

# Swimming Glossary

*~Just a few swimming terms that might be helpful to know~*

## Swim stroke terms

1. **Individual medley (IM):** all four strokes swam in the following order: fly, bk, br, fr
2. **Underwater (UW):** while this is not technically a stroke, many coaches refer to the underwater dolphin kick when you push off the wall as the 5th and fastest "stroke" 😊

## Distance terms:

3. **Short course:** a 25-yard pool (SCY)
4. **Long course:** a 50-meter pool (LCM)
5. **Short course meters:** less common in the US, 25-meter pool (SCY)
6. **50:** 2 short course lengths, or 1 long course length
7. **100:** 4 short course lengths or 2 long course lengths
8. **200:** 8 short course lengths or 4 long course lengths
9. **500:** 20 short course lengths, not a race in long-course meters (the LCM equivalent is the 400)
10. **4IM or 2IM:** this refers to the 200 or 400-individual medley
11. **The "mile":** 1500 long course meters or 1650 short course yards

## Equipment terms:

12. **Paddle:** a plastic hand device that may cover a swimmer's palm and fingers to add resistance and improve stroke technique
13. **Fins:** rubber-like devices that go on each foot to help improve kick power and in some cases ankle flexibility
14. **Snorkel:** a device that helps swimmers breathe while keeping their head in the water, typically used to help improve head position or focus on technique without interruption for a breath
15. **Buoy:** a foam device swimmers put between their legs to increase buoyancy during swims
16. **Tempo trainer:** a device swimmers put in their swim cap that emits sound to guide and improve stroke tempo and rhythm
17. **Kickboard:** a board swimmers hang on to focus on their legs during kick sets, it may also be used as a buoy during pull sets

## Technique training terms

18. **Catch:** the initial arm movement when swimmers must engage hands and forearms to establish a strong grip on the water for better propulsion
19. **Bilateral breathing:** this means breathing to both sides of the body to promote balance, typically swimmers will be told to breathe every 3, 5, 7, or 9 strokes when focusing on this
20. **Pull:** when a coach tells swimmers to get pulling gear on this usually means grab your buoy and paddles; the swimmer will perform the stroke without a kick

21. **Short-axis strokes:** butterfly and breaststroke
22. **Long-axis strokes:** freestyle and backstroke
23. **Scull:** when swimmers use only hands and forearms to move forward without full strokes
24. **Kicking:** when a swimmer uses their legs to propel them forward, kick sets typically involve not using arms and focusing on legs
25. **Distance per stroke (DPS):** if a coach tells you to focus on DPS they want you to focus on technique and take fewer strokes for each distance
26. **Stroke rate:** the number of strokes a swimmer takes per minute, indicating the speed of their arm movements
27. **Streamline:** a position in which a swimmer aligns their body to minimize drag and maximize efficiency in the water with hand over hand above their head
28. **Open turn:** a turn that a swimmer does when swimming breaststroke and butterfly in which the swimmer must touch with both hands and then turn in the other direction
29. **Transition turn:** the turns in IM between butterfly to backstroke, backstroke to breaststroke, and breaststroke to freestyle
30. **Flip turn:** at the end of a freestyle or backstroke lap when a swimmer must flip over and kick-off to turn to maximize efficiency and promote speed
31. **Pull-out:** the underwater in breaststroke when a swimmer pulls down and does a dolphin kick before sneaking arms back up for the first stroke
32. **Breakout:** the first stroke that transitions a swimmer from underwater to swimming

