

GLOSSARY OF SWIMMING TERMS

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 LSC's have divided the swimmers into more convenient divisions specific to their situations: (ie) 8-under, 13-Over, 15-Over, Junior, Senior.
Alternate	In a Prelims/Finals meet, after the finalist are decided, the next two fastest swimmers other than the finalist are designated as alternates. The faster of the 2 being first alternate and the next being second alternate. If a finalist cannot participate, the alternates are called to take their place, often on a moment's notice.
Anchor	The final swimmer in a relay.
Approved Meet	Swim meets conducted by organizations (other than USA SWIMMING member clubs or LSC's) that have applied to USA SWIMMING or the local LSC for approval. If approval is granted, swimmers may use times achieved as USA SWIMMING qualifying times. A USA SWIMMING official must be present at all sessions of the meet. Approval does not mean Sanctioned.
American Swim Coaches Association (ASCA)	The American Swim Coaches Association. The professional organization for swim coaches throughout the nation. Certifying coaches and offering many services for their education and career advancement.
Backstroke	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes, basically any style of swimming on your back. Backstroke is swam as the first stroke in the Medley Relay and second stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yds/mtr, 100 yds/mtr, and 200 yds/mtr. (LSC's with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd back)
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.
Breaststroke	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Breaststroke is swam as the second stroke in the Medley Relay and the third stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yds/mtr, 100 yds/mtr, and 200 yds/mtr. (LSC's with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd back)
Butterfly	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed FLY) is swam as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and first stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yds/mtr, 100 yds/mtr, and 200 yds/mtr. (LSC's with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd back)
Button	The manual Timing System stopping device that records a back-up time in case the touch pad malfunctioned. The button is at the end of a wire, plugged into a deck terminal box. There are usually 3 buttons per lane. It is the timers responsibility to push the button as the swimmer finishes the race.
Camp	A swimming function offered by USA SWIMMING, your LSC, or a USA SWIMMING coach. There are many types of camps for just about every level of swimmer. When selecting a camp, ask for your coaches advice as to what will be the best for the swimmer, or call USA SWIMMING swimming for details on the many camps they offer.
Championship Meet	The meet held at the end of a season. Qualification times are usually necessary to enter meet.
Championship Finals	The top 8 swimmers in a Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals..
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.
Closed Competition	Swim meet which is open to the members of an organization or group. Summer club swim meets are considered to be "Closed Competition".
Course	Designated distance (length of pool) for swimming competition. (ie) Long Course = 50 meters / Short Course = 25 yards or 25 meters.
Deck	The area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches. No one but an "authorized" USA SWIMMING member may be on the deck during a swim competition.
Deck Entries	Accepting entries into swimming events on the first day or later day of a meet.
Deck Seeding	Swimmers report to a bull pen or staging area and receive their lane and heat assignments for the events.
Dehydration	The abnormal depletion of body fluids (water). The most common cause of swimmers 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.

Disqualified (DQ)	A swimmers 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. (DQ)
Dive	Entering the water head first. Diving is not allowed during warmups except at the designated time, in specific lanes that are monitored by the swimmers coach.
Dual Meet	Type of meet where two (2) teams/clubs compete against each other.
Dropped Time	When a swimmer goes faster than the previous performance they have "dropped their time".
Dryland	The exercises and various strength programs swimmers do out of the water.
Dry Side	That part of the Code book (rule book) that deals with the "Administrative" Regulations of Competition.
Entry Fees	The amount per event a swimmer or relay is charged. This varies depending on the LSC and type of meet.
Entry Limit	Each meet will usually have a limit of total swimmers they can accept, or a time limit they can not exceed. Once an entry limit has been reached, a meet will be closed and all other entries returned.
Electronic Timing	The timing system usually has touchpads in the water, junction boxes on the deck with hook up cables, buttons for backup timing, and a computer type console that prints out the results of each race. Some systems are hooked up to a scoreboard that displays swimmers time.
Event	A race or stroke over a given distance. An event equals 1 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.
False Start Rope	A recall rope across the width of the racing pool for the purpose of stopping swimmers who were not aware of a false start. The rope is about 1/2 way on yard pools and about 50 feet from the starting end on meter pools.
FINA	the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for administering international competition in water sports . FINA oversees competition in six aquatics sports, swimming , diving , high diving , artistic swimming , water polo , and open water swimming .
Finals	The final race of each event. See Timed Finals"
Fins	Large rubber fin type devices that fit on a swimmers feet. Used in swim practice, not competition.
Flags	Pennants that are suspended over the width of each end of the pool approximately 15 feet from the wall.
Freestyle	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Freestyle (nicknamed Free) is swam as the fourth stroke in the Medley Relay and fourth stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yds/mtr, 100 yds/mtr, 200 yds/mtr, 400 mtr/500 yd 800 mtr/1000 yds, 1500 mtr/1650 yds. (LSC's with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd free)
Goals	The short and long range targets for swimmers to aim for.
Bell 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 rings the 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 swimmers time swam, 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. These sheets vary in accuracy, since the coaches submit swimmers times many weeks before the 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. Parents enjoy looking at the seedings prior to the race plus swimmers can tell the order the events will be conducted and get a rough idea how long the meet sessions will last.
IM	Individual Medley. A swimming event using all 4 of the competitive strokes on consecutive lengths of the race. The order must be: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle. Equal distances must be swam of each stroke. Distances offered: 100 yds, 200 yds/mtr, 400 yds/mtr.
Insurance	USA SWIMMING offers "accident insurance coverage" which is automatic when swimmer, coach, official, pays their USA SWIMMING membership fee. Many restrictions apply, so check with your club for detailed information.
Interval	A specific elapsed time for swimming or rest used during swim practice.

