

# Wild Waves Parent FAQ

**age group swimming** - Aged-based competitive categories for youth racing. USA Swimming's National Age Group categories are: 10&under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, and 17-18. Other age group categories often used are: 8&under, 13&under, Pre-senior, Junior, and Senior.

**backstroke start** - Swimmers in a backstroke event begin in the water, with two feet on the wall (toes below the waterline) and holding onto the block. Some pools with gutters will allow younger swimmers to hold the gutter. If the meet uses touch pads, swimmers may be required to use the blocks.

**block(s)** - The platform(s) at the end of each lane used to dive from at the start of a race. Blocks come in a variety of shapes and styles, some permanent and some movable. Most have either a horizontal bar or a cutout to use as a handhold on the backstroke start.

**bulkhead** - A movable platform used to divide a large pool into two sections. Most commonly used to convert a long course pool into a short course pool.

**bull pen** - Term for the staging area at a meet where swimmers gather to receive their heat and lane assignments. May consist of rows of chairs or benches where swimmers are staged by event and heat. Once all swimmers are present, a meet worker will escort the swimmers to their place behind the blocks prior to their event. Primarily done for younger swimmers to make sure they get to their event.

**circle seeding** - A method of seeding preliminary heats in which the fastest swimmers are split up into the last three heats of a preliminary event. Seeding method varies according to the number of lanes in the pool. See the chart below for a six lane pool with 24 swimmers.

Swimmer 1 has the fastest seed time, swimmer 2 has the second fastest and so on.

Lane	6	5	4	3	2	1
Heat	4	24	22	20	19	21
	3	18	12	6	3	9
	2	17	11	5	2	8
	1	16	10	4	1	7
						13

This method of seeding allows slower swimmers to be able to compete against faster swimmers and prevents a preview of the finals in the preliminaries.

**course** - The length of a pool. Long course pools are 50 meters (LCM), while short course pools are 25 yards(SCY) or 25 meters(SCM). There are two seasons for competitive swimming: long course season and short course season.

**deck** - The area surrounding a pool. The deck (or a roped off portion of the deck) is reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches at the vast majority of swimming meets. In order to access the

deck at elite-level competitions even swimmers, coaches and officials must show a valid credential issued by meet organizers.

**deck entries** - Meet entries submitted on the day of a meet. Not all meets allow deck entries.

**deck seeding** - In deck seeded meets, swimmers are assigned to their heat and lane only after they have reported to a staging area (sometimes called the bull pen) prior to their event.

**disqualification** - At a meet, when a swimmer breaks a rule of swimming, they are disqualified. (For example, if a swimmer finishes a breaststroke race by touching the wall with only one hand, instead of two.) Their race is "not counted," and the swimmer will not receive a time. Disqualifications are indicated on meet results with "DQ" in place of the swimmer's time. During the race, meet officials will indicate a disqualification by raising one arm with an open hand above their head. Swimmers and coaches will receive a notice that shows the reason for the disqualification.

**drag suit** - A loose suit worn over a practice suit to increase drag or resistance. This helps swimmers build strength and power, and creates the sensation of speed when swimming without a drag suit. Some swimmers buy suits specifically designed as drag suits, while others simply wear an old, loose, worn-out suit over their new one.

**drill** - An exercise that allows or requires a swimmer to focus on an aspect of their stroke technique.

**dryland** - Strength and flexibility exercises that swimmers do on land to complement their in-water training. Examples of dryland include: core-exercises, weight lifting, and cross-training activities such as running or cycling

**entry deadline** - The date by which meet entries must be postmarked. Online entries must be submitted by the entry deadline as well. Due to entry limits, the deadline is often moot.

**entry fees** - The amount charged to a swimmer for entering an event. (This fee is usually charged per event.) Relays are also charged this entry fee (one fee per relay, not per swimmer). Entry fees vary.

**entry form** - Form used to enter a meet.

**entry limit** - The maximum number of swimmers accepted to swim in a meet, often because of time or space constraints. Most meets have an entry limit.