### General workout terms

33. **Taper:** this is a time before a race when training intensity and volume decreases to give swimmers time to promote rest and recovery to optimize performance; what this looks like varies greatly depending on a swimmer's age and skill level
34. **Strength & Conditioning ("Dryland"):** land-based exercises and activities that swimmers do outside of the water to improve overall athleticism, flexibility, and strength
35. **Warm-up:** takes place at the beginning of practice, this is a chance to gradually warm up the muscles and slowly get the heart rate up
36. **Cool-Down or warm-down:** this happens at the end of a workout or after a race. This is gentle, easy swimming to help reduce heart rate, stretch, and relax the muscles
37. **Main set:** this is the main focus of the workout and usually the most challenging section that focuses on speed, endurance, technique, or all three
38. **Pre-set:** typically, this is a set that comes right before the main set, it may involve drills or slight pace work to help a swimmer get primed for the main set
39. **Descend:** getting progressively faster with each repetition or throughout a distance
40. **Ascend:** starting fast and progressively getting slower (opposite of descending)
41. **Negative split:** when a swimmer focuses on making the second of a set or a race faster than the first half

- 42. **IM order (IMO):** sets may be assigned to you as "IM order" for example, 4×100 IM order would be 1. Fly, 2. Bk, 3. Br, 4. Fr
- 43. **Best average:** this emphasizes consistency over a set or race, this is when a swimmer holds their best time across a series of repetitions be it 50s or 100s
- 44. **Build:** this is when a swimmer gradually increases their speed and intensity, starting slower and finishing a set or distance with increased speed and effort
- 45. **Circle swim:** in the US, swimming in a counterclockwise direction within a shared lane, down on the right and back on the left
- 46. **Spilt the lane or sides:** dividing a lane into two sides when less than 2 people are in the lane and agree to share
- 47. **Open-water swimming:** swimming done in rivers, lakes, and oceans
- 48. **Split:** the time it takes for a swimmer to complete a portion of a race or a set
- 49. **Pace:** a set performed at a specified speed over a duration. For example, if a swimmer wants to go 2:00 in the 200 free they would try to hold 30 seconds on each 50 for 200 pace

### Swim Meet terms

- 50. **Meet:** an organized swimming competition where swimmers compete in various events
- 51. **Event:** a specific stroke and distance combination raced at a swim meet like the 200-yard breaststroke or 50-meter freestyle
- 52. **Heats:** divisions of events based on swimmers' seed times, often used in preliminaries to determine qualifiers for finals
- 53. **Psych sheet:** a document that lists the swimmers' entry times and ranks them in each event before a swim meet
- 54. **Heat sheet:** a document that outlines the order of events and specific race assignments for each swimmer
- 55. **Seed:** what a swimmer is ranked before the meet, if they are listed third fastest a swimmer would say "I am seeded third"
- 56. **Entry Time:** the time a swimmer is entered into a meet with; this is generally their best time prior to competition
- 57. **DQ or disqualification:** a ruling by officials that disqualifies a swimmer due to violating a rule
- 58. **PB or best time:** a swimmer's fastest time in a particular event
- 59. **Block or starting block:** an elevated platform that swimmers dive off of at the start of their race
- 60. **Wedge:** an adjustable platform on the starting block that helps swimmers maximize their leg power to launch forward
- 61. **"Take your mark":** a phrase used by the official to signal swimmers to take their starting position on the blocks
- 62. **Tech suit:** a high-performance swimsuit designed to reduce drag and enhance speed in competitive swimming, usually very tight

63. **Lap counter:** a device used to keep track of the number of laps swum during long races, typically the 500 and up
64. **Official:** a person responsible for enforcing the rules and overseeing the fair conduct of a swimming competition
65. **Touchpad:** electronic pad at the end of each lane in a pool that swimmers touch to register their times during a race; it is important for swimmers to hit this with force!
66. **Timers:** 2-3 people who sit behind each lane during a race to get the swimmer's race time
67. **Relay:** a race when four swimmers compete as a team, each swimming a portion of the total distance
68. **Medley relay:** a relay race where each swimmer on the team swims a different stroke in a specific order (back, br, fly, fr) \*notice this is a different order from the individual medley
69. **Anchor:** the 4th and final swimmer who swims the last leg of a relay race
70. **Prelims:** short for preliminary heats, the initial rounds of competition to determine qualifiers for the finals
71. **Finals:** the last round of the competition where the top qualifiers from prelims compete for rankings and medals
72. **Timed Finals:** indicates that all heats of a particular event will only be swum once at a meet; there is no prelims/finals set up