

Swimming Jargon

A (A Cut)

Is a time classification for a swimmer or a swim. Known as the National Age Group Time Standard A. A times are faster than the BB time standards and slower than the AA time standards.

AA (AA Cut)

Is a time classification for a swimmer or a swim. AA is faster than A time standard.

AAA (AAA Cut)

Is a time classification for a swimmer or a swim sometimes called a Zone cut. AAA is faster than the AA time standard.

AAAA (AAAA Cut)

Is a time classification for a swimmer or a swim. It is faster than the AAA time standard and is the fastest typically listed in times standards.

A-Meet

A swim meet that requires swimmers to have previously swam an A time standard in events they wish to enter.

A-B Meet

Swim meet that offers separate competition for both A swimmers and B swimmers. Swimmers compete in separate brackets against other swimmers of similar ability.

A-B-C

Swim meet similar to an A-B meet except that there are 3 divisions. Swimmers compete in separate brackets against other swimmers of similar ability.

Add Up Aggregate Time

For a relay, the times achieved by 4 swimmers in individual events are added together to arrive at an entry time.

Age Group

The National Age Group divisions are: 10-under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, and 17-18. Occasionally, a meet will use non-standard divisions such as: 8-under, 13-Over, and 15-Over. Age grouping is used so that swimmers compete against others of similar size and development.

Alternate

In some meets, swimmers participate in prelims round and the fastest qualify to swim in finals. These meets are called Prelims/Finals meets. After the finalists are determined, the next two fastest swimmers are called the alternates. If a finalist cannot participate, the alternates are called to take their place.

Anchor

The last swimmer in a relay.

Approved Meet

Swimmers may use times achieved at an approved or sanctioned meet to qualify for zones, nationals and other meets that require time standards. If a meet is not approved, the times cannot be used for qualification.

B (B Cut)

Is a classification for a swimmer or a swim. National Age Group Time Standard B time is faster than the C time standard and slower than the BB time standard.

BB (B Cut)

Is a classification for a swimmer or a swim. National Age Group Time Standard BB time is faster than the B time standard and slower than the A time standard.

B-Meet

A swim meet that requires swimmers to have previously swam an A time standard in events they wish to enter.

B-C Meet

Swim meet that offers separate competition for both B swimmers and C swimmers.

Backstroke

One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. The start is unique, typically from in the water rather than off the blocks. It is the first stroke in the Medley Relay.

Blocks

The starting platforms for each lane.

Bonus Heat

In a Prelims/Finals meet, there may be either 2 or 3 finals heats. If there are three heats, the first or slowest, is called the bonus heat.

Breaststroke

One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. It is the second stroke in the Medley Relay and the third stroke in the I.M. It has a unique frog style kick.

Butterfly

One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. The butterfly, also called the fly, is swam as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and first stroke in the I.M. It has a unique dolphin style kick.

Cap

Serves several purposes including protecting hair from pool chemicals and can improve hydrodynamics. They are made from several different materials. Logo's, flags, and other

decorations can adorn them, although some organizations limit the size of these decorations.

Cards

At some swim meets, cards are used to help keep the meet organized. Each card lists the swimmer's name along with event, heat, and lane assignment. It will sometimes include the swimmer's USA number, seed time, or other info. After races, times are written on these cards by lane timers. Cards are collected and used to determine the order of finishes, times, etc.

Championship Meet

A meet held at the end of a season. Qualification times are nearly always necessary to enter a championship meet.

Championship Finals

The fastest qualifying swimmers in a Prelims/Finals meet. The number of qualifiers depends on the pool and meet rules.

Check-In

Before the beginning of some swim meets, swimmers must check off or circle their name to signify that they have made it to the meet.

Chlorine

The chemical used by most pools to keep it clear and safe to swim in.

Circle Seeding

A method of determining who swims in which lanes. The fastest 18 to 24 swimmers (depends on pool) are seeded in the last three heats of an event. The fastest swimmer is in lane 4 of the last heat, the next fastest is in lane 4 of next to last heat, and so on until all lanes are filled.

