



Strokes

The four competitive swimming strokes are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly.

In **freestyle** events, the competitor may swim any stroke. The stroke most commonly used is sometimes called the crawl. On turns and finishes, some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. Many swimmers do a flip turn. Touching the bottom of the pool or pulling on the lane lines will result in a disqualification (DQ).

Backstroke consists of an alternating motion of the arms with a flutter kick while on the back. On turns, swimmers may rotate to the stomach and perform a flip turn and some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. At the finish the swimmer must remain on the back. Rolling onto the stomach to look for the wall will result in a disqualification.

The **breaststroke**, which is the oldest stroke dating back hundreds of years, requires simultaneous movements of the arms on the same horizontal plane. The hands are pressed out from in front of the breast in a heart shaped pattern and recovered under or on the surface of the water. The kick is a simultaneous somewhat circular motion similar to the action of a frog. On turns and at the finish, the swimmer must touch the wall with both hands simultaneously at, above or below the water surface.

Some consider the **butterfly** to be the most beautiful of the strokes. It features a simultaneous recovery of the arms over the water combined with an undulating dolphin kick. In the kick, the swimmer must keep both legs together and may not flutter, scissors or use the breaststroke kick. Both hands must touch the wall simultaneously on the turns and the finish.

The **individual medley**, commonly referred to as the **IM**, features all four strokes. In the IM, the swimmer begins with the butterfly, then changes to backstroke, then breaststroke and finally freestyle.

Relays

A **medley relay** consists of four swimmers, each swimming a different stroke. The first swimmer swims backstroke, the second breaststroke, the third butterfly, and the final swimmer anchors the relay with freestyle.

A **freestyle relay** consist of four swimmers, each swimming one quarter of the total distance of the event.

Rules

The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition and to promote uniformity in the sport. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair competitive advantage over another swimmer.

The Course

Competition pools may be short course (25 yards or 25 meters), or long course (50 meters). The Southland Swim Association swims in 25 yard and 25 meter pools depending on the location.

Age Group

Participants compete in different age groups. Our league is broken down into the following age groups: 8 and under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, 15-18.

Anchor

The final swimmer of a relay team.

Blocks

The starting platform located behind each lane. Minimum water depth for use for starting blocks is 4 feet.

Event

A race or stroke over a given distance.

False Start

When a swimmer leaves the starting block before the horn.

Final Results

The printed copy of the results of each race of a swim meet.

Flags

Backstroke flags placed approximately 15 feet from the end of the pool. They help backstrokers by being able to count the number of strokes into each wall.

Heats

All of the swimmers entered in the event are divided into heats, or groups of swimmers. The results are compiled by the times swum, after all heats of the event are completed.

Heat Sheet

The pre-meet printed listings of swimmers' seed times in the various events at a swim meet.

Lane

The specific area in which a swimmer is assigned to swim. (ie) Lane 1 or Lane 2.

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.

Leg

The part of a relay event swum by a single team member. A single stroke in the IM.

NT

No Time. The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer has not swum that event before.

Seed time

A swimmer's previous personal best time used to place him/her in the correct heat for each event.

Stroke and Turn Judges

Stroke and turn judges are present at all competitions to enforce the technical rules of swimming so the competition is fair and equitable. They attend clinics, pass a written test and work meets before being certified.