

Swimming Terms & Language

- Adapted Swimming – Swimming for participants with a disability.
- Anchor – The final swimmer in a relay and the point in the stroke pattern where the hand feels the most resistance and begins effective propulsive movement.
- Angle of Attack – The angle or degree at which the hand enters the water.
- Body Position – The way the swimmers body sits in the water, ideally as straight, long and close to the surface of the water as possible.
- Bow Waves – Produced by breaking the water line and will slow the swimmer down.
- Burn Out – The point when competitive swimmers tire from swimming, possibly through over-stress or pressure.
- Circle Swim – When there are more than two swimmers in a lane during practice, swimmers swim up on the right hand side, staying close to the lane line, and return on the other side ensuring that there is 5 seconds apart between the swimmer in front. This eliminates the risk of swimmers crashing into each other.
- Cool-down – A slower, longer swim as an essential injury prevention technique, used by the swimmer after a race to rid the body of excess lactic acid
- Cut – A qualifying time for a competitive event.
- Deck – The area around a swimming pool reserved for swimmer, coaches and judges.
- Distance Freestyle – Freestyle competitive events at distances of 200 m or over.
- Flip Turn – A type of turn used in front crawl and backstroke. As the swimmer approaches the wall, they tuck their body into a somersault, roll toward the wall and push off with their feet.
- Flutter Kick – The alternating kick used in backstroke and front crawl, usually 6 kicks per cycle.
- Gala – An unofficial competitive swimming event.
- Heat – A division of an event used to cut the number of participants, when a single race to determine the winner would mean too many swimmers competing at the same time.
- High Elbow – Refers to the recovery phase of the front crawl, where

keeping a high elbow encourages better balance and body roll. Also refers to the pull stage of the stroke, where the elbow remains in a higher position over the hand, giving the sensation of reaching over a barrel when pulling through the water.

- Hypoxic Breathing – Breath control swimming such as underwater swimming or breathing every fifth or seventh stroke in Front crawl.
- Individual Medley – A combination of the four competitive swimming strokes swum in the following order; Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle (usually front crawl).
- Lane – The section of a pool, distinguished by lane lines, in which a swimmer is assigned to swim. In competitive swimming, lanes are numbered from 1 to 8, with lane 1 being the lane furthest to the right.
- Lead-off – The swimmer to execute the first leg of the relay.
- Length – A completed lap either up or down the pool. This may be a distance of 25 m or 50 m depending upon the size of the pool.
- Negative Split – When the second half of the race is swum faster than the first half.
- Open Water – Swimming events contested away from the swimming pool, either in rivers, lakes or the sea.
- Pace – The speed that corresponds with a race distance, e.g. 1:20 (1 minute 20 seconds) per 100m.
- Qualifying Time (QT) – A specified time that must be achieved for the swimmer to enter a competitive event.
- Relay Exchange – The exchange between the swimmer in the water finishing the leg and the next swimmer on the relay team. A smooth exchange requires the finishing swimmer's hand to touch the touch pad at the same time as the starting swimmer's sets off from the starting block.
- Resistance swimming – Used as a training method, resistance swimming is usually used in a confined space to keep the swimmer in one place, either for stroke analysis, athletic or therapeutic reasons. Resistance swimming is done either against a stream of water – known as a swim machine – or by holding the swimmer stationary via elastic attachments.
- Sculling – A technique executed for balance or to stay in one place through a back and forth motion of the hands.
- Shave down – The act of shaving off body hair just before the race in

order to reduce water drag.

- S-pull pattern – A technique used in front crawl that requires an outward and inward sweeping motion of the hand and arms rather than a straight back motion. This allows the arms to travel a greater distance through the water and travel further in the stroke.
- Seed – To assign a swimmer to a heat or lane according to their qualifying time.
- Split times – The times taken for each individual section of a race.
- Start Position – The position taken by the swimmer at the beginning of the race. The swimmer is required to have at least one foot at the front of the starting block and remain motionless until the start signal sounds. The most common position has the swimmer bent over, knees bent and feet shoulder width apart. Some swimmers prefer a track start with one foot forward and one foot back.
- Stroke Shortening – To counter the slowing down of a stroke as swimmers begin to tire, they may increase the frequency of their stroke rate without increasing their overall speed.
- Stroke Rate – The amount of time taken to complete a single cycle of a stroke.
- Taper – Reducing the intensity of training just before a race so that the swimmer may be fresh and in peak condition for the event.
- Touch – The finishing point of a race.
- Turnover – The number of times a swimmer completes one cycle of a stroke during a race.
- Unofficial time – The time displayed on a scoreboard or read over the PA system immediately after a race. After being checked and adjusted (if necessary), this will become the official time of a swimmer.

Yardage – The distance a swimmer races or swims during the totality of their practice.