



CLUB HANDBOOK
2009

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1. **Introduction**

- 1.1. Welcome to Sandbach Sharks Amateur Swimming Club. The aim of 'The Club Handbook', in conjunction with the club's website at www.sandbachsharks.co.uk is to provide all the information club members will require for the safe and informed participation in the club's activities and the sport of swimming.
- 1.2. This document provides an overview of the club's aims, objectives and working / governing practices. In order to fully understand the operation of the club and the requirements placed upon it by its affiliations to various swimming organisations, it is important that the handbook is read in conjunction with associated documents available either on the club's website or the websites of other swimming related organisations where indicated.
- 1.3. The handbook attempts to answer a wide range of questions covering the whole spectrum of the sport from non-swimming beginner to National Champion. However, there may well be something that has been over looked. This is YOUR club's handbook so please feel free to contribute to it! If you have a question please ask it!...if something is a concern to you then maybe someone else needs to know the answer as well. The club's committee exists to support its members on the road to being the best swimmer / athlete / person they can be through our sport so please feel free to direct any questions or concerns you might have at any member of the committee. If you have any suggestions as to how the handbook could be improved or additional information that might be useful to include, please email either [Chairperson](#) or [Vice-Chairperson](#)...we will be only too pleased to hear from you.
- 1.4. It is intended that the handbook will be maintained and updated in an electronic format but a printed version is available on request from the club Secretary.

2. **Sandbach Sharks - Aims**

- 2.1. Sandbach Sharks has been established since the late 1970's as a volunteer run, friendly but competitive amateur swimming club. The aims of the club are to provide safe and secure facilities with appropriate teaching / coaching:
 - *To challenge swimmers and for swimmers to enjoy the challenge.*
 - *To develop competitive swimmers who have the character to win with humility and to lose with resolve.*
 - *To encourage swimmers to commit themselves to doing their personal best at all times.*
 - *To show swimmers the value of supporting the team and the value of support from the team; to foster a sense of responsibility and obligation towards the club and its teams.*
 - *To encourage swimmers to see that hard work and honest endeavor achieve success.*
 - *To develop respect for the coaches and respect for other team members within a competitive environment; to encourage high standards of behaviour at all times.*

- To assist and enable swimmers in the Masters Section to develop and maintain higher levels of fitness at all ages.

3. **Sandbach Sharks and Swim 21**

- 3.1. In November 2008 the club was successful in its first submission to the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) for Swim 21 status. The ASA awarded the Club Swim 21 status at 'Teaching' level, which provides due recognition that the club provides a safe and structured environment for swimmers to progress and develop within.
- 3.2. The club must now maintain the standard it has set and seek to improve over the course of 2009 in line with its stated Swim 21 aims and objectives. The achievement of Swim 21 status was the result of a great deal of effort on the part of club personnel and this now needs to be maintained to ensure validation of the club's Swim 21 status towards the end of 2009. The club is confident that it will be in a strong position in this respect and will strive to continually improve its offer to all swimmers and members.
- 3.3. If you require any further information about Swim 21 and what it means for our club please ask any member of the committee or go to [Swim 21 at British Swimming](#).

4. **The Committee**

- 4.1. The operation of the swimming club and the management of its business are attended to by an elected committee. Committee members are elected at the club's Annual General Meeting (AGM) for a period of one year and may seek re-election at the next AGM. Election to the club's committee is detailed within the club constitution, details of which can be found below.
- 4.2. Each committee position has a role description, which are provided on the club's website. The current committee members together with their contact details are shown below. Please feel free to contact them on any club related matter or any general swimming query.

Position	Name	Telephone No.
Chairperson	Mark Davies	marko@worldonline.co.uk
Vice-Chairperson	John Bottomley	01270 768744
Secretary	Gordon Porter	01477 534202
Treasurer	Richard Slater	01477 537061
Membership	Heather Bottomley	01270 768744
Welfare	Carol Waters	
Gala Manager	Julia Chatten	01477 535846
Assistant Gala Manager	Roy Joines	01270 761705
Social Secretary/Fund Raiser	Karen Cody	01270 768029
Awards Officer	Tracey Budd	01477 533147
Pool Bookings / Lifeguards	Lise Grasmeder	01270 529095
Publicity	Jan Walsh	01270 515617
Club Shop	Kathy Tudor	01270 216915
Sharkies Representative	Renee Davey	01606 836137

5. Club Rules and Constitution

- 5.1. The club is affiliated to the ASA North West Region and the Cheshire County Swimming and Water Polo Association. Under these affiliations the club has an approved constitution and its own set of rules.

Copies of both the club's constitution and rules can be found on the club's web site at [Sandbach Sharks Forms](#).

6. Welfare and Child Protection

- 6.1. Sandbach Sharks is committed to providing safe and secure facilities within which you and your children can enjoy the sport of swimming. To ensure this, the club has a number of measures in place:

- The club has a dedicated Welfare Officer. Details can be found under [The Committee](#). In the Welfare Officer's absence any welfare and / or child protection issue can be directed to any member of the club's committee.
- The club has adopted the ASA's child protection policy, copies of which are available from the club's Welfare Officer or at [ASA Child Protection](#).
- The club has adopted the ASA's equity policy and code of ethics, copies of which are available from the club's Welfare Officer, on the club's website at [Sandbach Sharks Forms](#) or at [ASA Code of Ethics](#).
- All individuals who assist with the running of the club and who come into regular contact with children are subject to a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.
- The club maintains a venue information folder for all the venues used (Sandbach Leisure Centre, Sandbach Boys School and MMU, Alsager). This contains all the information required to assist the coaches and helpers in the event of an emergency and to effectively maintain health and safety systems and procedures. Venue information folders are available for inspection and all swimmers / parents should check relevant entries periodically to ensure that emergency contact details and medical information are correct.
- Coaching staff and helpers are made aware of venue specific normal operating procedures and emergency operating procedures as part of the induction process.
- Each of the club's activities has been subjected to risk assessment.
- The club is an advocate of the NSPCC supported ASA [SwimLine](#) and provides related information and contact numbers on all venue notice boards.

- 6.2. Copies of documents relating to the above have been retained as part of the club's Swim 21 application and can be viewed where there are no conflicts surrounding data protection and privacy.

- 6.3. In addition to the club's policies and procedures, the health and safety and general welfare of swimmers is a responsibility that everyone attached to the club in any respect should accept. The club will do its utmost to ensure it continues to provide a safe, secure and fair environment for swimming. However, should you have any concerns, in any respect, please make someone aware of them as soon as possible so that any investigation or remedial action required can be implemented.

