

Into the Pool!

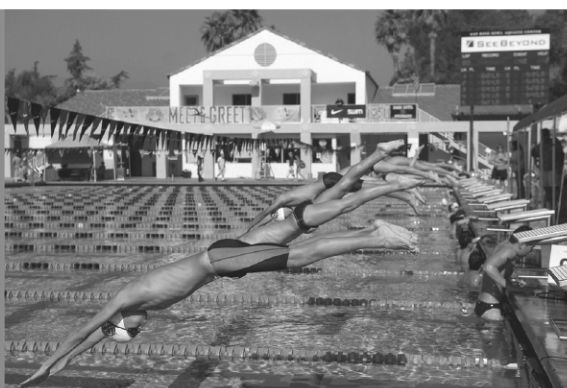


photo by John Hodge/USA Swimming

Mini Fact:

Swimmers begin their events by diving off “blocks,” or platforms at the end of the pool.

Is there a pool near your home? Does it have a swim team?

Many kids have fun competing in organized events called **swim meets**. To make the team, kids should be good at one or more of the four strokes: **freestyle**, **butterfly**, **breaststroke** and **backstroke**.

More than 2.5 million kids across the United States are on swim teams at their local pool. Many are between the ages of 6 and 12. Some kids swim year-round and go on to swim in high school and college.

Young kids may participate in all events. As their bodies grow, they may find one or two events they like best.

Swim meet basics

Have you ever been to a swim meet? Events move quickly. Crowds yell and cheer on their favorite swimmers. Here are some of the things you might see at a swim meet.

Events and heats

An **event** features a certain stroke over a set distance. For example, a swimmer might swim a 100-meter freestyle.

If there are more swimmers than there are lanes in the pool, there will be **heats**. If there are 12 swimmers in the 100-meter freestyle but only 10 lanes, there might be two heats of six swimmers.



The competition

Swimmers may swim in order based on their **seed times**. This means that swimmers with similar times in an event will compete against each other. At some meets, swimmers are grouped by age.

The swimmers

Boys usually wear tight-fitting, short racing suits. Girls wear one-piece suits.

Some swimmers wear **caps** to control their hair. This also helps them to move through the water faster.

Most swimmers also wear **goggles** to protect their eyes from the chemicals in the pool.

The officials

At a swim meet, you may see:

- a **referee**, who enforces the rules and makes sure all the other officials are being fair;
- a **starter**, who sounds a horn or shoots a cap gun to start a race;
- a **stroke judge**, who watches to make sure the stroke is being done correctly;
- a **turn judge**, who makes sure swimmers start, finish and turn correctly.



photo by Marin Rulsch

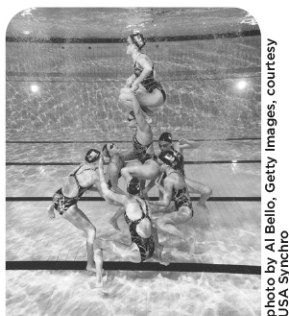


photo by Al Bello, Getty Images, courtesy USA Synchro

Underwater speakers allow the swimmers to hear the music.

A different kind of swim

At some pools, you might see a team of swimmers practicing complicated **routines**. These athletes are called **synchronized** (SIN-krohn-ized) **swimmers**.

This graceful sport combines the skills used in dance, swimming and figure skating. Swimmers must be very strong and flexible. They must be able to hold their breath for a long time.

Synchronized swimming routines take place in deep water. Swimmers are not allowed to touch the bottom of the pool.

Routines are done to music. Swimmers learn the routine by doing it on the deck of the pool, then trying it in the water. This is called **decking**. Team routines are five minutes long. Individual, duet (two swimmers) and trio (three swimmers) routines are shorter.

At competition, swimmers are judged individually on their **figures**, or positions. That score makes up half of their final score, including their routines. Judges look to see how long swimmers can hold their breath, how high they are in the water, their posture, and how difficult the routine is.

Resources



On the Web:

- usaswimming.org
- bit.ly/MPswimsafe

At the library:

- “The Science Behind Swimming, Diving and Other Water Sports” by Amanda Lanser

Try ‘n’ Find

Words that remind us of swimming are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



BACKSTROKE,
BREASTSTROKE,
BUTTERFLY, CAPS,
COMPETE, EVENT, FIGURES,
FREESTYLE, FUN, GOGGLES,
HEAT, JUDGE, LANE, MEET,
METER, REFEREE, ROUTINE,
SEED, STARTER, SUMMER,
SWIM, SYNCHRONIZED,
TEAM, TURN.

X	T	S	P	A	C	F	R	E	E	S	T	Y	L	E
I	E	G	O	G	G	L	E	S	R	E	T	E	M	Y
E	E	B	A	C	K	S	T	R	O	K	E	N	A	L
E	M	C	O	M	P	E	T	E	T	N	E	V	E	E
R	Y	L	F	R	E	T	T	U	B	N	R	U	T	E
E	F	D	E	Z	I	N	O	R	H	C	N	Y	S	G
F	U	I	B	M	I	W	S	E	R	U	G	I	F	D
E	N	B	R	E	A	S	T	S	T	R	O	K	E	U
R	E	M	M	U	S	X	R	O	U	T	I	N	E	J
H	E	A	T	R	E	T	R	A	T	S	S	E	E	D

Cook’s Corner

Mandarin Orange Salad

You’ll need:

- 1 (10-ounce) bag romaine lettuce
- 1 cup fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 3 pieces precooked bacon, heated and crumbled
- 1 (11-ounce) can mandarin oranges, drained
- 3 tablespoons sliced almonds

Dressing:

- 1/3 cup canola oil
- 3 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar

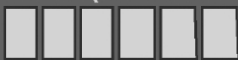


* You’ll need an adult’s help with this recipe.

What to do:

1. Place salad ingredients in large bowl.
2. Mix dressing ingredients in jar with tight lid; shake vigorously.
3. Pour dressing over salad. Toss and serve. Serves 2.

1. Move arms and legs quickly to move through water (6-letter verb)



2. To jump downward fast, usually head or front first (4-letter verb)



3. Spray water by jumping or moving hands (6-letter verb)



4. Soft cloth or paper used to rub, dry or wipe (5-letter noun)



1. Bonnie can _____ but will learn to swim this summer.
2. Jose will _____ into the water at the deep end of the pool.
3. Tommy made a big _____ in the water when he jumped.
4. After swimming, Tracy used her blue _____ to dry off.

ROOTONYM®
by Jan & Carey Orr Cook



Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: Paddle, Dive, Splash, Towel.

Mini Jokes



Sue: Where do swimmers eat their meals?
Stan: At pool tables!

Eco Note



Did you know that less than 1% of all the water on Earth can be used by people? The rest is salt water (the kind you find in the ocean) or is permanently frozen. As our population grows, more and more people are using up this limited resource. It is important that we use our water wisely and not waste it. For example, just by turning off the tap while you brush your teeth, you can save up to 8 gallons of water! That adds up to more than 200 gallons a month, enough to fill a huge fish tank that holds six small sharks!

adapted from epa.gov

For later:

Look in your newspaper for items about swim meets in your area.

Teachers: For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bit.ly/MPstandards. And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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