

# McGaw YMCA Swim Team



## Parent Handbook

Last Revised 10/22/10

## **The MYST Team Philosophy**

MYST is a competitive swimming program that's oriented toward developing the whole swimmer. We believe that there's more to competition than just collecting trophies.

The guiding philosophy of YMCA swimming is, "Everyone swims; everyone wins." That means we value participation as much as performance. Yes, we work hard to become tough and fair competitors. But we want our swimmers to learn what they can accomplish as individuals and as members of a team as well.

At MYST, we feel the best measure of our success is not the number of ribbons we bring home so much as the number of young people we turn out who love to swim, continue swimming, and do it well.

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# Getting Ready to Swim

## What is MYST?

The McGaw YMCA Swim Team (MYST) is a competitive youth sports program for boys and girls in kindergarten through high school. The program emphasizes skill development, fitness, and fun.

## How we're Organized

The team is organized into six groups, based on age, experience, and expectations. Several groups are divided into sub-groups, differing either by age or level of competitiveness.

The **Squid Squad** is for new, young swimmers, typically 5 to 7 years old. We provide a low-key introduction to competitive strokes for the young swimmer. The focus is more on developing proper stroke mechanics than on competition. Swimmers must be able to complete one length of the pool in freestyle or backstroke, and be water safe.

*Expectations:* We recommend swimming at two practices a week. Members of the Squid Squad are encouraged to participate in our intrasquad meets. If a child is ready by January, he or she is welcome to swim in one of our regularly scheduled Y dual meets.

The **Green Group** is for youngsters, typically aged 7 to 9 years old. Swimmers may be new to competitive swimming or have had some swim team experience. This group will focus on proper stroke mechanics and begin to develop more endurance. Competition in meets is encouraged as the swimmers become ready. Swimmers must be able to complete one length of the pool in freestyle and backstroke.

*Expectations for Green Group:* We expect them to participate in two practices per week (out of three offered). Participation in dual meets is recommended. We also recommend they engage in YMCA invitational meets, and either the District Championship (if they qualify) or the District Classic.

The **Yellow Group** is suggested for swimmers age 9 and up whom are new to swim team or not as interested in competition. Swimmers must be able to swim at least two lengths of the pool in freestyle and backstroke proficiently. This group will continue to refine stroke mechanics, developing all four strokes and moving towards longer swims in practice. Participation in swim meets is encouraged, but not mandated.

*Expectations:* Attend two practices a week (out of three offered).  
Participation in dual meets is encouraged, but not required.

The **Orange Group** are for swimmers aged 7 and older who have knowledge of all four strokes. Participation in meets, including the 10 and Under Wonder at McGaw as well as one or more USA meet, is strongly encouraged.

*Expectations:* Attend 2-3 practices per week

The **Red Group** includes our more experienced swimmers as well as those 14 and older who are new to the swim team. Swimmers must be able to swim all four strokes proficiently. Emphasis will be on continuing to develop competitive strokes and become proficient at starts and turns, as well as on introducing them to a more training-like environment.

*Expectations:* Attend 3 practices a week (out of 4 offered).  
Participation in home and away dual meets and invitational meets is expected.

The **Purple Group** is geared toward swimmers aged 11 and old who have achieved proficiency at all 4 strokes as well as starts and turns. The group is ideally suited for those who wish to swim competitively at large invitational meets, without necessarily putting in the level of training required of the blue group.

Expectations: 3 practices a week is required. Participation in meets is required.

The **Blue Group** is for more experienced swimmers, aged 9 and up who wish to train at the highest level and aspire to qualify for competition at the national and senior level. These individuals compete in YMCA & USA swim meets in an effort to achieve the highest levels of the sport. Swimmers are required to be proficient at all 4 competitive strokes, as well as starts and turns. While there is still an emphasis on technique, athletes will begin to learn to train at a higher level.

*Expectations:* Practice 3-4 days a week (out of 6 offered).  
Competition at dual, invitational, and championship meets, for both YMCA and USA swimming.

The **Senior Group** is targeted at swimmers age 12 and higher who have a fair amount of experience and wish to compete at an elite level. It provides the highest level of training MYST offers and includes strenuous practices. While there is a focus on technique, there is also one on conditioning and training. Participation in the Senior Group is by

invitation of the senior coach only.

*Expectations:* Swimmers must demonstrate a desire to train at a committed, strenuous level. This includes attending 60% of practices (out of 8 offered/week), competing at the YMCA nationals, closed YMCA competition meets including the Chicago District Championships.

## **Intrasquad Activities**

Every group is an important part of the team, and we encourage all swimmers to participate in team activities, regardless of what group they're in. This include some or all of the following, many of which have become hallowed traditions:

- A season kickoff at the beach (usually in September)
- Pizza or pasta nights (usually held on Fridays after practice)
- The marathon (swimmers see how many laps they can do in a 15 minutes, with parents recording their laps)
- The team photo (with opportunities to have individual pictures taken)
- The family swim meet
- The MYST banquet (usually held in April)

In addition, there are other fun events that held throughout the year, to give swimmers a chance to have fun together, and engage socially with coaches and parents.

