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This guide is designed to explain the different aspects of Swimming Galas.

It is a comprehensive guide; however, if you still have any questions, please get in touch.

Gala Types

In competitive swimming, galas can take place in either short course (SC) or long course (LC) pools. Short course pools are 25 meters in length, while long course pools are 50 meters.

Closed Meets

- Club Championships - Open to club swimmers only. Other clubs may attend by invitation only.
- Unlicensed Meets (Time Trials)- Usually run as internal galas for lower squads, or as dual meets involving 1–5 external clubs.

Open Meets

Open meets are the type of gala that we, as a club, most commonly attend throughout the year. These competitions are open to swimmers from multiple clubs and are run under published conditions set by the organizing club or county.

Open meets can be categorized by licensing level, which determines the standard of swimmers entering and how results can be used

Level 1 Open Meets

- Held in 50m (long course) pools
- Times achieved are eligible for National Qualifying Times
- Entry is often restricted by minimum qualifying times

Level 2 Open Meets

- Held in 25m (short course)
- Times can be used for Regional/Winter national Qualifying Times
- Usually they have upper and/or lower qualifying limits

Level 3 Open Meets

- Targeted at club and county-level swimmers
- Usually held in 25m (short course) pools, sometimes 50m
- Focus on development, race experience, and achieving County Qualifying Times (CQTs)
- Often include upper time limits to prevent higher-level swimmers from entering

Championship Meets

- Borough Championships- Swimmers must be resident in the Borough of Croydon.
- Surrey County Championships – Qualifying times required
- London Regional Championships (Winter & Summer) – Qualifying times required
- English & British Championships (Winter & Summer) – Invitation only, based on rankings
- Exception: Welsh Nationals – swimmers must be registered as Welsh before the published deadline

League Galas

For league galas, swimmers are selected by the club.

These meets can be either licensed or unlicensed, for example:

- Octopus League
- Arena League

Qualification Pathways

It is important to understand the distinction between SC and LC times, as SC times cannot always be used to qualify for higher-level competitions.

Some LC galas allow the use of converted SC times for entry purposes. When entering a gala that accepts time conversions, it is essential to indicate whether the submitted time is an SC or LC time. Conversion tools or tables, often provided by the sport's governing body, are used to convert SC times to their LC equivalents (and vice versa). These conversions take into account the difference in pool length and the additional turns in SC pools, which can affect overall race times.

The level of the gala you enter is very important, as not all galas allow swimmers to progress to the next level of competition.

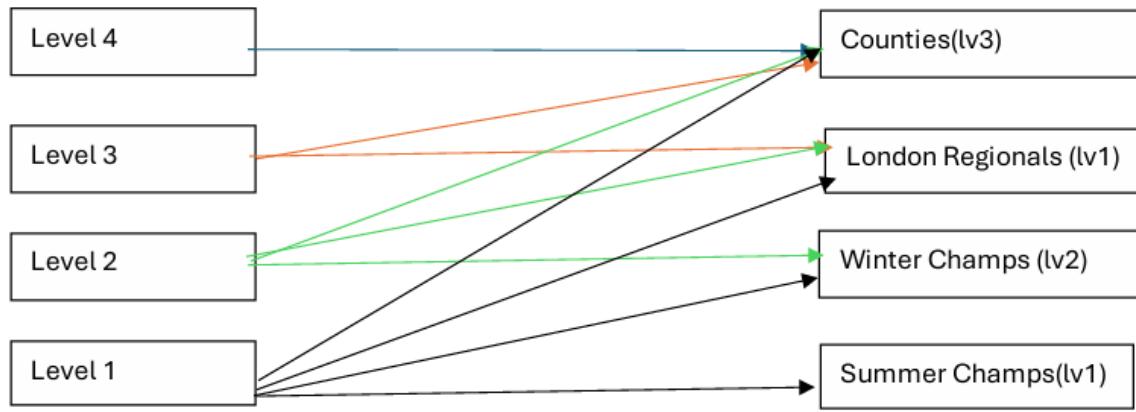
For example, times achieved at a Level 3 gala cannot be used to qualify for National Championships.