7. Fees and Associated Costs

- 7.1. The club is committed to keeping its costs as low as possible for all of the activities it offers to its members. However, the sport of swimming obviously has costs attached and the club must ensure that it remains financially viable through its pricing structure.
- 7.2. The club is committed to a policy of inclusiveness regardless of background and personal circumstances and can offer financial assistance on request with respect to fees and costs where this is deemed appropriate.
- 7.3. All persons who swim with the club must be current members, having paid the appropriate annual membership fee. This fee incorporates an annual insurance premium paid to the ASA and ensures that **all members are fully insured when participating in the club's swimming activities**. A copy of the club's insurance policy is displayed on all venue notice-boards and on the website at [Sandbach Sharks Forms](#) .
Non-payment of membership fees = no insurance = NO SWIMMING.
All questions and queries relating to the club's insurance should be directed to either the club [Chairperson or Secretary](#).
- 7.4. Current annual membership fees are dependent upon date of joining:
- Jan – Mar: Single - £36 / Family - £60
 - Apr – Jun: Single - £27 / Family - £45
 - Jul – Sept: Single - £18 / Family - £30
 - Oct – Dec: Single - £9 / Family - £15
- 7.5. In addition to the annual membership fee a compulsory monthly fee is also payable, dependent upon which squad you swim with. Current monthly squad fees are:
- Development Squad - £20
 - Performance Squad - £26
 - Masters - £20
 - Sharkies – Variable (payable on a termly basis)
- 7.6. As a condition of membership all monthly fees must be paid by standing order by the fifth of each month. The membership application pack issued by the club's membership secretary provides all relevant information and instructions, including the clubs banking details. If you don't hold a current bank account, please inform the membership secretary at the time of submitting your membership application.
- 7.7. Whilst the Club will make every effort to keep both the membership and monthly fees as low and as competitive as possible this is dependent upon the costs passed on by our service and facility providers.

8. Swimming Squads

- 8.1. Where and when you swim will be determined by a number of factors but as the club is a competitive swimming club and takes part in a number of events throughout the year, this will largely depend upon where you are in your swimming development / career.

8.2. There are currently four 'squads' that cater for all ages and abilities and each swimmer is allocated a squad place according to individual need and ability. The squads are:

- **Sharkies**: Those setting out for Olympic greatness but can't yet swim will start with Sharkies; the club's learn to swim program. This is structured in accordance with the ASA's National Plan for Teaching Swimming (NPTS) and provides the necessary basic skills to become a competent swimmer and the building blocks of technique and knowledge for those who wish to progress further with competitive swimming.
- **Development Squad**: The development squad provides teaching / coaching that will build upon levels of competence and knowledge gained at either Sharkies or other swim schools previously attended. The development squad programme continues to follow the NPTS and also uses the early stages of the Long Term Athlete Development Plan (LTAD).
- **Performance Squad**: The performance squad provides coaching for swimmers who have developed their skills and competence sufficiently to represent Sandbach Sharks, their School and themselves at competitive swimming events (galas or meets). The further development of swimmers in the performance squad continues to utilise the early stages of the LTAD to ensure that training, coaching and athlete development have a structured basis.
- **Masters**: 'The Masters' is a polite description for swimmers who are older than the rest. Traditionally a 'master' is a competitive swimmer over the age of twenty-five, however more recently the eighteen to twenty-five age group has been included. Masters swimming is actively encouraged by the club and all parents, guardians, carers or helpers are welcome to 'take the plunge' to maintain or improve fitness levels.

8.3. Copies of both the NPTS and the LTAD are available on the club's website and the LTAD is discussed in more detail in [Athlete Development](#).

9. **Swim Times and Venues**

<i>Sharkies</i>			
<i>Day</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Venue</i>	<i>Times</i>
Saturday	NPTS Stages 1-5	Sandbach Leisure Centre	8.30-9.00am
Saturday	NPTS Stages 6-7	Sandbach Leisure Centre	9.00-9.30am

<i>Development Squad</i>		
<i>Day</i>	<i>Venue</i>	<i>Times</i>
Tuesday	Sandbach Boys School	7.00-9.00pm
Wednesday	Sandbach Leisure Centre	6.30-7.30pm
Friday	Sandbach Boys School	7.00-8.00pm

Performance Squad		
Day	Venue	Times
Tuesday	Sandbach Boys School	8.00-9.00pm
Wednesday	MMU, Alsager	7.00-9.00pm
Friday	MMU, Alsager	7.00-9.00pm
Sunday	MMU, Alsager	4.00-6.00pm

Masters		
Day	Venue	Times
Tuesday	Sandbach Boys School	9.00-9.45pm
Friday	Sandbach Boys School	7.00-8.00pm
Friday	MMU, Alsager	8.00-9.00pm
Sunday	MMU, Alsager	5.00-6.00pm

10. **Age Requirements**

- The minimum age for swimmers to join Sharkies is four years.
- There is no age bar to progress into the development / performance squads.
- The minimum age permitted for participation in the club championships and time trials is 8 years.
- The minimum age permitted to compete in open galas and meets can be as low as 9 years but promoter's conditions should be checked.
- Age groups for Regional / National events are: Girls 11-13 years, Boys 11-14 years / Youth - Girls 14 onwards, Boys 15 onwards.

10.1. Boys and girls develop physically at different rates. Girls generally develop faster and it is recognised that they are generally able to swim faster than boys until around 12 years of age. From 13 years onwards boys become the faster of the two sexes as the rate of their physical development quickens.

11. **Kit and Equipment**

11.1. As with every sport there is a large range of equipment available for swimming. What an individual swimmer might need however, will be dependent upon their rate of progress and current stage of swimming career development.

11.2. The basics required for Sharkies swimmers is simply swimwear (costume / trunks), goggles and towel, as any additional equipment required such as kickboards (floats), teaching and learning aids is provided.

11.3. For swimmers in the development squad equipment such as kickboards and pull buoys will again be available. However, at this stage you might consider purchasing such items yourself. The only definite addition to your swimming kit accompanying a move from Sharkies is a drinks bottle. It is now essential that each swimmer brings a drink with them to each training session as correct hydration of the body before, during and after a training session is crucial. The loss of body fluid through perspiration during exercise is not easily noticeable in water-based activities. However, the harder you work, the more fluid you lose and to avoid cramp, tiredness and under performance this needs to be replaced. So bring a plastic

drinks bottle with you to all training sessions and events. This should be filled with either water, a weak diluted fruit cordial / squash or a specific sports drink. Do not use anything fizzy or with a high sugar content as this inhibits the body's re-hydration process.

- 11.4. Swimmers in the performance squad should have all their own equipment, consisting of kickboard, pull buoy, kick 'fins (not diving flippers), hand paddles, finger paddles, drinks bottles, drag shorts and a net bag to put it all in. As you will also be competing in club team events and open galas, you will need a bag big enough to accommodate all your swim kit including poolside t-shirt and tracksuit, spare towels and the clothing that you arrived at the event in! Mark all personal items as best you can to prevent loss. The club's shop caters for basic needs and most requirements. Additional items can be easily purchased from a range of suppliers such as [Swimshop](#).
- 11.5. As swimmers progress and develop they will invariably 'collect' additional goggles, costumes and other pieces of kit. It is a good idea to keep spare items in kit bags for all training sessions and events. Broken goggles or damaged costumes can then be substituted and training / competition can continue.
- Swimming hat or not?...The choice is entirely your own. Generally swimmers with longer hair (mostly girls) will wear a hat during both training and racing. Others might train without a hat but wear one for competition. However, there is no golden rule so swimmers should concentrate upon feels most comfortable regardless of whether it is a training or racing situation.
 - Swimwear choice...There is a vast array of swimwear available and the price range is considerable. The more expensive the item, the faster it is supposed to make you go, but at the expense of robustness and durability. Therefore, something at the cheaper end of the spectrum would be better for training and something better for racing. Competition swimwear shouldn't be used for training as items will need to be replaced unnecessarily and this will prove costly. Wear something 'slower' for training and consider the use of drag shorts.

