

Swim Speak - Glossary of Swimming Terms

Admission: Certain swim meets charge for spectators to view the meets.

Saskatchewan Swim Coaches Association: (SSCA) The professional organisation for swim coaches in Saskatchewan.

Alternate: In a prelims/finals meet, after the finalists are decided, the next fastest swimmers other than the finalists are designated as alternates. The faster of the two being the first alternate and the next being the second.

Anchor: The final swimmer in a relay.

Backstroke: One of the four competitive racing strokes, basically any style of swimming on your back. Backstroke is swam as the first stroke of the Medley Relay and the second stroke of the Individual Medley. This stroke is offered provincially at 50 metre, 100 metre, and 200 metre distances.

Block: The starting platform located behind each lane.

BOD: Board of Directors.

Breaststroke: One of the four competitive racing strokes. Breaststroke is swam as the second stroke in the Medley Relay and the third stroke in the Individual Medley. Offered provincially, racing distances are 50 metres, 100 metres, and 200 metres.

Bulkhead: A wall constructed to divide a pool into different courses, such as a 50m pool into two 25m pools.

Butterfly: One of the four competitive racing strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed fly) is swam as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and the first stroke in the Individual Medley. Offered provincially, racing distances are 50 metres, 100 metres, and 200 metres.

Cap: The latex or lycra covering worn on the head of swimmers.

Car Pool: The major transportation service provided by parents of a swim club to shuttle swimmers to and from practices.

Carbohydrates: The main source of food energy used by athletes.

Championship Meet: The meet held at the end of the short and long course seasons. Qualification times are necessary to enter meets.

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.

Chlorine: The chemical used by most pools to kill the bacteria in water and keep it clear and safe to swim in.

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.

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.

Closed Competition: Swim meet which is open to a specific number of invitees.

Club: A registered swim team that is a member in good standing with Swim Alberta.

Coach: A person who trains and teaches athletes in the sport of swimming.

Code of Ethics: A Code that both swimmers and coaches are required to sign while attending Swim Saskatchewan camps, tours, etc.

Colorado: A brand of automatic timing system.

Consolation Finals: After the fastest 8 or 10 swimmers, the next 8 or 10 swimmers 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 metres, short course = 25 metres.

Cut: Slang for qualifying time. A time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event.

Deadline: The date meet entries must be postmarked by, to be accepted by the meet host. Making the meet deadline does not guarantee entry into a meet since many meets are full prior to the deadline.

Deck: The area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches. No one but authorised persons may be on deck during a swim meet or practice.

Deck Entries: Accepting entries into events on the first day or later days of a meet.

Dehydration: The abnormal depletion of body fluids (water). The most common cause of swimmers cramps and sick feelings.

Distance: How far a swimmer swims.

Distance Event: Term used to refer to events over 400 metres.

DQ (Disqualified): This occurs when a swimmer has committed an infraction of some kind (e.g. one-handed touch in breaststroke). A disqualified swimmer is not eligible to receive an award, nor will there be an official time in that event.

Dive: Entering the water head first. Diving is not allowed during warm up except at the designated time, in specific lanes that are monitored by the swimmers coach.

Drill: An exercise involving a part of a stroke, used to improve technique.

Dropped Time: When a swimmer goes faster than the previous performance they have "dropped their time."

Dry-land Training: Training done out of the water that aids and enhances swimming performance; usually includes stretching, calisthenics, and/or weight training.

Dual Meet: Type of meet where two teams compete against each other.

Entry: An individual, relay teams roster event list into a swim competition.

Entry Chair: The host clubs designated person who is responsible for receiving and making sure the entries have met the deadline, or returning entries if the meet is full.

Entry Fees: The amount per event a swimmer or relay is charged to compete.

Entry Form: Form used by the coach to enter swimmers in a competition.

Entry Limit: Each meet will have a limit of total swimmers they can accept, or a time limit they can not exceed. Once an entry limit is reached a meet will be closed and all other entries returned.

Electronic Timing: Timing system usually has touchpads in the water, junction boxes on the deck with hook up cables, button for backup timing, and a computer console that prints out the results of each race. Some timing systems are hooked up to a scoreboard that displays swimmers times.

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 practice or competition.

