

CoStA Swim Glossary

Like every sport and pastime, swimming has its own special terminology. As your child progresses in competitive swimming, you are likely to encounter a bewildering array of acronyms and jargon that may leave you feeling as though you've been thrown in at the deep end. We hope this glossary will help you tell your HDWs from your DNSs. Apologies if some entries are obvious, but it seemed better to cover every base.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

A

Aerobic: Longer distance energy system (see **Energy**).

Aerobic energy: Aerobic means 'with air'. The aerobic system produces energy by the complete breakdown of glucose. Energy production is slower, but more continual than the **anaerobic** systems. The aerobic system is the major energy provider for the 200 m and longer distance events.

Age for competitors: Generally, age-determined events rely either on the age of the swimmer on the date of the competition, or on the age of the swimmer on 31st December in the year of the competition.

Age group: Swimmers are referred to as age group swimmers before the ages of 14 (girls) and 15 (boys).

Anaerobic: Sprint energy system (see **Energy**). The anaerobic system is the major energy provider for 25 m and 50 m sprints.

Anaerobic energy: Anaerobic means 'without air'.

Anchor: The final swimmer in a relay. The final leg is the anchor leg.

AOE: Automated Officiating Equipment are the touch/timing pads and timing system used at most licensed meets.

Arena League: Competition otherwise known as the *National Arena Swimming League*. This is a series of team galas running annually within a league framework. Three initial rounds held in October-December are within regional divisions, with winners from the top division of each region going on to a National final. Team selection is by coaches.

AT: Anaerobic threshold. A training intensity that pushes the swimmer to the highest pace they can hold without suffering from increased lactic acid production.

B

Blocks: The starting blocks from which freestyle, butterfly and breaststroke races begin.

C

Closing date: The date when meet entries close. CoStA closing date vs Meet closing date - CoStA will have an earlier closing date in order to guarantee our entries get accepted

Club Championships: CoStA holds Club Champs once a year and they provide a great opportunity for swimmers to measure their progress and race against peers in a safe, familiar environment.

Cool down: Also known as Swim Down. Used by the swimmer to rid the body of excess lactic acid generated during a race or training.

County Championships: The Championships will be held over three weekends in late January/early February. Qualifying times must be achieved at licensed meets during the qualifying period (usually since the last day of the previous year's competition). The qualifying age is the swimmer's age as of 31st December in that year (i.e. on 31st December 2016 for Counties in 2016).

CT: Consideration Time time - a slower time than a Qualifying Time (QT) that will be considered for entry but will not guarantee you a place e.g. at Counties

D

Dehydration: A swimmer who has not consumed enough water during training/competition will become dehydrated. If a swimmer feels thirsty, it is an indication that they are approximately 2% dehydrated. At 2% dehydration a swimmer's resting heart rate can be up to 10 beats per minute higher than normal. This uses extra energy.

D N C: Did not compete - Disqualification code used in competitive swimming events where the swimmer did not start the race.

D N F: Did not finish - Disqualification code used in competitive swimming events where the swimmer did not finish the race.

DQ: Disqualified. Swimmers may be disqualified for several reasons (e.g. false start, incorrect stroke, incorrect turn, starting before the starting signal, arms not simultaneous, etc.). The reason for disqualification will sometimes be published on the meet results.

E

Energy systems: The cardio-vascular system provides energy. The body has three complementary energy systems, although as far as swimming is concerned, only two are relevant. The **anaerobic** system provides energy instantly and does not use oxygen but will only produce energy for up to about a minute. The anaerobic system is the major energy provider for 25 m and 50 m sprints.

The **aerobic** system needs a constant supply of oxygen. It is a slower and more economical system of energy production. The aerobic system is the major energy provider for the 200 m, and longer distance events.

Swimmers use different energy levels when they train, which relate to how much oxygen is used up by the muscles and how fast the heart is beating. It is important to train at different rates, using all the energy systems - **VO2 Max**, **Threshold**, **A2** (aerobic 2) and **A1** (aerobic 1).

