Swim Meet Seeding Arrangements

Various meets that our team attends may use regular or circle seeding. Depending on the meet, the first heat can contain the fastest swimmers or the slowest swimmers. Local meets are often organized in fastest to slowest seeding. Although bigger meets often place the fastest swimmers in the last heats, there are a few different ways they can be organized.

Regular Seeding:
When the meet has timed finals, the events are usually organized with regular seeding. Since swimmers only get one shot at swimming that particular event, they're matched with competitors of most similar speed. This means that the fastest swimmers are placed together in the last heats. The fastest swimmers in a heat always swim in the middle lanes. The slower swimmers in a heat are placed in the outside lanes. This allows swimmers to compete against those closest to their speed.

Circle Seeding:
When attending a prelim/final meet, the events often have circle seeding. In an eight-lane pool, regular seeding is used in the early heats while the 24 fastest swimmers are placed in the last three heats. In the last (fastest) heat, the top seeded individual is placed in lane four. In the next to last heat (2nd fastest), the second seeded swimmer is also placed in lane four. The third seed is in the third fastest heat in lane four as well. Then the pattern wraps around and repeats. The fourth place swimmer is in the last (fastest) heat next to the top seeded swimmer in lane five and so on. This way, swimmers in the top three heats get the chance to swim against the fastest swimmers. This gives swimmers the optimal chance to make it into finals or consolation finals since they race the top seeds in preliminaries.

Deck Seeding:
The final type of seeding we normally encounter is Deck Seeding. This is primarily used for events that are 400 yards or longer. Deck Seeding allows meet hosts to guarantee there will be as many swimmers possible in each heat of an event, allowing for a better timeline for each meet session. Deck Seeding is confirmed by each swimmer "checking in" with the clerk of course prior to the end of warm ups. Any swimmer who does not successfully check in, will not be placed into a lane and heat for the deck seeded event