# **The Official MYST Season**

## **Swim Practice**

Our regular season runs from October to March, with practice running continually during that period. Practice is an important part of any swim team. MYST swimmers are encouraged to attend practices regularly each week throughout the season — even during vacations and holiday periods, when we run an adjusted schedule.

MYST is divided into six practice groups. The groups are set up by the MYST coaching staff to provide the best teaching environment possible. There is some overlap between age and ability in order to allow for some flexibility in providing a training environment ideally suited for each swimmer.

If you have questions as far as the placement of your swimmer, please feel free to speak with the Head Coach about what would be best. It is important for your swimmer to attend the correct practice for developmental reasons: a novice swimmer attending a practice that is too advanced may feel overwhelmed and not enjoy the sport, and the opposite may occur for a more advanced swimmer practicing with others at lesser ability and commitment.

## **Practice Groups and Schedule**

The Regular Team (everyone except Squid Squad) practices in the 6-lane Murdough Pool, while the Squid Squad works out in the 4-lane pool, which is kept slightly warmer. All practices are supervised and led by the MYST coaching staff. Parents are always welcome to come and watch.

Different squads practice on a consistent schedule, although at slightly different times to accommodate everyone in the pool. Be sure to get the current season practice schedule from the coaching staff or the MYST Web site (<http://www.gomyst.com>). In general, though, practice schedules are as follows:

- The Squid Squad has practice times available in the late afternoon twice a week. Squid Squad team members are asked to attend 1 – 2 practices per week, out of two offered.
- The Green Group has practice times in the late afternoons three times per week. Swimmers are asked to attend at least 2 practices per week.

- The Yellow Group has practice times available a little earlier in the afternoon 3 times per week. Swimmers are asked to attend 2 practices per week.
- The Red Group has practice times available four evenings a week and on Friday afternoons. Swimmers are asked to make a commitment of 3 practices a week.
- The Blue Group has practice times available six times a week and, with some morning and dryland training opportunities offered. Swimmers are asked to make a commitment of 3-4 practices a week.
- The Senior Group has practice times 8 times a week, including morning and evening. Swimmers are expected to attend 60% of them.

Of course, swimmers are always welcome to attend more than the suggested number of practices.

Information about adjustments to the schedule (particularly during the holidays) will always be included in the weekly swim team newsletter, which is emailed to all parents/guardians and is also available on the MYST website. Generally, we *do* conduct practices during school holidays. A good rule of thumb is that, if the Y is open, we practice.

## **What is “Stroke Clinic”?**

In September, just prior to the start of our regular season, and again in April, just after the close of the season, our MYST coaching staff runs a stroke improvement clinic. This is a YMCA class that focuses on good swimming mechanics and technique.

The clinic’s emphasis is more on swimming well than on swimming fast — although the two usually go hand-in-hand.

You do not have to be a member of the team to attend stroke improvement clinic. Many team members attend to work on their technique and improve their conditioning.

## **Swim Team Fees**

All swimmers must be members of the McGaw YMCA. On top of the membership dues, the Y charges for participation in the swim team program. These fees depend upon the level at which your swimmer is participating, with Squid Squad fees the lowest and the Blue Team the



highest. Fee assistance is available for families who qualify. Families with more than one swimmer can receive a discount for each child enrolled beyond the original team member.

Swim team fees cover the following:

- cost of practices
- fees for all YMCA dual meets
- fees for up to two YMCA invitational meets
- fees for YMCA district and state championship meets
- bus travel to certain “away” swim meets
- a MYST swim cap
- competition ribbons and various awards at the end of the season
- membership in USA Swimming

Blue team fees cover participation in USA Swimming-sanctioned swim meets and other invitational meets; swimmers in other groups are welcome (and often encouraged) to participate for an additional fee. All swimmers must pay for their own snacks at home and away meets, as well as the food served at swim team events (unless otherwise mentioned). Generally, parents and guardians are responsible for getting their swimmers to and from meets, though car-pooling is generally easy to arrange.

For more information about fees for the current season, please check the swim team registration form, which is included in the parent information packet and also available from the MYST website.

# Competitions

## YMCA and USA Swimming

There are two age-group competitive swimming organizations in the United States: YMCA and USA Swimming (formerly USS -- and before that, AAU). Our team carries dual charters. This allows us to swim in both types of swim meets.

MYST is primarily a YMCA team. This means that we fill out our schedule of meets with other YMCA teams and our focus at the end of the season is on the YMCA championship meets.

We participate in a few USA Swimming-sponsored meets each year. These meets provide our swimmers with exposure to swimmers from more teams and allow them to participate in some particularly interesting meets.

On the meet sign-up forms, each meet is designated as a "Y" meet or a "USA" meet. Generally, USA meets involve multiple teams in large swimming venues, often happening over several days. For example, several of them are held at the UIC Natatorium downtown.

While some Y meets are also large, most of them are smaller, 2- and 3-team competitions held at the local YMCA. MYST generally hosts 3-4 of these a year at our pool.

## **Types of Meets**

MYST swimmers can compete in various types of meets.

### ***Intrasquad Meets***

Intrasquad meets race MYST team members against each other in our home pool at the McGaw YMCA. We typically have one or two intrasquad meets each season. These are fun events designed primarily to introduce swimmers to meet mechanics and the basic race components of clean starts, turns, finishes and relays. An intrasquad meet usually lasts one to three hours.

