

Galas and Competitions

Competition Overview

The table below summarizes the main types of competition we enter:

Type of Gala	Example	Entry
League Galas	National Arena League, London	Selected swimmers only Age 9+
Friendly Team Galas	Riverside Inter club gala. We set up several of these sorts of galas each year	Selected swimmers Age 8+
Internal Galas	Club Championships – every October Mini Sprints – held twice a year	All Club swimmers. All ages
Open Meets	These are meets that other clubs hold and open up to swimmers of different abilities. They include meets like Guildford Open, Bexley Open, Haslemere Christmas Cracker, Surrey County Championships and London Regional Championships. There are lots of these meets spread throughout the year	All swimmers 9 + with the qualifying times. You can enter these individually but usually we go as a club. Your coach will send you out information about what you have qualified for and you will enter through our club entry system

Types of Competition - Details

LEAGUE GALAS

Swimmers are selected for league galas based on the fastest times held in our database, though we also like to give other swimmers with fast times a chance to compete. We swim in one main league – the Arena National Swimming League. We are currently in Division 2 - of the London Area. These galas are held in the autumn – October, November and December, with finals held in the spring.

FRIENDLY TEAM GALAS

We enter a number of friendly team galas at different levels. We use these galas to give as many swimmers as possible experience of swimming in a team gala and representing their club. Priority is usually given to those who are not normally selected for the league galas. Sometimes we enter a friendly gala as a practice run for one of our main league galas. Your age group is determined by your age on the day of the gala.

INTERNAL CLUB GALAS

These are “closed competitions” as only members of our club can enter them. There are three each year. The main club championships are held at the beginning of the season and last over 4 weekends in October. Everyone in the club is entered, though only those over 1 do the 100m races and only the older swimmers do the longer races like the 800 and 1500m. The championships are a great way of getting swim times for other club galas and for competing with the whole of the club who you might not normally meet. Even mums and dads from pre-masters sometimes enter. Then twice a year we hold mini sprints. These happen over one Saturday and are a change to race 25m long sprints. These are the only galas where you can be any age to enter and indeed we have often have the youngest members of our club swimming. We would expect the majority of our swimmers to enter these galas. Your age group is determined by your age on the day (of the last gala for the club championships).

OPEN MEETS

An open meet competition is open to all who are age **9 years** and over. Many clubs, run open meets in order to raise funds for their club. The County, Regional and National Age Groups & Youth Championships are also open meets.

The great things about swimming is that although winning is most people's ultimate goal, as long as swimmers do their best to achieve their own targets, such as getting a **p.b. (personal best time)** or swimming with good technique or practising for a more important race, then they will have succeeded.

All competitions are learning experiences. By taking part in competitions regularly swimmers become more competent both with technique and speed. We recommend all swimmers age 9+ enter at least 3-4 open meets each year.

Open meets are graded or licensed at different levels, with “**qualifying**” and “**cut-off**” times appropriate to the level. They are licensed from **Level 4** at entry level, to **Level 1** at the top. Novices should look for a Level 3 or level 4 meets to start with, such as Ealing or Epsom Open Meets. These have slower qualifying times. However, they also often have upper, cut off times too, so that if you are fast at a stroke, you will not be able to swim. Sometimes Level 4 galas are also graded into **B and C** swim times, both of which have an upper and lower qualifying time. This means that slower swimmers can still win medals in the C category. However, if you enter with a slow time and swim the race really fast, you may get a “**speeding ticket!**” Too fast for these? Then you should look for a Level 2 or 1 meet.

Your Squad Coaches are always happy to advise if you are unsure about which meets to enter. They will send you out a report for the galas we have decided to enter as a club, which will advise you on the races you are eligible for. You can always then discuss it with your coach before you put the entry in. The procedure is on our website.

REMEMBER

If you want to improve your times you need to enter competitions regularly! This will increase your chance of being selected to swim for the club and helps your coaches make decisions about moving swimmers up groups. Once you are 9 years old you should aim to enter 3-4 open meets each year in addition to our internal club galas.