**false start** - In a race, when a swimmer leaves the starting block before the starter sounds the beep or gun. At most meets one false start disqualifies a swimmer (or a relay). The starter will let the swimmers know of the false start with multiple beeps of the electronic timing system, or a second and/or third firing of the starter's gun

**finals** - The last, championship race of an event. The swimmers with the fastest times in the preliminary heats race in finals. See also consolation finals and timed finals

**flags** - Also called backstroke flags, these are the colored, triangular flags that hang across a pool, approximately 15 feet (or 5 meters) from either end. Backstrokers use the flags to anticipate where the wall is.

**flip turn** - Used to transition between laps by doing a forward somersault before the wall. Used in freestyle and backstroke events. The freestyle and backstroke flip turns are slightly different. There is also a backstroke-to-breaststroke flip turn that is completely different than the freestyle/backstroke flip turn.

**freestyle relay** - A freestyle race in which four swimmers each swim one-fourth the total distance of the race. Two relays are contested at the Olympics: 400m (or 4 x 100m) and 800m (or 4 x 200m). Shorter races are sometimes offered at other levels of competition: 4 x 25 yards/meters, and 4 x 50yards/meters.

**heat** - The term for one race, when there are too many swimmers entered in an event for them to all race at once. Winners of the event are determined after all heats have raced, and the times of each swimmer have been compared to those of the swimmers in all other heats of the same event.

**heat ribbon** - Given to the winner of a heat at age group meets. This award, usually a ribbon, is not always given out. Also referred to as a heat award.

**heat sheet** - The list of events to be contested at a meet, which shows the names of the swimmers who entered the event and their entry times. The heat sheet is often available for purchase.

**high point** - An award given to the swimmer who scores the most points in their age group at a given meet. This award is not always given out.

**Individual medley (IM)**- One of the events contested in a meet, in which contestants swim lengths of all four strokes in a specific order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle. The number of lengths of each stroke depends on the event's distance. Events offered are usually 100 yards/meters (25 yards/meters each stroke), 200 yards/meters (50 yards/meters each), and 400 yards/meters (100 yards/meters each).

**Invitational** - A meet in which every participating team has been invited by organizers

**Kickboard** - A lightweight, flat flotation device used to practice kicking. Swimmers typically rest straight arms on the board.

**lane** - The space between lane lines, or between a lane line and the wall. Lanes are approximately 2.5 meters (8 feet) wide.

**lane line** - The cables or "ropes" strung the length of the pool (from the blocks to the opposite wall) that divide the water into lanes. Modern lane line ropes are covered in plastic flotation pieces that absorb or eliminate the wakes created by swimmers (referred to as wave- or wake-eating lane lines).

**lane markings** - The black lines at the bottom of the pool marking the middle of each lane. The black lines end in a T at both ends to indicate that the wall is near.

**lead off** - The first swimmer in a relay; the "lead-off" swimmer swims the first leg.

**leg (of a relay)** - One swimmer's portion of a relay; there are 4 legs of each relay in a meet.

**length** - Once across the pool.

**long whistle** - At a meet the starter will sound one long whistle as a signal to swimmers in the race to step onto the blocks. In a backstroke race, this is the signal that swimmers may jump into the water. For swimmers who are not able to dive from the blocks, the long whistle is their cue to stand next to the block with their toes over the edge of the deck.

**medley relay** - A race in which four swimmers each swim one-fourth the total distance. Each swimmer swims a different stroke, and the strokes must swim in this order: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, freestyle. Two medley relays are contested at the Olympics: 200m (or 4 x 50m) and 400m (or 4 x 100m). A shorter race (4 x 25 yards/meters) is frequently offered at other levels of competition.

**meet** - A swimming competition. Meets consist of events, which almost always have numerous heats each. There are many meet formats, but the most common are prelims/finals and timed finals

**negative split** - Swimming a race so that the second half of the race is faster than the first half.

**official** - Someone on deck at a meet who is in charge of enforcing the rules governing the competition. Officials at USA Swimming meets are: stroke and turn judges, administrative officials, starters, timers, and referees.

