

Age Group Swimming—the program through which USS provides fair and open competition for its younger members. It is designed to encourage maximum participation, provide an educational experience, enhance physical and mental condition, and develop a rich base of swimming talent. Nationally recognized age groups are 10 and under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, and 15-18. Local meets may also include events for 8 and under, and single age categories

Block—the starting platform.

Bulkhead—a moveable wall to divide a pool into different courses, such as a 50-meter pool into two 25-yard courses.

Circle Swimming—performed by staying 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—person responsible for receiving deck entries at a meet and for handling the circle-in process for swimmers.

Cut—slang term for a qualifying time. A time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event.

Deck Entries—entries for events that are not done in advance, but on the swimming deck prior to the start of the meet.

Distance Events—term used to refer to events over 400 meters/500 yards.

DQ— Disqualification. This occurs when a swimmer has committed an infraction of some kind (ex. Freestyle kick in butterfly). A disqualified swimmer is not eligible to receive awards, nor can the time be used as an official time.

Drill—a teaching exercise involving a portion of a stroke which is used to improve technique.

Dry land Training— training done out of the water that aids and enhances swimming performance; usually includes stretching and calisthenics.

False Start—occurs when a swimmer is moving before the start is sounded. In USA Swimming, one false start will result in disqualification.

Final—the championship heat of an event in which the top swimmers from the preliminaries compete.

Finish—the final phase of the race; the touch at the end of the race.

Flags—backstroke flags placed 5 yards from the end of the pool. The flags enable backstrokers to execute a turn safely and more efficiently.

Goal—a specific skill or time achievement a swimmer sets and strives for. Can be short or long term.

Gutter—the area along the edge of the pool in which water overflows during a race and is recirculated through the filtration system.

I.M. — short for Individual Medley. An event in which the swimmer uses all four strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle.

Lap Counter—a set of plastic display numbers used to keep track of laps during a distance race. (Also, the person who counts for the swimmer, stationed at the opposite end from the start.)

Long Course—a pool 50 meters in length. USS 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 in length.

LSC—Local Swimming Committee. The governing body for swimming at the local level. There are 59 LSC's in the country. Our LSC is Virginia.

Meet—competition designed to be a learning experience. By implementing what has been learned in practice, the swimmer races against the clock to determine improvement.

Middle Distance—term used to refer to events of 200 yards/meters to 400 meters/500 yards in length.

National Age Group Time Standards—time standards derived from the previous years' results that are broken down by age and sex as well as B, BB, A, AA, AAA and AAAA divisions. These designations are national and should be used as motivational times.

National Reportable Times/Top 16—time standards set for both short and long course based on previous years' achievements. Only times meeting these standards may be submitted for consideration each year. The Top 16 submitted times in each event are recognized.

Negative Split—swimming the second half of the race equal to or faster than the first half.

Official—a judge on the deck of the pool at a sanctioned competition who enforces USA swimming rules. There are stroke and turn judges, administrative officials, starters, timers and referees.

Open Water Swims—any freestyle event over 1500 meters, normally conducted in a natural body of water, such as a lake, river or ocean.

Pace Clock—large clock with a large second hand and a smaller minute hand, used to check pace or maintain intervals in practice; may also be digital.

Prelims—short for preliminaries. Also called Heats or Trials. Those races in which swimmers qualify for the championship and consolation finals in the events.

Q-Time—qualifying time necessary to compete in a particular event and/or competition. Also known as a cut.

Relay—an event in which four swimmers compete together as a team to achieve one time.

Scratch—to withdraw from an event prior to it being held in a competition.

Short Course—a pool 25 yards or 25 meters in length. USA Swimming conducts most of its winter competition in short course yards.

Split—a time recorded from the official start to the completion of an initial distance within a longer event. Also the time for one of the four individuals in a relay. Under certain conditions, splits may also be used as official times, for example, the lead off swim in a relay, or the lead off portion of an event.

Sprint—describes the shorter events (50 and 100). In training, to swim as fast as possible for a short distance.

Streamline—the position used by swimmers when starting or pushing off the walls designed to reduce water resistance.

Taper—the final preparation phase sometimes referred to as “rest”. The slow gradual reduction of workloads and intensities in preparation for season ending competition.

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.

Touch Pad—a large touch sensitive board at the end of each lane where a swimmer’s finish is registered and sent electronically to the timing system.

USA Swimming—the national governing body for competitive swimming in the United States.

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 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 and helps to prevent injury.

Watches—Stopwatches used to time swimmers during a competition. When totally automatic timing equipment is used, watches serve as a back-up method.