12. What and When to Eat

- 12.1. It is generally recognised that you should not swim until an hour has elapsed since eating anything substantial. What about eating after swimming? Strenuous swimming depletes the body's natural stores of carbohydrates and consequently, for a short time after the completion of a training session the body's immune system is significantly suppressed, making it more prone to illness. This period of time is thought to be around half an hour to forty minutes. This window of vulnerability can be reduced if not completely avoided by the intake of carbohydrates immediately after the training session. This should ideally be done on the poolside if allowed, but at the very latest in the changing room before showering and getting changed. Advertised 'health bars' are not necessary as a simple jam sandwich has all the required nutrients to replace what the body has lost and to sufficiently boost the body's defences back to pre-exercise levels. Unfortunately, this simple practice is all too often ignored by swimming athletes.

13. Cancelled Training Sessions

- 13.1. The club relies upon a number of other service providers particularly with regard to pool facilities, which are booked well in advance. However, there may be occasions when the pool(s) become unavailable due to events beyond the club's control. Where pool closures are anticipated eg. Summer and Christmas holiday periods, the club will provide advanced notice on venue notice boards and on the club website.
- 13.2. If a pool facility becomes unavailable at short notice the club will do its utmost to circulate information to swimmers likely to be affected. Current and where necessary, updated contact details are therefore required to facilitate this and for any other important club communication.

14. Parents at Training Sessions

- 14.1. It might not be every parent's idea of fun to watch 'their' athlete plough up and down the pool for hours on end! However, by doing so it is possible to see just how much effort a swimmer exerts for what might be 30 seconds of racing. By being present parents can build their knowledge of the sport by talking to others in a similar position and help to build team spirit. It might even be possible to find someone to share the responsibility of being on poolside to ease the burden.
- 14.2. The busy lives that we tend to lead rarely provide the opportunity to effectively 'zone out'. It is surprising how relaxing the sound of 40 swimmers seriously engaged in a 2 hour training session can be...try it! More importantly, if any problem arises such as the pool being closed, you will be immediately available to assist your swimmer.
- 14.3. The club rules include a section detailing the extent of club responsibility in relation to the supervision of swimmers and where parents would be expected to assist in this respect. All parents are advised to familiarise themselves with this document, which is available at [Sandbach Sharks Forms & Documents](#).

15. Squad Movement and Progression

- 15.1. Movement between swimming squads is at the discretion of the coaching staff under the direction of the Head Coach.
- 15.2. As the club is competitive the benchmark for progress will normally, but not exclusively be, 'how fast / well can you swim'. The club holds a number of events during the course of the year such as time trials and the club championships to gauge swimmers progress and the times recorded at these events are then used to assist the coaching staff with placing individual swimmers in the appropriate squad. However, achieved times are not the only consideration and commitment, attitude, dedication and potential also play an important role in placing swimmers within the club's squad system.
- 15.3. Swimmers are continuously monitored and assessed to ensure that they are swimming where they should be and that the available coaching and development opportunities best meet their individual needs. Should you have any doubts as to

why you are swimming where you are then just ask your coach, who will be happy to explain.

- 15.4. The club's 'Squad Progression & Developmental Targets' guide supplements this section of the club handbook. This document gives more detailed information about the club's commitment to a staged and structured developmental approach towards an individual swimmers progress and advancement within the club's squad hierarchy and the world of swimming beyond Sandbach Sharks.

16. Athlete Development

- 16.1. The development of swimmers within the club is guided by The National Plan for Teaching Swimming (NPTS) and the Long Term Athlete Development Plan (LTAD). The club's guide to 'Squad Progression & Developmental Targets' clearly shows the various stages of the NPTS. A guide to the LTAD is available from the British Swimming web site at [LTAD](#).
- 16.2. The LTAD aims to guide a swimmers progress from non-swimmer to Olympic finalist or even champion, via the five stages of the plan. This therefore means that very few swimmers will actually pass through all five stages.
- 16.3. Given the relative size of the club and the resources at its disposal, Sandbach Sharks aims to develop swimmers to a point somewhere within stage three (Train to Train) of the LTAD. Should any swimmer develop sufficiently by this stage, in order to maximise potential, it may then be necessary to consider moving to another club that can provide the required pool time, resources and coaching expertise. Current thinking in British Swimming is that swimmers should be prepared to move on in this way when their current club has taken them as far as they can. Sandbach Sharks however, provides the very best place to start your journey, and can accommodate the majority of swimmers throughout their swimming careers.
- 16.4. Any swimmer not achieving National Qualifying Times (NQT's) or podium places at the Regional Championships by stage three (Train to Train) of the LTAD ie. the vast majority(!) will still be in the best place to continue to develop, perhaps as a top quality County level athlete.
- 16.5. The club has in the past and more recently been responsible for producing swimmers who have achieved NQT's and qualified, swum and won medals at both the Regional and National Age Group Finals. At the other end of the age group spectrum masters swimmers have placed in the world top forty and tri-athletes in the national top ten. Sandbach Sharks has an excellent pedigree and will continue to strive to develop its swimmers to the best of their potential.

17. Charting Your Progress and Club Records

- 17.1. Everyone wants to know how they are progressing; at school or within a chosen sport. Coaches and teachers will also need to monitor an individual's performance, progress and achievements. The club keeps records of all personal best times achieved and these are made available on its website. However, and in addition, it is recommended that you keep your own records including details of date, event,

venue, distance, stroke, length of pool (short course = 25m / long course = 50m) and time achieved. One simple way of doing this is by using a spreadsheet as in the example below. This excel spreadsheet can be activated by double left clicking in it and you can then copy it for your own use or adaptation.

Date	Event & Venue	Stroke / Distance (Metres)								
		Butterfly	Dist.	Backstroke	Dist.	Breaststroke	Dist.	Freestyle	Dist.	
27.1.08	Burns Meet Sheffield								57.84 (LC)	100
1.3.08	Cheshires Macclesfield	1:05.20 (H)	100						57.86 (H)	100
1.3.08	Cheshires Macclesfield	1:02.87 (F)	100						56.39 (F)	100
9.3.08	Cheshires Macclesfield					1:15.66 (H)	100			
9.3.08	Cheshires Macclesfield					1:17.20 (F)	100			

(H) = Heat, (F) = Final, (LC) = Long course (50m pool)

- 17.2. In addition to recording your times achieved at competitive events, you might also find it helpful to maintain a 'training logbook'. Here you can record details of individual training sessions including type of set, set details, metrage, split times and other times recorded or given to you by your coach. You could also include notes about whether you enjoyed a particular set, felt tired during it or other personal thoughts to help you later.
- 17.3. An accurately maintained logbook can prove invaluable; it will give you a record of just how much you have been doing and how you felt whilst doing it. It is very easy to go swimming and not swim as well as you would have liked for no apparent reason. Your logbook may well tell you that you have increased the intensity of your training sessions, which would naturally leave you feeling tired! The logbook is a valuable tool to support a swimmers personal development. However, the value of the information to come out is only as good as that put in!
- 17.4. The club has a list of all the times that have recorded by swimmers who have swum whilst representing the club. The times form the basis of the club's record times for that particular event.
- 17.5. The full record policy can be found at [Sandbach Sharks Forms & Documents](#).
- 17.6. The list of club records can be found at [Sandbach Sharks Club Records](#).

