

GLOSSARY

A Glossary of those strange and wacky words we use in the sport of swimming. Parents! You may or may not find these words in the English Dictionary, and if you do, their definitions will probably be radically different than the ones listed in this Glossary. Relax and take your time reading. Soon you'll be understanding and maybe even speaking some "SWIMSLANG".

A Finals	The top 6 or 8 swimmers (depending on the # of pool lanes) in Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals. Big Finals is the fastest heat of finals when multiple heats are held.
Admission	Certain swim meets charge for spectators to view the meets. These are usually the larger more prestigious meets. Sometimes the meet program (heat sheet) is included in the price of admission.
Age Group	Division of swimmers according to age. The National Age Group divisions are: 10-under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18. Some LSC's have divided the swimmers into more convenient divisions specific to their situations: (i.e.) 8-under, 13-Over, 15-Over, Junior, Senior.
Alternate	In a Prelims/Finals meet, after the finalists are decided, the next two fastest swimmers other than the finalist are designated as alternates. The faster of the 2 being first alternate and the next being second alternate. If a finalist cannot participate, the alternates are called to take their place, often on a moments notice.
Anchor	The final swimmer in a relay.
Approved Meet	Swim meets conducted by organizations (other than USS member clubs or LSC's) that have applied to USS or the local LSC for approval. If approval is granted, swimmers may use times achieved as USS qualifying times. A USS official must be present at all sessions of the meet. Approval does not mean Sanctioned.
ASCA	The American Swim Coaches Association - the professional organization for swim coaches throughout the nation. Certifying coaches and offering many services for coaches' education and career advancement.
Backstroke	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes, basically any style of swimming on your back. Backstroke is swam as the first stroke in the Medley Relay and second stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yds./m., 100 yds./m., and 200 yds./m. (LSC's with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd back)
Banner	A team sign that is displayed at swim meets. Banners are usually made from nylon material and carry the Team Logo and possibly the name of a popular team sponsor. Some size restrictions are enforced at certain meets.
Beep	The starting sound from an electronic, computerized timing system.
Bell Lap	The part of a freestyle distance race (400 meters or longer) when the swimmer has 2 lengths plus 5 yards to go. The starter fires a gun shot over the lane of the lead swimmer when swimmer is at the flags.

Blocks	The starting platforms located behind each lane. Some pools have blocks at the deeper end of the pool, and some pools have blocks at both ends. Blocks have a variety of designs and can be permanent or removable.
Bonus Heat	The heat held during the finals session of a Prelims/Finals meet, which is slower than the swimmers participating in Big Finals. The Bonus Heat may refer to Consolation Finals or an extra heat in addition to Consolation finals.
Bottom	The floor of the pool. Bottom depths are usually marked on the walls or sides of the pool.
Breaststroke	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Breaststroke is swam as the second stroke in the Medley Relay and the third stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yds./m, 100 yds./m, and 200 yds./m. (LSC's with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd back)
Bull Pen	The staging area where swimmers wait to receive their lane and heat assignments for a swimming event. Area is usually away from the pool and has rows of chairs for the swimmers to sit. The Clerk of the Course is in charge of the Bull Pen.
Butterfly	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed FLY) is swam as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and first stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yd./m, 100 yd./m, and 200 yd./m. (LSC's with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd back)
Button	The manual Timing System stopping device that records a back-up time in case the touch pad malfunctioned. The button is at the end of a wire, plugged into a deck terminal box. There are usually 3 buttons per lane. It is the timers responsibility to push the button as the swimmer finishes the race.
Cap	The latex or silicone covering worn on the head of swimmers.
Cards	A card that is either handed to the swimmer in the bull pen or given to the timer behind the lane. Cards usually list the swimmers name, seed time, event number, event description, and the lane and heat number the swimmer will swim in. Backup times are written on these cards. Each event has a separate card.
Championship Meet	The meet held at the end of a season. Qualification times are usually necessary to enter meet.
Championship Finals	The top 6 or 8 swimmers (depending on the # of pool lanes) in Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals.
Check-In	The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded meet. Sometimes referred to as positive check in, the swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host.
Circle Seeding	A method of seeding swimmers when they are participating in a prelims/finals event. The fastest 18 to 24 swimmers are seeded in the last three heats, with the fastest swimmers being in the inside lanes. See USA Swim rule book for exact method for seeding depending on the lanes in the pool.
Club	A registered swim team that is a dues paying member of USA Swimming and the local LSC.