Club

A registered swim team that pays dues to USA Swimming.

Code

A set of rules, ethics, and conduct that both swimmers and coaches are required to sign at certain USA/LSC sponsored events. The Code is not strict and involves common sense and proper behavior.

Consolation Finals

In a Prelims/Finals meet, the next to fastest heat in finals is referred to as the consolation finals. Regardless of how fast a swimmer is in the consolation finals, their rank finish in the event cannot move up past those in the fastest finals heat.

Course

The length of the pool. Long Course = 50 meters / Short Course = 25 yards or 25 meters.

Deadline

The date meet entries must be postmarked to be accepted by the meet host.

Deck

The area around the swimming pool. At USA swim meets, only authorized USA members, swimmers, and coaches may be on the deck during a swim competition.

Deck Entries

Most of the time, swim meet entries are made well ahead of a swim meet. But some swim meets allow swimmers to enter an event during a meet.

Developmental

A kind of meet or competition held for the purpose of allowing all levels of swimmers to compete in a low pressure environment.

Disqualified

A swimmer's performance is not counted because at least one rule concerning performance was broken. A disqualification is signaled by an official typically by raising one arm with open hand.

Dropped Time

When a swimmer goes faster than the previous best performance they have dropped their time.

Dryland

The exercises and various strength programs swimmers do out of the water.

Entry

An Individual, Relay team, or Club roster's list indicating who will swim what events in a swim competition.

Entry Fees

The amount per event a swimmer or relay pays to participate.

Electronic Timing

The timing system usually has touchpads in the water, buttons humans press 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 swimmer's times.

Event

A race or stroke over a given distance. Events have one or more heats depending on the number of swimmers entered in the event.

False Start

When a swimmer leaves the starting block too early or moves while they are supposed to remain still. A false start will disqualify a swimmer or a relay team.

Fastest to Slowest

A seeding method used on many longer events such as the mile or 1500 meters. The fastest swimmers are seeded in the first heat followed by the next fastest and so on. Many times one girl's heat will alternate with one boy's heat.

Format (of the meet)

The order of events and type of swim meet being conducted.

Freestyle

One of the four competitive racing strokes. Freestyle, also called Free is swum as the fourth stroke in the Medley Relay and fourth stroke in the I.M. Most swimmers use the crawl, the fastest swimming stroke.

Goggles

Eye protection devices worn by swimmers to keep their eyes from being irritated by the chlorine in the water.

Gun Lap

In longer races, when the swimmer has 2 pool lengths plus 5 yards to go, the starter fires a gun shot (or rings a bell) over the lane of the lead swimmer (and sometimes each swimmer).

Heats

When there are too many swimmers in an event for all to compete at the same time, the swimmers are split into heats. The results of the event are compiled over all the heats of the event.

Heat Award

Sometimes a ribbon or prize is given to the winner of each heat.

Heat Sheet

The pre-meet listings of swimmers indicating which events and heats each swimmer is assigned to. It is based on meet entry times. Heat sheets are usually available at the meet for purchase and sometimes available on the web.

High Point

Some meets give an award to the swimmer scoring the most points in a given group at a swim meet.

Individual Medley (IM)

A swimming event in which a swimmer must swim all 4 of the competitive strokes in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle.

Invitational

Type of meet that requires a club to request an invitation to attend the meet.

Kick Board

A flotation device used by swimmers during practice to work on swim kicking.

Lane

A swimmer is assigned to swim in a particular area of the pool, usually designated by a number. Lanes are separated by lane lines.

Lane Lines

Floating markers that separating each lane and reduce the waves created by swimmers.

Lap

Depending on the context, can either refer to either one length of the pool or two lengths of the pool, one down and one back.

Lap Counter

During events 500 yards or longer, lap counters are used to help swimmers know how far they have swum. Counting is done from the end opposite the starting end. Typically, counting is done on large cards that are held in the water for swimmers to see as they approach the end of the lap.

