



Glossary of Common Swimming Terms

Block - The starting block.

Cap - A latex or lycra swim cap used during race or workout to protect swimmer's hair from the effects of chlorine in the water as well as help cut down water resistance from the swimmer's hair. FAST swimmers wear a team cap at practice and events.

False Start - Occurs when a swimmer leaves the starting block early or is moving on the block before the starter official starts the race. In USA Swimming, one false start will result in an automatic disqualification from the race.

FINA - Federation Internationale di Natation de Amateur, the international governing body of competitive swimming, diving, water polo and synchronized swimming.

Final - The championship final of an event in which the fastest eight, ten, sixteen, twenty, or twenty-four swimmers from the morning preliminaries compete.

Goggles - Eyewear worn by swimmers in the pool to protect the swimmers' eyes from the effects of chlorine in the water.

Gutter - The area at the edge of the pool in which water overflows during a race and is recirculated into the pool. Deep gutters catch surface waves and don't allow them to wash back into the pool and affect the race.

Official - A judge on the deck of the pool. Various judges watch the swimmer's strokes, turns, and finishes or are timers.

IM - Slang for the individual medley, an event in which the swimmer uses all four competitive strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle.

Lane Lines - The dividers used to delineate the individual lanes. These are made of individual finned disks strung on cable which rotate on the cable when hit by a wave. The rotating disks dissipate surface tension waves in a competitive pool.

Long Course - A pool configured for swimming with a 50-meter-long racing course. World records may be set in long course and short course competition. The main USA Swimming Long Course season is during the summer months. The Olympic Games as well as most major international competitions are conducted long course.

Negative Split - A race strategy in the distance freestyle events in which a swimmer covers the second half of the race faster than the first half.

Prelim - Races in which swimmers qualify for the championship and consolation finals in the events.

Relay Exchange - The exchange between the swimmer in the water and the next swimmer on the relay team.

Short Course - A pool configured in 25 yard or 25-meter lengths.

Split - A swimmer's intermediate time in a race. Splits are registered every 50 meters or 25 yards depending on the pool and are used to determine a swimmer's pace.

Touch - The finish of the race.

Touchpad - The area at the end of each lane in the pool where a swimmer's time is registered and sent electronically to the timing system and the scoreboard.

Uniform - Team apparel worn to practices and meets.

USA Swimming - The National governing body for amateur competitive swimming in the United States.

Warm Down - Used by the swimmer to rid the body of excess lactic acid generated during a race.

Warm Up - Used by the swimmer before the race to get their muscles loose and ready to race.