

# SWIM JARGON (a.k.a. “Swim Terms for Dummies”)

**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

**Carbohydrate** – Primary source of energy used by athletes in workouts and meets. Foods such as cereals, fruits, breads, pasta, and vegetables are excellent sources of carbohydrates

**Check In** – The indication that a swimmer intends to participate in the meet or event

**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

**Consolation Finals** – The competition for the fastest remaining swimmers of those who fail to qualify for the finals

**Course** – Designated distance over which there is a competition (Long course = 50 meters, short course = 25 meters or yards)

**Cut** – Slang for qualifying time (a time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event)

**Disqualification (DQ)** – When an official determines that a swimmer has violated a swimming rule, he or she may disqualify that swimmer. Typically, swimmers are disqualified for an illegal stroke, turn, or finish

**Drag** – The extra clothing swimmers may wear to create resistance while practicing, often in the form of shorts or multi-layered suits that may have rips or tears

**Eastfields** – A championship meet held in the spring for all 9 and over YMCA registered swimmers who make the qualifying cut times. The northeastern section of the country attends the Eastfield Regional Championships. Cut times are posted on the bulletin boards when they become available.

**Entry Form** – The form on which a swimmer enters a competition. Includes age, gender, event number, and swimmer’s “lifetime best” time.

**False Start** – Moving once swimmers have been instructed to take their mark before the start is signaled. A false start may result in a DQ.

**Final** – A single race in which the fastest preliminary swimmers compete to determine final places and times in an event.

**Finish** – The final phase of the race; the touch at the end of the race.

**Flags** – Backstroke flags placed 5 yards or meters from the end of the pool. They enable backstrokers to execute a turn more efficiently by counting their strokes to the turn instead of turning around to look.

**Flutter Kick** – The kick used in the freestyle stroke. The legs alternate, moving up and down.

**Free Relay** – Four swimmers swim freestyle as part of a team.

**Freestyle** – One of the four basic individual and team swimming competitions. Uses the flutter kick and a windmill-style arm stroke. Also known as front crawl or overhand.

**Goal** – A specific time achievement a swimmer sets and strives for - can be short- or long-term.

**Gutter** – The area along the edge of the pool in which water overflows during a race and is re-circulated through the filtration system.

**Heat** – A qualifying swimming competition that precedes semi-final races. Used due to the number of event entrants.

**Heat Sheet** – A listing of all swimmers by event number, heat, and lane assignments in the meet. These are available at the beginning of the meet and are usually purchased at the price of \$3 to \$10. (These are usually only provided at Invitational meets and USA swim meets).

**Invitational Meet** – A meet hosted by one club who invites members from several other clubs to participate. Usually there is no limit on the number of swimmers that clubs can enter, but certain entry restrictions are usually applied. The number of heats of each event is determined by the number of entrants for that event.

**Junior Olympics (JO's)** – Usually local, state, or LSC championships. In most LSC's, one must qualify to enter this competition. This is in USA swimming only.

**Lap** – 1 lap = 2 lengths of the pool.

**Lap Counter** – A set of plastic display numbers used to keep track of laps during a distance race. Also, a person who counts for the swimmer, stationed at the opposite end of the start.

**Length** – The distance from one end of the pool to the other.

**Log Book** – A book in which swimmers record their time achieved at any given meet or time.

**Long Course** – A type of competitive pool that measures 50 meters in length. The standard size of all international competition and all world record swimming is the 50 meter course.

**LSC** – Local Swimming Committee (i.e., Maine Swimming)

**Medley** – A race in which all four basic competitive strokes are used, each for one-fourth of the total distance. In an *Individual Medley* one swimmer performs all the strokes in the order of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle; in the *Medley Relay* four teammates each swim a different stroke (backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, freestyle)

**Middle Distances** – Term used to refer to events of 200 yards or meters to 500 yards or 400 meters in length.

**National Age Group Times Standards** – Time standards derived from the previous years' reported results that are broken down by age and gender as well as B, A, AA, AAA, AAAA divisions. These designations are NATIONAL and may be used for entry or qualifying purposes.

