

Glossary of Swimming Terms

New to the world of swimming or just need a refresh? We've got you covered here with our list of competitive swim terminology. If you have a question about any other terms that are used but are not on this, feel free to ask a coach or administrator for further help.

TERM	DEFINITION
Blocks	The raised platforms used by the swimmers for their starts. Swimmers should be in place behind the blocks until they are told to stand on them. Younger swimmers may start from the edge of the pool until they feel comfortable with diving from the blocks.
Bullpen	The place where swimmers wait for their events, once they have received their time cards from the Clerk of Course, until they are directed to go on deck to the starting blocks.
Clerk of Course	Swimmers report to the Clerk, located somewhere on or close to the pool deck, before their event to receive their event lane assignment.
D.Q.	Disqualification. A swimmer will be disqualified from an event if he has two false starts or swims a stroke incorrectly. Swimmers in the 8 & under group are given some latitude for the purpose of instruction during the first half of the season.
DSDC	DuPage Swim & Dive Conference – the governing body of the summer swim season. Consists of 12 other park district teams.
Event Card (Only at some summer away meets)	Given to each swimmer before an event. The card includes the swimmer's name, the event number, lane assignment, and spaces for times to be written. When the swimmer approaches the starting block he/she will give the card to the timer in the assigned lane.
Event Distances	25 yards = 1 length; 50 yards = 2 lengths; 100 yards = 4 lengths; 200 yards = 8 lengths; 500 yards = 20 lengths
Event Heat	All of the swimmers entered in the event are divided into heats, or groups of swimmers. There is normally only one heat, which is considered the competition heat. Competition heats are the only heats that contribute to the team's overall score. All swims, whether in competition or exhibition heats, count as an official time for the swimmer.
Exhibition	An event that normally comes before the competition heat. Exhibition swims do not count towards the team's point total, but will count as an official time and an official swim. Exhibition swims are used to give swimmers the opportunity to swim more often at a meet and reach the maximum number of swims (four during the winter season and five during the summer season).
False Start	A false start occurs when a swimmer is moving on or leaving the block before the starting gun is sounded. In DSDC rules, a swimmer is allowed two false starts before being disqualified.
Flip Turn	Flip turns and open turns are used in swimming once a swimmer reaches one end of the pool. The flip turn (used in freestyle and backstroke) and the open turn (used in breaststroke and butterfly) allow the swimmer to more quickly push off the wall. If not done effectively, this should be the

	second fastest speed the swimmer will travel in a given race, the first of which is the swimmer's dive.
Freestyle Relay	Four swimmers, each swimming freestyle, as a team to achieve one time. In the 8 & under age group, each swimmer completes one length, so two swimmers start from the other end of the pool. In all other age groups the relay is 200 yards, with each swimmer doing 50 yards.
I.M.	Individual Medley. One swimmer swimming one length of each of the four strokes, in the order of fly, back, breast, and freestyle.
Medley Relay	Four swimmers, each swimming a different stroke, in the order of back, breast, fly, and free, competing as a team to achieve one time. In the 8 & under age group, each swimmer swims 25 yards; in all other age groups each swimmer swims 50 yards.
NIWSC	Northern Illinois Winter Swim Conference – the governing body of the winter swim season. Consists of 13 other teams mainly from other park districts in the Chicago suburbs.
Referee	Announces each event, and is responsible for settling any disputes that arise during the meet.
Starter	Responsible for calling swimmers to the blocks and starting each event with the starter gun.
Taper	The resting phase of a swimmer at the end of the season before the championship meet. Yards are slowly diminished to allow the swimmer's body the ability to rest and recover from a season's worth of hard work in order for that swimmer to compete at the highest level. Depending on the season, taper can be anywhere from 1-4 weeks.
Warm-up	Low intensity swimming used prior to a race to get muscles loose and warm. Warm-ups gradually increase heart rate, respiration, and helps to prevent injury.