VO2 Max is working hard but not an all-out sprint; **threshold** should be a pace when swimmers are working hard but can maintain speed and effort throughout the whole set;

A2 is slightly slower than threshold but again should be a pace swimmers can maintain. **A1** is slightly slower again, with swimmers having a fairly low heart rate during an A1 set - however this does not mean they can swim slowly and put no effort in!

Event: A race or stroke over a set distance, e.g. 100 m freestyle or 200 m breaststroke.

F

False start: When a swimmer leaves the block before the starting signal has sounded.

False start - one start rule: ASA law (SW4.4) defines a false start as “Any swimmer starting before the starting signal has been given shall be disqualified”.

If a swimmer starts before the gun/whistle/beeper sounds, he or she is disqualified. This means that if they get it wrong on the first start, they are disqualified; there is no second chance.

Fixture list: Fixtures in the swimming year (September-July) are aimed at best possible dates for achieving qualifying times for competitions and will also include any other Open Meets or Leagues such as the **Arena League**, **Major League** and **Peanuts**, as well as **Club Championships**. CoStA's fixture list appears on the right-hand side of the Club's homepage.

Flags: Also known as **backstroke flags**. These are suspended five metres from either end of the pool to indicate to the swimmer that the end of the pool is near and to assist with backstroke turns. With practice, the swimmer will be able to

work out how many more strokes are required and so eliminate the need to turn around to look.

Flyer: In relays, when a swimmer performs a takeover before the incoming swimmer has touched the wall.

Form stroke: Any stroke other than front crawl (freestyle).

G

Gala: A **gala** is a general term for an organised competitive swimming event. It can include club galas, league fixtures, friendly competitions, or larger events, and swimmers usually participate as part of a team representing their club. Entry is often limited to invited clubs or league members.

H

HDW: Heat declared winner. Term used in gala events where only heats are swum, not heats and finals. Swimmers are graded by entry time. The swimmer with the fastest heat time in the relevant age group wins the event, regardless of which swimmer wins each heat. Once all the heats have been completed, the placings for each age group are calculated from the times recorded. Thus it is possible for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd places for an age group to go to swimmers who competed in different heats and for a swimmer who placed 6th in his heat to be 1st overall in his age group.

Heat declared events are extremely difficult for spectators wanting to know the results, because you have to identify all the swimmers in a particular age group and note all their times before you know how well your swimmer has done.

I

IM: Individual medley. All four strokes swum in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle. IMs are raced over 100, 200 or 400 metres. When swum in a relay, the order is back, breast, fly, freestyle so as to avoid a takeover to backstroke.

J

Judges: There are three types of judges in a competition. Stroke judges ensure that each swimmer uses the correct stroke for each race. Turning judges observe all turns and relay take-overs. Placing judges decide the order of finishing and act as turning judges at the finishing end. Judges report infringements of the rules to the **Referee**, who then decides whether to disqualify a swimmer.

K

Kick: The leg component of a swimming stroke. A legs-only set in training.

Kick board: A foam board used during training to support the upper body for some legs-only drills. Sometimes called a float.

L

Lane order: In finals the lane order is decided from times swum in the heats or semis. The fastest qualifier goes in lane 4, the second fastest in lane 5, third fastest in lane 3, fourth fastest in lane 6, fifth fastest in lane 2, sixth fastest in lane 7, seventh fastest in lane 1, with the slowest qualifier in lane 8. In theory this should produce a **spearheaded** race when viewed from above. Sometimes later heats in **HDW** events will be spearheaded too.

Licensed meet: Different galas are aimed at different levels of swimmer. Competitions are often licensed by the **ASA** and described as being at one of four levels:

- - **Level 1** galas are aimed at the elite swimmers and usually have very tough qualifying times (times that the swimmer must have swum faster than in order to enter). These galas are held in a 50 m pool.
- - **Level 2** galas usually have slightly easier times and can be held in a 25 m pool.
- - **Level 3** galas are aimed at swimmers who are trying to achieve qualifying times for **County** or higher-level galas. They will usually have upper qualifying time limits (times that the swimmer must NOT have swum faster than) and may also have a lower qualifying time (times that the swimmer must have swum faster than) to be able to enter the event.
- - **Level 4** galas can be either single club events, such as club champs, or a meet where one club invites others to participate, such as a local derby. These can be held in any length pool from 25 m and above.