Invitational	Type of meet that requires a club to request an invitation to attend the meet.
Juniors	A USA SWIMMING National Championship meet for swimmers 18 years old or less. Qualification times are necessary. National Meets are conducted both short course (in April) and long course (in August).
Kick Board	A flotation device used by swimmers during practice. A lightweight object used with great accuracy by coaches.
Lane	The specific area in which a swimmer is assigned to swim. (I.e) Lane 1 or Lane 2. Pools with starting blocks at only one end: As the swimmers stand behind the blocks, lanes are numbered from Right (lane 1) to Left (Lane 6).
Lane Lines	Continuous floating markers attached to a cable stretched from the starting end to the turning end for the purpose of separating each lane and quieting the waves caused by racing swimmers.
Lap	One length of the course. Sometimes may also mean down and back (2 lengths) of the course.
Lap Counter	The large numbered cards (or the person turning the cards) used during the freestyle events 500 yards or longer. Counting is done from the end opposite the starting end. The numbers on the cards are "odd numbers" only with the final lap being designated by a bright orange card.
Late Entries	Meet entries from a club or individual that are received by the meet host after the entry deadline. These entries are usually not accepted and are returned to sender.
Leg	The part of a relay event swam by a single team member. A single stroke in the IM.
Long Course	A 50 meter pool.
LSC	Local Swim Committee. The local level administrative division of the corporation (USA SWIMMING) with supervisory responsibilities within certain geographic boundaries designated by the Corporation
Meet	A series of events held in one program.
Meet Director	The official in charge of the administration of the meet. The person directing the "dry side" of the meet.
Meters	The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the metric system. A long course meter 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.
Nationals	USA SWIMMING senior or junior level meets conducted in March/April and August. See Senior or Junior Nationals.
Natorium	A building constructed for the purpose of housing a swimming pool and related equipment.
Non-Conforming Time	A short course time submitted to qualify for a long course meet, or vice versa.
NRT	National Reportable Time. A time list published once a year, which if a swimmer equals or betters the time on the list, they may submit their time in that event for consideration for national recognition.
NT	No Time. The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer has not swam that event before.
Officials	The certified, adult volunteers, who operate the many facets of a swim competition.
Olympic Trials	The USA SWIMMING sanctioned long course swim meet held the year of the Olympic Games to decide what swimmers will represent the USA on our Olympic Team. Qualification times are faster than Senior Nationals.
OT	Official Time. The swimmers event time recorded to one hundredth of a second (.01).
Parka	Large 3/4 length fur lined coats worn by swimmers. Usually are in team colors with logo or team name.
Pace Clock	The large clocks with highly visible numbers and second hands, positioned at the ends or sides of a swimming pool so the swimmers can read their times during warmups or swim practice.
Paddle	Colored plastic devices worn on the swimmers hands during swim practice.
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	Session of a Prelims/Finals meet in which the qualification heats are conducted.
Prelims-Finals	Type of meet with two sessions. The preliminary heats are usually held in the morning session. The fastest 6 or 8 (Championship Heat) swimmers, and the next fastest 6 or 8 swimmers (Consolation Heat) return in the evening to compete in the Finals. A swimmer who has qualified in the Consolation Finals may not place in the Championship Finals even if their finals time would place them so. The converse also applies.
Proof of Time	An official meet result, OVC, or other accepted form. Swimmers/Coaches must supply proof of time with some meet entries, and other meets it is not required unless a swimmer misses a cut of time at the meet.
Psyche Sheet	Swimmers entered in a meet in order event and fastest to slowest seed time.
Pull Buoy	A flotation device used for pulling by swimmers in practice.
Qualifying Times	Published times necessary to enter certain meets, or the times necessary to achieve a specific category of swimmer. See "A" "AA" (etc.) times.
Recall Rope	A rope across the width of the racing pool for the purpose of stopping swimmers who were not aware of a false start.
Referee	The head official at a swim meet in charge of all of the "Wet Side" administration and decisions.
Relays	A swimming event in which 4 swimmers participate as a relay team each swimmer swimming an equal distance of the race.
Ribbons	Awards in a variety of sizes, styles, and colors, sometimes given at swim meets.
Sanction	A permit issued by an LSC to a USA Swimming group member to conduct an event or meet. Sanction Fee The amount paid by a USA SWIMMING group member to an LSC for issuing a sanction.
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, swimmer can be disqualified from remaining events.
Seed	Assign the swimmers heats and lanes according to their submitted or preliminary times.
Seeding	Deck Seeding - swimmers are called to report to the Clerk of the Course. After scratches are determined, the event is seeded. Pre Seeding - swimmers are arranged in heats according to submitted times, usually a day prior to the meet.
Senior Meet	A meet that is for senior level swimmers and is not divided into age groups. Qualification times are usually necessary and will vary depending on the level of the meet.
Senior Nationals	Nationals are conducted long course in the spring (usually in late March) and in the summer (usually in late July or August).
Session	Portion of meet distinctly separated from other portions by locale, time, type of competition, or age group.
Short Course	A 25 yard or 25 meter pool.
Split	A portion of an event, shorter than the total distance, that is timed. (1e) A swimmers first 0 time is taken as the swimmer swims the 100 race. It is common to take multiple splits for the longer distances.
Starter	The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.
STAGS	South Texas Age Group Standards A meet held twice a year (Short Course and Long Course) sponsored by the LSC.
STAGS Qualifier	A swimmer who has made the necessary cut off times to enter the State meet.
Stand-up	The command given by the Starter or Referee to release the swimmers from their starting position.
Step-Down	The command given by the Starter or Referee to have the swimmers move off the blocks. Usually this command is a good indication everything is not right for the race to start.
Stroke & Turn Official	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.

