

GLOSSARY OF SWIMMING TERMS

- **Age Group Swimming** -- Nationally recognized age groups are 10 and under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18 and 19-20. Local meets may include event for 8 and under.
- **Backstroke** – The swimmer must stay on his or her back, except during the turns. The stroke is an alternating motion of the arms -- much like the crawl stroke -- with a flutter kick. Since April of 1991, a swimmer is no longer required to touch the wall with his or her hand before executing the turn maneuver. The key to proper interpretation of the backstroke rule is the phrase "continuous turning action", i.e., a uniform, unbroken motion with no pauses. In a more technical interpretation, after the shoulder rotates beyond the vertical toward the breast, a continuous simultaneous single or double arm pull may be used to initiate the turn. There shall be no kick, arm pull, or floatation that is independent of the turn. The position of the head is not relevant. In all U.S. Swimming and FINA competition, each swimmer's head must surface within 15 meters of the start of the race.
- **Block** – The starting platform or starting block.
- **Breaststroke** – Perhaps one of the most difficult strokes to master, breaststroke requires simultaneous movements of the arms on the same horizontal plane. The hands are pushed forward from the breast on or under the water and are brought back in the pull simultaneously. The kick is a simultaneous thrust of the legs called a "frog" or breaststroke kick. No flutter or dolphin kicking is allowed during the swim. Swimmers must touch the wall with both hands at the same time before executing their turn.
- **Bulkhead** – A wall constructed to divide a pool into different courses such as a 50 meter pool into two 25 meter courses.
- **Butterfly** – The most physically demanding stroke, the butterfly features the simultaneous overhead stroke of the arms combined with the dolphin kick. The dolphin kick features both legs moving up and down together. No flutter kicking is allowed. As in the breaststroke, swimmers must touch the wall with both hands before turning. In all U.S. Swimming and FINA competition, each swimmer's head must surface within 15 meters of the start of the race. Butterfly races are swum in 100 and 200 meter distances.
- **Circle Swimming** – Performed by staying to the right of the black line when swimming in a lane, to enable more swimmers to swim in each lane.
- **Coach** – A person who trains and teaches athletes in the sport of swimming.
- **Code of Conduct** – An agreement signed by a swimmer prior to travel stating that the swimmer will abide by certain behavioral guidelines.

- **Cut** – Slang for qualifying time. A time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event.
- **Distance** – Term used to refer to events over 400 meters/500 yards.
- **DQ** – Disqualified. This occurs when a swimmer has committed an infraction of some kind. A disqualified swimmer is not eligible to receive awards, nor can the time be used as an official time.
- **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.
- **Entry Form** – Form on which a swimmer enters a competition. Usually includes USA number, age, sex, event number and time.
- **Failed Swim** – Where a meet requires a minimum time standard for entry and the swimmer fails to swim that standard in a particular race or event.
- **False Start** – Occurs when a swimmer is moving at the start. Dual confirmation between two officials, both the Starter and the Referee or else it is not upheld.
- **FINA** – The international governing body of swimming, parent to USA Swimming and they set Olympic rules and regulations.
- **Finals** – The championship heat of an event in which the top six or eight swimmers from the preliminaries compete, depending on the number of lanes in the pool.
- **Flags** – Backstroke flags placed five yards (short course) or five meters (long course) from the end of the pool. They enable backstrokers to execute a backstroke turn more efficiently by counting their strokes.
- **Freestyle** – In the freestyle, the competitor may swim any stroke he or she wishes. The usual stroke used is the Australian Crawl. This stroke is characterized by the alternate overhand motion of the arms and a flutter kick which can be either a six-beat-per stroke or two-beat-per-stroke cycle rhythm. The slower two-beat kick is used in the distance races, while the faster, six-beat kick is used in the sprint events and at the very end of the distance races. In all U.S. Swimming and FINA competition, each swimmer's head must surface within 15 meters of the start of the race.
- **Freestyle Relays** – There are two freestyle relays -- 400 and 800 meters (FINA). In the freestyle relays, four swimmers each swim one fourth of the total distance. As in the medley relay, no individual may swim more than one leg (one-quarter) of the relay.

- **Goal** – A specific time achievement a swimmer sets and strives for. Can be short or long term.
- **Gutter** – The edge of the pool in which water overflows during a race and is re-circulated through the filtration system.
- **Heat** – The portion of swimmers that can swim the event at one time. An event will be divided into heats so all the entered swimmers may compete, usually seeded by times.
- **Individual Medley** – The individual medley, commonly referred to as the "I.M.," features all four competitive strokes. In the I.M. a swimmer begins with the butterfly, changes to the backstroke after one-fourth of the race, then the breaststroke for another quarter and finally finishes with the freestyle. The "no-touch" backstroke rule comes into play in the individual medley events in that the new turn may be used in the 400 IM (100s of each stroke) only in the middle of the backstroke legs. The new turn may not be used in the backstroke to breaststroke turn, however, and is therefore not allowed in a long course 200-meter individual medley race. The IM is swum in 200 and 400 meter distances (FINA).
- **IM** – Slang for the Individual Medley, an event in which the swimmer uses all four strokes in the following order – butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle.
- **Lap Counter** – A set of plastic display numbers used to keep track of laps during a distance race. Also, the person who counts for the swimmer stationed at the opposite end from the start.
- **Long Course** – A pool 50 meters in length. USA conducts most of its summer competition in long course pools.
- **Long Distance** – Any freestyle event over 1500 meters, normally conducted in a natural body of water, such as a lake, river or ocean. Also known as Marathon swimming.
- **LSC**– Local Swimming Committee; Governing body for swimming on a local level; Wisconsin Swimming for our team/area.
- **Medley Relay** – In the medley relay, all four strokes are swum by four different swimmers. No swimmer may swim more than one leg of the relay, which is swum in backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle order. Additionally it is possible to set a world record in the 100-meter backstroke (the first leg) in this race The medley relay is 400 meters -- or 4x100 meters (FINA).
- **Meet** – Competition designed to be a learning experience by implementing what has been learned in practice. The swimmer tests himself against the clock to see how he is improving.
- **Meet program** – Contains pertinent information regarding event, heat and lane assignments for all participating swimmers at a meet. Parents should purchase