Late Entries

Meet entries from a club or individual 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 and occasionally used to refer to a single stroke in the IM.

Length

The distance from one end of the pool to the other.

Long Course

A 50 meter pool.

Mark

The command for swimmers to take their starting position as in "Take your Mark".

Marshall

The individual(s) responsible for controlling the crowd and swimmers at a swim meet.

Medals

Awards given to the swimmers at meets.

Meet

A series of events held in one or more days.

Meet Director

The official in charge of the administration of the meet is called the Meet Director.

Natatorium

A building constructed for the purpose of housing a swimming pool.

Non-Conforming Time

A short course time submitted to qualify for a long course meet, or vice versa.

Novelty Meet

A meet that has limited events, unusual events, sessions, or age brackets.

No Time (NT).

The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer had not swum that event before (or at least did not include a time when the entry was submitted).

Officials

The certified volunteers, who control the start of events and judge a swim competition.

Official Time (OT)

The swimmers event time recorded to one hundredth of a second (.01).

Out Touched

In a close race, when one swimmer reaches the touchpad first the winner is said to have out touched the other. Often limited to only the top two swimmers in a heat and especially when someone who has an excellent finish and appears to get the win because of that good finish.

Pre-seeded Meet

A meet in which swimmers know what lane and heat they are in by looking at the Meet heat sheet, or posted meet program.

Psyche Sheet

Similar to a Heat Sheet or meet program, although typically a psyche sheet does not indicate lane assignments for the heats of the events.

Qualifying Times

Published times necessary to enter certain meets, or the times necessary to achieve a specific category of swimmer.

Relays

A swimming event in which swimmers participate as a group is known as a relay. The two most common types of relays are the Medley Relay (One swims backstroke, one

swims breaststroke, one swims butterfly, one swims freestyle) and the Freestyle Relay (each swims freestyle).

Rest Area

A designated area (such as a gymnasium) that is set aside for swimmers to rest, camp, and hangout during a meet.

Sanction

A permit issued to a USA group member to conduct an event or meet.

Scratch

To withdraw from an event after having declared an intention to participate is to scratch the event. Some meets have scratch deadlines and specific scratch rules, and if not followed, swimmer can be disqualified from remaining events.

Seed

The assignment of the swimmers to heats and lanes according to their submitted or preliminary times is known as their seed.

Deck Seeding

After scratches and deck entries are determined, the event is re-seeded.

Session

Refers to a time block in a long meet, such as a prelims/finals meet or a multi-day meet.

Short Course

A 25 yard or 25 meter pool.

Split

A portion of an event, usually a number of lengths, that is timed.

Starter

The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers start legally.

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.

Stroke

There are 4 competitive strokes: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle.

Stroke Judge

Official(s) at the meet responsible for making sure swimmers perform according to the rules. If a 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 a previous meet.

Swim-off

In a Prelims/Finals type competition, when swimmers tie during prelims, a race may be needed to decide who swims in finals.

Taper

The resting phase for a swimmer usually before the championship meet that allows the swimmer to enter the meet in a rested, but optimal condition. Rarely needed for young swimmers.

Timed Finals

Competition in which final place of each swimmer in an event is determined by a single swim.

Time Standard

A time set by a meet that a swimmer must achieve for qualification or recognition.

Timer

A volunteer who sits behind the starting blocks and times races.

Touch Pad

The removable panels put in the pool and connected to an automatic timing system. They are sensitive to swimmers touching them.

Unattached

An athlete who competes, but does not represent a club or team is referred to as an unattached swimmer.

Unofficial Time

The time displayed immediately after a race. Such times may be inaccurate or the swimmer may be disqualified.

USA Swimming

The governing body of swimming in the USA used to be known as USS.

USA Number

A number assigned to a swimmer after they have filled out the proper forms and paid their annual dues.

Warm-down or Cool down

Relaxed swimming done after a race is referred to as either warm-down or cool down.

Warm-up

The practice a swimmer does before a meet or his or her event is swum.