18. Team Events, Galas and meets

- 18.1. The club participates in a number of events during the course of the year. There is no actual 'swimming season' as there is for cricket or football. As the major swimming events and competitions occur at similar times each year, all the others have to fit around them and so tend to take place on similar dates each year as well. The British Swimming website www.britishswimming.org has a planner that goes to up to 2012.

18.1.1. The Deva League:

- In the Autumn of each year the club participates in [The Deva League](#). This league consists in the main, of teams from Cheshire but with some from surrounding areas such as North Wales and Shropshire. There are currently three divisions in the League with a promotion and relegation system in operation. Each division holds a series of galas with each team hosting a 'home' gala.
- The age groups are 11 years and under / 13 years and under / 15 years and under / Open.

18.1.2. The Speedo League:

- During the Autumn of each year the club also competes in The Speedo League. This league is a National Competition with in excess of 500 participating teams each year since 1986. The competition is split into regions and Sandbach Sharks competes in the North West section with each section further divided into divisions.
- Each division holds three rounds of galas that are followed by an A and B regional final from which National Finalists are selected. After each round the results are submitted to the organisers, who then identify the next rounds opponents (and venue) by comparing point scores and finish position for all competing teams at each gala. Effectively, teams can be promoted, relegated or remain where they are after each round! In 2006 the club took part in the Regional Division 2 (B) final at the Manchester Aquatics Centre. A full and detailed explanation of how the Speedo League operates can be found on their website at www.speedoleague.org.uk

18.1.3. The Peak and Plain League:

- In the Spring / Summer of each year the club takes part in [The Peak & Plain League](#). This 'novice' league offers inexperienced swimmers an introduction to competition. The League consists of teams from within Cheshire only and is divided into two divisions, 'The Peak' and 'The Plain' with four teams in each division and a system of 'two up, two down' operating between the two. Each team hosts a 'home' gala against other members of the division, with a celebration gala for all teams from both divisions taking place at Macclesfield, usually in July each year.
- The age groups are 10 years and under / 11 years and under / 13 years and under / Open.
- This is a competition with time restrictions i.e. swimmers cannot take part if they have already recorded faster times than those allotted for a particular event within a specific age group. As swimmers exceed these 'time barriers' opportunities arise for other less experienced swimmers to participate and to get a taste of competition.

18.2. The ages for all the above league competitions are set at a fixed date determined by the last day (gala) of the competition each year, corresponding with ASA Law 411.5 where for racing / speed swimming, the age of the swimmer will be calculated at midnight on the day of the event or the final day of a series of events forming part of one competition.

- 18.3. To be eligible to compete, a swimmer must be 9 years of age on or before the last day of the competition, which is usually towards the end of November each year and corresponds with ASA Law 411.5.3. This minimum age rule applies to both individual events and relays.
- 18.4. The club also takes part in a number of other team events during the course of the year usually by invitation and teams will be selected accordingly.

19. Open Galas / Licensed Meets and the rest of the Swimming Year

- 19.1. During the rest of the year the club's swimmers are encouraged to enter what are known as either Licensed or Open Meets (events that are 'licensed' by the relevant ASA region). Annually the club sends swimmers to events such as The North Midlands Championships in January and the Cheshire County Championships in March. Other 'open' events are supported by the club and these are listed as part of the annual programme on the club's website at [Sandbach Sharks Events](#).

19.2. Open Galas – Any Questions?

? **What is an open / licensed meet?**...It's an event that is 'open' to any individual swimmer who meets the requirements of that particular competition. Unlike a team gala, you choose what events to enter, and it doesn't matter how many swimmers from the same club enter the same event; in fact the more the merrier.

? **Why should I enter?**...Generally, for team galas, you will be required to swim your best stroke or an event to help the team score maximum points. Open galas offer you the opportunity to swim any or every stroke across a variety of distances. So if you fancy the 400m Individual Medley (I.M), the 50m Backstroke and the 200m Butterfly you can enter them all and pit yourself against swimmers from clubs you may never swim against in team galas. 'Opens' always seem to produce lots of Personal Best Times, and medals / trophies etc. are awarded across all age group categories. Your coach will advise you on the most appropriate competitions for you to enter.

? **What are the different levels?**...There are four types or levels of licensed / open gala with Level 1 being the highest standard, requiring the fastest entry times.

- **Level 1:** These galas have 'consideration times' based around a national minimum standard. If you can beat these times, the organisers will then 'consider' whether they will let you swim! If too many people want to enter a particular event, the organisers will only take the top swimmers based upon their submitted entry times. These galas, which include the North West Regional Championships are intended for the country's / regions top swimmers and for swimmers looking to achieve National Qualifying Times (NQT's). However, this shouldn't deter anyone; if you can make the entry times you are good enough to compete at this level!
- **Level 2:** These galas have 'consideration times' that consist of an upper and lower time for each event. Therefore your entry time must fall somewhere in the

band between the two times to be considered. Again, to comply with licensing conditions the organizers will only accept the fastest entry times if the event is over-subscribed. The North Midlands and the Cheshire County Championships are Level 2 events. These events are intended for swimmers looking for Regional Qualifying times.

- **Level 3:** These galas, commonly referred to as 'B Grade', again have 'consideration' or 'cut-off' times for each event but unlike a Level 1 gala, you will not be permitted to enter any specific event where you have previously recorded a faster time than the cut-off time given. These galas are great fun for up-and-coming swimmers as you won't find a Regional Champion in the next lane! If however, you beat the cut-off time on the day of the gala you will receive a 'speeding ticket' to mark your achievement. Medals are only awarded to the fastest swimmers who don't exceed the cut-off time for each event. These events are intended for swimmers looking for Level 2 gala qualifying times.
- **Level 4:** These galas are quite uncommon but can include events like club championships. These events are generally not licensed as there is no requirement.

Level 1 to 3 events will have electronic timing, also known as Automated Officiating Equipment (AOE). This is started by the starting signal and finished when the swimmer touches a "pad" at the end of their lane at the conclusion of the race. The results will then be automatically displayed on a scoreboard. Results with times recorded electronically are submitted by event organisers to generate the national rankings. These events will have qualified officials (referee(s), starter(s), judges and time keepers) in attendance with responsibility for the running of the event and to ensure compliance with the rules.

? **How do I enter?**...The club identifies which galas it intends to take swimmers to at the beginning of each year and publicises a programme of supported events on the club website. Coaching staff will be aware of forthcoming events and will alert swimmers accordingly if they feel that a particular gala would be suitable. Alternatively, if you are interested in a programmed event you can obtain an entry form from the club's [gala manager](#). An entry fee for each event swum is payable on submission of the entry form for each gala to the club's gala manager with a small administration fee (currently £1 per swimmer per day) to cover club costs.

? **Cards or Cardless?**...Until recently, it was the norm to receive an entry card from the gala organisers for each event you were due to swim. Where this system remains in operation, these cards should be brought to the gala and 'posted' in the box reserved for the purpose, generally sited near the entrance to either the venue or changing rooms. **Do this before the warm-up for each session.** These cards tell the organisers that you have arrived and are going to swim. If you forget to post them, you will not be allowed to swim. Each card details exactly what event you are in and when the warm-up for that particular session begins.