Submitted Time	Times used to enter swimmers in meets. These times must have been achieved by the swimmer at previous meets.
Swim-A-Thon	The "Fund Raiser" copyrighted by USA SWIMMING swimming for local clubs to use to make money.
TAGS	Texas Age Group Standards A meet held twice a year (Short Course and Long Course) sponsored by the LSC.
TAGS Qualifier	A swimmer who has made the necessary cut off times to enter the State 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 or LSC or USA Swimming that a swimmer must achieve for qualification or recognition.
Timer	The volunteers sitting behind the starting blocks/finish end of pool, who are responsible for getting watch times on events and activating the backup buttons for the timing system.
Time Trial	An event or series of events where a swimmer may achieve or better a required time standard.
Touch Pad	The removable plate (on the end of pools) that is connected to an automatic timing system. A swimmer must properly touch the touchpad to register an official time in a race.
Transfer	The act of leaving one club or LSC and going to another. Usually 120 days of unattached competition is required before swimmer can represent another USA SWIMMING club.
Unattached	An athlete member who competes, but does not represent a club or team. (abbr. UNA)
Unofficial Time	The time displayed on a read out board or read over the intercom by the announcer immediately after the race.
USA Swimming	The governing body of swimming. United States Swimming.
USA Swimming Number	A 12 part number assigned to a swimmer after they have filled out the proper forms and paid their annual dues. The first three parts include the two letter abbreviation for the LSC (Local Swim Committee) and the registration year. The next three parts are letters standing for the first initial of: Last Name/First Name/Middle Name in that order. The last 6 parts are numbers of swimmers birthdate: Day/Month/Year using zeros as place holders. For example: USA SWIMMINGSwimmer Kent Michael Nelson, a member of Indiana Swimming, registering for the 1993/94 year and born Aug.27, 1976 = IN4NKM082776.
USOTC	United States Olympic Training Center located in Colorado Springs, Colorado.
Whistle	The sound a starter/referee makes to signal for quiet before they give the command to start the race.
Zones	The country is divided up into 4 major zones: Eastern - Southern - Central - Western. At the end of the long course season (in August) the Zone Administration sponsors a championship age group meet.