Gala/Meet Tips



- Set yourself a **goal** for your races. Speak to your coach for advice.
- Make sure you **pack** a **towel** (often 2 or 3 are useful, especially those light weight ones), a **costume** (again 2 or 3 for long meets), your **goggles** (practise with new ones before a race), your club hat, a **T-Bag** (club T-shirt) or any other large T-shirt for warmth while waiting for your races (and shorts if you want), a pair of **flip flops** or crocs, a **drink**, lots of **snacks**, a **healthy meal** if you are there all day and something to **play** with or **read** (again not too much as space is usually limited!). If you can its also good to have spare goggles and a spare hat.
- **Arrive** in plenty of time. For most open meets you will need to sign in, usually by the start of the published warm up time. If it is a team gala or you have been told there is a “sign out” procedure you **must** report to your coach 15 minutes before warm-up is due to begin.
- Parents - If you wish to **video or photograph** your child you will need to complete the relevant record book when you pay your spectator fee in order to comply with ASA and BSC child protection procedures.

- There is a **warm up** to start with. You will be told which lane to swim in by your team manager/coach.
- You will need to wait with the rest of our club swimmers until just before your race. You will be told in plenty of time when to go up, and will be reminded which stroke/distance you are swimming.
- You will **first** go to the “**whipping area**”. Here you will be told which heat and lane you will be swimming in. Each heat of swimmers is led together to the start area - just follow the instructions given.
- **After** your race you will need to see your coach for feedback on how you did
- If there is a **swim-down** pool available you should go and swim down within 3 minutes of your race finishing. Take a **drink** with you to the swim-down pool.
- After your race/swim down, have a **drink** and, if there is time before your next race, a snack.
- You should not go over to the **spectators area** during the gala (imagine what it would be like if all the children tried to talk to their parents after their races!). If you need to go to the toilet or wish to see your parents you must speak to your coach/team manager first.
- Remember that there may be **heats** in your race, so even if you win your heat you may not win the whole event.
- Don't forget to take your **rubbish** home with you!
-

Key Gala/Meet Rules

Start procedure

- Referee blows 3 short whistle
- Announcer states which race it is
- One long whistle - swimmers get up onto block (or into water for backstroke & second long whistle to call to block)
- “Take your marks
- Start signal - may be bleep, horn or whistle - you GO
- You must remain still from the “take your marks” until you hear/see the starters signal
- Your head must surface within 15m of the start, except in breaststroke

Backstroke

- You must hold the starting block with two hands
- Your toes must not bend over the side or gutter
- You must remain on your back throughout the race, except when initiating a tumble turn
- Tumble turns must be a “continuous turning action”. This means you must not travel on your front outside of the turning action, as soon as you roll over you must start your somersault
- For touch turns you must remain on your back throughout the turn
- You must **finish the race** (touch the wall) **on your back**

Breaststroke

- All movements are simultaneous, imagine a mirror down the centre of your body & make sure both sides are doing the same
- Head must break surface of water every stroke cycle
- Hands must not pull below hips, except during the underwater phase at the start & after the turn
- Feet must turn out for kick - no pointed toes!
- At the start & after the turn you are allowed one keyhole pull down to your thighs followed by one breaststroke kick underwater
- When proficient you are taught the inclusion of a downward dolphin kick during the underwater pull
- You must touch with 2 hands at the same time (not on top of each other or touching) at the turn and finish

Butterfly

- All movements are simultaneous, imagine a mirror down the centre of your body & make sure both sides are doing the same
- Both feet must move up and down together
- Both arms must come forwards over the water together and pullback together
- At the start & after the turn you are allowed as many underwater dolphin kicks as you like and one

- underwater butterfly pull which brings you to the surface, provided you surface by the 15m mark
- You must touch with 2 hands at the same time (and not on top of each other or touching) at the turn and finish

Freestyle

- No specific rules, but follow the general rules like not stepping along the bottom!! You can stand.

Finish

- Remain in the water until you are told to get out by the referee
- In the first 3 legs of a relay the swimmer leaves the water at the side of the pool when they have finished their leg, but they must not get in the way of swimmers in other lanes - so look carefully
- The final swimmer remains in the water until told to get out.

The Goggle Dilemma

WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOUR GOGGLES SLIP IN A RACE

Most competitive swimmers wear goggles when racing without realising that if they come off or slip, there are certain rules for different strokes to allow them to adjust the goggles without being disqualified! Here are some tips on how to deal with your goggles, if this happens to you.

Do Nothing. You can carry on swimming if this is at all possible. You may end up with very red eyes but at least you will not waste any time.

Take them off or move them. If they are affecting you breathing or are just too uncomfortable, you can try to take them off or move them. To avoid disqualification, this needs to be done in a particular way for each stroke.

