

Swim Terminology

Age Group

The program through which USA provides fair and open competition for its younger members. 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 8 & under, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, and 15 & Up.

Anchor

The final swimmer in a relay.

Block

The starting platform.

Bulkhead

A wall constructed to divide a pool into different courses, such as a 50-meter pool into two 25-yard courses.

Bullpen

An area where the upcoming swimmers meet before their heat. Swimmers are called to the bullpen prior to their heat and put in the correct heat and swim lane by the bullpen worker. This does not necessarily mean the swimmer will be in the correct spot on the block.

Buttons

Also called "plungers" Buttons are a direct line to the fully automatic timing system usually used at meets. When pushed by "timers" upon a swimmer's finishing a race, they send signals to stop the clock. For the most accurate time possible, two "timers" with two buttons are used per lane and times are averaged.

Check-In

The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck-seeded meet.

Course

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

Cut

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

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 Entries

Accepting entries into swimming events on the first day or later day of a meet.

Deck Seeding

Heat and lane assignments are posted after swimmers have checked in have “scratched” (indicated they will not participate in the event.)

Disqualification (DQ)

A rules infraction that is called by an official. A disqualification is shown by an official raising one arm with open hand above their head.

Drill

An exercise involving a portion or part of a stroke, used to improve technique.

Dryland Training

Training done out of the water that aids and enhances swimming performance, usually includes stretching, calisthenics and/or weight training.

Dual Meet

Type of meet where two teams/clubs compete against each other.

Entry

An individual, relay team, or club roster's event list in a swim competition.

Entry Fees

The amount per event a swimmer or relay is charged. This varies depending on the LSC and type of meet.

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.

Event

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

False Start

When a swimmer leaves the starting block before the horn or gun. One false start will disqualify a swimmer or a relay.

FINA

The international rules-making organization for the sport of swimming.

Final

The championship heat(s) of an event in which the top six or eight swimmers from the preliminaries compete, depending on number of lanes in the pool.

Flags

Pennants that are suspended over the width of each end of the pool approximately 15 feet from the wall. They enable the backstroke swimmer to execute a backstroke turn or finish more efficiently by counting their strokes from the flags to the wall.

Goal

A specific time achievement a swimmer sets and strives to reach. Can be short-or long-term. Swimmers are also encouraged to set academic and personal goals.

Gutter

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

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 Sheet

The pre-meet printed listings of swimmers' seed times in the various events at a swim meet.

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 Counter

A set of plastic display numbers used to keep track of laps during a distance race (500, 1000, 1650 yards or 800, 1500 meters). The person who counts for the swimmer is stationed at the opposite end from the start.

Leg

The part of a relay event swum by a single team member. A single stroke in the IM.

Long Course

A 50-meter pool.

LSC

Local Swimming Committee. The governing body for swimming on a regional level; USA Swimming has 59 LSCs. Our LSC is Ozark Swimming.

Meet

A series of events held in one program.

Meet Director

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

NT

No Time. The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer has not swum that event before.

Officials

The certified adult volunteers who operate the many facets of a swim competition.

Pace Clock

Large clock with a second hand and a smaller minute hand, used to check pace or maintain intervals in practice. The clock may be digital.

Positive Check In

The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded or pre-seeded meet. The swimmer or coach must indicate the swimmer is present and will compete or the swimmer will be scratched and you will be charged for the event.

Prelims

Short for preliminaries, also called Heats or Trials – races in which swimmers qualify for the finals in the events.

Pre-seeded

A meet conducted without a bull pen in which a swimmer knows what lane and heat they are in by looking at the heat sheet or posted meet program.

Psych Sheet

An entry sheet showing all swimmers entered into each individual event.

Qualifying Times/Motivational Times

Published times necessary to enter certain meets, or the times necessary to achieve a specific category of swimmer.

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.

Scratch

A swimmer will not be swimming an event.

Seed

Assign the swimmers heats and lanes according to their submitted or preliminary times.

Session

Portion of meet distinctly separated from other portions by locale, time, type of competition, or age group.

Short Course

A 25-yard or 25-meter pool.

Split

A portion of an event that's shorter than the total distance and is timed, i.e. a swimmer's first 50 time is taken as the swimmer swims a 100 race. It is common to take multiple splits for longer distance races. *Negative Split* means the second half of the race was faster than the first half and *Even Split* means times were equal.

Splash Fees

A fee that is charged for each individual swim event a swimmer participates in at a meet.

Sprint

This describes shorter events (50 yards i.e.)

Streamline

The position used to gain maximum distance during a start and/or push-off from the wall in which the swimmer's body is as tight and tall as it can be.

Stroke Judge

An official positioned at the side of the pool, walking the length of the course as the swimmers race or stationed at the bulkhead or side of the pool. If they see something illegal (against swimming rules), they report to the referee, and the swimmer may be disqualified.

Surcharge Fee

A fee that is charged for each swimmer participating in a meet. This is a separate charge from any splash fees and relay fees

Taper

The final preparation phase of training. Prior to a major competition, an older more experienced swimmer will decrease their training volume while increasing their rest in order to prepare their bodies to go best times

Timer

The volunteers sitting 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.

Time Trial

A time-only swim that is not part of a regular meet, typically swum between heats and finals.

Touch Pad

A large sensitive board at the end of each lane where a swimmer's touch is registered and sent electronically to the timing system.

Unattached

An athlete member who competes, but does not represent a club or team. (abbr. UN)

USA Swimming

The national governing body for amateur competitive swimming in the United States.

USA Member ID Number-Unique number assigned to a swimmer when he/she joins USA Swimming.

Warm-down/Cool-down

The recovery swimming a swimmer does after a race when pool space is available.

Warm-up

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