



COMMON SWIM TEAM TERMS

As a new swim parent or swim fan you may find yourself occasionally wondering why the people around you seem to be speaking gibberish. Your swimmer, coach, or fellow swim parent start talking and your eyes start to glaze over with confusion... Cuts, seeds, tapers, psych sheets, heat sheet.... and what exactly is a split and how on earth can they be negative? So today I'd like to go over common swimming terms so that you too can speak the mysterious language of swimming.

Championship Finals - The top six or eight swimmers (depending on the number of pool lanes) in a Prelims/Finals meet who, after the prelims are swum, qualify to return to the Finals. The fastest heat of finals when multiple heats are held.

Championship Meet - The meet held at the end of a season. Qualification times are usually necessary to enter meet.

Computer Room / Scorers Table - This is the area where the people running the timing system sit. Usually someone will be in charge of a computer which tracks the results of races, another person will be in charge of the score board, and there will also often be an announcer, and some officials at the table.

Course - Designated distance (length of pool) for swimming competition. (Long Course = 50 meters / Short Course = 25 yards or 25 meters.)

Deck - The area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches. No one but an "authorized" USA Swimming member may be on the deck during a swim competition.

Deck Entry - At most meets you have to sign up to swim your events days or even weeks in advance. Many meets will offer deck entries which allow you to sign up for an event the day of the meet. The downside of deck entering is usually you'll be seeded as a, NT (no time), they are more expensive than a regular entry, and usually the meet will only fill empty lanes, and won't create new heats to accommodate deck entries, so you may not get into the events you want.

DQ / Disqualification - This is short for disqualification. There are many things a swimmer can do to be disqualified including improper stroke technique, false starts, swimming the wrong stroke, or not following some other rule. If you're disqualified from a race the swim will not count.

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

Entry Limit - Each meet will usually have a limit of total swimmers they can accept, or a time limit they cannot exceed. Once an entry limit has been reached, a meet will be closed and all other entries returned.

Electronic Timing - The timing system which has touchpads in the water, junction boxes on the deck with hook up cables, buttons 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 swimmers.

Event - A race or stroke over a given distance. An event equals 1 preliminary with its final, or 1 timed final.

False Start - "When all swimmers are stationary, the starter shall give the starting signal" and "Any swimmer starting before the starting signal is given shall be disqualified if the Referee independently observes and confirms the Starter's observation." Basically, if a swimmer starts before the start signal and/or if a swimmer moves after they take their mark but before the start of the race.

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 Award - A ribbon, coupon, or other prize given to the winner of a single heat during an age group swim meet.

Heat Sheet - The meet program which lists the swimmers in the meet by event, heat, and lanes. This allows you to figure out when and where your child is swimming.

High Point - An award given to the swimmer scoring the most points in a given age group at a swim meet. All meets do not offer high point awards; check the pre meet information packet found on the CCSC website under each meet listing.

IM – Individual Medley - A race that consists of a leg of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle (in that order). You'll see these swum as 100 IMs (25s of each stroke), 200 IMs (50s of each stroke), and 400 IMs (100s of each stroke)

IMX - A motivational program through USA Swimming that allows swimmers across the nation to compare themselves to the thousands of other athletes in their age group. All you have to do is swim a combination of events, at least one time per season, and USA Swimming will automatically give you your ranking.

IM Ready - A stepping stone program to IMX where swimmers compete in a series of five events at shorter distances and achieve a score. In this program swimmers are not ranked. Administered by USA Swimming.

Interval - A specific elapsed time for swimming or rest used during swim practice.

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.

Lap - One length of the course. Sometimes may also mean down and back (2 lengths) of the course.

Lap Counter - The large numbered cards (or the person turning the cards) used during the freestyle events 500 yards or longer. Counting is done from the end opposite the starting end. The numbers on the cards are "odd numbers" only with the final lap being designated by a bright orange card.

Leg – This refers to a part of a race. In a relay each swimmer's part is referred to as a "leg" of the relay. You also sometimes hear this in reference to the IM, someone may reference the "breaststroke leg" which of course refers to the breaststroke portion of the race.

Long Course: A 50-meter pool. This is the true definition of Olympic-sized pool. Most long-course racing is done in the summer from May to August. A swimmer's long-course times will generally be slower because the distance is longer. There are several online calculators for converting short-course times to long and vice versa.

Medley Relay – A relay where each swimmer does a different stroke. This is not swum in IM order, so that backstrokers can safely start without interrupting the race. The order is: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, freestyle.

Meet Director - The official in charge of the administration of the meet. The person directing the "dry side" of the meet.

Meet Referee - The head official at a swim meet in charge of all of the "Wet Side" administration and decisions.

NT / No Time – Sometimes in a heat sheet or psych sheet you will see an NT listed next to your swimmer's name where the seed time normally would go. This stands for "No Time", meaning the team that entered you had no seed time reported for you. This is common when you've not swum the event before, recently switched teams, deck entered the event, or there was simply an error in the entry for some reason.