All MYST team members are encouraged to participate in these meets, including members of the Squid Squad.

### ***Dual Meets***

Dual meets are competitions between MYST and one other YMCA team, swimming either in our pool or theirs. MYST usually competes in about six dual meets per season.

Dual meet sign-up procedures:

Swimmers may sign up for up to three individual events and a relay, or up to two individual events and two relays.

Sign-ups are posted at the pool the week before the meet.

By the end of practice on Thursday, all swimmers — whether they intend to participate or not — should have either signed up for their chosen events, or (if they aren't going to compete) crossed their name off the roster.

If possible, coaches will post the meet line-up on Friday afternoon, or tell swimmers which races they're in as they arrive for the meet.

Signing up for an event does not necessarily ensure the swimmer will actually swim that event, but the coaches do what they can to accommodate as many wishes as possible.

Most dual meets are on Saturday afternoons, and last three to four hours.

### ***Tri- Meets***

Tri-meets are like dual meets but held with two other YMCA teams, either in our pool or theirs. Typically we compete in these meets to accommodate a YMCA team that does not have enough swimmers to

warrant a dual meet.

### ***Invitational Meets***

Invitational meets pull together a half-dozen or more teams in a much larger competition that can involve hundreds of swimmers. Invitational meets are held on either Saturdays or Sundays (often both), and last several hours.

To participate, swimmers must sign up well in advance. The swim team schedule always contains several invitational meets. Sponsors of invitational meets charge an entry fee for each swimmer. The Y pays these fees for two invitational meets each year. Meet sponsors do not offer refunds for no-shows. So, swimmers must understand that turning in their meet entry represents a commitment to participate.

### ***USA Swimming Meets***

USA Swimming is a national organization of age-group swimmers and swim teams. MYST maintains a USA Swimming charter, which allows us to supplement our normal schedule of YMCA events

Generally, these events are more like invitational meets, involving multiple teams. To participate, swimmers will need to pay small additional fees to register in individual events. These fees are typically \$10 to \$15 per meet.

### ***Championship Meets (“Districts,” “Districts Classic,” and “Area”)***

Each swimmer who has competed in at least three dual meets is eligible for one of the season-ending championship meets sponsored by the Chicago District.

A swimmer who achieves a “district qualifying time” in an individual event is eligible for the Chicago District Championship meet. Qualifying times for the championships are published separately, and we will make them available on the MYST Web site (<http://www.gomyst.com/>).

We encourage swimmers at all age levels to print out the qualifying times for the district meet, and use them as a motivation throughout the year: this is a great motivator, and will encourage goal-setting skills, which are valuable throughout life.

Swimmers who qualify for districts will receive notification. The location of the meet, which takes place somewhere in the north Chicagoland area, is generally announced several months or more in advance. This meet occurs on a weekend in late February or early March at an area pool. Typically, boys swim one day of the weekend and girls the other day. At these meets, swimmers may compete in up to three individual

events and one relay, or two individual events and two relays.

Those who have not achieved a “district time” are eligible to compete in the Chicago District Classic meet. This end-of-season event features the same races as the regular season, but without relays. Swimmers with a district-qualifying time may not swim at the Classic. However, it is possible for a swimmer to compete in both the Classic and at the District Championships, if he or she swims in individual events at the Classic, and on a relay team at the District Championships.

Swimmers who achieve a state qualifying time at the District meet (or who finish first at the District meet) advance to the Illinois Area YMCA Swimming Championships. This meet is typically held on a weekend in mid-March, with boys competing on one day and girls on the other. Its location moves around the state from year to year: the 2007-8 meet was held at Northern Illinois.

The state qualifying times are also available on the MYST Web site.

### **Does a swimmer have to compete?**

No. A child can be part of MYST and not swim in meets — but we do encourage it. Most kids really enjoy the competition, and it’s a great reward for attending all those practices.

# Preparation for your Swimmer

## Basic Equipment

We strongly recommend that your swimmer have the following equipment:

- Team swim suit
- Swim cap (Swimmers are issued one team cap; extras are available for an additional charge)
- Practice suit
- Goggles — at least 2 pairs
- Towel
- Swim bag to carry gear
- Combination lock

Your swimmer's name should be clearly marked on all items.

## MYST Team Gear

At the beginning of the season, MYST members can purchase suits, sweats and swim bags emblazoned with the team logo. These items, while fun, are strictly optional. We try to select suits that are affordable, and encourage everyone to purchase one.

Replacement gear with the team logo may be purchased through the team store.

## What to Bring to a Meet

Swimmers should bring all of their basic swim gear (see above) to a meet, plus these few additional items:

- Deck shoes or sandals
- T-shirt or sweatshirt to wear between events
- Several towels – remember, swimmers swim in several events and usually want to dry off after each
- Dry clothes to wear home
- Healthy snacks or up to \$10 to buy food at the meet (please note: Food is never allowed on a pool deck - especially food or drinks in glass containers)

In addition to the above, for an invitational meet you may also want the following:

- Homework or books (especially for longer, invitational meets)
- Cards and quiet games to pass time between events
- Radios with headphones
- Sleeping bag or large blanket for the gym floor
- Lunch and/or a cooler

Please do not bring balls, Frisbees or active games, as space for the swimmers is usually limited. Also, while meets are safe and well-supervised, thefts or misplacement can happen, so avoid bringing any items of value.