**official time** - Race result, or swimmer's time from a race, that has been checked and validated by meet officials

**out-touch** - To win a race by a tenth or hundredths of a second; to just barely beat a competitor to the wall.

**pace clock** - Large clock showing seconds that is located on the pool deck, typically at both ends of the pool. Swimmers use the clock to keep track of their times (and send-offs or intervals) during a workout. Some pace clocks are traditional clock faces with only minute and second hands, and others are digital clocks that cycle from 00:00 through 59:59 every hour.

**personal best** - Also called "PB" for short, this is the fastest time a swimmer has ever achieved in an event. PBs are often used in goal-setting and to chart improvement over the course of one or more seasons.

**positive check-in** - Term for when a swimmer checks-in at the beginning of a meet. At deck-seeded and pre-seeded meets, this is required or the swimmer may be scratched from the event(s) he/she is

entered in. This is primarily used in the longer events such as the 400 IM, 500, 1000 and 1650 Freestyle.

**prelim/final** - A meet format in which there are two sessions: one for preliminary heats and a second (usually held later in the day) for finals races. In finals, the fastest swimmers from the preliminary heats of each event will race for the final medals/places. Most often preliminary heats and finals are on the same day.

**preliminary heats** - Heats of an event that are raced to determine who will race for medals/ribbons in the finals of an event. In most meets "prelims," as they are often called, are held in the morning, and finals later the same day

**psych(e) sheet** - A list of all the swimmers entered in a meet. Swimmers are listed first by event, and then within each event from fastest to slowest

**qualifying time** - The time a swimmer must have achieved previously in an event in order to enter a meet

**relay** - A race in which four swimmers compete as a team. All the swimmers must swim an equal distance in the race. At practices, a relay simply means a multi-person race, the rules of which are limited only by the imaginations of the coach. For details on competitive events see freestyle relay and medley relay

**scratch** - To withdraw from an event in which the swimmer is entered. There is typically a time deadline by which swimmers must scratch, if they do not want to race. If swimmers fail to show up to the blocks for an event in which they are still entered (or have not scratched), they may sometimes be barred from competing in other events in that session or that meet.

**seed** - A swimmer's heat and lane assignment for an event. The swimmer with the fastest entry time is usually assigned to lane 3 in the last (fastest) heat. Example: "Michael is the top seed in the 50 breastroke."

**seed times** - The times used to assign swimmers to heats and lanes for an event at a meet. These are usually the entry times.

**seeding** - Swimmers heat and lane assignments for each event in a meet. Seeding is done according to swimmers' entry times.

**session** - Part of a swimming meet, usually preceded by opening the competition pool to warm-up. Events held in a session vary, depending on the meet format and the meet's sanction

**shave down** - To shave the entire body (arms, legs, back, and chest) prior to an important meet in order to reduce drag.

**split** - A swimmer's time for a portion of a race

**stand up** - The command swimmers may hear from the starter, asking them to stand up out of their start position

Stroke – Name and method of performing one of the four competition strokes:

### **Backstroke**

Backstroke is often thought of as “upside-down freestyle.” As in freestyle, backstroke is swum with alternating arm strokes and rapid, alternating, up-and-down kicks. Unlike freestyle, the swimmer must be on his/her back, facing the sky. When swimmers turn their shoulders more than 90 degrees, they are disqualified from the race for not remaining on their backs. The only exception to this rule applies to the flip turn in multi-lap backstroke races: Swimmers may turn onto their stomachs for one arm pull, provided their arm movement is continuous. When their feet leave the wall, swimmers must be on their backs. Backstroke races start with swimmers already in the water. Swimmers place their feet against the wall, and hold onto either the gutter or the grip built into the starting block. At the finish of the race, backstroke swimmers must stay on their backs until they touch the wall, ideally with one hand.