Event: A race or stroke over a given distance. An event equals one preliminary with final or one timed final.

False Start: Occurs when a swimmer is moving at the start prior to the signal.

Fastest to Slowest: A seeding method used on the longer events 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 alternate one female heat and one male heat until all swimmers have competed.

Fees: Money paid by swimmers for services such as practice fees, pool time, registration fees, etc.

FINA: The international, rules making organisation, for the sport of swimming.

Final: The championship heat of an event in which the top six or eight swimmers from the preliminaries compete for awards, depending on the number of lanes in the pool.

Final Results: The printed copy of the results of each race of a swim meet.

Fins: Large rubber fin type devices that fit on swimmers feet. Used in practice only.

Finish: The final phase of the race is the touch at the end of the race.

Flags: Backstroke flags placed 5 metres from the end of the pool. They enable backstrokers to execute a backstroke turn more efficiently through being able to count the number of strokes into each wall.

Freestyle: One of the four competitive racing events. Freestyle is swam as the forth stroke in the Medley Relay and in the Individual Medley. Offered provincially, distances are 50 metres, 100 metres, 200 metres, 400 metres, 800 metres, or 1500 metres.

Gallery: The viewing area for spectators during the swimming competition.

Goal: A specific time achievement a swimmer sets and strives for; can be short or long term.

Goggles: Glasses type devices worn by swimmers to keep their eyes from being irritated by the chlorine in the water.

Gun: A blank firing pistol that may be used by the starter to start the races.

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 Sheet: The pre-meet printing listings of swimmers seed times in events at a competition. These sheets vary in accuracy since coaches submit swimmers times many weeks before the meet. Heat sheets are usually sold at the admissions table and are used to mainly 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.

Horn: A sounding device, sometimes used in place of a gun. Used mainly with a fully automatic timing system.

I.M.: Slang for individual medley, an event in which the swimmer uses all four strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle.

Insurance: Swim Alberta offers accident insurance coverage which is automatic when swimmers, coaches, officials are registered with Swim Alberta. Many restrictions apply so check with the office.

Invitational: Type of meet that requires a club to request an invitation to attend.

Jump: An illegal start done by the second, third, or fourth member of a relay team. The swimmer on the blocks 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 floatation device used by swimmers during a practice. A light weight object used with great accuracy by coaches.

Lane: The specific area in which a swimmer is assigned to swim. Lanes are numbered from right (lane 1) to left (Lane6).

Lane Ropes: Continuous floating markers attached to a cable attached from the starting end to the turning end for the purpose of separating each lane and quieting waves caused by racing swimmers.

Lap: One length of the course (sometimes means down and back).

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

Late Entries: Meet entries from a club that are received by the meet host after the entry deadline. These entries are usually returned or can be accepted at double the published entry fee.

Leg: The part of a relay event swam by a single team member or a single stroke in the IM.

Length: The extent of the competitive course from end to end.

Long Course or LC: A 50 metre long pool.

Long Distance: Any freestyle event over 1500 metres, normally conducted in a natural body of water, such as a lake, river, or ocean.

Lycra: A stretch material used to make competitive swim suits and caps.

Mark: The command to take your starting position.

Marshall: The official who controls the crowd and swimmer flow at the swim meet.

Medals: Awards given to the swimmers at meets. They vary in size, design, and method of presentation.

Meet: Competition designed to be a measure of progress and a learning experience. By implementing what has been learned in practice, the swimmers test themselves against the clock to see how they are progressing.

Meet Chair: The person in charge of the administration of the meet.

Metres: The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the metric system. Long course is 50 metres and short course is 25 metres.

Middle Distance: Term used to refer to events of 200 to 400 metres in length.

Negative Split: Swimming the second half of the race faster than the first half.

No Time (NT): The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer has not swam that event before.

Novice: A beginner or someone who does not have experience.

Nutrition: The sum of the processes by which a swimmer takes in and utilises food substances.

Nylon: A material used to make swim suits.

Official: A judge on the deck of the pool at a sanctioned competition who enforces SNC rules.

Official Time: A time achieved in a race during a duly sanctioned competition.

Omega: A type of automatic timing system.

Open Competition: Competition which any qualified club or swimmer may enter.