## **Nutrition for Competition**

Swimmers like to eat at swim meets, and junk food is always for sale there. Bad nutrition, though, can hurt performance. Help your swimmer by making sure he or she eats well before and during competition.

Recommended foods are high in carbohydrates but low in fat, including:

- Pasta
- Pancakes or waffles (easy on the syrup)
- Cereal - whole grain
- Oatmeal
- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Potatoes
- Sandwiches (lots of bread; easy on the mayo, meat and cheese)
- Popcorn

Please avoid:

- All fried foods
- Candy, cake and cookies
- Highly sweetened foods
- carbonated beverages.

Swimmers also dehydrate very quickly. Make sure your swimmer drinks plenty of recommended fluids, including:

- Water
- Sports drinks, such as Power-Aid or Gatorade
- 100% fruit juice

## **General Conduct**

The driving force behind the MYST program is to cultivate a positive,

productive environment in which all swimmers feel welcome and supported.

To accomplish this, everyone involved with MYST, including the coaches, Y-staff, parents, and the swimmers themselves, must hold themselves and everyone else to exacting standards. The MYST program has zero-tolerance for negative or disruptive behavior, including vandalism, leaving Y-provided towels or trash in the locker room, bullying, negative or ill-tempered language, or anything else that would blemish our relationship with the McGaw community or drive another swimmer away from the program. Infractions will be dealt with immediately and aggressively.

We encourage parents to keep an eye around the pool area and locker room, and help us keep the environment safe and friendly. If you see someone behaving in a way that you would not tolerate from your own child, please tell the coaches about it – as a parent or guardian, wouldn't you want to know if your child is acting out of line? And, if you are informed that your child has had an infraction, please do not dismiss it or chalk it up to immaturity, but talk with him or her about it and make sure they understand that the MYST program is all about mutual encouragement and positive interaction.

## **The Coaching Staff**

### **Working with Our Coaches**

The coaching staff is responsible for the development and safety of the swimmers during practice and swim meets. Parents are encouraged to ask the coaches questions about their child's swimming. A good time to speak to the coaches face-to-face is at the end of practice sessions while the kids are showering and dressing.

Alternatively, you may leave questions for the head coach in the Y voicemail box: 847-475-7400, extension 219. It's also good to check this voicemail recording if you have questions about upcoming MYST activities, as the coaches will update the message to include the latest information on bus departures, warm-up times, etc.

Another very valuable source of team information is the MYST Web site at <http://www.gomyst.com/>. Check it regularly! This is where we post:

- The current newsletter (which can be mailed to families who aren't online)
- MYST calendar of events



- Meet schedule
- YMCA district and state qualifying times
- plus a wealth of other, MYST-related facts

If you are not online or don't have access to a computer, please let the coaching staff know. They will work on getting you this information in print format.

Finally, swimmers and parents should also regularly check their folder for announcements, awards and other news. Folders for each family are put out in front of the pool office (on the deck by the 6-lane pool) each day after practice.

# Parent Responsibilities

The YMCA is a family-oriented institution, and its swim team is no exception. One of the most important ingredient in the swim program's success has been the involvement of swimmers' parents and guardians.

## Parents' Most Important Role

Competitive swimming allows swimmers to experience both success and defeat. A positive, supportive environment at home encourages swimmers to continue pursuing their long-range goals. We encourage good sportsmanship and respectful behavior toward teammates, opponents, coaches, and officials at all times, and hope that you will support and demonstrate these values yourself.

Attendance at meets shows your support. Some parents help swimmers track their times to monitor their progress: swimmers times are available off the MYST website. Setting short-term and long-term goals with your swimmer is a great way to keep them motivated and steadily increasing both their performance and their enthusiasm.

## Responsibility of the Parents at Swim Meets

Swim meets are exciting events, and it takes the efforts of many volunteers to run a smooth and successful home meet. During a meet, the coaching staff is typically busy working with the swimmers, so it's the responsibility of the swim team parents to make everything else happen.

***We need all parents to volunteer at least a couple of meets during the season.***

Here are some of the ways you can help.

### ***Meet Coordinator***

The *Meet Coordinator*, assisted by the *Volunteer Coordinator*, organizes parents to run our home meets. This is generally covered by someone on the volunteer committee throughout the year. When McGaw hosts the district or district classics meet, we will designate someone to be coordinator for that meet.

### ***Officials***

Six to eight YMCA-certified officials are needed to run a swim meet. The referee has over-all responsibility for running the meet and calls each event. The starter directs the swimmers to their starting positions and signals the start of each race. The stroke and turn judges assure that

swimmers use the proper techniques for each of the competitive strokes.

Each year, we like to have a few new parents go through the certification process (typically a few hours of classroom training followed by a brief written exam) to assure that we have enough officials for each home meet.

