



GUIDE TO COMPETITIVE SWIMMING

Aims

- **Look at different levels of competitive swimming**
- **Differences between gala types**
- **Role of BAGCAT Points**

Every swimmer must have the opportunity to swim in appropriate, quality competition to enable them to achieve their true potential.”

(Success is long term – ASA)

What are the benefits for children taking part in competitions?

Children from the age of 5 compare skills they have with others, and when they get to age 8 or 9 start to understand competitive play. The benefits of children taking part in competitions are:

- **Children become competitive, as they refine and practise skills, and develop co-ordination and cognitive abilities**
- **Helps to develop healthy attitudes about winning and losing**
- **Children learn about their abilities and limitations**
- **Learn to participate in team events as well as an individual**
- **Learn about rules of sport**
- **Can encourage growth and push children to excel**

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THE COMPETITION STRUCTURE

Level 4 meets

Inter club Gala / Invitational Club Gala

Level 3 meets

Graded Gala

Level 2 meets

Upper & Lower limits

Level 1 Meets

Open Meets

County Development Meets (June & July)

County Championships (February & March)

Regional Championships (November, May & June)

National Championships (July & August)

Open / Graded Galas

These are run by different swimming clubs and are open for other swimmers from different clubs to compete.

Level 4 – club / invitational galas

This level is where there is no lower limit, and is a real introduction to competitive swimming. Clubs have their own championships. However there are often invitational galas between clubs (Jean Hillman, Gordon Steele) where taking part is more important and learning about the competition environment.

Level 3 – Graded Gala

These types of galas are again for low level competition, and swimmers use these competitions to gain qualifying times for County Championships, these galas have upper limits as to restrict the faster swimmers from competing and allow swimmers to compete at the right level.

Level 2 meets – Qualifying competitions

This is where the competition gets tougher and swimmers are attempting to attain Regional and National Times. They have both an upper and lower limit to times and are designed for swimmers that are either too fast for graded galas or are too slow for open level 1 meets.

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Level 1 Meets – Open Competition

This is aimed at national swimmers and swimmers close to national qualifying times, who come together to compete against each other during the year. There is no upper limit to ensure the best competitive environment, and there are lower limits to ensure only the fastest swimmers compete.

Competitive Swimming – County / Regional / National levels.

County Development – June / July

This level was introduced to give swimmers an introduction to competitive swimming. It was designed to have least amount of pressure and that swimmers can concentrate on maximum performance on every event. Most swimmers use this as an opportunity to qualify for the Hampshire Championships. This is a level 3 graded gala.

County Level – Hampshire Champs – Feb – March

This standard ensures that the best swimmers in the county compete against each other. Entry to these Championships is subject to achieving qualifying times which are set each year.

Regional Championships – South East Regions (SER's) – May - June

As above the best swimmers from the south east compete against each other, and have qualifying times which swimmers must achieve to be allowed to compete.

National Championships – July – August

This is where the top swimmers in the country come together to national honours.

What are the BAGCAT's and how does it affect my Child.

British Age Group CATEGORIES – BAGCAT's

They exist for boys 9-14 years & Girls 9-13 years old, & work in a similar way to Heptathlon / Decathlon works in Athletics.

It is to determine the best all round swimmer from taking their best points earned in different event categories.

It is done to ensure that 'age group' swimmers take part in all events and don't specialise too early in their career.

When competing in the Hampshire Development series each swimmer should take part in events that cover each area of the BAGCAT point system (I.e. At least 1 event from the 4 / 5 categories below)



What are the BAGCAT's and how does it affect my Child (cont).

	Sprint	100's	Form	Distance	IM
Explanation	Best Swim from 50M Events (9 & 10 yr olds / youth only)	Best Swim from 100M Events (11 years & over)	Best 200M Swim in Back / Brst / Fly events	Best Swim from 200M (or longer) Freestyle Event	Best Swim from a Medley swim

If you have any query about what events to enter your child for please see the Squad Coach.

At age group level we want the swimmers to have times in all strokes & distances. There will be a times in a swimmers life when they don't particularly like a certain stroke or distance, but by working with the coach it is important to overcome this.