

GLOSSARY

A Glossary of the specific terminology use in the sport of swimming will help you understand what's going on. You may or may not find these words in the English Dictionary and if you do, their definitions will probably be radically different than the ones listed in this Glossary. Relax and take your time reading these definitions. Soon you'll understand and maybe even speak "the swimming language".

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.
Anchor	The final swimmer in a relay.
Approved Meet	Swim meets conducted by organizations (other than USS member clubs or LSC's) that have applied to USS or the local LSC for approval. If approval is granted, swimmers may use times achieved as USS qualifying times. A USS official must be present at all sessions of the meet. Approval does not mean Sanctioned.
Backstroke	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes, basically any style of swimming on your back. Backstroke (nicknames BACK) is swum 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)
Beep	The starting sound from an electronic, computerized timing system.
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 a bell over the lane of the lead swimmer when swimmer is at the backstroke flags.

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.
Bottom	The floor of the pool. Bottom depths are usually marked on the walls or sides of the pool.
Breaststroke	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Breaststroke (nicknames BREAST) is swum 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 breast)
Butterfly	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed FLY) is swum 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 fly)
Cap	The latex or silicon covering worn on the head of swimmers. The colors and team logo's adorning these caps are limitless. National Caps, State Team Caps, award caps, plain practice caps, etc.
Car pool	The major transportation service provided by parents of a swim club, organized car pools shuttle swimmers to and from practices.
Championship Meet	The meet held at the end of a season. Qualification times are usually necessary to enter meet.
Championship Finals	The top 6 or 8 swimmers (depending on the # of pool lanes) in a Prelims/Finals meet, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals; the fastest heat of finals when multiple heats are held. "Big" Finals.

Club	A registered swim team that is a dues paying member of USA Swimming and the local LSC.
Colorado	A brand of automatic timing system.
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" USS member may be on the deck during a swim competition.
Dehydration	The abnormal depletion of body fluids (water). The most common cause of swimmers cramps and sick feelings.
Distance	How far a swimmer swims. Distances for short course are: 25 yards (1 length), 50 yards (2 lengths), 100 yards (4 lengths), 200 yards (8 lengths), 400 yards (16 lengths), 500 yards (20 lengths), 1000 yards (40 lengths), 1650 yards (66 lengths). Distances for long course are: 50 meters (1 length), 100 meters (2 lengths), 200 meters (4 lengths), 400 meters (8 lengths), 800 meters (16 lengths), 1500 meters (30 lengths).
Disqualified	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.
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 swimmer's coach.

Dropped Time	When a swimmer goes faster than the previous performance, they've improved or "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	An Individual, Relay team, or Club roster's event list into a swim competition.
Entry Fees	The amount per event a swimmer or relay is charged. This varies depending on the LSC and type of meet.
Electronic Timing	The level of timing which normally uses 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.
Equipment	The items necessary to operate a swim practice or conduct a swim competition.
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.

Fastest to Slowest	A seeding method used on the longer events held at the end of a session. The fastest seeded swimmers participate in the first heats followed by the next fastest and so on. Many times these events will alternate one girls' heat and one boys' heat until all swimmers have competed.
Fees	Money paid by swimmers for services, e.g., practice fees, registration fee, USS membership fee, etc.
FINA	The international organization which makes rules governing all levels of the sport of swimming.
Fins	Large rubber coverings/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.
Fundraiser	A money making endeavor by a swim team/club usually involving both parents and swimmers.
Freestyle	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Freestyle (nicknamed FREE) is swum 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.
Goggles	Glasses type devices worn by swimmers to keep their eyes from being irritated by the chlorine in the water.
Handbook	A reference manual published by teams/clubs and LSC's or other swimming organizations.

Heats	A division of an event when there are too many swimmers to compete at the same time. The results are ranked by the times swimmers swam, after all heats of the event are completed.
Heat Award	A ribbon or coupon given to the winner of a single heat at an age group swim meet.
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, and swimmers can tell the order the events will be conducted and get a rough idea how long the meet sessions will last.
High Point	An award given to the swimmer scoring the most points in a given age group at a swim meet. Not all meets offer high point awards; check the pre-meet information.
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 and Freestyle. Equal distances must be swam of each stroke. Distances offered: 100 yds, 200 yds/mtr, 400 yds/mtr.
Insurance	USS offers "accident insurance coverage" which is automatic when swimmer, coach, official, pay their USS 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.
J.O.	Junior Olympics. An age group championship meet conducted by the LSC.
Jump	An illegal start done by the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th member of a relay team when the swimmer on the block breaks contact with the block before the swimmer in the water touches the wall.
Juniors	A USS 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	The leg movements of a swimmer. A popular word to "yell" to encourage swimmers during a race.
Kick Board	A flotation device used by swimmers during practice.
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	Two lengths of the course; down and back. (50 yds/meters in short course, 100 meters in long 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 which 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.
Length	The extent of the competitive course from end to end.
Long Course	A 50 meter pool.
LSC	Local Swim Committee. The local level administrative division of the corporation (USS) with supervisory responsibilities within certain geographic boundaries designated by the Corporation

Mark	The command to take your starting position.
Marshall	The adult(s) (official) who control the crowd and swimmer flow at a swim meet.
Medals	Awards given to the swimmers at meets. They vary in size and design and method of presentation.
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. Long course pools are 50 meters long; short course pools are 25 meters long.
Mile	The slang referring to the 1500 meter or the 1650 yard freestyle, both of which are slightly short of a true mile (1760 yards).
Nationals	USS senior or junior level meets conducted in March/April and August. See Senior or Junior Nationals.
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.
OT	Official Time. The swimmers event time recorded to one hundredth of a second (.01).