More recently there has been a move towards 'cardless meets' where no cards are issued. The organisers will assume that you are going to swim and you will be allocated a heat and lane automatically. If you are ill or wish to withdraw from your race, you **must** tell the organisers before the end of the warm up for that session.

Failure to do so can result in you being prevented from swimming in the rest of the gala or a monetary fine for either yourself or the club!

? **What happens on the day?...**You will need to bring: trunks / costume, goggles, swimming cap, and spares, club T-shirt, water bottles, clean footwear (trainers or flip-flops) and at least two towels. A plastic bag is useful to keep your clothes dry on poolside. Drinks should be water, very diluted squash or better still specific sports drinks. Never drink anything fizzy!!!

Most of these open events last all day in either two or three sessions (morning, afternoon and evening) with no more than seven and a half hours of swimming in a day. Unfortunately that seven and a half hours does not include the warm up, which precedes each session and generally lasts an hour.

All-day galas therefore require a packed lunch, though city centre galas may give you the chance to 'eat out'. Beware though; a heavy meal of junk food is likely to give you indigestion and result in poor times! Bring a track-suit or warm clothes so you can go outside (after telling the coach!) for fresh air. Some form of entertainment would be a good idea, as you will invariably have a long wait between races. Expensive items such as jewellery and watches are best left at home. Parents make good taxi-drivers and are useful for moral and financial support so you'll need them as well!

When you arrive (which must be before warm up) post your cards (unless the meet is cardless) and get changed. Parents must go to the spectator gallery where they will be kept safe and warm until required to take you home or feed you. The only adults allowed on poolside are the officials, organisers and your club's coach who will need a special pass. If the coach cannot make a gala, then the Club will choose an experienced parent to act as chaperone and they will be given a coaches pass. Take all your baggage onto poolside and hunt for your teammates, they should all be wearing a Sandbach Sharks t-shirt as well!

? **How do I know when I am needed for my race?...Don't Panic!** Your coach will make sure you know when your races are. If you posted a card you will get it back, and you will see that someone has allocated you a heat and lane for each of your events. You will hear announcements such as "*Will entrants for heats one to five of event number 201, the Girls 11-16, 50 metres Butterfly please make their way to the Marshalling Area.*" When your event and / or heat is called, you will be directed to an area containing a number of rows of chairs. This is the marshalling area and the Marshall will sort everyone into heat and lane order and give you a seat usually on the back row of the block of seats. As each heat is called up to the blocks, the remaining swimmers shuffle along the rows of chairs until it is your turn to go to the blocks to start your race. Make sure you have your goggles and cap if you use one plus spares, drink, inhaler if you need one and keep your tracksuit, t-shirt etc on. Some races are for a single age group whilst others combine several age groups. You will swim in a heat against people who have entry times similar to yours, so don't worry about the giant next to you, as you will both have similar times! You will be called up behind the blocks while the previous heat is in progress, so you have plenty of time to prepare and to strip down to your swimming costume at this point. Ensure you stretch before your race whilst waiting for the heat in the water to finish.

? **What happens at the start?**...The heat before your race will finish and the officials will make sure they are happy with the race. The referee will then blow three short, sharp whistle blasts. If you are not already stripped down to your swimwear, do so now as the referee has to wait a reasonable time to allow you to do this. Once everyone is ready to swim the referee will then blow one long whistle blast. On hearing this, for Butterfly, Breaststroke and Freestyle, step onto the starting block with at least one foot at the front of the block. Once the referee is satisfied that everyone is ready they will hand over to the starter, who will again check for readiness before giving the command "*take your marks*". You need to prepare yourself to go at this point as the next thing you will hear is the starting signal...time to race!

For backstroke events, on the first long whistle from the referee get into the pool in your own lane. You will then hear a second long whistle blast and you must return to the wall and take your starting position, with your back towards the pool and both hands on the starting block. The referee will then hand over to the starter who will again check everyone is ready before giving the command "*take your marks*". Again, get ready for the starting signal and GO!

Once under the starter's control, do not move on the blocks before the starting signal or delay the start by wasting time on the blocks or in the water on backstroke. If you do, you are likely to be disqualified and ***your time will have been wasted***.

? **What happens at the finish?**...There are a number of options here dependant upon the level of the gala and the stroke you've just swum. At smaller events you should remain in the water until one of the officials tells you to get out. At other events 'over the top starts' may be used. This is where the officials will make sure that they are happy with the race and then start the next race while you are still in the water with the next heat diving over you! Ensure you hold on to the lane rope and tuck in close to the wall (but not touching the electronic pad). Once the next heat has begun leave the pool quickly. Level 1 to 3 open galas will have electronic timing, which consists of pressure pads at the finish. It is important that you don't climb out of the pool over these pads! You may damage them, delaying the event and making you the most unpopular person in the pool! Exit the pool at the side and always go under, never over the lane ropes. However, for all backstroke events you will be asked to leave the pool so that the swimmers for the next heat can enter the water for the start. Again, leave the pool by the side as quickly as you can. To prevent confusion, watch what happens in the heat before you and listen to the officials. If there is a swim-down pool, ensure you use it to restore your body to its normal condition.

? **Heats and Finals or Heat Declared Winner (HDW)?**...Events at open galas will be either heats and final, or heat declared winner (HDW). Generally, at events up to Level 2 i.e. the Cheshire County Championships and North Midlands Championships, the events up to and including 100 metres will be heats then finals and those over 100 meters will be HDW. All Level 1 events are heats and finals with perhaps the exception of the 800 metres and 1500 metres freestyle events. It is important that you and your coach know how the winner of your event(s) will be decided, so that you can plan your races accordingly.

- **Heats and Finals:** Your finishing position in your heat does not necessarily have any bearing upon the overall result. You may finish last in your heat, but all the swimmers ahead of you may be in different age groups. Wait for the results! However, beware race tactics until you can expertly judge your own pace. You are best advised to give it your best shot in the heats to make every effort to qualify for the final.
- **Are you a finalist?** The number of swimmers in the final will be dependent upon the number of lanes available at the venue. Ponds Forge in Sheffield has ten lanes so there will be ten finalists; Macclesfield Leisure Centre has eight lanes so there will be eight finalists. Using Macclesfield as an example, at the conclusion of the heats for an event, the fastest eight swimmers will be identified. They will be announced over the PA system in age group order, youngest first. This is usually done during the first few heats of the next event. Two reserves per age group final will also be announced in case someone does not want to swim in the final (they may have a more important event later in the day for example) or is unable to for some other reason. Finalists will then be called to the marshalling area and put into lane order to wait as described before. Finalists, however are seeded against each other based upon times achieved in the heats. The seeding will be:

Lane number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Seeded Position	7	5	3	1	2	4	6	8

Medals are therefore expected to come from the centre lanes but this is not necessarily always the case! Seedings can be worked out for all pools by remembering that lanes are numbered right to left from the starting end looking up the pool and that seeding goes from left to right ensuring all the lanes are filled, starting with the top seed in the middle lane.