Long course: Competitions held in a 50 m pool. Times achieved are usually slower than those achieved in a 25 m pool.

M

Major League: The Herts **Major League** caters for swimmers in four age categories: under 12, under 14, under 16 and Open category for older swimmers.

It has three divisions, with promotion and relegation between divisions for the top and bottom two teams. There are three galas per season. In the third and final gala in Divisions One and Two, the Top 6 teams swim against each other and prizes are awarded to the overall winner and runner-up in each Division.

Marshalling area: The area where swimmers report to the race marshals prior to their heat and await instructions to go to the area behind the starting blocks.

Masters: Swimmers 25 or over.

Medley relay: A relay of four swimmers, where each swimmer swims a different stroke in the order backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, freestyle.

Meet: shortened name for Open Meet (see below)

N

Nationals: The British Summer Championships and Swim England National Summer Meet are held each July/August. These are by invitation only, based on the long course times (50m pool) achieved during the qualification window which is set from March to May. The top ranked swimmers in each age grouping for each discipline/distance in Great Britain are invited to the British Summer Championships (in 2024 around 28 swimmers) and the next set of eligible swimmers (in 2024 around 30 swimmers) are invited to English, Scottish or Welsh National Meets depending on their Home Nationality.

The Swim England National Winter Short Course (25m) Championships are held in December.

Negative split: A race strategy in which a swimmer covers the second half of the race faster than the first half.

NFT: No faster than. Qualifying times for events at an open meet/gala which must not be exceeded.

NT: No time. Used to designate swimmers who have not previously swum an **event** competitively and have therefore not obtained a time for it. CoStA swimmers can enter events at **Club Champs** with **no time**, so they can then set a personal benchmark time for that event and use it to enter other competitions.

O

Official time: The time officially recorded for a swimmer after comparing it with the placings.

Open meet: An open meet is a specific type of swimming competition or gala that is *open* to swimmers from any affiliated club, provided they meet the published entry criteria (such as age groups, qualifying or consideration times). Swimmers enter individually, and results are formally recorded, often for qualification purposes (e.g. counties, regions, nationals). Usually, swimmers must be faster than set qualifying times (lower limits). Some meets will have cut-off times (upper limits), which means swimmers must be **no faster than** the set time.

Over the top start: Phrase used during competitions where swimmers stay in the water, by the lane ropes, at the end of their race until the next race has started. This approach is used to reduce time between events.

P

PB: Personal best. The best time a swimmer has ever done over a specific distance and stroke. Swimmers may have times for short course (25 m) and long course (50 m) pools.

Peanuts: The Herts **Peanuts League** caters for swimmers in four age categories: 9-year-olds, under 11, under 12 and under 13. It has three divisions, with promotion and relegation between divisions for the top and bottom two teams. There are three galas per season, typically run between April and July. In the third and final gala in Divisions One and Two, the Top 6 teams swim against each other and prizes are awarded to the overall winner and runner-up in each Division.

Pull: The arm action of a swimming stroke. Can be used to describe an arms-only set.

Pull buoy: A keyhole-shaped float gripped between the legs to keep them afloat during an arms-only set.

Q

QT: Qualifying time. An upper- or lower-time limit, based on gender and age, specified for events in a competition, with which the swimmer must comply in order to enter. Swimmers either must be faster than the time specified, or slower than an upper limit time, also known as an **NFT**, or **no faster than**, time.

R

Rankings: see Swim England National Rankings.

Referee: The referee has overall control of a competition, ensuring that the rules are obeyed, inspecting the course and has the authority to receive protests from competitors and/or coaches and decide on them.

Regional Championships: For CoStA this is the Eastern region, which covers Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. These are the next step up from **County Championships**. Times must be achieved at a **Level 1, 2, or 3 licensed meet**.

RQT: Regional qualifying time. S

Scratched: To be refused entry to a competition, either because a swimmer does not meet the qualifying times or, most commonly, because a meet is oversubscribed. Swimmers with the slowest qualifying times in an event are likely to be scratched first.