Officials - The certified adult volunteers who operate the many facets of a swim competition. (Stroke & Turn, Chief Judge, Starter, Deck Referee, Meet Referee)

Pace Clock - The electronic clocks or large clocks with highly visible numbers and second hands, positioned at the ends or sides of a swimming pool so the swimmers can read their times during warmups or swim practice.

Plunger - The button attached to the touchpad at the starting block. This should be depressed at the finish of every race (not at the start).

Prelims-Finals - Type of meet with two sessions. The preliminary heats are usually held in the morning session. The fastest six or eight (Championship Heat) swimmers, and the next fastest six or eight swimmers (Consolation Heat) return in the evening to compete in the Finals. A swimmer who has qualified in the Consolation Finals may not place in the Championship Finals even if their finals time would place them so. The converse also applies.

Psych Sheet - These have swimmers listed in events organized fastest to slowest. Unlike heat sheets they do not list the swimmers heat and lane assignments. Psych sheets allow you to quickly see how a swimmer stacks up against the competition. These can often be viewed on the Meet Mobile app

Qualifying Times - Published times necessary to enter certain meets, or the times necessary to achieve a specific category of swimmer. See "A", "AA" (etc.) times.

Relays - A swimming event in which four swimmers participate as a team. Each swimmer completes an equal distance of the race. There are two types of relays: 1.) Medley relay - One swimmer swims Backstroke, one swimmer swims Breaststroke, one swimmer swims Butterfly, one swimmer swims Freestyle, in that order. Medley relays are conducted over 200 yd/mtr and 400 yd/mtr distances. 2.) Freestyle relay - Each swimmer swims freestyle. Free relays are conducted over 200 yd/mtr, 400 yd/mtr, and 800 yd/mtr distances. Relays may be single gender or mixed.

Scratch - If you are signed up to swim an event but decide not to swim they will “scratch” you from the event.

Seed Time - This is usually the best time your team has on record for you from your previous swims. Usually when you enter a meet your previous best time will be reported so that they can have swimmers of similar speed/ability level swim against each other in a heat. Or if you had to qualify for the meet from another meet, or a preliminary session, your seed time will be the time you swam to qualify, which may not be your overall best time.

Short course - This term usually means a 25-yard pool, but can refer to 25-meter pools too. Most USA Swimming-sanctioned racing during the fall, winter and spring is done in short-course yards, including high school and college meets.

Starter - The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.

Split - The time for a portion of a race, such as each 50 of a 100-yard-race. Coaches will compare the split for the first (or front half) part of a race with the second (or back half) to determine where the swimmer was fastest and slowest. A negative split means the swimmer swam the second half faster than the first.

Swim-off - Occasionally when there is a tie there will be a swim off where the tied swimmers race again to break the tie. This is often done in prelims finals meets where a tie needs to be broken to determine who gets to move on to finals.

Taper - This is a practice technique used before the biggest meet of the season. Coaches will reduce the number of yards and change the intensity of practices in the weeks leading up to the meet they are tapering for in order to produce the fastest swims possible. After swimmers have spent many months doing exhausting and difficult practices the taper allows the body to rest and store up energy for fast swimming. There is a lot of science around a good taper, and coaches handle it in different ways, but when done effectively swimmers drop incredible amounts of time at their championship meets.

Time Standard - Some meets require you to have a certain seed time in order to qualify for the meet. These are also sometimes called “cut times”. In most cases you need to have a faster seed time than the standard (cut) in order to qualify to swim in. In some cases you need to be slower than the standard because the meet is intended for slower swimmers. These are posted on New England Swimming website and attached to our weekly club emails in preparation for qualifying meets,

Time Trial - An event or series of events where a swimmer may achieve or better a required time standard. You must consult your swimmers’ coach to participate and there is usually a fee associated with each time trial (\$5-\$10).

Timed Finals - Competition in which your swimmer will only swim each event once (most of our home meets) and place is determined by one swim.

Timer - The volunteers behind the starting blocks/finish end of pool, who are responsible for getting watch times on events and activating the backup buttons for the timing system.

Technical "Tech" Suit - These are very expensive suits like Olympians wear that provide a competitive advantage. These are usually only worn by experienced swimmers for very important meets. Check out the CCSC website for more information about tech suits.

Top 10 - A list of times compiled by the NE Swimming or USA Swimming that recognizes the top 10 swimmers in each single age group (boys & girls) by each event and distance.

Touch Pad - The removable plate (on the end(s) of pool) that is connected to an automatic timing system. A swimmer must properly touch the touchpad to register an official time in a race.

Warm-down - The recovery swimming a swimmer does after a race when pool space is available. (not at home meets, but at some away meets with larger facilities like Brown University and WPI)

Warm-up - The practice and "loosening-up" session a swimmer does before the meet or their event is swum