- **'HDW' Heat Declared Winners:** A heat declared winner is taken directly from the results of the heats by comparing times by age-group. The results for each age group are announced over the PA and no finals take place. For a HDW event swimmers need to ensure that they give 110% effort in their heat as this is in effect, the final!
- ? **Awards and Presentations?**...Many galas have a podium for the first three in each age group and some even play fanfares as medalists go to receive your awards. If you have performed well enough to find yourself in this enviable situation, wear your club t-shirt, smile and enjoy your moment of fame. Shaking hands with the other two swimmers is a sporting gesture, whether you have won or lost. Remember you will probably be seeing them at other galas! At galas where there are no formal presentations or awards ceremonies the results will be posted on the wall somewhere around the pool and in the spectator area. You will be able to see where you came in your age group and what your time was. Remember to record this so that you can update your [record of achievement](#).
- ? **BAGCAT's?**...In addition to results sheets showing times and positions there will be separate results sheets for the BAGCAT's (British Age Group Categories Points). This point-based scoring system was introduced by British Swimming to encourage young swimmers to swim all events across all distances. It works in a similar way to

an athletics decathlon. The faster your times across a broad range of strokes and distances, the more points you score.

The benchmark for swimming is the average of the eight fastest swims of all time in that event (a good place to start!) and this figure is given 1000 points. Your BAGCAT points for that event are calculated when the time you achieve is compared to this averaged time using a formula. You can find a 'BAGCAT Calculator' and a more detailed explanation on the British Swimming website at [British Swimming BAGCAT's](#).

BAGCAT's are calculated across four distinct elements – Form (any stroke other than freestyle), Freestyle, Individual Medley and Sprint / 100. Points scored for each element depend upon whether times achieved are either long or short course.

The tables below show how points can be accumulated for the 12 yrs age group (blue = boys / pink = girls):

Short Course 25m Pool

Sprint	Best 50m	Sprint	Best 50m
100s	Best 100m	100s	Best 100m
Form	Best 200m form stroke	Form	Best 200m form stroke
Distance	Best 200/400/1500 freestyle	Distance	Best 200/400/800 freestyle
IM	Best 100/200/400 IM	IM	Best 100/200/400 IM

Long Course 50m Pool

100s	Best 100m	100s	Best 100m
Form	Best 200m form stroke	Form	Best 200m form stroke
Distance	Best 200/400/1500 freestyle	Distance	Best 200/400/800 freestyle
IM	Best 200/400 IM	IM	Best 200/400 IM

There are slight differences with regard to age (9 year old swimmers aren't expected to do the 1500 freestyle!) and full details are available at [British Swimming BAGCAT's](#).

Your overall BAGCAT score for the gala will comprise the best points scoring swim from each of the four elements. At the end of the gala the results show the best all round swimmers in each age group. At most open galas there are separate awards and prizes for the top BAGCAT swimmers, which can be cash or swimwear and well worth winning!

It is worth mentioning however, that not all open galas apply this system strictly. There may for example, be no 200 metres IM or 400 metres freestyle during the course of the meet. In this case the event organisers, also known as 'The Promoter', will use substitute events so that an 'unofficial' BAGCAT system can be run.

It is well worth checking the 'Promoters Conditions' prior to entering the gala to ensure that you are swimming the right events to maximise your point scoring opportunities.

? **Going home!**...Tell your Coach if you are going home. However, even though you have essentially been swimming for your self you are still representing Sandbach

Sharks. Your team-mates and friends may well have been cheering you on during your races and may appreciate some support as well!
If you are going home make sure you take all your personal belongings with you, including your rubbish.

? **Where Next?**...The general route of progression advocated by the club is from Level 3 to Level 1 open galas. This effectively provides swimmers with experience of competing at novice events with speeding tickets, through County or District events, such as the North Midlands or Cheshire County Championships to Regional events like Swim North West competitions. At this level swimmers should be aiming to achieve a National Qualifying Time (NQT) in their best event and maybe one other, as a result of being a competent BAGCAT swimmer.

The National Age Group and Youth Championships are held annually in July and August. At the moment they are hosted in Sheffield at Ponds Forge in Sheffield though this may change once London builds it's 2012 swimming venue. Entry into the 'Nationals' at whatever age is only by way of invitation, though this invitation is automatic if you achieve or better the advertised NQT.

NQT's for each event, distance, sex and age are published annually during September / October for the following year's Nationals. The NQT itself is the average time of the finalists in the preceding years corresponding event i.e. the NQT for the boys 14yrs 400metres freestyle for 2008 is the average time of the ten finalists who took part in the 2007 final of the same event. These times are quick so to 'swim an NQT' in any event is an achievement in itself and cause for much celebration.

At almost all licensed meets the NQT's will be shown at the front of the programme and are also available on the British Swimming website at www.britishswimming.org. NQT's can only be achieved at events using electronic (AOE) timing ie. Level 1,2 and 3 galas where this is compulsory and level 4 events where it is used.

? **Long Course or Short Course?**...As most of the more prestigious events throughout the year are swum in long course pools (50 metres) it is important to try and gain as much experience in a long course pool as possible. Don't be fooled however, into thinking that its simply twice the distance of a 25 metre pool as it takes more than twice the effort to get from one end to the other! Long course pools mean fewer turns (and the benefits of the push off the wall) during the course of an event and times compared to those achieved in a 25 metre pool are not as fast.

The NQT's show the difference between short and long course times. For example, the 2008 long course NQT for 14 years boys 400 metres freestyle is 4.26.11 and the short course time for the same event is 4.18.91; a difference of over seven seconds! Qualification for the Nationals can be achieved using either as each event has both a short and long course qualifying time. Short course times can be converted to long course and vice versa. A good conversion tool can be found at [Time conversion utility](#).

20. **ASA Registration**

20.1. Swimmers must be 'Category 2' registered with the Amateur Swimming Association to compete at any licensed meet and to represent Sandbach Sharks at certain other

team events. Any swimmer who is likely to be selected for the Speedo League squad will automatically be registered as a Category 2 swimmer by the club during the annual membership process. However, anyone entering an open gala for the first time, especially at the youngest age (9 years) should first check with the club's membership secretary to confirm their current category of registration.

- 20.2. Individuals can if they wish, be registered to swim with more than one club. This however, does have implications for who has 'first call' on your services and when and in what competitions you might be eligible to participate in. Should you have any queries about dual membership / registration please contact to the [membership secretary](#), who will be happy to advise you.

21. Medication

- 21.1. Question?...What do all of the club's category 2 ASA registered swimmers, have in common with David Beckham, Ian Thorpe and Paula Radcliffe? Answer...They are all athletes and therefore subject to anti-doping legislation. Consequently, they may be asked to provide a sample for testing and this has previously happened to a Sandbach Sharks swimmer! Parental / guardian consent is required in the case of any swimmer under the age of 18 but everyone is subject to the legislation, regardless of age.
- 21.2. Swimmers who take regular medication for hay-fever or asthma for example, must declare it on an Amateur Swimming Association form which can be obtained from the club's Membership Secretary. It is also sensible to tell your doctor that you are a competitive swimmer when being prescribed medication as this may help in deciding which medication to treat you with.