### **Breaststroke**

Breaststroke is often thought of as the “frog stroke,” as the kick is reminiscent of a frog’s kick. A breaststroke swimmers arms and legs must move simultaneously, on the same horizontal plane, and identically to each other. The arms and legs stay mostly underwater, but a swimmer’s head must break the surface every stroke. So-called scissor kicks are not allowed. The arm stroke begins and ends in streamline position. The hands scoop water out to the sides, before sweeping in toward the middle of the body and then shooting forward. Swimmers are not allowed to pull their hands down past their hips, and must keep their elbows in the water when their hands are shooting forward. On the breaststroke kick, swimmers must point their toes out to the side as the feet sweep out, around, and back together. For every arm stroke there must be one, and only one, kick. Breaststroke races begin with a forward-facing dive from either the edge of the pool or the starting block. At the beginning of each lap, swimmers may do one pull-down: one huge pull, in which the hands sweep down to the thighs, and one giant kick to the surface. On the first stroke after the pull-down, a swimmer’s head must break the surface of the water. Today’s swimmers are also allowed to do one dolphin/butterfly kick in the first part of the pull-down, before the first breaststroke kick. At the end of each lap of a breaststroke race, swimmers must touch with two hands, simultaneously and on the same horizontal plane. In multi-lap races, swimmers will use open turns, not flip turns.

### **Butterfly**

Butterfly emerged as a new stroke in the 1950s, as swimmers were trying to find ways to swim breaststroke faster. The two primary innovations were the double over-the-water arm recovery, and the dolphin kick. Butterfly is swum with an undulating, dolphin-like movement at the surface of the water. The arms pull underwater simultaneously, and recover over the water, also simultaneously. Both hands must come out of the water at the same time on every stroke. During each arm pull, swimmers do two dolphin kicks, one when the hands enter the water, and one when the hands exit the water. A swimmer’s feet must kick up and down together, ideally with the feet kept close together. While the vast majority of swimmers lift the head and shoulders to breathe, some swimmers breathe to the side, as in freestyle. Butterfly races begin with a forward-facing dive, and swimmers must finish each lap by touching the wall with two hands simultaneously, on the same

horizontal plane. At the beginning of each lap, swimmers will do underwater dolphin kicks, but must break the surface of the water with their head at or before 15 meters. In multi-lap races, swimmers will do open turns, as opposed to flip turns.

### **Freestyle**

Freestyle, often called the “crawl,” is the most flexible in its rules, and it is typically the fastest stroke. The only rules are that the swimmer may not push off the bottom of the pool or pull on the lane line, and must touch the far wall with some part of their body. Otherwise, swimmers may use any type of stroke. Freestyle is swum face-down with alternating arm strokes; side-breathing; and rapid, alternating up-and-down kicks. Freestyle races begin with swimmers doing forward-facing dives from either a starting block or the side of the pool. In multi-lap races, swimmers can do either an open turn or a flip turn. When doing a flip turn, the swimmer does not touch the wall with his/her hand. Instead, the swimmer's feet touch the wall. At the finish, freestyle swimmers touch with one hand.

**taper** - The final recovery phase of a training plan before an end-of-season championship meet. During taper, the swimmer reduces the intensity and length of workouts in the weeks or days leading into an important race. This allows the body to fully recover, or repair itself, from the training of the previous weeks and months. Some athletes will taper only once a year. Others will taper two or three times a year

**time standard** - A time set by teams or local organizations or national governing bodies that a swimmer must achieve in order to enter a meet or achieve some level of recognition.

**time trial** - A practice race, often used to evaluate improvement or establish a time to use for meet entry.

**timed final** - Meet format in which swimmers' times from the heats are their final time in the event. The swimmers with the fastest times are the event winners.

**touch pad** - A soft, black pad placed in the water across each lane at both the start and turn ends of the pool, the touch pad is part of an electronic timing system. Swimmers stop the clock for their lane when they hit the pad. Swimmers must hit the touch pad with enough force to stop the clock.

**unattached** - To race without representing a team. Represented by "UN" or "UNAT" in the meet program

**USA Swimming** - The national governing body of youth swimming in the United States.