

Summer Swimming 101 – a crash course!

Meet Events

Boys and girls generally swim each event separately.

The events for each stroke go from youngest to oldest. The girls in a given age group swim the even first, followed by the boys.

- **Medley Relay**
 - All age groups swim the Medley Relay, including 8 and under.
 - It is a relay consisting of 4 swimmers.
 - **The Medley Relay has a specific stroke order: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle.** Since the younger children only swim one lap each, **those swimmers swimming the breaststroke and freestyle portion of the relay must be at the opposite end of the pool**, not the starting block end. Those swimmers will start in the water.
- **Butterfly**
 - Butterfly events follow the breaststroke events. After the Medley Relays come the Butterfly events. These progress as the events above, from youngest to oldest, with the girls swimming before the boys in each age category.
- **Freestyle**
 - Freestyle events follow the butterfly events.
- **Breaststroke**
 - Breaststroke events follow the freestyle events.
- **Backstroke**
 - Backstroke events follow the breaststroke events.
- **Freestyle Relay**
 - The freestyle relays are the last events of the meet.
 - The children love relays and get a real sense of being part of a team by competing in them.
 - Unforeseen circumstances may result in a child being placed in the relay at last minute, so never leave meets early!
 - The relay team has 4 swimmers.
 - Ages 10 and under swim a 100 meter relay, which means each swimmer swims **one** lap of freestyle.
 - Ages 11-12 and up all swim a 200 meter relay, which means each swimmer swims **two** laps of freestyle.

Quick Reference

Medley Relay

- Order: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, Freestyle
- All ages swim this event
- Breastroker and Freestyler must be at opposite end of the pool!

Freestyle Relay

- For 10 & U: one lap of freestyle
- 2nd and 4th (aka “anchor”) child must be at the opposite end of the pool

Helpful swimming Terms

- **•Beep, Whistle, Starting Pistol**: This may be all that is heard for the swimmer to start racing the event. He/she will hear the announcer state, “Swimmers, take your mark.” Then the swimmer will hear “one of the starting signals (Beep, Whistle, or a Starting Pistol).” The swimmer should immediately begin racing. If there has been a false start, the swimmer will hear a continuous beeping or whistle sound or the starting pistol one additional time during the race. He/she should stop swimming and return to the starting block.
- **•Bullpen**: The bullpen is a designated area where all swimmers must report before they can swim an event. This is where they are organized in advance of their races, in order to keep the meet running smoothly. Failure to report to the bullpen on time will result in the swimmer being scratched from the event. Swimmers aged 13 and up do not have bullpen requirements.
- **•Disqualification (DQ'd)**: A swimmer may be disqualified if they are not executing the stroke according to USA Swimming rules, if they dive in early, perform an incorrect flip turn or any number of other events. Although this can be upsetting to a child, “DQs” are very common and should be regarded as part of the learning process.
- **•Dual Meet**: Two teams compete at one location
- **•Event**: The race in which a swimmer will participate
- **•False Start**: Leaving the blocks before the sound of the starter's signal
- **•Finishing**: Finishing a race often relies on split-second judgment. A decision to start a new arm stroke or lengthen the current one, may need to be made. In breaststroke and butterfly, both hands should touch the wall together; in freestyle and backstroke you can make the touch with one hand.
- **•Heat**: Race within a single event
- **•Heat Sheet**: A listing of all swimmers by heat and lane assignments at a meet, seeding swimmers according to times submitted.
- **•Individual Medley**: This is when a swimmer swims four different strokes in one race. The order is butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and then freestyle. Special turns are used because swimmers need to change from one stroke to another.
- **•Relays**: In relays, the swimmer is one of a team of 4 people each swimming an equal distance. There are 2 relays, the freestyle and the medley.
- **•Scratch**: When a swimmer, scheduled for an event, is removed by the coach prior to participating.
- **•Seed**: The placement within an event according to individual time
- **•Seed Times**: Time used to enter a swimmer in a meet. This determines a swimmer's heat and lane assignment
- **•Starter**: Official responsible for the start of each heat and for calling swimmers to the blocks.
- **•Starting Block**: Starting blocks are normally used to start an event where swimmers dive into the water. A swimmer may not take any stroke until he/she breaks the surface of the water. If a swimmer is not yet comfortable using the starting block, he/she may choose to start in the water or dive from the side of the pool. Backstroke is the only stroke where you have to start in the water.
- **•Stroke Judge**: The official that determines the legality of a swimmer's stroke or his/her turns

- **Time Standards:** Qualifying times that have been set by Regional and National Committees for all events.

THE STROKES

Breaststroke

This stroke must be done on the stomach with some part of the head surfacing during each stroke sequence, except on starts and turns when one underwater pull and kick are allowed, in that order. The kick must be a squeezing action with no downward thrust of the legs, all on the same horizontal plane, recovering forward from the chest. The swimmer must touch the wall with both hands simultaneously at all turns and the finish.

Backstroke

Swimmers must remain on their backs until they touch the wall for a turn or finish. Any means of stroke or kick is allowed. The pennants hanging across the pool are situated to prepare the swimmer for the approaching wall.

Butterfly

The leg kick(s) must be a downward thrust, which is simultaneous action. The arm pull must be simultaneous and the arms must recover forward over the top of the water only. Both hands must touch the wall simultaneously at all turns and the finish.

Freestyle

"Free" means any stroke imaginable, but most swimmers choose the crawl, the fastest of the strokes. Any part of the body may touch the wall at turns and the finish. This is the first stroke emphasized and virtually all new swimmers will compete in freestyle events.