22. A Word to Parents and Supporters

- 22.1. Parents, family and friends are as important to a swimmers development as their coach and other club staff and officials. The requirement for financial and emotional support are generally laid at the door of parents in addition to the substantial transportational demands that the sport of swimming can impose upon both man and machine! Parents and associates may have an idea about what events they would like 'their' swimmer to compete in and how they might expect them to perform. However, it must be remembered that no one sets out to swim badly unless that is, you have decided to enter them in the 200 metres butterfly in a long course pool at their very first event! There can be numerous reasons for what you perceive to be a poor swim; nerves, illness, gaining experience of a race-paced swim, the event not being a target meet, the list is endless. Suffice to say that you should do everything you can to support 'your' swimmers. Be sympathetic, positive and pick up the pieces if necessary - let the coach provide the constructive criticism and expert advice!

23. Getting Involved at Sandbach Sharks

- 23.1. As previously mentioned the club's committee is elected annually at the AGM and the role descriptions are available on the website. If you would like to stand for

election to the committee you should make your intentions known to the club [Chairperson](#) prior to the AGM.

- 23.2. The club is always in need of helpers who can assist at both the club's team events and at other 'in house' events such as the club championships or time trials. More importantly, the club needs coaches and teachers; training and support could be made available to anyone who might be interested in pursuing this path. If you would like to know more about helping out or getting involved in any respect, please contact a member of [the committee](#) and they will be able to assist.

24. Volunteering beyond Sandbach Sharks

- 24.1. It would of course be preferable if you were to offer your services to the club as first priority! However, there are a number of volunteer opportunities in the wider world of swimming that might appeal to those keen to spread their wings further afield. These include becoming a qualified technical official (those dressed in white on poolside at galas and meets). Such positions include timekeepers, judges, starters and referees. Locally, these officials get a modest mileage allowance to cover the cost of their travel to an event, refreshments between sessions, entry to the event and of course, the best seat in the house! If you're going to be there all day anyway, why not help out? Nationally, officials receive much the same with the added bonus of being able to watch the top swimmers in the country. Again, if you would like to know more about helping out or getting involved in this respect, please contact a member of the committee and they will be able to point you in the right direction.

And Finally...Please remember...If you are reading this handbook, it belongs to you! Feel free to contribute and to suggest ways in which it could be improved.

GO SHARKS



A Swimmers Glossary

Aerobic training - Training that requires lots of oxygen and increases the heart rate. It strengthens the cardio-vascular system (heart and lungs).

Anaerobic training - Training that uses movements requiring very little oxygen. These are quick explosive actions of short duration such as sprinting.

Age Group - Division of swimmers according to age. Males and females differ slightly; Age Group for girls is aged 11 years through to thirteen and for boys 11 years through to fourteen.

Anchor - The final swimmer in a relay.

A.S.A. / Amateur Swimming Association - The Amateur Swimming Association is the national governing body with responsibility for swimming, diving, water polo, open water and synchronised swimming in England. See [ASA](#).

Backstroke / Backcrawl - One of the four competitive racing strokes; basically any style of swimming on your back. Backstroke is swum as the first stroke in the Medley Relay and second stroke in the Individual Medley. Racing distances are 50 metres / yards, 100 metres / yards and 200 metres / yards.

BAGCAT - See [BAGCAT's?](#)

Blocks - The starting platforms located at one end of each lane of the pool. Some pools have blocks at the deeper end of the pool and some pools have blocks at both ends. Blocks have a variety of designs and can be permanent or removable.

Breaststroke - One of the four competitive racing strokes. Breaststroke is swum as the second stroke in the Medley Relay and the third stroke in the Individual Medley. Racing distances are 50 metres / yards, 100 metres / yards and 200 metres / yards. Swum on the front with arms circling out in front and a 'frog like' leg movement it is technically the slowest stroke.

British Swimming - The National governing body with responsibility for swimming, diving, water polo, open water and synchronised swimming in Great Britain. See [British Swimming](#).

Butterfly / Fly - One of the four competitive racing strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed Fly) is swum as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and first stroke in the Individual Medley. Racing distances are 50 metres / yards, 100 metres / yards and 200 metres / yards. Butterfly is the second fastest but technically and physically the hardest of the four main strokes. The butterfly kick is also known as a dolphin kick (see below). Arms move together in an up and over the water motion.

Button - The manual timing system stopping device that records a back-up time in case the touch pad malfunctions. The button is at the end of a wire and it is the timekeeper's responsibility to push the button as the swimmer finishes the race.

Cannon – A relay that includes a male and female swimmer from each age group present at the gala.

Cap - The latex or silicone covering worn on the head of swimmers. Team colours and logo's are often used on these caps.

Circle / Cyclic Seeding - A method of seeding swimmers participating in a heats / finals event. Dependent upon the number of lanes available the fastest swimmers are seeded in the last three heats, with the fastest swimmers occupying the centre lanes. The fastest swimmer goes in the centre lane of the last heat, the next fastest in the centre lane of the penultimate heat with the third fastest swimmer in the heat before that. The fourth fastest swimmer is then placed in the final heat but in the lane to the left of the fastest swimmer and so on until all lanes are taken for all three heats. See [Are you a Finalist?](#)

Colorado - A brand of automatic timing system.

Course - Length of pool for any specific swimming competition. Long Course = 50 metres / yards. Short Course = 25 metres / yards.

Deck - The area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches. Only authorised personnel (swimmers officials, coaches) may be on the deck during a competition and a pass is usually required for the purpose.

Dehydration - Excessive loss of body fluids (water). This is the most common cause of swimmers suffering from cramps and feeling sick.

Distance - How far a swimmer swims. Distances for short course are: 25 metres / yards (1 length), 50m / yds (2 lengths), 100m / yds (4 lengths), 200m / yds (8 lengths), 400m / yds (16 lengths), 800m / yds 32 lengths, 1500m / yds (60 lengths). Distances for long course are: 50m / yds (1 length), 100m / yds (2 lengths), 200m / yds (4 lengths), 400m / yds (8 lengths), 800m / yds (16 lengths), 1500m / yds (30 lengths).

Disqualified / D.Q. - A swimmer's performance is not counted because of a rules infringement.

Dive - Entering the water headfirst. Diving is not allowed during warm-ups except at the designated time and in specific lanes that are monitored by the swimmer's coach.

Dolphin kick - A leg kick performed in the butterfly stroke in which the legs are held together and moved up and down by bending and straightening them at the knee twice in quick succession.

Dragsuit / shorts - Baggy nylon swimsuit / trunks worn over a regular training swimwear to add drag / resistance to everyday training.

(Dry)Land - Exercises and strength training programmes swimmers undertake out of the water.

Drills - Specific training exercises that help to develop stroke technique and fitness.

Entry Fees - The amount payable for entry into competition events. This varies depending upon the type of gala / meet.

Electronic Timing - Timing system operated automatically by the starting signal and finished by the swimmer touching the pad at the end of their lane. It has cables for the 'buttons' (see above), and a computer console that prints out the results of each race. Systems are linked to a scoreboard that displays split times and the race result.

Exhale - Breathing out.

Equity and Diversity Policy - The way we can ensure that swimming is a 'Sport for all'. See [British Swimming Equality and Diversity](#).

False Start - When a swimmer moves before the starting signal. A false start will disqualify a swimmer or a relay team, although the starter or referee may disallow the false start due to unusual circumstances.

