool until swimmers from the next heat have left the blocks (reduces amount of time to run events.)

Four Hour Rule – Limitation on number of meet entries allowed by host club to ensure that each preliminary session does not exceed four hours.

Head Timer – Volunteer position in charge of timers; starts two watches for every heat in case of timer error or watch malfunction.

Heat – Division of an event in which there are too many swimmers to compete at one time

I.M. (Individual Medley) - an event in which the swimmer uses all four strokes in the following order – butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle.

Invitational – Competition for those swimmers, organizations, or clubs invited by the host club.

Junior Olympic – type of age group competition conducted by the Age Group Division.

LSC – Local Swim Committee, a division of USA Swimming. Connecticut Swimming is an LSC.

Leg (relay) - The portion of the relay event that is swum by a single team member.

Length – Extent of the course from end to end.

Long Course – 50 meter pool; USA Swimming conducts most of its summer competition in long course pools.

Long Distance – Term used to refer to events of 800 meters/1000 yards, to 1500 meters/1650 yards.

Marshall – Oversees the warm-up procedures and warm-up pool.

Medley Relay – A relay in which all four competitive strokes are performed by different competitors in order: back, breast, butterfly, free.

Meet – Competition designed to be a learning experience; swimmers race against the clock to determine improvement. A series of events held in one program.

Meet Approval – A permit issued by an LSC for meets conducted in conformance with USA Swimming technical rules in which both USA Swimming members and non-USA Swimming participants may compete.

Meet Referee – Person in charge of the meet and who is responsible to see that USA Swimming rules and SI policies are enforced.

Meet Sanction – A permit issued by an LSC to a USA Swimming group member to conduct a meet in conformance with all USA Swimming rules (participants are all USA Swimming members.)

NGB – National Governing Body or USA Swimming, Inc. There are also several other swimming governing bodies which represent different segments of the swimming population, e.g., CIF, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), YMCA, Federation International de Natation Amateur (FINA).

NRT/Top 16 – National Reportable Time - Time standards set for both short and long course events to give national recognition to the fastest 16 swimmers in each stroke, distance, gender and age group. Achieving these standards allows a swimmer's time to be submitted for consideration each year. Attainment of these times does not guarantee achieving a Top 16 ranking.

N.T. – No Time; entering 'No Time' on an entry form indicates the swimmer has never swum the event or distance previously or has no current (within one year) or sanction time.

National Team – The 'A' team comprises those American swimmers who are ranked in the Top 8 in the world; the 'B' team includes those ranked in the Top 16 in the world.

Negative Split – Swimming the second half of a race equal to or faster than the first half.

Non-Consistent Time – a short course qualifying time submitted for a long course meet or a long course time submitted for a short course meet.

Non-Sanctioned Meet – Swimming competition which has not received a sanction permit number from SI; times from non-sanctioned meets cannot be used when entering a sanctioned or proof of time meet.

Observed Swims – Swims recognized for USA Swimming purposes which are achieved at meets not run under USA Swimming rules, e.g., NCAA, CIF; at least two USA Swimming officials (minimum SI Stroke/Turn certified) must be present to attest that the observed swims conform to applicable USA Swimming rules.

Official – Judge on deck of the pool at a sanctioned competition that enforces USA Swimming rules.

Official Result – That time which is recorded in the official meet results.

Official Verification Card (OVC) – a form for certifying a national qualifying time made by a swimmer and issued by a verification official of the area in which the meet was held. OVC's shall be issued for any time that equals or betters a national time standard or international trials time standard.

Open Events (Competition) – Competition in which any qualified individual can enter regardless of age or organization.

Pace Clocks – Large clock with a large second hand and a smaller minute hand; used to check pace or maintain intervals in practice.

Prelims (Preliminary) – Preliminaries are also called heats or trials; those races in which swimmers attempt to qualify for the championship, consolation finals or semi-finals.

Pre-Seeded – Heat and lane assignments are made prior to meet according to submitted times; no check-in or scratches are required.

“Proof of Time” Meet – Meets where minimum times are required and proof must be submitted including place and date of meet; proof of time meets are generally “AA” meets and above, e.g., JO, Zone, etc.;

“Psych” Sheets – Listing of swimmers and submitted entry times; psych sheets are usually posted at meet and are reproduced in the meet program.

Pull Buoy – Flotation device held between the legs during training to increase drag and force greater use of arms.

Race – Any single swimming competition; i.e., preliminary, final, timed final.

Registered – enrolled as an athlete member of USA Swimming and an LSC.

Relay – Any event in which four swimmers compete together as a team to achieve one time; it can be either Free Relay where all swimmers swim the same distance using the freestyle stroke or Medley Relay where each swimmer uses a different stroke.

Reportable Time – A time achieved in conformance with applicable USA Swimming rules in which may be submitted to USA Swimming for recognition.

Sanctioned Meet – A Meet at which the host club has received permission to conduct the meet in conformance with all USA Swimming rules.

Scratch – The withdrawal of an entry from an event prior to the event being closed by the Clerk of Course.

Seeding – Method using submitted times for determining which swimmers will swim in which heats; the fastest swimmers will be seeded in the middle lanes (4 & 5).

Short Course – 25 yard pools.

Split – Time recorded from the official start to the completion of an intermediate distance within a longer event; also the time for one of the four individuals in a relay.

Sprint – Describes the shorter events (50 or 100); or, to swim as fast as possible for a short distance.

Starter – Deck official in charge of starting the heats; verifies that no swimmer is in motion prior to the start signal.

Streamline – Position used by swimmers in the water when starting or pushing off the walls; designed to reduce water resistance.

Stroke/Turn Judges – Deck officials who will observe the swimmers from both sides of the pool and report to the Meet Referee any infractions of the technical rules of swimming; Stroke Judge and Turn Judge may be combined as one position.

Submitted Times – Those filed with an entry, as having been previously achieved.

Suspension – Deprivation of all rights of membership in USA Swimming.

Swim Off – Part of the preliminary competition to determine which competitors with identical times during the preliminaries will swim in the final heats.

Time Line – Computer generated approximation of what time each event will begin based on number of swimmers and entries.

Time Standards – Performance requirements to enter a swimming competition. Standards are determined for local swim meets by the LSC.

Time Trial – A time-only swim, which is not part of a regular meet.

Tri-Meet – Meet with three teams competing.

Turn Judge – Observe the swimmers from each end of the pool and ensure that the turns and finishes comply with the rules applicable to each stroke.

Unattached swimmer – A USA Swimming athlete member who competes but does not represent a club member of USA Swimming.

USA/USS – USA Swimming; the national governing body for swimming competition in the U.S.

Warm down – Low intensity swimming used by swimmers after a race or main practice set to rid the body of excess lactic acid and to gradually reduce the heart rate and respiration.

Warm up – Low intensity swimming used by swimmers prior to a main practice set or race to get muscles loose and warm; warm up gradually increases heart rate, respiration, helps to prevent injury.

Zone – USA Swimming is divided into the Eastern, Southern, Central and Western Zones; Zone meets are the highest level of age group competition available to USA Swimming age group swimmers.