Freestyle. You can use one or both hands to adjust the goggles or stop and stand on the bottom as long as you do not walk!

Breaststroke or Butterfly. You must use both hands at the same time. Using one hand will result in disqualification. If your kick or stroke cycle is affected you may be disqualified. If at all possible, it is best to keep swimming and leave the goggles alone.

Backstroke. You must remain on your back when adjusting the goggles and you can use one or both hands to do so.

Medley. The rules above apply to each stroke in the medley, however, if the goggles come off at the beginning, try and get through the butterfly and adjust them during the backstroke leg where there is less chance of disqualification.

TIPS TO AVOID PROBLEMS WITH GOGGLES IN A RACE

Fitting. Goggles must be tight even during training! The straps should be properly adjusted and even tighter for competitions.

Diving. The most obvious time when your goggles are likely to come adrift. To avoid this, tuck your chin onto your chest as you enter the water. If the top of your head enters after your arms, you will be streamlined, therefore faster and you will be less likely to lose your goggles.

Hat. Under or Over? Goggles under your hat means that they are less likely to come off but it is more difficult to deal with them if they do move! You need to try both ways in training to see which you prefer.

New goggles. Always try them out in training first. You may have a special pair that you keep for racing but all new goggles should be tried out before competitions.

TOP TIPS

Just in case your goggles do come off, try training without using them to see how you cope. Michael

Phelps's coach, Bob Bowman, famously broke his goggles so that he had to race without them. This proved to be a good move, as several years later at the Beijing Olympics, Phelps had problems with his goggles but stayed calm and went on to win a gold medal!

Swimwear Rules

From 1st January 2010 all competitions in England, Scotland and Wales have applied the FINA rules below in relation to Swimsuits for swimming.

FINA rules state:

General Rule 5 SWIMWEAR

GR5.1 The swimwear (swimsuit, cap and goggles) of all competitors shall be in good moral taste and suitable for the individual sports discipline and not carry any symbol which may be considered offensive.

GR5.2 All swimsuits shall be non transparent.

GR5.3 The referee of a competition has the authority to exclude any competitor whose swimsuit or body symbols do not comply with this Rule.

GR5.4 Before any swimwear of new design, construction or material is used in competition, the manufacturer of such swimwear must submit the swimwear to FINA and obtain approval of FINA.

By Law 8 SWIMWEAR

BL 8.1 All FINA approved swimwear to be used at the Olympic Games and FINA World Championships must be approved by FINA at least twelve (12) months prior to the start of the respective competition. In addition, it must be available for all competitors by 1st January of the year of the Olympic Games or FINA World Championships.

BL 8.2 In swimming competitions the competitor must wear **only one swimsuit** in one or two pieces.

No additional items, like arm bands or leg bands shall be regarded as parts of a swimsuit.

BL 8.3 From January 1st 2010 swimwear for men shall **not extend above the navel nor below the knee**, and for women, shall not cover the neck, extend past the shoulder, nor shall extend below knee. All swimsuits shall be made from textile materials.

British Swimming has also published the following announcement:

'In addition to complying with FINA General Rule 5, the swimwear in these competitions must comply with By-Laws 8.2 and 8.3 concerning the style and material used. **This does not prevent the use of a zip** (or other fastening) as this is not mentioned in these provisions. British Records may be achieved. However, if a World or European Record is to be claimed then the swimwear must meet the requirements of the issuing authority. This is separate from the General Rules and By-Laws and is subject to change at any time. A list of approved swimsuits can be found on the FINA website www.fina.org

CHECKLIST

1. Directions to the gala
2. Times of session starts and races I am swimming
3. Food, snacks, drink for day
4. Coin/coins for locker (20p or £1)
5. Kit
 - Goggles
 - Race suit
 - Warm-up swimming suits
 - Towels
 - T-Bag
 - Hats
 - Flip flop
 - Entertainment (optional) or homework in extreme cases!



Factsheet 2 - Food for Swimming Competitions

(<http://guildfordcitysc.com/files/HPS/Nutrition%20for%20swimmers%20handout.pdf>)

Gala Entry Process

Times for swimmers are all kept in Hytek and on the ASA website.

Hytek

This is the link to Hytek.

<http://www.sports-tek.com/TMOnline/index.asp?theTeam=StPaulsBarnesSwimmingClub&REMOTE=T>

There are various tabs where you can look at the times of the individual swimmers or all swimmers in various age groups. Times are either in LC (times swum in 50m pools), SC (times swum in 25m pools) or yards.