Each competition publishes **Promoters' Conditions**, which is a document containing all the key information and rules for that specific gala. This document is usually released before entries open.

It is essential that the Promoters' Conditions are read carefully before entering any gala, whether you are a new or experienced swimmer, as the requirements can change:

- from year to year
- from competition to competition

Please see the example below showing which gala levels allow qualification for higher-level competitions, provided the required qualifying times are achieved.



Competitions Calendar

The swimming season is divided into two parts:

Winter Season (Short Course) -Runs from **September to February**

Summer Season (Long Course) -Runs from **February to August**

Throughout the season, clubs enter swimmers into a variety of competitions. Some of these events are required to “unlock” progression to higher-level competitions.

In most cases, achieved qualifying times are valid for 12 months.

For example, if a swimmer achieves a personal best in the 800m Freestyle in March 2025, that time can be used to enter the County Championships in February 2026, provided it meets the published qualifying standard.

Each competition must hold a valid Swim England license in order to take place.

County Championships and higher-level competitions are usually confirmed well in advance and are considered largely fixed, typically varying by no more than \pm one week from year to year.

In contrast, open meets are normally awarded their license only 4–5 months in advance. As a result, it is not possible to publish a fully confirmed competition calendar at the start of the season. Supported open meets are therefore added to the calendar progressively throughout the season as licenses are granted and information becomes available.

The most up-to-date competition calendar can always be found on the club website.

Below you have a diagram showing a timeline of the swimming competitions within a season.

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Open/closed meets (lv3&4)												
Championships												
Leagues												
Level 3 Galas EXAMPLES	1	2	3	4			5		6	7	8	

The timeline diagram illustrates the sequence of swimming events. It starts with 'Open/closed meets (lv3&4)' from September to August. Following this, there is a 'Championships' section with 'London Winter Champs' (orange arrow), 'SE Winter Champs' (blue arrow), 'Surrey County Champs' (blue arrow), 'British' (grey arrow), 'Summer' (blue arrow), and 'British/English Championships' (yellow arrow). A 'Leagues' section follows, featuring the 'Octopus Swimming League (4 Rounds)' (black arrow). Finally, there is a 'Level 3 Galas EXAMPLES' section with numbered circles (1-8) representing specific galas.

1 SCSC CLUB CHAMPS

2 L3 Autumn Gala

3 L3 Gala

4 Lv3 Christmas Cracker- End of Qualifying window for C

5 Croydon Borough Champs

6 L3 Summer Gala

7 L3 Summer Gala

8 L3 End of the season Gala

SE Rankings

<https://www.swimmingresults.org/>

Rankings are lists of swimmers ordered by their fastest recorded times in each event (e.g. 100 m freestyle, 200 m backstroke) over a given period, typically the last 12 months or all-time records.

You can view rankings across different age groups, for example Under-12, Under-15, Under-18, and Open, filtered by gender, distance, and course type (short course or long course).

Personal Best Record

<https://www.swimmingresults.org/individualbest/>

This section allows you to check your personal performance record and personal best times. You will need your SE number to search easily, or you can find yourself manually, which is more difficult.

In terms of Counties and Regionals, rankings are not very important, as both competitions require specific qualifying times published early by the organizers. Rankings help to estimate position, but they are essential for National-level competitions — the top 44 swimmers in each age group, in each event, will be invited to the Summer Championships.

Swim England rankings show how swimmers' times compare to others for specific events, age groups, and courses (25 m short course or 50 m long course). They are based on actual times swam at licensed competitions and are updated regularly.

Gala Entries

When a gala is organised, the promoter issues an electronic entry file, which allows clubs to submit entries in bulk.

Swimmers may also enter non-club-supported galas as individuals, but only where the purpose is to achieve a qualifying time within a specific qualifying window and where this has been agreed with the coach.

