

Swimming Terminology

Swimming definitely has its own language. You may find the glossary below helpful.

- **Blocks:** The platforms on which the swimmer stands and pushes off to start the race.
- **Break / Relay False Start:** When one swimmer on a relay team leaves the wall or block before the other swimmer in the water touches the wall.
- **Clerk of Course:** An area where swimmers go to be pre-staged for the upcoming event. This is sometimes also referred to as the “bullpen”.
- **Disqualification (D.Q.):** Some infraction of the rules committed by the swimmer. This could be a violation of the rules regarding the start, turn, touch, or stroke. When this occurs, no points are scored and the time is not recorded.
- **Dual Meet:** A swim meet with two teams.
- **Event:** A race classified by age, stroke and distance (e.g., “Boys 13-14 100-meter freestyle”).
- **Exhibition Heat / Exhibition Swimmer:** An event or swimmer that does not count toward the total points for the meet. (Assisted swimmers fall in this category.)
- **False Start:** When a swimmer leaves the block before the starter has started the race.
- **Heat:** Groups of swimmers all competing in the same event or race, when there are more swimmers for the event than there are lanes in the pool.
- **Individual Medley (I.M.):** One swimmer swims one length of the pool in each of the four strokes in the following order: (1) Butterfly, (2) Backstroke, (3) Breaststroke, (4) Freestyle.
- **Lane:** The specific area to which the swimmer is assigned to swim.
- **Medley Relay:** A race in which four swimmers swim 25 or 50 yards each. The 1st swimmer swims Backstroke, the 2nd swimmer swims Breaststroke, the 3rd swimmer swims Butterfly and the 4th swimmer swims Freestyle.
- **Runner:** The parent volunteers who collect timer's sheets.
- **Scorer:** The parent volunteers who score the dual meets.
- **Starter:** The parent volunteer who starts the race with a gun or buzzer. The starter also determines if there has been a false start and whether to recall such a start.
- **Stroke and Turn Judges:** The officials who see that the swimmer does each stroke and turn properly. If a stroke or turn is improper, these judges will write up a disqualification card and bring the card to the Runner or the Scorer's table.
- **Strokes:** The four competitive strokes: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle. Each stroke has a proper execution.
- **“Take Your Mark”:** The command given by the starter to the swimmers, at the start of each race, which tells the swimmer to take his/her starting position.
- **Timers:** Parent volunteers who record the times of each swimmer. There are normally two Timers per lane, using a stopwatch and hand-recording the results. A Back-up Timer serves as a back-up for the Timers, in case there is a mistake or a malfunction of the Timer's stopwatch.
- **Warm-Ups:** The pre-meet swim that allows swimmers to get a feel for the pool and the starting blocks. Warm-ups also enable a swimmer to loosen up and practice events they will swim that day. At dual meets, the Home team generally warms up first, then the Away team. At the Championships, warm-up times are assigned to each team.