### ***Timers***

Our pool is equipped with electronic timing equipment. The starter has a trigger that both signals the start and starts a clock at the beginning of each race, and touchpads record each individual's time as swimmers contact the touch-pad at the end of their lanes. The timing equipment coordinators are responsible for operating the timing console and passing the electronic results of each event to the scorer and the ribbon writers.

Occasionally, the electronic timing system fails. This can occur for many reasons — the most common being when a swimmer somehow fails to hit the touch-pad correctly at the end of a race. Therefore, two back-up timers must stand in each lane, operating stopwatches. So, in our six-lane pool, we need a minimum of twelve timers for each meet. We strive to have at least 24 timers, so people have to work only half of the meet.

Timing is easy: click the stopwatch when the light flashes, and again when the swimmer finishes, then write down the time on a sheet. Officials will go over this at a race, and people are always on hand.

If you are at a meet and meet officials call for timers, please volunteer. It's not fair to have the same parents time again and again. Besides, it's actually fun: it helps pass the time, you'll be on hand to encourage your swimmer before a race, and you'll have a ring-side seat!

### ***Logistics***

There are many more volunteers needed to run the meet smoothly. The *set-up crew* prepares the pool area for competition. The *bullpen coordinators* organize swimmers in the waiting area before their events. After each race, *runners* collect time cards from the lanes and deliver them to the scorer's table. The *scorer* reviews the results of each event — both electronic and hand-recorded times — and confirms each swimmer's place and official time. *Ribbon writers* then prepare the appropriate awards. The *take-down crew* helps put away the equipment and chairs after the meet.

### ***Bake Sale***

The bake sale typically takes place in the Skydeck overlooking the pool.

Volunteers are needed to supply snacks, set up, operate the sale, and take down at the end of the meet.

## Parent Committee

Our parent volunteer efforts are organized by our team's Parent Committee. There are many areas where you can get involved:

Awards and scorekeeping	Officials
Communications	Sound
Data processing	Special events
Finance	Team uniforms
Food concessions	USA Swimming
Home meets	General team support

Parents can learn more about each of these roles at the parents' information meeting in the fall. Or, feel free to contact the chairperson of any committee during the season. (And if you get a call from a committee chair asking for help, please do consider saying "Yes"!).

## Fundraising

The funds we raise each year help defray costs not covered by the basic swim team fees. Fund-raising also helps us purchase new equipment for our team, such as touch pads, computer software, timing systems, stopwatches and more. Some of our fund-raising events include:

*Bake Sales* — At each home meet, we run a bake sale at which we sell snacks donated by parents. Your gifts of homemade or store-bought munchies and drinks are very important to each bake sale's success, as is your help "behind the counter." This year, we'll have several dual meets and the District Classic meet for which parents will be asked to volunteer food and assistance.

*Merchandise Sales* – The program makes a little money selling MYST merchandise: t-shirts, bags, swim caps, swimsuits, water bottles, and other such gear. These make great gifts! Merchandise is generally for sale at the beginning of the year and at most home meets.

*The Districts* — Each year we host one "big" event such as the Districts or District Classics, with hundreds of swimmers compete and money gained from attendance, ad sales, bake sales, and sales of merchandise.

Because of the size of the meet, we need many, many volunteers, and as such, ***all parents are expected to volunteer time at and food for the District meet.*** There are many ways to volunteer: setup the night before, sell ads, be a timer or official, work security, and so on.

*Other Events* – In past years, we have conducted car washes, silent auctions, and other ways to earn money. We look to parents to come up with ways to earn money, and to help coordinate these events. If something has worked for you at other organizations in the past, we're all ears.

Your participation in these fund-raising events really matters!

# Competitive swimming glossary

**Alternate:** In a prelims/finals meet, after the finalists are decided, the next fastest swimmers other than the finalists are designated as alternates. The fastest of the two being the first alternate and the next be the second. Alternates are placed in finals in the event of a scratch of one of the main finalists.

**Anchor:** The final swimmer in a relay.

**Area Meet:** A meet held at the end of the season after districts, attended by swimmers from Y's across Illinois and Missouri. Qualification times gained at the district meet are necessary to enter this meet.

**Backstroke:** One of the four competitive racing strokes, basically any style of swimming on your back. It is also sometimes called the **Back Crawl**. Backstroke is swum as the first stroke of the Medley Relay and the second stroke of the Individual Medley. This stroke is offered at 25, 50, 100, and 200 yard/meter distances.

**Backstroke Start:** Swimmers begin in the water, usually with their hands gripping the starting block but with their feet underwater.

**Block:** The starting platform located at the end of each lane.

**Breaststroke:** One of the four competitive racing strokes. It is a frog-like stroke with a whip kick. Breaststroke is swum as the second stroke in the Medley Relay and the third stroke in the Individual Medley. Racing distances are usually 25, 50, 100, and 200 yards/meters (depending on type of pool).

**Bulkhead:** A wall constructed to divide a pool into different courses, such as a 50m pool into two 25m pools.

**Butterfly:** One of the four competitive racing strokes. It is a stroke in which both arms rotate together on either side of the body while the legs performed a dolphin kick (held together). Butterfly (nicknamed fly) is swum as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and the first stroke in the Individual Medley. Racing distances are usually 25, 50, 100, and 200 yards/meters (depending on type of pool).