False Start Rope - A recall rope across the width of the pool used to stop swimmers who are unaware of a false start, should the race be recalled. The rope is 15 metres from the start end of the pool.

Flags - Pennants that are suspended over the width of each end of the pool 5 metres from the wall and used to assist backstrokers with positioning themselves for the turn.

F.I.N.A. - La Fédération Internationale de Natation. The world governing body for swimming. Link to www.fina.org.

Fins - Also known as flippers. There are lots of different types. The two most common are mono fins, which are a large single fin with inserts that hold both feet together and the standard fins that are worn on each foot. Used for training purposes.

Freestyle / Front crawl - One of the four competitive racing strokes. Freestyle (nicknamed Free) is swum as the fourth stroke in the Medley Relay and fourth stroke in the Individual Medley. Racing distances are 50 metres / yards, 100 metres / yards, 200 metres / yards, 400 metres / yards, 800 metres / yards, 1500 metres / yards. Free is the fastest stroke. It is swum on your front and is named as such because there is no set technique.

Gala - A swimming contest / competition is often called a swimming gala.

Goggles - A pair of tight-fitting eyeglasses that protect your eyes and help you see better underwater. Numerous types and styles are available.

Gravity wave - The wave action caused by the swimmers' bodies moving through the water, which moves down and forward from the swimmer, bounces off the bottom of the pool then returns to the surface as turbulence.

Heat - The swimming races that determine fastest qualifiers for the final. There may be more than one round of heats.

H.D.W. - Heat Declared Winner; an event without a final where the winner is determined from the times recorded in the heat(s).

Individual Medley / I.M. - Individual Medley events are held over 100 metres / yards, 200 metres / yards and 400 metres / yards, with competitors swimming all four strokes in leg order of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle.

Inhale - Breath in.

Keyhole / Wine Glass pull - The 'keyhole' or 'wine glass' is the shape made with the hands and arms when swimming butterfly.

Lanes - A set of parallel courses marking the bounds for contestants in a swimming race. The number of lanes depends on the width of the pool.

L.E.N. - Ligue Européenne de Natation. The governing body of the 51 European Swimming Federations. See www.lenweb.org.

Lengths - Unlike in athletics and motor racing where a race is made up of laps, swimming races consist of pool lengths.

Lap Counter - The large numbered cards (or the person turning the cards) used during the freestyle events 400 metres / yards or longer. Counting is done at the end specified by the promoter. The numbers on the cards descend with the final lap (50 metres) sometimes designated by different coloured numbers.

Leg - The part of a relay event swum by a single team member. One of the single strokes in the Individual Medley.

Long course - A swimming race swum in a 50metres / yards pool.

Medley - See Individual Medley.

Medley Relay - In the medley relay a different swimmer swims each leg using a particular stroke in the order of backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle.

Negative Split - A race or training strategy in which a swimmer covers the second half of a race / set faster than the first half.

Main Set - The central (and usually longest and most challenging) set in a workout, which defines the purpose of the entire workout / training session.

Marshall - The people who you report to at an open gala / meet. They will allocate you a heat and lane and ensure you are in position for your race.

N.Q.T. - National Qualifying Time; a time that must be either equalled or bettered in order to be invited to the National Championships.

Olympian - An athlete who has competed at the Olympic Games.

Omega - A brand of automatic timing system.

One start rule - The rule by which swimmers are disqualified after being judged to have false started in an event.

On the top - Starting a set on the 12 o'clock (or 60-second) mark on a poolside pace clock.

On the bottom - Starting a set on the 6 o'clock (or 30-second) mark on a poolside pace clock.

Pace Clock - The electronic clocks or large clocks with highly visible numbers and second hands, positioned at the ends or sides of a swimming pool to enable swimmers to read their times during warm-ups or training.

Promoter – The individual / group responsible for the organisation, running, administration and rules of a gala.

Referee - The head official at a gala / meet in charge of all of the 'wet side' administration and decisions. The Referee is the only person who can disqualify a swimmer as a result of a report from either the starter or a judge or based upon what they have observed themselves.

Relay - A race that involves more than one person representing their team.

Set – A number of repeated swims at specified distances with a stated rest interval between each swim. A training session / workout can comprise a single set or multiples.

Sculling - A stroke that mirrors the sculling movement of an oarsman, with the swimmer using their arms to propel themselves through the water. Can be performed on either front or back.

Reverse I.M - Individual medley in reverse order; freestyle, breaststroke, backstroke, and butterfly (sometimes written as I.M-1).

Scratch - To withdraw from an event after having initially declared an intention to participate. Some galas / meets have scratch deadlines and specific scratch rules, which if not followed can lead to disqualification from any remaining events.

Short course - A swimming race swum in a 25 metre pool.

Stamina - Physical (or mental) capacity to resist fatigue and tiredness.

Split - Part of an event that is shorter than the total distance and is timed eg. a swimmer's first 50 metres / yards time is taken during a 100 metres / yards race. It is common to take multiple splits for the longer distances.

Start End - The end of the pool at which races are started. This may well change during a short course gala with 25 metres / yards races or a long course gala with 50 metres / yards races.

Starter - The official in charge of signalling the beginning of the race. The starter also ensures that all swimmers have a fair and legal take-off.

Starting platform - Another name for 'the block(s)' from which swimmers start a race in butterfly, breaststroke and freestyle.

Streamlined - Swimming in a style that provides the least resistance to the water, particularly at the start and during turns.

Stroke Judge - The official(s) positioned at the side of the pool, walking the length of the course as the swimmers race. If the Stroke Judge sees something illegal, they report to the referee and the swimmer may be disqualified.

Surf - To swim just behind a swimmer in an adjacent lane to take advantage of the wave created by that swimmer.

SwimLine - A confidential phone line to report instances of abuse or neglect of children. See [SwimLine](#).

Swim-Off – Where swimmers from the same or different heats register equal times to within 1/100th of a second and qualify for a place in a final, semi-final or reserve for either results in a swim-off between the respective swimmers. Equal times for non-qualifying swimmers are classed as ties.

Tapering - The act of paring down workouts (in length and intensity) for the weeks or days leading up to a specific gala or race.

Threshold - The maximum time you can 'hold' or repeat, for a given distance, during a highly aerobic set.

Tumble turn - This is the turn used in freestyle races where the swimmer performs a somersault in the water to make the turn as quickly as possible.

Time Trial - An event or series of events where a swimmer attempts to achieve or better a required time standard.

Touch Out - To reach the touch pad and finish first in a close race.

Touch Pad -The removable plate (on the end of the pool) that is connected to an electronic (automatic) timing system. A swimmer must properly touch the pad to register an official time in a race.

Turn End - The end opposite the start end.

Unofficial Time -The time displayed on a read out board or read over the intercom by the announcer immediately after the race. After the time has been checked it becomes the official time.

Warm-down - The recovery swimming a swimmer performs after a race when pool space is available.

Warm-up - The practice and 'loosening-up' session a swimmer performs before the gala starts or their event is swum.

Wave Power - The ASA's child protection guidelines. See [Wave Power](#).

Youth - Division of swimmers according to age. Youth is for girls from 14 upwards and for boys 15 upwards.