

Swimming Glossary

Length: one end of the pool to the other

Lap: one end of the pool to the other and back (begin and end at the same place)

Frequently used interchangeably, but actually quite different.

Our competition and most practice is done in a 25 yard pool, which means one length of the pool is 25 yards. In a meet our shortest race is 50 yards (2 lengths or 1 lap). Our longest race, in a meet, is 500 yards (20 lengths or 10 laps).

Competitive Strokes: there are four of them.

Freestyle (Free)

Backstroke (Back)

Breaststroke (Breast)

Butterfly (Fly).

Medley: all four competitive strokes. There is a Medley Relay in which four swimmers each swim one of the various competitive strokes. There is an Individual Medley (IM) event in which one swimmer swims each of the four competitive strokes.

Swim: performing a given stroke using both arms to pull and legs to kick.

Kick: performing a given stroke using only legs to kick.

Pull: performing a given stroke using only arms to pull.

Kickboard: floatation device, held with the arms/hands, used to support the upper body while kicking.

Pull-buoy: floatation device, held between the legs, used to support the lower body while pulling.

Set: a group of swims (or kicks, or pulls, or a combination)

SKiPS: a special set performed in a specified distance in the order: Swim – Kick – Pull – Swim

Example: 4X100 Freestyle SKiPS

100 Swim, 100 Kick, 100 Pull, 100 Swim

IM order: a set performed in the order of the strokes as they are performed for an IM event. (Fly, Back, Breast, Free)

Interval: a specified amount of time in which you must complete a set and be ready to do the next set.

Example: 3 sets of 4X50 IM order with 10 seconds rest on the 5

You swim 50 yards Fly, rest 10 seconds, swim 50 yards Back, rest 10 seconds, swim 50 yards Breast, rest 10 seconds, swim 50 yards Free. After 5 minutes total has elapsed, you start again and do a second set of the same. Again after 5 minutes (a total of 10 minutes) has elapsed, you start a third set. If a set takes you a total of 4 minutes, you get the additional 1 minute to rest before start the next set. The entire exercise takes 15 minutes.

On the Top: a swim or set that starts “On the Top” begins at the start of a minute. Think of an analog clock with a second hand. The “Top” is zero seconds.

On the Bottom: a swim or set that starts “On the Bottom” begins at the 30 second mark on the clock. Again, think of an analog clock. The “Bottom” is 30 seconds.

Leave on the next 5, 10, 15, 20, etc.: start a swim or set the next time the clock reads 5 seconds (X:05), 10 seconds (X:10), 15 seconds (X:15), 20 seconds (X:20), etc.

Lane: competition pools are separated into lanes by lane lines. Each lane has a line on the bottom, typically black in color. Swimmers must stay in their assigned lanes and may not touch the lane lines or bottom of the pool.

Circle Swimming: typical pattern for swimming when 3 or more swimmers share a lane (for practice). Swim in a given lane, always staying to the right of the black line at the bottom of the pool.

Split Lane Swimming: typical pattern for swimming when 2 swimmers share a lane (for practice). Swim in a given lane, always staying on the same side of the black line at the bottom of the pool.

Split: an intermediate time, usually at 50 yard (or meter) intervals. In the 200 yard Freestyle a swimmer will have splits at 50 yards, 100 yards, and 150 yards in addition to a final time.

Negative Split: swimming the second half of a race or set faster than the first half.

Example: swim 100 yards with a split time (first 50 yards) of 35 seconds and final time of 1:05 (second 50 yards in 30 seconds).