Seeding: The method of arranging swimmers who have entered in an event according to their submitted time. Most competitions are swum starting with the slowest entries and working up to the faster entries. The final heat is often swum in "**spearhead**" formation, with the fastest swimmers occupying the middle lanes.

Senior: Swimmer aged 18 years and over (25+ year-olds are also Masters).

Set: A series of training routines.

Short course: Races swum in a 25 m pool. Because there are more turns, times are usually faster than those achieved in **long course** pools (50 m) for the same event distance.

Skins: This is an event at a gala, whereby the fastest 50 m freestyle swimmers across the age groups are involved in a knockout-style race. Usually this would involve 8 swimmers depending on the size of the pool. The swimmers repeat the 50 m swim, each time eliminating one swimmer, until only two remain, the winner being the faster of the two in the head-to-head race. This can be a very exciting and demanding race.

Spearhead: The lane order for finals is decided from times in the heats or semi-finals. The fastest qualifier will swim in lane 4, second fastest in lane 5, third in lane 3, fourth in lane 6, fifth in lane 2, sixth in lane 7, seventh in lane 1 and eighth in lane 8. Theoretically, this creates spearhead format in the race.

Speeding ticket: Swimmers who exceed the fastest permissible time for an event are given a speeding ticket. This means that their time stands but not the place.

Split: A swimmer's intermediate times in a race. The times from each race are broken down into 25 m or 50 m segments which enable swimmers to see how they have paced their race. A **negative split** is used to describe a situation where a segment time is quicker than the previous segment (i.e. the swimmer got faster).

Sports Engine: This is the sports management system that the club uses to manage member communications, billing, meet entries, training schedule, camps, track training attendance. Each member account will have a log in to manage their own profile and inform the club of any changes to contact details and medical information. It's important that you keep your profile and details up to date. The Sports Engine mobile app is an on-the-go version of the system which all members can download and use the same log-in details.

Squadron: A freestyle relay, usually of 8-10 swimmers of mixed age and gender in each team.

Streamlining: Reducing the cross-sectional area of the body to the minimum, to make faster progress through the water as a result of less drag. This is one of the first and most important skills taught to CoStA swimmers.

Swim down: Also known as Cool Down. Used by the swimmer to rid the body of excess lactic acid generated during a race or training.

Swim England: Swim England is the English national governing body for swimming, diving, water polo, open water and synchronised swimming. It organises competition throughout England, establishes the laws of the sport and operates comprehensive certification and education programmes for teachers, coaches and officials as well as its Learn to Swim awards scheme. The ASA supports 1,600 affiliated swimming clubs through a **National / Regional / County** structure.

Swim England National Rankings: Every **licensed meet** that a swimmer attends in the swimming year will have sent its results to the **ASA** for ranking purposes. These rankings are either **long course** (50 m pools) or **short course** (25 m pools) and cover every event in every age group. Can be accessed by anyone via swimmingresults.org

Swim England number: A unique reference number for each swimmer issued by Swim England.

Swim-off: In a heat/semi-finals/finals-type competition, a race after the scheduled event to break a tie.

T

Takeover: The point in which one swimmer replaces another swimmer in a relay.

Time trial: Swim made to secure a recognised time for a particular event. Open gala organisers sometimes permit swimmers to make late entries on the day of competition, the results of which may not be included in the overall medals but will be recorded as official times.

Touch pad: The removable pad (on the end of pools) that is connected to an automatic timing system.

W

Withdrawals: When a swimmer withdraws from an event after having declared an intention to participate. Withdrawals must be notified to the meet organisers on the day at a specified time before the competition starts. This practice, unless for good reason (e.g. medical) that may have to be confirmed by providing evidence, should be avoided; it does not reflect well on either the swimmer or the Club and may result in a fine for the club which will be passed on to the swimmer.

World Aquatics The international rule-making and governing body of competitive swimming, diving, water polo and artistic swimming.

Y

Youth: Swimmers aged between 14 and 18 (girls) and 15 and 18 (boys). After 18 a swimmer is regarded as a **Senior**.