**Cap/Swim Cap:** The latex or lycra covering worn on the head of swimmers.

**District Meet:** The meet held at the end of the season, attended by swimmers from Y's in the north shore area (Leaning Tower, etc.). Qualification times are necessary to enter this meet. If swimmers beat certain time thresholds at this meet, they advance to the Area Meet (see Area Meet).

**Check In:** The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded meet. Sometimes referred to as positive check in, the swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host or they will be scratched from entering

**Chlorine:** The chemical used by most pools to kill the bacteria in water and keep it clear and safe to swim in.

**Circle Seeding:** A method of seeding swimmers when they are participating in a prelims/finals event. The fastest 18 to 24 swimmers are seeded in the last three heats, with the fastest swimmers being in the inside lanes.

**Circle Swimming:** Performed by staying to the right of the black line when swimming in a lane to enable more swimmers to swim in each lane.

**Closed Competition:** Swim meet which is open to a specific number of invitees.

**Club:** A registered group of swimmers, pretty much synonymous with “team”

**Coach:** A person who trains and teaches athletes in the sport of swimming.

**Colorado:** A brand of automatic timing system.

**Consolation Finals:** After the fastest 8 or 10 swimmers, the next 8 or 10 swimmers in a prelims/finals meet who, after the prelims swim, qualify to return to the finals. Consolations are the second fastest heat of finals when multiple heats are held and are conducted before the championship heat.

**Course:** Designated distance (length of pool) for swimming competition. Long course is 50 yards or meters, short course is 25 yards or meters.

**Cut:** Slang for qualifying time. A time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event.

**Deadline:** The date meet entries must be postmarked by, to be accepted by the meet host. Making the meet deadline does not guarantee entry into a meet since many meets are full prior to the deadline.

**Deck:** The area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches. No one but authorized persons may be on deck during a swim meet or practice.

**Deck Entries:** Accepting entries into events on the first day or later days of a meet.

**Distance:** How far a swimmer swims.

**Distance Event:** Term used to refer to events over 400 meters.

**DQ (Disqualified):** This occurs when a swimmer has committed an infraction of some kind (e.g. one-handed touch in breaststroke). A disqualified swimmer is not eligible to receive an award, nor will there be an official time in that event.

**Dive:** Entering the water head first. Diving is not allowed during warm up except at the designated time, in specific lanes that are monitored by the swimmers coach.

**Drill:** An exercise involving a part of a stroke, used to improve technique.

**Dropped Time:** When a swimmer goes faster than the previous performance they have "dropped their time."

**Dry-land Training:** Training done out of the water that aids and enhances swimming performance; usually includes stretching, calisthenics, and/or weight training.

**Dual Meet:** Type of meet where two teams compete against each other.

**Entry:** An individual, relay teams roster event list into a swim competition.

**Entry Chair:** The host clubs designated person who is responsible for receiving and making sure the entries have met the deadline, or returning entries if the meet is full.

**Entry Fees:** The amount per event a swimmer or relay is charged to compete.

**Entry Form:** Form used by the coach to enter swimmers in a competition.

**Entry Limit:** Each meet will have a limit of total swimmers they can accept, or a time limit they can not exceed. Once an entry limit is reached a meet will be closed and all other entries returned.

**Electronic Timing:** Timing system usually has touchpads in the water, junction boxes on the deck with hook up cables, button for backup timing, and a computer console that prints out the results of each race. Some timing systems are hooked up to a scoreboard that displays swimmers times.

**Eligible to compete:** The status of a member swimmer that means they are registered and have met all the requirements.

**Equipment:** The items necessary to operate a practice or competition.

**Event:** A race or stroke over a given distance. An event equals one preliminary with final or one timed final.

**False Start:** Occurs when a swimmer is moving at the start prior to the signal.

**Fastest to Slowest:** A seeding method used on the longer events at the end of a session. The fastest seeded swimmers participate in the first heats followed by the next fastest and so on. Many times these events alternate one female heat and one male heat until all swimmers have competed.

**Fees:** Money paid by swimmers for services such as practice fees, pool time, registration fees, etc.



**FINA:** The international, rules making organization, for the sport of swimming.

**Final:** The championship heat of an event in which the top six or eight swimmers from the preliminaries compete for awards, depending on the number of lanes in the pool.

**Final Results:** The printed copy of the results of each race of a swim meet.

**Fins:** Large rubber fin type devices that fit on swimmers feet. Used in practice only.

**Finish:** The final phase of the race – the touch at the end of the race. In backstroke and freestyle, it's when any part of the swimmer's body touches the end of the pool. Backstrokers must not turn over to their front before the finish. In the breaststroke and butterfly, the swimmer must touch the wall at the turns and at the finish with both hands simultaneously.

**Flags:** Backstroke flags placed 5 meters from the end of the pool. They enable backstrokers to execute a backstroke turn more efficiently through being able to count the number of strokes into each wall.

**Flip Turn:** In freestyle and backstroke only, when a swimmer turns by completing a partial somersault and twisting underwater before pushing off the wall to resume swimming. In backstroke, the swimmer rotates onto his/her stomach with one continuous arm strike and pushes off the wall on his/her back to resume swimming.