Individual Championships Entries

Entries for National Championships are submitted individually, not via the club. Entry fees are paid directly to Swim England or British Swimming, in line with the relevant Entry Pack for that competition.

If a gala appears on the SCSC competition calendar, entries must be submitted through the club.

Club Entry Process

- To enter a gala, swimmers must submit their entry via the **Sports Engine software** on their phone.
- Once logged in, click the **three lines (≡)** in the top-left corner and navigate to: **Events & Jobs → Event and Meet Entry**.
- Find the gala you wish to enter and select "**Declare**".
- Click on your **swimmer's name**. A list of all available **sessions** will appear.
- Click on each session to view the races for that session, then **tick the box on the left** for every race you wish to enter **for which your swimmer has qualifying times**.
 - o **Times shown in black** can be entered.

- **Times shown in red** indicate that your swimmer **does not have the qualifying time** for that race.
- Once you have selected the races, tick “**Yes please**” and then select “**Apply**” in the bottom-right corner.
- If you do **not** wish to enter the gala, select “**No thanks**” and then click “**Apply**”.

Entries are either **accepted** or **rejected** a few days before the competition.

- Any fees paid for **rejected swims will be refunded** by the club.
- Swimmers and parents must check the “confirmed entries” file to confirm whether entries have been accepted or rejected.
 - Any errors or discrepancies must be reported to the club promptly.

Qualifying Times & Accepted / Rejected Entries

Swimmers and parents must always read the **promoter's conditions**, as these outline the specific entry rules set by the host of the gala.

Key points to be aware of:

- Some galas operate upper and lower qualifying times, meaning swimmers cannot be faster or slower than the stated time band.
- Some galas may accept faster or slower entries only as time trials.
 - In these cases, swimmers are not eligible for medals or awards.
- For galas with a hard entry deadline (not first-come-first-served), if the event is oversubscribed, the slowest swimmers in each age group will be rejected.
- (Automatic) Qualifying Times guarantee acceptance into a gala unless stated otherwise in the promoter's conditions.
 - Please note that distance events are often restricted to a limited number of heats.
- If a swimmer has achieved a Consideration Time, parents are encouraged to enter the event.
 - Acceptance is not guaranteed, but swimmers may still be accepted depending on entry numbers.
- All rejected entries will be refunded by the club.
- If a swimmer is withdrawn after entries have been submitted, entry fees will not be refunded, unless supported by a doctor's note or medical certificate. (any refund in these circumstances is entirely at the discretion of the meet organiser, not SCSC.)

- Qualifying times change every year. A time that qualified a swimmer in a previous season does not automatically qualify them the following year.
- Meet organisers request that clubs inform them if a swimmer who has been entered will be absent.
 - o No refund will be issued if a swimmer does not swim.
- A swimmer may only be withdrawn by the coach on duty where a written withdrawal request has been submitted to the club in advance.
- Please note that the London Region applies a penalty fee for “No Show” swims, which will be passed on to the swimmer/parent.

A Typical Day at a Swimming Gala

A typical day at a swimming gala is usually split into two separate sessions, although some events may run three sessions in one day.

Each session includes:

- **Warm-up time** – a designated period for swimmers to warm up in the pool
- **Start time** – the official start time of racing for that session

Swimmers and parents must check the event schedule carefully, as warm-up and start times can vary between sessions and from gala to gala.

Where a gala runs two or three sessions in a single day, each session has its own warm-up. If a swimmer is entered only in races taking place in Session 3, there is no requirement to attend earlier sessions.

This is why it is essential to read all event paperwork carefully, including session schedules and confirmed entries, to ensure swimmers arrive at the correct time.