Code	A set of rules that have been officially published.
Code of Ethics	A Code of Conduct that both swimmers and coaches are required to sign at certain USA/LSC sponsored events. The Code is not strict and involves common sense and proper behavior.
Colorado	A brand of automatic timing system used at swim meets.
Consolation Finals	After the fastest 6 or 8 swimmers, the next 6 or 8 swimmers (depending on the # of pool lanes) in a Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals. Consolations are the second fastest heat of finals when multiple heats are held and are conducted before the Championship heat.
Course	Designated distance (length of pool) for swimming competition. Long Course = 50 meters / Short Course = 25 yards or 25 meters.
Deadline	The date meet entries must be "postmarked" by, to be accepted by the meet host. Making the meet deadline does not guarantee acceptance into a meet since many meets are "full" weeks before the entry deadline.
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 or practice.
Deck Entries	Accepting entries into swimming events on the first day or later day of a meet.
Deck Seeding	Swimmers report to a bull pen or staging area and receive their lane and heat assignments for the events.
Disqualified	A swimmers performance is not counted because of a USA Swimming rules infraction. A disqualification is shown by an official raising one arm with open hand above their head.
Dive	Entering the water head first. Diving is not allowed during warmups except at the designated time, in specific lanes that are monitored by the swimmers coach.
Diving Well	A separate pool or a pool set off to the side of the competition pool. This pool has deeper water and diving boards/platforms. During a meet, this area may be designated as a warm-down pool with proper supervision.
Division I-II-III	NCAA member colleges and universities are assigned divisions to compete in, depending on the schools total enrollment.
Drag	Resistance created by an extra suit, body hair, or device as part of the training process.
Draw	Random selection by chance.
Dropped Time	When a swimmer goes faster than the previous performance they have "dropped their time".
Dryland	The exercises and various strength programs swimmers do out of the water.

Dry Side	That part of the Code book (rule book) that deals with the "Administrative" Regulations of Competition.
Dual Meet	Type of meet where two (2) teams/clubs compete against each other.
Entry	An Individual or Relay event list into a swim competition.
Entry Chairperson	The host clubs designated person who is responsible for receiving, and making sure the entries have met the deadline. This person usually will find discrepancies in the meet entries and notify the entering club to correct any errors.
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.
Electronic Timing	Timing system operated on DC current (battery). The timing system usually 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 time.
Eligible to compete	The status of a member swimmer that means they are registered and have met all the requirements.
Equipment	The items necessary to operate a swim practice or conduct a swim competition.
Event	This is a label for a race over a given distance. An event equals one preliminary race with a final to be swum at another session, or 1 timed final.
False Start	When a swimmer flinches or leaves the starting block before the horn or gun. One false start will disqualify a swimmer or a relay team.
False Start Rope	A recall rope across the width of the racing pool for the purpose of stopping swimmers who were not aware of a false start. The rope is about 1/2 way on yard pools and about 50 feet from the starting end on meter pools.
Fastest to Slowest	A seeding method used on the longer events held at the end of a session. The fastest seeded swimmers participate in the first heats followed by the next fastest and so on. Many times these events will alternate one girls heat and one boys heat until all swimmers have competed.
Fees	Money paid by swimmers for services. Practice fees, registration fee, USA membership fee, etc.
FINA	The international, rules making organization, for the sport of swimming.
Finals	The final race of each event.
Final Results	The printed copy of the results of each race of a swim meet.

Fine	The monetary penalty assessed a swimmer or club when a swimmer does not achieve the necessary time required to swim in an event, and cannot prove they have done the time previously.
Flags	The colored pennants that are suspended over the width of each end of the pool approximately 15 feet from the wall.
Format	The order of events and type of swim meet being conducted.
Freestyle	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Freestyle (nicknamed Free) is swam as the fourth stroke in the Medley Relay and fourth stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yds./m, 100 yds./m, 200 yds./m, 400 m/500 yds. 800 m/1000 yds., 1500 m/1650 yds. (LSC's with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd free)
Gallery	The viewing area for spectators during the swimming competition.
Goals	The short and long range targets for swimmers to aim for.
Goggles	Glasses type devices worn by swimmers to keep their eyes from being irritated by the chlorine in the water.
Handbook	A reference manual published by teams/clubs and LSC's or other swimming organizations.
Heats	A division of an event when there are too many swimmers to compete at the same time. The results are compiled by swimmers time swam, after all heats of the event are completed.
Heat Award	A ribbon or prize given to the winner of a single heat at an age group swim meet.
Heat Sheet	The pre-meet printed listings of swimmers seed times in the various events at a swim meet. These sheets vary in accuracy, since the coaches submit swimmers times many weeks before the meet. Heat sheets are sold at the admissions table and are used mainly to make sure the swimmer has been properly entered in all the events they signed up for. Parents enjoy looking at the seeding prior to the race plus swimmers can tell the order the events will be conducted and get a rough idea how long the meet sessions will last.
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.
Illegal	Doing something against the rules that is cause for disqualification in a race.
IM	Individual Medley. A swimming event using all 4 of the competitive strokes on consecutive lengths of the race. The order must be: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle. Equal distances must be swum of each stroke. Distances offered: 100 yds., 200 yds./m, 400 yds./m.
Insurance	USA Swimming Inc. offers "accident insurance coverage" which is automatic when swimmer, coach, official, pays their USS membership fee. Many restrictions apply so check with your club for detailed information.
Interval	A specific elapsed time for swimming or rest used during swim practice.

