

Swim Team Glossary

Glossary of Competitive Swimming Strokes

ANCHOR – The last swimmer in a relay is the anchor.

BACK – Backstroke

BLOCKS – The blocks are the starting platforms that cannot exceed 30” above the water. The swimmers start their races from these platforms with the exception of the backstroke.

BREAST – Breaststroke

CLERK OF COURSE – Official who stages events by assigning heats and lanes to swimmers based on seed times

CUT-OFF-TIMES – These times are established by the host team to determine who qualifies for entry into certain meets and they vary according to age, group, and sex.

DISQUALIFICATION (DQ) – This usually occurs because of an improper start, kick, stroke, or turn by a swimmer. If a DQ occurs the swimmer may not be able to swim the race or the race is not counted if he or she does swim it.

EVENT – All of the races within an age group category are the events.

EXHIBITION – A swimmer or relay not entered for points, swims exhibition.

FALSE START – This occurs during the start of a race, if in the opinion of the referee or starter, one or more of the swimmers has gained an advantage by starting before the gun. The starting blast is pushed repeatedly if the starter has already started the race and wishes to recall the swimmers and charge a false start. If the swimmers do not hear the false start blast, a rope is dropped into the water. A false start usually leads to a disqualification.

50 YARDS – Two lengths of a yard pool are 50 yards.

FLAGS – Backstroke flags are placed 5 yards or 5 meters from the end of the pool. They enable a backstroke swimmer to execute a backstroke turn more efficiently by counting their strokes.

FLIP TURN – The head is usually below the surface of the water and the legs are brought out of the water during the turn. It is much faster than an open turn.

FLY - Butterfly

FREE – Freestyle (Normally a swimmer will swim front crawl since it is the fastest stroke, but they may swim any stroke they prefer if they swim freestyle.)

FREE RELAY – In the free relay four swimmers swim a set distance, one at a time, usually using the crawl stroke. The first swimmer starts the race at the start of the gun. Each successive swimmer starts their segment at the conclusion of the preceding swimmer.

HEAT – One race

HEAT SHEET – The heat sheet lists the events in the meet and the names and times of the swimmers.

I.M. – Individual Medley. An event in which the swimmer uses all four strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle.

JUDGES DECISION – This is the official “call” of the order of finish, regardless of final times.

LONG COURSE – This is a pool 50 meters in length. USS conducts most of its summer competition in long course.

MEDLEY RELAY – The same procedure is used as in the free relay except that each successive swimmer uses a different stroke in the following order: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle.

MEET APPROVED – Times can be used as proof of times for USA Championship meets. Swimmers other than USA members may participate in this meet.

MEET OFFICIAL – A starter, referee, and turn judge are officials that are provided by the host team.

MEET SANCTIONED - Only swimmers who belong to the sanctuary body may participate in this meet.

OPEN TURNS – This turn is usually done with the head coming out of the water and taking a breath. The feet and legs stay underwater. It is slower than a flip turn.

SCRATCH – A scratch is the cancellation of a swimmer’s participation in an event.

SECTIONAL – Each team participates according to its section of the state. The top two individuals or relays in each event qualify for the state meet.

SENIOR – IN USA Swimming, there is no age restriction in “Senior” competition.

SEED TIME - This is the swimmer’s best time. It is used to place the swimmers in the proper order in heats the next time they swim. Seed times carry over from one season to the next, and from one age group to the next, if the distances are the same.

SPLIT – The split is the time for each individual on a relay or the time of a set portion of a swimmer’s race.

STARTING JUDGE – This is the official responsible for instructing all swimmers before all events as to the stroke and distance involved, for starting the race, and for calling the order of finish.

STATE – Top sectional swimmers from all over the state compete at this meet.

STROKE AND TURN JUDGES – The officials who judge for the correctness of starts, finishes, turns, and strokes

TAPER – A taper is a special type of practice, usually at the end of the season, designed to enable a swimmer to peak for major meets. A taper involves fast sets with lots of rest in between.

TOUCH – On some turns and finishes, stroke rules require a two-hand touch. Butterfly and breaststroke require a two-hand touch. Backstroke and crawl require only a one-hand touch.

TOUCHPADS – These are installed at the finishing end of the pool. They are used to stop an electric timing device, which gives both the elapsed time and order of finish for the heat as the swimmers touch the pad.

25 YARDS – One length of a yard pool is 25 yards.

WARM-UPS – A warm-up is low intensity swimming used by a swimmer prior to a main practice set or a race to get muscles loose and warm, and gradually increase heart rate and respiration. If a proper warm-up is not used, the swimmer experiences a “tightening” feeling or risks injury when trying to swim at maximum effort.