Open Competition	Official Time. The swimmers event time recorded to one hundredth of a second (.01). Competition which any qualified club, organization, or individual may enter.
Parka	Large 3/4 length fleece lined coats worn by swimmers, often in team colors with the team logo or team name.
Paddle	Colored plastic devices worn on the swimmers hands during swim practice.
Practice	The scheduled workouts swimmers attend with their swim team/club.
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 are faster. The converse also applies.
Pre-seeded	A meet conducted without a bull pen in which a swimmer knows what lane and heat they are in by looking at the Meet heat sheet, or posted meet program.
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	Shows the ranking of all swimmers in a particular event; without lane assignments.
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.
Race	Any single swimming competition, e.g., preliminary, final, timed final.
Referee	The head official at a swim meet in charge of all of the "Wet Side" administration and decisions.
Registered	Enrolled and paid as a member of USS and the LSC.
Relays	A swimming event in which 4 swimmers participate as a relay team, each swimmer swimming an equal distance of the race. There are two types of relays: 1.) Medley relay - One swimmer swims Backstroke, one swimmer swims Breaststroke, one swimmer swims Butterfly, one swimmer swims Freestyle, in that order. Medley relays are conducted over 200 yd/mtr and 400 yd/mtr distances. 2.) Freestyle relay - Each swimmer swims freestyle. Free relays are conducted over 200 yd/mtr, 400 yd/mtr, and 800 yd/mtr distances.
Ribbons	Awards in a variety of sizes, styles, and colors, given at swim meets.
Safety	The responsible and careful actions of those participating in a swim meet. USS and each LSC now have a "Safety Coordinator" and each meet must have "Marshalls" in charge of safety.
Sanction	A permit issued by an LSC to a USS group member to conduct an event or meet.

Sanction Fee	The amount paid by a USS group member to an LSC for issuing a sanction.
Schedule	USS or LSC list of meets with dates, meet host, meet location, type of meet, and contacts address and phone.
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	A USS National Championship meet for swimmers of any age as long as the qualification times are met.
Senior Nationals	Nationals are conducted short course in the spring (usually in late March) and long course in the summer (usually in late July or August).
Shave	The process of removing all arm, leg, and exposed torso hair, to decrease the "drag" or resistance of the body moving through the water. Used only by Seniors at very important (Championship) meets.
Short Course	A 25 yard or 25 meter pool.

Simultaneously	A term used in the rules of butterfly and breaststroke, meaning at the same time.
Splash	United States Swimming newsletter that is mailed bimonthly.
Split	A portion of an event, shorter than the total distance, that is timed, e.g., a swimmer's first 50 time is taken as the swimmer swims the 100 race. It's common to take multiple splits for the longer distances.
Start	The beginning of a race. The dive used to begin a race.
Starter	The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.
State	A meet held twice a year (Short Course and Long Course) sponsored by the LSC. It is common to hold a Championship Senior meet and Age Group meet separately. Qualification times are usually necessary.
State 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	There are 4 competitive strokes: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle.

Stroke Judge	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.
Suit	The racing uniform worn by the swimmer, in the water, during competition.
Swim-A-Thon	The "Fund Raiser" copyrighted by USA Swimming for local clubs to make money.
Taper	The resting phase of a swimmer at the end of the season before the championship meet.
Team	USS Registered club that has the right to compete for points.
Team Records	The statistics a team keeps, listing the fastest swimmer in the club's history for each age group, in each event.
Timed Finals	Competition in which only heats are swum and final placings are determined by those times.
Time Standard	A time set by a meet or LSC or USS (etc) 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; no placing or awards are given.

Top 16	A list of times compiled by the LSC or USS or Swimming World that recognizes the top number of swimmers in each age group (boys & girls) in each event and distance.
Touch Out	To reach the touchpad and finish first in a close race.
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 USS club.
Trophy	Type of award given to teams and swimmers at meets.
Unattached	An athlete member who competes, but does not represent a club or team (abbreviated UN)
Uniform	The various parts of clothing a swimmer wears at a meet. This may include: Parka, Warmup jacket, Team duffel bag, sweat pants, suits, hat, goggles, T-shirt, towel, etc.
Unofficial Time	The time displayed on an electronic score board or read over the PA system by the announcer immediately after the race. After the time has been checked, it will become the official time.
USS	The governing body of swimming, USA Swimming.

USS Number	A 12 part number assigned to a swimmer after they have filled out the proper forms and paid their annual dues. The first six place holders are the swimmers birthdate, followed by the first three letters of the first name, middle initial, and first four letters of the last name. For example, the USS# for swimmer John William David, born Aug. 27, 2001 = 082701JOHWDAVI.
Warm-down	The gentle swimming a swimmer does after a race when pool space is available.
Warm-up	The gradual increased tempo swimming a swimmer does before the meet or before their event is swum.
Watch	The hand held device used by timers and coaches for timing a swimmers races and taking splits.
Whistle	The sound a starter/referee makes to signal for quiet before they give the command to start the race. Three short whistles indicate “behind your block”, one long whistle indicates “step onto your block”.
Yards	The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the American system. A short course yard pool is 25 yards (75 feet) in length.
Yardage	The distance a swimmer races or swims in practice. Total yardage can be calculated for each practice session.
Zones	The country is divided 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.