Invitational	Type of meet that requires a club to request an invitation to attend the meet.
Jump	An illegal start done by the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th member of a relay team. The swimmer on the block breaks contact with the block before the swimmer in the water touches the wall.
Jr. Nationals	A USA National Championship meet for swimmers 18 years old or less. Qualification times are necessary. National Meets are conducted both short course (in April) and long course (in August).
Kick Board	A flotation device used by swimmers during practice.
Lane	The specific area in which a swimmer is assigned to swim.
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.
Late Entries	Meet entries from a club or individual that is received by the meet host after the entry deadline. These entries are usually not accepted and are returned to sender.
Leg	The part of a relay event swam by a single team member.
Length	The extent of the competitive course from end to end.
Long Course	A 50 meter pool.
LSC	Local Swim Committee. The local level administrative division of USA Swimming, Inc. with supervisory responsibilities within certain geographic boundaries designated by USA Swim.
Mark	The command to take your starting position on the block.
Marshal	The adult(s) who control the crowd and swimmer flow at a swim meet.
Medals	Awards given to the swimmers at selected meets. They vary in size and design and method of presentation.
Meet	A series of events held in one program.
Meet Director	The official in charge of the administration of the meet.
Mile	The slang term referring to the 1500 meter or the 1650 yard freestyle, both of which are slightly short of a mile.

NAGTS	National Age Group Time Standards - the list of "C" through "AAAA" times published each year.
Nationals	USA senior or junior level meets conducted in March/April and August. See Senior or Junior Nationals.
Natorium	A building constructed for the purpose of housing a swimming pool and related equipment.
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
Non-Conforming Time	A short course time submitted to qualify for a long course meet, or vice versa.
Novice	A beginner or someone who does not have experience.
NT	No Time. The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer has not swam that event before.
Officials	The USA Swimming certified, adult volunteers, who operate the many facets of a swim competition.
Olympic Trials	The USA sanctioned long course swim meet held the year of the Olympic Games to decide what swimmers will represent the USA on our Olympic Team. Qualification times are faster than Senior Nationals.
OT	Official Time. The swimmers event time recorded to one hundredth of a second (.01).
OTC	Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado.
Open Competition	Competition which any qualified club, organization, or individual may enter.
Parka	Large 3/4 length fur lined coats worn by swimmers. Usually are in team colors with logo or team name.
Pace Clock	The large clocks with highly visible numbers positioned at the ends or sides of a swimming pool so the swimmers can read their times during warmups or swim practice.
Paddle	Colored plastic devices worn on the swimmers hands during swim practice.
Positive Check In	The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded or pre seeded meet. The swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host.
Practice	The scheduled workouts a swimmer attends with their swim team/club.
Prelims	Session of a Prelims/Finals meet in which the qualification heats are conducted.
Prelims-Finals	Type of meet with two sessions. The preliminary heats are usually held in the morning session. The fastest 6 or 8 (Championship Heat) swimmers and the next fastest 6 or 8 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.

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 Meet heat sheet, or posted meet program.
Proof of Time	An official meet result or other accepted form. Swimmers/Coaches must supply proof of time with some meet entries, and other meets it is not required unless a swimmer misses a cut of time at the meet.
Psych Sheet	This booklet lists the swimmers in a meet based on fastest to slowest in each event.
Pull Buoy	A flotation device used for pulling by swimmers in practice.
Qualifying Times	Published times necessary to enter certain meets, or the times necessary to achieve a specific category of swimmer.
Ready Room	A room pool side for the swimmers to relax before they compete in finals.
Referee	The head official at a swim meet in charge of all of the "Wet Side" administration and decisions.
Registered	Enrolled and paid as a member of USA Swimming and the LSC – Florida Swimming.
Relays	A swimming event in which 4 swimmers participate as a relay team each swimmer swimming 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. 2.) Freestyle relay - Each swimmer swims freestyle.
Rest Area	A designated area (such as a gymnasium) that is set aside for swimmers to rest during a meet.
Ribbons	Awards in a variety of sizes, styles, and colors, given at certain swim meets.
Sanction	A permit issued by an LSC to a USA Swimming registered team to conduct an event or meet.
Sanction Fee	The amount paid by a USA Swimming registered team to an LSC for issuing a sanction.
Scratch	To withdraw from an event after having declared an intention to participate. Some meets have scratch deadlines and specific scratch rules, and if not followed, swimmer can be disqualified from remaining events.
Seed	Assign the swimmers heats and lanes according to their submitted or preliminary times.
Seeding	Deck Seeding - swimmers are called to report to the Clerk of the Course. After scratches are determined, the event is seeded. Pre Seeding - swimmers are arranged in heats according to submitted times, usually a day prior to the meet.
Senior	Any swimmer over the age of 14.