**Freestyle:** One of the four competitive racing events. It can be virtually any stroke (there are not specific rules about the form to use), though it is typically the front crawl, with arms moving in circles parallel to the direction of the swim and feet alternating kicks. Freestyle is swam as the forth stroke in the Medley Relay and in the Individual Medley. Distances are typically 25, 50, 100, 200, 400, 800, and 1500 yards/meters.

**Gallery:** The viewing area for spectators during the swimming competition.

**Goal:** A specific time achievement a swimmer sets and strives for; can be short or long term.

**Goggles:** Glasses type devices worn by swimmers to keep their eyes from being irritated by the chlorine in the water.

**Gun:** A blank firing pistol that may be used by the starter to start the races.

**Heats:** A division of an event when there are too many swimmers to compete at the same time. The results are compiled by swimmers time swam after all heats of the event are completed.

**Heat Sheet:** The pre-meet printing listings of swimmers seed times in events at a competition. These sheets vary in accuracy since coaches submit swimmers times many weeks before the meet. Heat sheets are usually sold at the admissions table and are used to mainly make sure the swimmer has been properly entered in all the events they signed up for. Parents enjoy looking at the seedings prior to the race plus swimmers can tell the

order the events will be conducted and get a rough idea how long the meet sessions will last.

**Horn:** A sounding device, sometimes used in place of a gun. Used mainly with a fully automatic timing system.

**I.M. or Individual Medley.** An event in which the swimmer uses all four strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle. Typically, there are 100-yard medleys (1 length of the pool per stroke) and 200-yard medleys (2-lengths per stroke).

**Invitational:** Type of meet that requires a club to request an invitation to attend.

**Jump:** An illegal start done by the second, third, or fourth member of a relay team. The swimmer on the blocks breaks contact with the block before the swimmer in the water touches the wall.

**Kick:** The leg movements of a swimmer. A popular word to yell to encourage swimmers during a race.

**Kick Board:** A floatation device used by swimmers during a practice. A light weight object used with great accuracy by coaches.

**Lane:** The specific area in which a swimmer is assigned to swim. Lanes are numbered from right (lane 1) to left (Lane 6).

**Lane Ropes:** Continuous floating markers attached to a cable attached from the starting end to the turning end for the purpose of separating each lane and quieting waves caused by racing swimmers.

**Lap:** One length of the course (sometimes means down and back).

**Lap Counter:** A set of plastic display numbers used to keep track of laps during a distance race. The person, who counts for the swimmer, is stationed at the opposite end from the start.

**Late Entries:** Meet entries from a club that are received by the meet host after the entry deadline. These entries are usually returned or can be accepted at double the published entry fee.

**Leg:** The part of a relay event swam by a single team member or a single stroke in the IM.

**Length:** The extent of the competitive course from end to end.

**Long Course or LC:** A 50 meter long pool.

**Long Distance:** Any freestyle event over 1500 meters, normally conducted in a natural body of water, such as a lake, river, or ocean.

**Lycra:** A stretch material used to make competitive swim suits and caps.

**Mark:** The command to take your starting position.

**Marshall:** The official who controls the crowd and swimmer flow at the swim meet.

**Medals:** Awards given to the swimmers at meets. They vary in size, design, and method of presentation.

**Meet:** Competition designed to be a measure of progress and a learning experience. By implementing what has been learned in practice, the swimmers test themselves against the clock to see how they are progressing.

**Meet Chair:** The person in charge of the administration of the meet.

**Meters:** The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the metric system. Long course is 50 meters and short course is 25 meters.

**Middle Distance:** Term used to refer to events of 200 to 400 meters in length.

**Negative Split:** Swimming the second half of the race faster than the first half.

**No Time (NT):** The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer has not swam that event before.

**Novice:** A beginner or someone who does not have experience.

**Nylon:** A material used to make swim suits.

**Official:** A judge on the deck of the pool at a sanctioned competition who enforces SNC rules.

**Official Time:** A time achieved in a race during a duly sanctioned competition.

**Omega:** A type of automatic timing system.

**Open Competition:** Competition which any qualified club or swimmer may enter.

**Pace:** The often pre-determined speed with which a swimmer completes each segment of a race (e.g. 25m, 50m)

**Pace Clock:** Large clock with a large second hand and a smaller minute had, used to check pace or maintain intervals in practice (may also be digital).

**Paddle:** Colored plastic devices worn on the swimmers hands during swim practices.

**Pool:** The facility in which swimming competitions and practices are conducted.

**Positive Check In:** The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded or pre seeded meet. The swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host.

**Practice:** The scheduled workouts a swimmer attends with their club/team.

**Prelim:** Slang for preliminaries, also called heats – those races in which swimmers qualify for the championship and consolation finals in an event.

**Prelim/Final:** Type of meet with two sessions. The preliminary heats are usually held in the morning session.

**Pre-seeded:** A meet conducted without a bull pen in which a swimmer knows what lane and heat they are in by looking at the heat sheet or meet program.