PROCEDURE TO CHECK YOUR OWN TIMES ON HYTEK

1. Go to Hytek with the above link
2. If you are taken to the home page, scroll down the team window to find St Paul's Barnes
3. Select the second tab Athletes
4. Select the appropriate letter of the alphabet
5. Select the appropriate name
6. Click on times
7. On the left hand side next to course, choose either SC or LC
8. Select the appropriate stroke

The default setting is the fastest 1, but you can also select the fastest 2 times and you can also look at the results from various meets by selecting this in the Meet window. You can explore all the other tabs too.

PROCEDURE TO CHECK YOUR TIMES ON THE ASA WEBSITE

The ASA keeps a master record of all swim meets and all swimmers in the country. This is the link <http://www.swimmingresults.org/individualbest/>

If you then enter your family name or asa membership number it will take you to all the people with that surname and you can select your own name and the times will come up. You can also look at your ranking in the county, region or club

<http://www.swimmingresults.org/eventrankings/>

PROCEDURE FOR CONVERTING TIMES

Many high level galas (Level 1's like the Regionals) insist on long course (LC) times, ie times done in a 50m pool. Generally, it is tougher to swim in a 50m pool and so times tend to be slower as the turn gives you added force/speed in a 25m pool. Therefore, if you only have short course times you need to convert them to long course to see if they are fast enough for these galas. This is the link to a site where you can convert long course and short course times.

<http://www.pullbuoy.co.uk/times>

1. Select whether you want to convert from LC to SC or the other way round
2. Select the event
3. Select the gender
4. Put in the time
5. Press ASA tables
6. Your converted time will appear below

Gala Entry Process

In brief the process is outlined below. We know this is what many of you do already, so it should be familiar. **In brief:**

1. Coach enters details into Hytek for specific Gala.
2. Coach runs eligibility report in Hytek and emails Gala eligibility report to parents with costs.
3. Parent chooses which events to enter from the eligibility report and makes online payment for the Gala to the BSC Competition Account for those events.
4. Parent confirms to Coach and Comp Sec which of the list of eligible events will be entered by their child and confirms that online payment has been made for those events.
5. You can also check your own times on hytek and compare them to the eligibility published by the gala organisers

Please note, if you don't confirm to the Coach and Competition Secretary which events you are doing and confirm that you have paid for those events (step 4), then you won't be entered. It sounds a bit harsh...but unfortunately the club can't function if we enter people for events and then subsequently don't get the payment. 'No pay no swim'.

In more detail

You will receive the following in an email;

Notication of Event

This email will contain the date by which you as a parent need to reply to confirm your participation, plus any recommendations from the Coach on what events he/she sees as the main targets for the squad.

Hytek Meet Entry Fees Report which shows for each swimmer the number of Individual Events (IE) that the swimmer could enter as well as the cost per IE and the total cost per swimmer if they chose to do all the IEs that are available to them (based on the Gala eligibility criteria)

The Hytek Individual Meet Entries Report which shows for each swimmer which events they are eligible for.

Please then reply to the Coach and the Competition Secretary to:

- Confirm which events your child/children will be swimming in
- Confirm that you have just paid online to the BSC Competitions Account the amount due for the given individual events (IE) that your child/children are swimming in (Note: relays are paid for by the club, so no need to pay for any relays that your child/children have been entered in)
- In order to make the process run smoothly, it is important that when you declare that you are entering and have paid online, you have indeed already paid online. The Competition Secretary will be able to go into the online accounts and check that the payment was received, but it makes things work much faster if the Club can take your reply in the email as confirmation that payment has been made.

BSC Competitions Account

For online payment please use:

Account name: ST PAUL'S BARNES SC COMPETITION ACCOUNT

Account number: 01554476

Sort code: 40-05-31

Please use a reference when paying, so that it is clear for which child and Gala the payment is for.

Refunds

Some galas work on the basis of first come first served, but others work on the basis of taking the top N fastest qualifying times for each event. This means that after submitting all the entries, the club hosting the gala may subsequently inform us that your swimmer has been "scratched" from some events. In this case the Competition Secretary will contact you to arrange for you to be refunded the appropriate amount.

Competition Secretary

The current competition secretary is:

Mark Thomson, SPBSC Competition Secretary

Email: competitions.bsc@gmail.com. Phone: 07805092202