Senior Meet	A meet that is for senior level swimmers and is not divided into age groups. Qualification times are usually necessary and will vary depending on the level of the meet.
Senior Nationals	A USA National Championship swim meet for swimmers achieving qualifying times. National Meets are conducted both short course (in April) and long course (in August).
Session	Portion of meet distinctly separated from other portions by locale, time, type of competition, or age group.
Shave	The process of removing all arms, legs, and exposed torso hair, to decrease the "drag" or resistance of the body moving through the water. Only recommended for certain senior swimmers.
Short Course	A 25 yard or 25 meter pool.
Splash	USA Swimming Inc. newsletter that is mailed bi-monthly to members.
Split Stations	A portion of an event, shorter than the total distance that is timed. Separate portions of a dryland or weight circuit.
Start	The beginning of a race. The dive used to begin a race.
Starter	The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.
Still Water	Water that has no current caused by a filter system or no waves caused by swimmers.
State	A meet held twice a year (Short Course and Long Course) sponsored by the LSC. It is common to hold a Championship Senior meet and Age Group meet separately. Qualification times are usually necessary.
State Qualifier	A swimmer who has made the necessary cut off times to enter the State meet.
Stand-up	The command given by the Starter or Referee to release the swimmers from their starting position.
Step-Down	The command given by the Starter or Referee to have the swimmers step off the blocks. Usually this command is a good indication everything is not right for the race to start.
Stroke	There are 4 competitive strokes: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle.
Stroke Judge	The official positioned at the side of the pool, walking the length of the course as the swimmers race. If the Stroke Judge sees something illegal, they report to the referee and the swimmer may be disqualified.
Submitted Time	Times used to enter swimmers in meets. These times must have been achieved by the swimmer at previous meets.
Suit	The racing uniform worn by the swimmer, in the water, during competition.

Swim-off	In a Prelims/Finals type competition, a race after the scheduled event to break a tie. The only circumstance that warrants a swim-off is to determine which swimmer makes finals or an alternate, otherwise ties stand.
Taper	The resting phase of a senior swimmer at the end of the season before the championship meet.
Team	USA Swimming registered club that has the right to compete for points.
Team Records	The statistics a team keeps, listing the fastest swimmer in the clubs history for each age group/each event.
Timed Finals	Competition in which only heats are swum and final placing is determined by those 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 Standard	A time set by a meet, LSC, or USA Swimming that a swimmer must achieve for qualification or recognition.
Time Trial	An event or series of events where a swimmer may achieve or better a required time standard.
Top 10	A list of times compiled by the LSC or USA Swimming that recognizes the top number of swimmers (boys & girls) in each event and distance.
Touch Out	To reach the touchpad and finish first in a close race.
Touch Pad	The removable plates (on the end of pools) that are connected to an automatic timing system. A swimmer must properly touch the touchpad to register an official time in a race.
Transfer	The act of leaving one club or LSC and going to another. Usually 120 days of unattached competition is required before swimmer can represent another USA Swimming club.
Trophy	Type of award given to teams and swimmers at certain meets.
Unattached	An athlete member who competes, but does not represent a club or team until the 120 days have passed since representing another team.
Uniform	The various parts of clothing a swimmer wears at a meet. (Parka, Warm up outfit, swim bag, bathing suits, cap, goggles, T-shirts, etc.)
Unofficial Time	The time displayed on a read out board or read over the intercom by the announcer immediately after the race. After the time has been checked, it will become the official time.
USA Swimming Inc.	The governing body of USA swimming.

USA Swim Number	A 14 digit identification assigned to a swimmer after they have registered and paid their annual dues. The swimmers date of birth, then first three letters of swimmers first name, middle initial, then last four letters of last name.
Watch	The hand held device used by timers and coaches for timing a swimmers races and taking splits.
Whistle	The sound a starter/referee makes to signal for quiet before they give the command to start the race.
Yardage	The distance a swimmer races or swims in practice. Total yardage can be calculated for each practice session.
Zones	The country is divided up into 4 major zones: Eastern - Southern - Central - Western. At the end of the long course season (in August) the Zone Administration sponsors a championship age group meet.