

Understanding Time Standards: A Guide for New Swim Team Parents

1. What Are Time Standards?

In competitive swimming, time standards are benchmark times that swimmers must achieve to qualify for certain meets. Illinois Swimming (the state's governing body under USA Swimming) publishes updated time standards each season to help swimmers progress toward higher levels of competition.

There are typically three levels of meets based on time standards:

1. Regular Season Meets – No qualifying times required.*
2. Regional Championships – Swimmers must achieve Regional 'cut' times.
3. State Championships – Swimmers must achieve faster State 'cut' times.

*Some meets, travel meets in particular, may require cuts based on [USA Swimming Motivational Time Standards](#). This would be noted in the meet packet.

2. Why Time Standards Matter

Time standards motivate swimmers with clear goals, group athletes by ability for fair racing, and determine eligibility for championship-level meets.

3. Where to Find the Illinois Time Standards

Official Illinois Swimming time standards are posted [here](#). They are generally updated annually, typically in October.

You'll find separate charts for Short Course Yards (25-yard pools), Short Course Meters (25-meter pools), and Long Course Meters (50-meter pools) as well as different age groups (9 & Under–10, 11–12, 13–14, 15 & Over).

4. How to Read the Time Standards Chart

Each chart lists qualifying times by event, age, and gender. Swimmers must swim equal to or faster than the listed time to qualify for that level. For example, if the Regional cut for 11–12 Girls 50 Freestyle is 30.59 seconds, any time 30.59 or faster qualifies for Regionals.

Note that splits from a relay do NOT count as official times unless the swimmer is the first swimmer in the relay.

5. How Time Standards Connect to Meets

Level	Season Timing	Required Cut
Local/Invite	Throughout the Season	None*
Regional Championships	Feb (Winter) / July (Summer)	Regional Cut^
State Championships	March (Winter) / Late July (Summer)	State Cut

*Some meets, travel meets in particular, may require cuts based on [USA Swimming Motivational Time Standards](#). This would be noted in the meet packet

^Swimmers with a state cut cannot swim that event at regionals. The exception would be if they have a regional cut for the next age group. In this scenario, they could 'swim up' with the next age group at regionals.

6. Tips for Parents

- Celebrate every improvement, even if not yet at the cut time.
- Understand meet levels early to plan entries and travel.
- Remember: every swimmer's path is unique—focus on effort and progress.

7. Helpful Links

- [Illinois Swimming Time Standards](#)
- [IL Championship Calendar](#)
- [USA Swimming Motivational Time Standards](#)
- [BNSC Webpage - Helpful Links - Time Standards](#)