

It's About Time Standards

It's About Time (Standards)

There are many beautiful things about the sport of swimming. One of them is the objective nature of the results. Once you touch the wall, there it is in black and white: the time it took you to cover the distance of the race!

Time standards are used to:

- Set goals – gives swimmers something to shoot for.
- Measure performance – helps swimmers to evaluate how well they are progressing and helps coaches to evaluate the effectiveness of their training.
- Set qualifying times for swim meets.
- Place swimmers into groups based on gender, age, and ability where younger, less experienced swimmers can compete against other swimmers at their same level.

There are many different time standards.

USA Swimming sets Motivational Time Standards for age groups and National Level Time standards for national level senior meets. These time standards are revised every 4 years.

Each Zone sets time standards for Zone level senior meets. These time standards are revised every year.

Each Local Swimming Committee (LSC) sets time standards for both Age Group and Senior Level meets within their LSC. These time standards are revised yearly.

AGE GROUPS

Only swimmers between 5 and 18 can compete in age group meets. Swimmers 19 and over may swim in an age group meet for times only, called 'exhibition'. They do not compete for awards or points.

Levels

USA Swimming recognizes the physical differences of children aged 18 and under. Therefore, USA Swimming defines Age Groups as.

- 10 & Under
- 11-12
- 13-14
- 15-16
- 17-18

Each LSC is the governing body to define and implement time standards for meets sanctioned by their LSC. Meaning, time standards for each age group within Southern California Swimming (SCS) is different from time standards for the respective age groups in other LSCs.

Our LSC, Southern California Swimming (SCS), defines the following age groups:

- 5-8
- 7-10
- 11-12
- 13-14
- 15-18 (still documented as 15-16 and 17-18 but the times are identical)

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Age Group Time Standards

SCS further separates each age group into levels. These levels are based on age group time standards. SCS uses the USA Motivational Time standards for regular swim meets for all ages groups **except the 5-8 age group**, (USA Swimming does not have a separate 5-8 age group).

Time standards groupings are then defined for each event, gender, age-group, and level. Example:

- Girls – 7-10 – 50 Free – “C” (no time (NT) or slower than ‘B’)
- Girls – 7-10 – 50 Free – B (faster than “C”)
- Girls – 7-10 – 50 Free – BB (faster than “B”)
- Girls – 7-10 – 50 Free – A (faster than “BB”)
- And so on

Swimmers who have not competed in an event can enter that event in any “C” meet as NT – No Time. To swim an event in a B/BB/A meet a swimmer must have achieved at least a “B” time in the event. It's entirely possible to have a “C” time in one event, a “B” time in another event, a “BB” time in another event, etc.

Places are awarded by the level. In the example above, a 1st place, thru 6th place would be awarded in each: Girls 7-10 – 50 Free ‘C’, Girls 7-10 Free B/BB time, and Girls 7-10 50 Free A. The award is based on the entry time and not the finish time.

Non-Conforming Times

SCS rules allow for age group swimmers to use their achieved time in an event to qualify for a same stroke event in yards / meters or one distance. This rule applies only to the age group meets. It does not apply to the Age Group Championship or Senior meets.

Yard Times for Meter Meets / Meter Times for Yard Meets:

For an A/BB/B meter meet , If the swimmer has achieved a B time in yards but not meters they can enter the meter meet using their B yard time. And vice versa. After meet entry closes, meet administration will convert times for seeding purposes only.

Likewise for the A, BB divisions.

Swimming “up” a distance in ability level:

A swimmer who has achieved a qualifying time in an event may swim “up” only one distance as long as that distance is the same time qualifying standard. i.e. a swimmer achieving a B time in the 50 Free but does not have a B time in the 100 Free may enter the 100 Free as a non-conforming time as long as the 100 Free is a B time.

- A swimmer with a B 50 Free can enter a B 100 Free.
- A swimmer with a BB 100 Fly can enter a BB 200 Fly.
- A swimmer with a B 200 IM can enter a B 200 IM but NOT a BB 200 IM.
- A swimmer with a BB 50 Free or BB 100 Free but not a BB 200 Free cannot enter a BB 500 Free.

