



Rough Guide To Competitive Swimming



Competitive swimming can be very rewarding for swimmers of all levels but is sometimes tricky to understand, especially for those who are new to the sport. This guide is intended to help you navigate through the different types of galas Bath Dolphin takes part in and to help you understand how each swimmer fits into this.

Club Galas

These are galas that only active members of our swimming club can take part in. They are a really good way for swimmers to get used to competition in familiar surroundings, amongst fellow club members, with parents and friends being invited to come and support swimmers and join in the fun.

We currently run two different types of club galas; the Club Championships in the Autumn and the Graham Cutting memorial sprint gala in July. Swimmers are entered into races according to their age group and compete for medals, trophies and the honour of being a club champion. These are not licensed meets (see explanations below) so the time swum will not be recorded by Swim England but will be recorded on our own club database. We encourage all swimmers to take part in these galas, it's great to be cheered on by your club mates and spectators and we always have fun!



Open Meets

Open meets are events where the swimmer swims for themselves to try to improve their Personal Bests ("PB's) and perhaps gain that qualification time for the County and Regional Championships once they are 9 or older.

Every year the coaches decide a programme of races to enter and eligible club members will receive an email from the competition secretary who collates the entries



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and monies to send as one bulk entry. Please do not submit individual entries and payments to the meet organisers.

Although these are individual events, you will still be representing the club and will be with your team mates, team managers and potentially coaches. They are a great way for swimmers to try to set a new personal best or try out a new event. BDSC regularly competes in meets hosted by local clubs at venues such as:

- Millfield School (Street)
- Hutton Moor Sports Centre (Weston Super-Mare)
- Hengrove Pool (Bristol)
- The Five Rivers Leisure Centre (Salisbury).

Most Open Meets are now "licensed" (see explanations below) which mean the times you swim at licensed Open Meets can be used as a qualifying time for County and Regional championships and will be recorded by Swim England. Some open meets have restrictions on who can enter according to their PB swim times with either 'no faster than' or 'no slower than' stipulations. These are set out in the Race Conditions. Most Meets accept swimmers on the basis of their "age as at 31 December", but some choose to use a date closer to race day.

Swimmers will be in heats with other competitors with similar swim times although they may be a different age. The heats usually start with the slower swimmers and end with the fastest in each event. Once all the swimmers' times have been recorded the swimmer will be placed according to age group. Until everyone has swum it's very hard to tell how you have performed within your age group so be patient! It's important to note the swimmer may win in the heat but that doesn't mean to say they would win in their age group. Medals are given to the top 3 swimmers in each event.

It is increasingly popular for race results to be published in "real time" on an App called Meet Mobile, available on Google Play or the Apple Store.





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League Galas

In league galas the swimmer is swimming as part of the BDSC team. Currently we take part in the Cotswold League. The Cotswold League caters for all ages of swimmers throughout the club and comprises 4 league rounds held between January and April, each with 4 teams, resulting in a larger Final in May. The age groups are 11 & Under, 13 & Under, 15 & Under and Open. The coaches will try to select as many swimmers as possible across the season but with 2-year age group bands, it's not easy to get everyone a swim, especially those who are 12 & 14 years old.

Each race will have points allocated according to finishing position and the points all add up to see who is the winning club. "No faster than" times exist for each event (so if a swimmer is too fast they get a "Speeding ticket" and no points!) and every swim counts! Swimmers are picked to compete and allocated races by the coaches. We travel by coach together as a team to the galas which is great fun and helps develop a real team spirit. Most swimmers and supporters come home with no voice left as there is so much cheering and encouragement. The most exciting race is usually the cannon at the end when one male and one female swimmer from each age group takes a leg in the relay. Ear plugs are definitely recommended if you don't like noise! The swimmers' times from these galas are not recorded by Swim England.



County and Regional Championships

BDSC is affiliated to Great Britain Swimming through Swim England, Swim England South West Region and finally through Somerset County ASA. There are 3 levels of competition - County, Regional, and National each year. In order to compete in these championships, the swimmer will need to firstly swim a qualifying time within the last year that is recorded by Swim England and also have the entry accepted.

The Somerset County Championships take part in January and February each year and usually take place at Millfield School. Qualifying times for each event are



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published in about November and we will share these with you as soon as we have them (but swimmers are usually expected to swim quicker than the “no faster than” times used for the County Development Meet in September/October). Unlike some counties Somerset do not publish consideration times (times that may get you in depending on the calibre of the entries), only qualification times. These are broken down into age groups and it’s important to remember it’s the age of the swimmer at the end of the year the championships take place in that is the one relevant to the swimmer. The youngest age category is 10/11 (and 8-year olds with late birthday would be required to achieve these times in order to compete).

It’s a real boost for a swimmer to swim at the County Championships and they will be in amongst some fantastic athletes, some of whom you may later recognise swimming for the country. There is often a “qualification window” in which swimmers must meet the qualification times, so this invariably means that open meets in December are very busy (often over-subscribed), so it is important to get entries in promptly once an event has been advertised.



South West Summer Regional Championships can take place in May each year with the youth swimmers competing in Plymouth and the younger swimmers competing at Hengrove and/or Millfield. Swim South West publishes both qualification times and



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slightly slower consideration times for each race. Swimmers need to achieve these times within a qualification window (which is typically 1 October thru mid April) at licensed Meets of levels 1-3.

The Winter Regional Championships are for age 15 & under and 16+. Times for these need to have been raced from 1 January – 18 October of that year.

Explanations

Licensed Meets are swimming events licensed by the Swim England. This means they have to meet certain standards. There are 4 levels with level 1 & 2 being the "highest standard." Further information can be found at <http://www.swimming.org/sport/licensed-meets/>. Times achieved at licensed meets are automatically updated to the Swim England national rankings system that can be viewed at <https://www.swimmingresults.org/individualbest/>.

In Summary

Event type	How do I sign up?	Do I need to pay?	How do I get there	Support
League Galas	Coaches select a team (not necessarily the fastest swimmers)	No	Coach provided unless it is our turn to host	The Club needs to provide officials (time keepers, judges etc) in order to run the gala. The host club will need volunteers to make the event happen.
Open Meet	Competition Secretary advertises the event on the BDSC website and parents/swimmers are sent a link to "declare" and choose what to race (sign up can be on the website or through On Deck app). These events are often over-subscribed so please stick to the advertised deadline for getting your entries in.	Yes (the fees are set out in the race conditions). Refunds are rarely given if a swimmer decides to withdraw.	Swimmer makes their own way/lift share.	Coaches and poolside helpers accompany the swimmers. Host clubs provide most of the officials but each club is asked if volunteers can help run the event.



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Club Champs	Google docs	No	Usually takes place instead of a training session at the Sports Centre.	Lots of volunteers (time keepers, runners, poolside assistants etc) are needed.
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