

SWIM 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".

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.
Anchor	The final swimmer in a relay.
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/mtr, 100 yds/mtr, and 200 yds/mtr. (LSC's with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd back)
Beep	The starting sound from an electronic, computerized timing system.
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.
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/mtr, 100 yds/mtr, and 200 yds/mtr. (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 The marshal oversees the Bull Pen.
Bulletin	One of the most important communication devices for a swim club. Bulletin boards are usually in the entrance Board ways of pools and have timely information posted for swimmers and parents to read.
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 yds/mtr, 100 yds/mtr, and 200 yds/mtr. (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 is usually one button per lane. It is the timer's responsibility to push the button as the swimmer finishes the race.
Cap	The latex or lycra covering worn on the head of swimmers. The colors and team logo's adorning these caps are limitless.
Car pool	The major transportation service provided by parents of a swim club, to shuttle swimmers to and from practices.
Chlorine	The chemical used by most pools to kill the bacteria in water and keep it clear and safe to swim in.
Course	Designated distance (length of pool) for swimming competition. (I.e.) Long Course = 50 meters / Short Course = 25 yards or 25 meters.

Deck	The area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches. Only authorized personnel may be on the deck during a swim competition.
Distance	How far a swimmer swims. Distances for short course are: 25 yards (1 length), 50 yards (2 lengths), 100 yards (4 lengths), 200 yards (8 lengths), 400 yards (16 lengths), 500 yards (20 lengths), 1000 yards (40 lengths), 1650 yards (66 lengths).
Disqualified	A swimmer's performance is not counted because of a rule's infraction. A disqualification is shown by an official raising one arm with open hand above their head.
Dive	Entering the water headfirst. Diving is not allowed during warmups except at the designated time, in specific lanes that are monitored by the swimmer's 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.
Dual Meet	Type of meet where two (2) teams/clubs compete against each other.
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.
Entry	An Individual, Relay team, or Club roster's event list into a swim competition.
Electronic Timing	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 swimmer's 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	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 team, although the starter or referee may disallow the false start due to unusual circumstances.
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 girl's heat and one boy's heat until all swimmers have competed.
Fees	Money paid by swimmers for services. (i.e.) Practice fees, registration fee, USS 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.
Fins	Large rubber fin type devices that fit on a swimmer's feet. Used in swim practice, not competition.
Flags	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.

Fund Raiser	A money making endeavor by a swim team/club usually involving both parents and swimmers.
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/mtr, 100 yds/mtr, 200 yds/mtr, 400 mtr/500 yd 800 mtr/1000 yds, 1500 mtr/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.
Gun	The blank firing pistol used at some meets by the starter to start the races.
Gun 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.
Handbook	A reference manual published by teams/clubs and LSC's or other swimming organizations.
Hats	See "caps".
Heats	A division of an event when there are too many swimmers to compete at the same time. The results are compiled by swimmer's time swam, after all heats of the event are completed.
Heat Sheet	The pre-meet printed listings of swimmer's 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 seedings 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 each age group at a swim meet. All meets do not offer high point awards; check the pre meet information.
Horn	A sounding device used in place of a gun. Used mainly with a fully automatic timing system.
Illegal	Doing something against the rules that is cause for disqualification.
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, Freestyle. Equal distances must be swam of each stroke. Distances offered: 100 yds, 200 yds/mtr, 400 yds/mtr.
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.
Kick	The leg movements of a swimmer. A popular word to "yell" to encourage swimmers during a race.
Kick Board	A flotation device used by swimmers during practice. A lightweight object used with great accuracy by coaches.
Lane	The specific area in which a swimmer is assigned to swim. (Ie) Lane 1 or Lane 2. Pools with starting blocks at only one end: As the swimmers stand behind the blocks, lanes are numbered from Right (lane 1) to Left (Lane 6).

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.
Leg	The part of a relay event swam by a single team member. A single stroke in the IM.
Length	The extent of the competitive course from end to end. See lap.
Long Course	A 50-meter pool.
Lycra	A stretch material used to make competitive swimsuits and swim hats.
Malfunction	A mechanical or electronic failure - not a human failure by the swimmer.
Mark	The command to take your starting position.
Marshall	The adult(s) (official) who control the crowd and swimmer flow at a swim meet.
Medals	Awards given to the swimmers at 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. The person directing the "dry side" of the meet.
Meters	The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the metric system. Long course meters are 50 meters, short course meters is 25 meters.
Mile	The slang referring to the 1500 meter or the 1650-yard freestyle, both of which are slightly short of a mile.
Natorium	A building constructed for the purpose of housing a swimming pool and related equipment.
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
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.
Nylon	A material used to make swimsuits.
Officials	The certified, adult volunteers, who operate the many facets of a swim competition.
Omega	A brand of automatic timing system.
OT	Official Time. The swimmers event time recorded to one hundredth of a second (.01).
Pace Clock	The large clocks with highly visible numbers and second hands, 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.

Pentathlon	A type of meet where swimmers swim 5 individual events and no relays. Typically, swimmers will compete in each of the 4 strokes, plus the Individual Medley.
Plaque	A type of award (wall plaque) given to swimmers at a meet.
Pool	The facility in which swimming competition is conducted.
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.
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. See "A" "AA" (etc.) times.
Race	Any single swimming competition. (Ie) preliminary, final, timed final.
Referee	The head official at a swim meet in charge of all the "Wet Side" administration and decisions.

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. 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.
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 swim meets.
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.
Session	Portion of meet distinctly separated from other portions by locale, time, type of competition, or age group.
Shave	The process of removing all arm, leg, and exposed torso hair, to decrease the "drag" or resistance of the body moving through the water. Used only by Seniors at very important (Championship) meets.
Short Course	A 25-yard or 25-meter pool.
Simultaneously	A term used in the rules of butterfly and breaststroke, meaning at the same time.
Split	A portion of an event, shorter than the total distance, that is timed. (i.e.) A swimmers first 50 time is taken as the swimmer swims the 100 race. It is common to take multiple splits for the longer distances.

Stations	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 ensuring 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.
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 move 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, Freestyle.
Stroke Judge	The official positioned at the side of the pool, walking the length of the course as the swimmer's 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. The three most popular styles/types of suits worn are: Nylon, Lycra, Paper.
Taper	The resting phase of a senior swimmer at the end of the season before the championship meet.

Team Records	The statistics a team keeps, listing the fastest swimmer in the club's history for each age group/each event.
Timed Finals	Competition in which only heats are swum, and final placings are 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.
Touch Out	To reach the touchpad and finish first in a close race.
Touch Pad	The removable plate (on the end of pools) that is 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 USS club.
Trophy	Type of award given to teams and swimmers at meets.
Uniform	The various parts of clothing a swimmer wears at a meet. May include: Parka, Warmup jacket, Team duffel bag, sweat pants, suits, hat, goggles, T-shirt, 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.
Vertical	At right angle to the normal water level.
Warm-down	The loosening a swimmer does after a race when pool space is available.
Warm-up	The practice and loosening session a swimmer does before the meet or their event is swum.

Watch	The handheld device used by timers and coaches for timing a swimmer's races and taking splits.
Water	For the purpose of filling swimming pools and swimmers drinking to properly hydrate themselves.
Weights	The various barbells / benches / machines used by swimmers during their dryland program.
Whistle	The sound a starter/referee makes to signal for quiet before they give the command to start the race.
Work Out	The practice sessions a swimmer attend.
Yards	The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the American system. A short course yard pool is 25 yards (75 feet) in length.
Yardage	The distance a swimmer races or swims in practice. Total yardage can be calculated for each practice session.