This only operates “up”, NOT “down” (i.e. not 100 to 50 back).

Age Group Championship & Invite Standards

To compete in one of the SCS Championship meets the swimmer must have achieved the meet qualifying time for the event, gender, age-group. These meets are:

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- WAG – Winter Age Group SCY - December.
- SprAG – Spring Age Group (formerly Spring Junior Olympics) Championship - SCY, March, 14 and under only
- JAG – June Age Group Invite: LCM - June
- SumAG – Summer Age Group (formerly Summer JO) Championship - LCM, July.
- SCS AG Elite – LCM, beginning of August. 14 and under only.

These meets are ‘proof of time’. Non-conforming times are not allowed. Swimmers must have achieved the time standard.

SENIORS

As swimmers develop in technique and mature physically they reach a point where they are consistently exceeding the standards for Age Group swimming. These swimmers move into the level of “Senior” swimming.

In “Senior” swimming there are no age groups and meets are open to all swimmers over the age of 5 as long as they meet the qualifying time. There is not one set of time standards used for all senior meets. The qualifying times depend pretty much on the meet and are published in the meet sanction document. Some time standards are published on the LSC, Zone, or USA Swimming web sites.

SCS Senior meets are:

- SCS Senior Development Meets (various months throughout the season)
- Kevin Perry, November
- CA/NV Sectionals SCY, December
- SCS Road to Paris, January
- Swim Meet of Champions (SMOC), April
- Speedo Grand Challenge, May
- LA Invite, July
- CA/NV Sectionals LCM, July

AGING UP

So, what happens when a swimmer “ages up”, in other words, goes from one age group to another? Do they have to start over? NO! Swimmers **ALWAYS KEEP** the times they earned. But the time standard changes and gets faster. So, a swimmer who had a BB time for an event may now find they now have a B time for that same event.

And each age group progression gets faster and harder. In other words, the time difference between 7-10 and 11-12 is a small jump, the time difference between 11-12 and 13-14 is a much bigger jump, and the time difference between 13-14 and 15-18 is a mind boggling jump.

TIME STANDARDS

USA Motivational Time Standards

USA Swimming (the Olympic Organization) has an Age Group Motivational Time Standards program that ranks EVERY swimmer nationally according to their fastest times by age, stroke and distance.

The objective of the Motivational Time Standards is to:

- inspire swimmers to set goals and get faster, and

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- to rank all swimmers nationally.

USA Swimming has created 2 different sets of Motivational Time Standards, (1) Age Group and (2) Single Age. The Single Age time standard does not define standards for swimmers 9 & Under so we use the Motivational Age Group standards to rank our swimmers.

The Motivational Age Groups are.

- 10 & Under
- 11-12
- 13-14
- 15-16
- 17-18

USA Swimming re-evaluates the time standards every four years. The current Motivational Times are 2024-2028. The Motivational Time Standards can be found on the USA Swimming web page.

Downloads are available on our website under Meets & Events / Time Standard Downloads

Southern California Swimming - Age Group Championships

Each September, at the beginning of the swim season, SCS sets the time standards for the invite and championship meets, WAG, SprAG, JAG, SumAG, and SCS Elite.

Time Standards for SCS Age Group are published on the So Cal Web Site SoCalSwim.org

Consolidated downloads are available on our website under Meets & Events / Time Standard Downloads

Last Thought

Bottom line - Time standards are great for goal setting and should be used to motivate your swimmer, but while improvement is desired it should not be required. Be patient and let your athlete improve at their own pace. P.S. Never compare your swimmers success to another swimmer. All swimmers are individuals with unique abilities and each will develop at their own rate.

Parents... get with your swimmer(s) to set time goals, commit to swim meets, and always give positive feedback no matter what ... acknowledging your swimmers' accomplishments openly keeps them motivated and gives them incentives to hit their target times.

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