



## Glossary of Swimming Terms

**Age Group Swimming:** The program through which USA Swimming provides fair and open competition. It is designed to encourage maximum participation, provide an educational experience, enhance physical and mental conditioning, and develop a rich base of swimming talent. Nationally recognized age groups are 10 and under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, and 17-18.

**Backstroke Flags:** Backstroke flags placed 5 yards (short course yards) or 5 meters (long and short course meters), from the end of the pool. The flags enable backstrokers to execute a backstroke turn safely and more efficiently.

**Block:** The starting platform.

**Bulkhead:** A moveable wall, constructed to divide a pool into different courses, such as a 50 meter pool into two 25 yard courses.

**Circle Swimming:** The practice of staying to the right of the black line when swimming in a lane to enable more swimmers to safely swim in each lane.

**Coach-Athlete-Parent Triangle:** A balanced positive relationship between the coach and athlete, the coach and parent, and the parent and swimmer offering the swimmer the best opportunity for both high swimming performance and positive life experience.

**Code of Conduct:** An agreement signed by swimmers, coaches and parents stating that they will abide by certain behavioral guidelines.

**Cut:** Slang for qualifying time. A time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event.

**Disqualification (DQ):** The elimination of a swimmer's time due to a stroke, turn or other USA Swimming infraction (e.g. freestyle kick in butterfly.)

**Distance Events:** Term used to refer to events of 800 meters/1000 yards or more.

**Drill:** A teaching exercise involving a portion of a stroke which is used to improve technique.

**Dryland Training:** Training done out of the water that aids and enhances swimming performance; usually includes stretching and calisthenics (also see weight training).

**False Start:** A disqualification that occurs when a swimmer is moving after the starter sets the swimmers and before the strobe is lit.

**Finish:** The final phase of the race; the touch at the end of the race.

**Goal:** A specific skill or time achievement a swimmer sets and strives to achieve.

**Gutter:** The area along the edge of the pool in which water overflows during a race and is circulated through the filtration system.

**Individual Medley (I.M.):** An event in which the swimmer swims all four strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle.

**Lap Counter:** A set of display numbers used to keep track of laps during a distance race longer than 500 yards. (Also, the title given to the person who counts for the swimmer, stationed at the opposite end from the start.)

**Long Course:** A pool 50 meters in length. USA Swimming conducts most of its summer competition in long course pools.

**LSC:** Local Swimming Committee. The governing body for swimming at the local level.

**Meet:** Competition designed to be a learning experience.

**Mid-Distance:** Term used to refer to events of 200 yards/meters to 400 meter/ 500 yards.

**Negative Split:** Swimming the second half of the race equal to or faster than the first half.

**Official:** A judge on the deck of the pool at a sanctioned competition who enforces USA Swimming rules. There are stroke and turn judges, administrative officials, starters, timers and referees.

**Open Water:** A freestyle event conducted in a natural body of water, such as a lake, river or ocean.

**Optimal 'Push':** That combination of encouragement and restraint that gives the swimmer the most parental support with the least interference.

**Pace Clock:** A clock used to check pace or maintain intervals during practice.

**Qualifying Time:** A maximum time required in order to compete in a particular event and/ or competition. Also known as a cut.

**Referee:** The official in charge of running the meet. The referee has overall authority and control of the competition; ensures that all the rules are followed; assigns and instructs all officials; and decides all question relating to the conduct of the meet.

**Relay:** An event in which four swimmers compete together as a team to achieve one time.

**Scratch:** To withdraw from an event.

**Short Course:** A pool 25 yards or 25 meters in length. USA Swimming conducts most of its winter competition in short course yards.

**Split:** A time recorded from the official start to the completion of an intermediate distance within a longer event. Also the time for one of the four individuals in a relay. Under certain conditions, splits may also be used as official times, for example, the lead off swim in a relay, or the lead off portion of an event.

**Starter:** The official who assumes control of the swimmers from the Referee, directs them to "take your mark," and sees to it that no swimmer is in motion prior to giving the start signal.

**Stroke Judge:** The official who observes the swimmers from both sides of the pool to ensure that the rules relating to each stroke are being followed. The positions of Stroke Judge and Turn Judge may be combined into one position called the Stroke and Turn Judge.

**Sprint:** The shorter events (50 and 100 yards and/or meters ). In training, to swim as fast as possible for a short distance.

**Streamline:** The position used by swimmers when starting or pushing off the walls designed to reduce water resistance.

**Taper:** The final preparation phase, sometimes referred to as 'rest'. The slow gradual reduction of workloads and intensities in preparation for season ending competition.

**Time Standards:** Performance requirements to enter a swimming competition.

**Time Trial:** A unique session during which the athlete pays for the opportunity to secure the additional swim.

**Timers:** Typically a volunteers, an individual who operates timing devices (watches or semi-automatic timing systems) and records the time for the swimmer in a specific lane.

**Turn Judge:** The official who observes the swimmers from each end of the pool and ensures that the turns and finishes comply with the rules applicable to each stroke.

**Touch Pad:** A large touch sensitive board at the end of each lane where a swimmer's finish is registered and sent electronically to the timing system (not available at all meets).

**Warm Down:** Low intensity swimming used by swimmers after a race or main practice set to rid the body of excess lactic acid and to gradually reduce heart rate and respiration.

**Warm Up:** Low intensity swimming used by swimmers prior to a main practice set or race to get muscles loose and warm. Warm up gradually increases heart rate, respiration and helps to prevent injury.

**Watches:** Stop watches used to time swimmers during a competition. When totally automatic timing equipment is used, watches serve as a back-up method.

**Weight Training:** A form of dryland training that is suggested only for older swimmers. Excessive weight training in younger swimmers can injure the growth plates and cause bone and joint problems later in life.