**Proof of Time:** An official meet result. Swimmers/Coaches must present proof of time with some entries.

**Psyche Sheet:** An entry sheet showing all swimmers entered into each individual event. Sometimes referred to as a heat sheet or meet program.

**Pull Buoy:** A floatation device used for pulling by swimmers in practice.

**Qualifying Time:** Qualifying time necessary to compete in a particular event and/or competition.

**Race:** A single swimming competition event.

**Referee:** The head official in charge of a swim meet.

**Registered:** Enrolled and paid member of a team.

**Relay:** An event in which 4 swimmers compete together as a team to achieve one time.

**Relay Start:** Beginning one's leg of a relay by diving as soon as the incoming relay member touches the wall.

**Ribbons:** Awards in a variety of sizes, styles, and colors given at some swim meets.

**Rules:** YMCA swimming is governed by the swimming rules adopted by the NCAA. USA Swimming is governed by separate rules. There are just a few, minor differences between the two sets of rules.

**Safety Procedure:** Safety procedures are designed to prevent accidents, and must be followed to the letter.

**Sanctioned Meet:** All competitions in which records may be set and official times may be obtained, must be officially approved by a body such as Illinois Swim or the Area Y.

**Scratch:** To withdraw from an event in a competition.

**Seed:** Assign the swimmers to heats and lanes according to their submitted or preliminary times.

**Session:** Portion of a meet distinctly separated from other portions by time.

**Short Course or SC:** A 25 meter long pool in which most competitions during the winter are held.

**Split:** A swimmer's intermediate time in a race. Splits are registered every 50m and are used to determine if a swimmer is on a planned pace. Under certain conditions, initial splits may also be used as official times.

**Sprint:** Describes the shorter events (50 and 100m); in training, to swim as fast as possible for a short distance.

**Start:** The beginning of a race. The dive used to begin a race.

**Starter:** The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.

**Stand up:** The command given by the starter or referee to release the swimmers from their starting position.

**Step down:** The command given by the starter or referee to have the swimmers move off the blocks. Usually this command is a good indication that everything is not right for the race to start.

**Streamline:** The position used to gain maximum distance during a start and/or push-off from the wall in which the swimmer's body is as tight and straight as it can be.

**Stroke:** There are four competitive strokes, butterfly, backstroke, freestyle, breaststroke.

**Stroke Judge:** The official 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.

**Suit:** The racing uniform worn by the swimmer, in the water, during competition. The four most popular types of suits worn are Nylon, Lycra, Paper, and Fastskin.

**Swim-off:** In a prelims/finals type competition a race after the scheduled event to break a tie. The only circumstance that warrants a swim-off is to determine which swimmer makes finals or an alternate, otherwise the tie stands.

**Team:** Swimmers with a particular Y. McGaw is a swim team.

**Team Records:** The statistics a team keeps, listing the fastest swimmer in the clubs history for each age group/each event.

**Taper:** The final preparation phase. As part of this phase, and prior to major competitions, older and more experienced swimmers will shave their entire body to reduce resistance and heighten sensation in the water.

**Time Card:** The card issued to each swimmer prior to each race, on which splits and the final time are recorded.

**Timed Final:** Competition in which only heats are swum and final placings are determined by those times.

**Time Standard:** A time set by a provincial association that a swimmer must achieve for qualification or recognition.

**Time Trial:** A practice race which is not part of a regular competition. Time trials may be sanctioned and used to qualify for specific meets.

**Timer:** The volunteers sitting behind the starting block/finish end of the pool, who are responsible for getting watch times on events and activating the backup buttons for the timing system.

**Touch Out:** To reach the touch pad and finish first in a race.

**Touch Pad:** A large sensitive board at the end of each lane where a swimmer's touch is registered and sent electronically to the timing system.

**Touch Turn:** In place of a flip turn, changing direction during a race by touching the wall with one hand, then pushing off with the feet. Backstrokers must push off on their back.

**Travel Fund:** A sum of money set aside for a swimmer to use for travel expenses and entry fees to specified meets.

**Tri-meet:** A meet with three teams competing for points.

**Unofficial Time:** The time displayed on a read out board or read over the intercom by the announcer immediately after a race. After the time has been checked, it will become official.

**USA, USA Meet, USA Swimming:** USA Swimming is the national governing body for the sport of swimming, located at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. Among the many things they do (including train and support Olympic swimmers), USA Swimming sanctions swim meets, which you will see listed as a "USA Meet." Many swim clubs, such as the YWCA of Evanston, swim only in USA meets. MYST can compete in both Y-sanctioned events as well as USA events. USA Swim meets are generally held at 50-meter (also known as Long Course) university pools and involve dozens of swim clubs from the region and hundreds of swimmers.

**Warm-down:** Low intensity swimming used by swimmer after a race or main practice set to

rid the body of excess lactic acid, and to gradually reduce heart rate and respiration.

**Warm-up:** Low-intensity swimming used by swimmers prior to a main practice set or a race to get muscles loose and warm, and to gradually increase heart rate and respiration.

**Watches:** Stopwatches used to time swimmers during a competition. When totally automatic timing equipment is used, watches serve as a back-up method.

**Y Meet:** A swim meet sanctioned by the YMCA, and involving Y teams. Most of our dual and tri meets are Y meets.