one at the beginning of each meet.

- **Middle Distance** – Term used to refer to events of 200 yards/meters to 400 yards/meters in length.
- **National Age Group (NAG) Time Standard** – Time standards derived from the previous years' results that are broken down by age and sex as well as B, A, AA, AAA, AAAA divisions. These designations are NATIONAL and may be used for qualifying purposes. Many LSC's have their own time standards.
- **National Age Group Top 16** – Time standards set for both short and long course based on previous years' achievements. Only times meeting these standards may be submitted for consideration each year.
- **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 is there to enforce USA rules. There are stroke and turn judges, administrative officials, starters, and referees.
- **Pace Clock** – Large clock with a large second hand and a smaller minute hand, used to check pace or to maintain intervals in practice; may also be digital.
- **Prelims** – Slang for preliminaries, also called Heats or Trials. Those races in which swimmers qualify for the championship and consolation finals in events.
- **Prelim/Finals** – Type of meet in which preliminary heats are raced and selected swimmers return for finals.
- **Proof of Time** – A requirement at some meets to make certain that all swimmers have legally met the time standards for that meet.
- **Psych Sheet** – List of entrants for all events in a meet, may be with/in the meet program. Not the same as a Heat Sheet.
- **Qualifying Time** – time necessary to compete in a particular event and/or competition.
- **Referee** – The official who has the authority over all other officials at a meet. He/She makes all final decisions and sees to the efficient running 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 in a competition.
- **Seed Times** – The time a swimmer uses to enter a meet. This time represents a swimmer's entry time for an event, and determines one's position and lane in a that event.

- **Set** – A group of drills put together to form a complete practice.
- **Senior Swimming** – The program through which USA provides fair and open competition in National Swimming championships. It is designed to afford maximum opportunity for participation, provide an educational experience, enhance physical and mental conditioning and develop a pool of talented athletes for International competition. There are no age restrictions in Senior competition.
- **Short Course** – A pool 25 yards or 25 meters in length. USA conducts most of its winter competition in short course yards.
- **Split** – A swimmer's intermediate time in a race. Splits are registered every 50 yards or meters and are used to determine if a swimmer is on record pace. Under certain conditions, splits may also be used as official times.
- **Sprint** – Describes the shorter events (50 and 100). In training, to swim as fast as possible for a short distance.
- **Starts and Turns** – Many races are lost in poor starts and turns. In the start, the swimmer is called to starting position by the starter who visually checks that all swimmers are in the down positions and still. Then, once the starter is satisfied, the race is started by either a gun or electronic tone. If the starter feels that one of the swimmers has jumped early, the race will be recalled and the offending swimmer disqualified. Quick turns are essential to a good race. In all events the swimmer must touch the wall, but in the freestyle and the backstroke, the swimmer may somersault as he or she reaches the wall, touching only with the feet. In the other two competitive strokes, the swimmer must touch the wall with one or both hands before executing the turn.
- **Starter** – The official at a meet responsible for starting each heat and calling the next heat to the blocks.
- **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 as it can be.
- **Stroke & Turn Judge** – The official who determines the legality of a swimmers' strokes and turns and who disqualifies those swimmers who do not conform to the rules.
- **Taper** – The final preparation phase prior to major competition. An older, more experienced swimmer will shave his entire body to reduce resistance and heighten sensation in the water.
- **Time Trial** – A time only swim which is not part of a regular meet.
- **Timed Finals** – Type of meet where swimmers swim once to determine order of finish.
- **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.

- **USA Swimming** – United States of America Swimming, Inc. The national governing body for amateur competitive swimming in the United States.
- **USA ID number** – Unique number assigned to a swimmer when they join United States of America Swimming. Composed of numbers and letters in the following sequence: the numbers for the swimmers date of birth in MMDDYY format followed by the first three letters of the first name, then the middle initial, and lastly the first four letters of the last name. For example, Susan May Smith born on Oct 15, 1995 would be 101595SUSMSMIT.
- **Warm Down** – Low intensity swimming used by swimmers after a race or main practice. It rids the body of excess lactic acid and gradually reduces heart rate and respiration.
- **Warm Up** – Used by a swimmer prior to a main practice, set or race. Gets muscles loose and warm and gradually increases heart and respiration.
- **Watches** – Digital stopwatches used to time swimmers during a competition, usually electronic. When totally automatic timing equipment is used, watches serve as a back-up method.