Pace: The often pre-determined speed with which a swimmer completes each segment of a race (e.g. 25m, 50m)

Pace Clock: Large clock with a large second hand and a smaller minute had, used to check pace or maintain intervals in practice (may also be digital).

Paddle: Coloured plastic devices worn on the swimmers hands during swim practices.

Pool: The facility in which swimming competitions and practices are conducted.

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 club/team.

Prelim: Slang for preliminaries, also called heats are those races in which swimmers qualify for the championship and consolation finals in an event.

Prelim/Final: Type of meet with two sessions. The preliminary heats are usually held in the morning session.

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 heat sheet or meet programme.

Proof of Time: An official meet result. Swimmers/Coaches must present proof of time with some entries.

Psyche Sheet: An entry sheet showing all swimmers entered into each individual event. Sometimes referred to as a heat sheet or meet programme.

Pull Buoy: A floatation device used for pulling by swimmers in practice.

Qualifying Time: Qualifying time necessary to compete in a particular event and/or competition.

Race: A single swimming competition event.

Referee: The head official in charge of a swim meet.

Registered: Enrolled and paid member of Swim Alberta.

Relay: An event in which 4 swimmers compete together as a team to achieve on time.

Ribbons: Awards in a variety of sizes, styles, and colours given at some swim meets.

Safety Procedure: Safety procedures are designed to prevent accidents, and must be followed to the letter.

Sanctioned Meet: All competitions in which records may be set and official times may be obtained, must be sanctioned (=approved officially) by Swim Alberta.

Scratch: To withdraw from an event in a competition.

Seed: Assign the swimmers to heats and lanes according to their submitted or preliminary times.

Session: Portion of a meet distinctly separated from other portions by time.

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 senior swimmers at important meets.

Short Course or SC: A 25 metre long pool in which most competitions during the winter are held.

Split: A swimmer's intermediate time in a race. Splits are registered every 50m and are used to determine if a swimmer is on a planned pace. Under certain conditions, initial splits may also be used as official times.

Sprint: Describes the shorter events (50 and 100m); in training, to swim as fast as possible for a short distance.

Start: The beginning of a race. The dive used to begin a race.

Starter: The official in charge of signalling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.

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 that everything is not right for the race to start.

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 and straight as it can be.

Stroke: There are four competitive strokes, butterfly, backstroke, freestyle, breaststroke.

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.

Suit: The racing uniform worn by the swimmer, in the water, during competition. The four most popular types of suits worn are Nylon, Lycra, Paper, and Fastskin.

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 the tie stands.

Team: Swim Saskatchewan club that is eligible to compete for points.

Team Records: The statistics a team keeps, listing the fastest swimmer in the club's history for each age group/event.

Taper: The final preparation phase. As part of this phase, and prior to major competitions, older and more experienced swimmers will shave their entire body to reduce resistance and heighten sensation in the water.

Time Card: The card issued to each swimmer prior to each race, on which splits and the final time are recorded.

Timed Final: Competition in which only heats are swum and final placings are determined by those times.

Time Standard: A time set by a provincial association that a swimmer must achieve for qualification or recognition.

Time Trial: A practice race which is not part of a regular competition. Time trials may be sanctioned and used to qualify for specific meets.

Timer: The volunteers sitting behind the starting block/finish end of the pool, who are responsible for getting watch times on events and activating the backup buttons for the timing system.

Touch Out: To reach the touch pad and finish first in a race.

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.

Transfer: The act of leaving one club and going to another. A 30-day unattached status is required before the swimmer can represent the new club.

Travel Fund: A sum of money set aside for a swimmer to use for travel expenses and entry fees to specified meets.

Tri-meet: A meet with three teams competing for points.

Unofficial Time: The time displayed on a read out board or read over the intercom by the announcer immediately after a race. After the time has been checked, it will become official.

Warm-down: Low intensity swimming used by swimmer after a race or main practice set to rid the body of excess lactic acid, and to gradually reduce heart rate and respiration.

Warm-up: Low-intensity swimming used by swimmers prior to a main practice set or a race to get muscles loose and warm, and to gradually increase heart rate and respiration.

Watches: Stopwatches used to time swimmers during a competition. When totally automatic timing equipment is used, watches serve as a back-up method.