Swimmers:

- Sign in if this is a requirement of the gala.
 - o If running late, ask someone you know to sign you in where permitted and always inform the club and the coaches.
- Report to the Team Manager on poolside and make yourself known.
- Follow all instructions given by Coaches and Team Managers.
- Go to the marshalling area in good time- ask if you are not sure where it is.
- Listen carefully to announcements as well as instructions from Coaches and Team Managers.
- Poolside staff cannot be held responsible if you miss your event.

- Older swimmers are expected to support and look after younger swimmers and set a positive example.
- Stretch before warm-up and before each race.
- After the race swimmers should always report to a Coach (not necessarily their own squad coach) to receive feedback and advice on how to improve future swims.
- Mobile phones may only be used to listen to music with headphones, and must remain in your bag.
- Mobile phones must not be used or carried openly in changing rooms at any time. Taking photos or recording videos is **strictly prohibited**.
- Mobile phones must **remain in your bag when not in use**, to avoid any misunderstanding regarding their purpose.
- Phones may only be used to contact parents in an emergency and with permission from a Coach or Team Manager.
- At most galas, organizers do not permit mobile phone use on poolside at all, and this rule must be respected.
- Remember that you are representing the club and must follow the **Code of Conduct** at all times.
 - o Coaches or Team Managers **may return a swimmer to their parent** if behavior on poolside is unacceptable.

Parents:

- Parents must remain in the spectator area and supervise their child from there.
- Parents must not enter or wander around the changing rooms.
 - o If there is a need to speak to your child during the gala, this can be arranged by the Team Manager.
 - o Please inform the Team Manager so this can be done appropriately.

Disqualifications (DQs) are part of competitive swimming and are applied for a reason.

DQs ensure that all swimmers are treated equally, compete fairly, and race according to the rules. They also help educate swimmers in the correct application of competition rules.

Please do not direct frustration towards Coaches, Team Managers, helpers, or Officials, even if you believe a disqualification was incorrect.

The reason for any DQ can be found in the published results at the end of the relevant session.

A DQ may be queried if a swimmer believes they have not broken a rule.

- If you are unsure, please speak to the coach on duty in the first instance.
- Please note that, in most cases, the referee's decision is not changed, even when video footage is available.

Gala Results

Post-race results are usually displayed after each event.

Typically, two result sheets are provided:

- one for swimmers
- one for parents, usually located near the viewing gallery

These sheets show official times and any reasons for disqualification (DQ).

Some galas are linked to the Meet Mobile app, allowing results to be checked on a mobile device almost immediately.

In most cases, results are uploaded to British Swimming – Swimming Results within 48 hours of the event.

Volunteering

Swimming is a sport that relies heavily on the dedication and support of volunteers, particularly parents and carers. While coaches and teachers are paid for their roles, the smooth operation and long-term success of the club depends significantly on parental involvement.

Competitions could not take place without volunteers, including qualified Officials and Referees.

Officials are essential for running races at galas.

- Without qualified officials, galas cannot be licensed
- Unlicensed galas do not count for official times or records

Team Managers support coaches at galas by:

- Supervising swimmers when they are not racing
- Organizing swimmers and sending them to the marshalling area
- Acting as a key link between swimmers, coaches, and parents on the day

Getting Involved

If you are able to spare a few hours occasionally to support your child's swimming environment, we strongly encourage you to put your name forward.

- Full training will be provided for all roles
- No prior experience is required
- Volunteering directly supports your child and the wider club community

Gala Checklist: What to Take

Below is a general guide of what swimmers should bring to each gala:

- Two swimsuits (in case one splits)
- 2x Goggles
- South Croydon Swimming hat
- Drawstring bag (large bags are often not allowed poolside)
- T-shirt for poolside
- South Croydon top if you have one.
- Shorts for poolside
- Jumper/hoodie for poolside
- Change of clothes for after the gala
- Towel
- Sliders or Crocs- it's a must for H&S reasons
- Lunch/snacks if attending multiple sessions e.g. pasta, banana, flapjack
- Water or juice bottle -ensure you have enough for the whole day
- £1 coin for lockers (where required)
- Carrier bag for wet kit after racing