**Negative Split** – Swimming the second half of the race equal to or faster than the first half.

**New England** – A New England Regional Championship swim meet held in the spring at Brown University. It is open to all YMCA registered swimmers who make the qualifying cut times. Times are posted on the boards when they are released.

**Pace Clock** – Large clock with a large second hand and a small minute hand to determine pace for workouts.

**Prelims** – In certain meets, the qualifying rounds held for each event to determine the finalists.

**Proof of Time** – A requirement at some meets to make certain that all swimmers have legally met the time standards for that meet.

**PR (Personal Record)** – Is also known as individual best time and is the best time a swimmer has swum for an event.

**Qualifying Time** – Also known as “cut time”. (a time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event)

**Ready Bench** – An area at the meet where swimmers report before their event to be arranged into their heat and lane assignments.

**Referee** – The official who has the authority over all other officials at the meet. He/she makes all the final decisions and sees to the efficient running of the meet.

**Relay** – An event in which four individuals on each team swim with the same stroke or, in prescribed order, one of the four different strokes. Each competitor swims one-quarter of the race distance.

**Sanction** – A permit issued by an LSC to conduct an event or meet. (Note: All athletes participating in any USA-sanctioned swim meet must be registered USA swimmers.)

**Scratch** – Withdrawal of an entry from competition. The coach should be notified in the case of a scratch. Proper withdrawal procedures must be taken.

**Seeding** – Distributing the swimmers among the required number of heats or lanes, according to submitted or preliminary times. Heats may be pre-seeded heats or deck-seeded heats.

**Pre-seeded Heats** – Swimmers are arranged in heats or events according to submitted times, and heat sheets are prepared listing lane and heat assignments.

**Deck Seeded Heats** – Swimmers are called to report to the clerk of course for their event on the day of the meet. After scratches, remaining swimmers are seeded in the proper heats.

**Set** – A specific segment of a daily practice.

**Shock** – A pool operator adds a prescribed amount of chemicals to the pool to take care of contamination (i.e., fecal or vomitous incident). A pool generally cannot be used for 24 hours after it has been shocked.

**Short Course** – Refers to competition conducted in 25-yard or 25-meter pools.

**Split** – An intermediate section of a race. Often used by the coaches to teach the concept of pacing.

**Sprint** – Describes the shorter events (50 and 100). In training, it means to swim as fast as possible for a short distance.

**Starter** – The official at a meet responsible for starting each heat and calling the next to the blocks.

**Streamline** – The position used to gain maximum distance during a start and/or push-off from the wall.

**Stroke Judge** – A certified official who determines the legality of swimmers’ strokes and disqualifies those who do not conform to swimming rules.

**Submitted Times** – Times previously achieved that are filed with an entry.

**Swim Bench** – A piece of equipment used for dry land training that allows the swimmer to exercise on land using actual pulling patterns.

**Taper** – The resting process in training. Prior to major competition, training is tapered off to allow the swimmer to compete in a rested state.

**Time Trials** – An event or series of events where swimmers may achieve or better a required time standard.

**Timed Finals** – Competition in which only heats are swum and final placing determined by the times achieved in those heats.

**Touch Pad** – The part of an electronic timing system that rests in the water at the finishing end of each lane. Times are recorded electronically as the pad is touched.

**Unattached** – The status a swimmer receives when changing from one USA swimming club to another. A swimmer must be unattached for 120 days from his/her last competition with the previous club. During this time they may compete individually, but not in relays.

**USS** – Abbreviation for United States Swimming, Inc., now the governing body for all amateur swimming in the United States. National Headquarters are in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

**USS#** – The personal registration number of each state member in United States Swimming.

**Warm Down** – Low intensity swimming used by swimmers after a race or main practice to rid the body of excess acid and to gradually reduce heart rate and respiration.

**Warm-up** – The period before the start of each session set aside to allow swimmers to enter the pool to loosen up, practice turns, etc.

**Zone Competition** – A highly competitive age group competition held within each of the four zones: Eastern, Western, Central, and Southern. Swimmers compete for their LSC not their club.



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