**My first gala**

**Preparation**

Before arriving at the gala, make sure you understand the registration process and which races you are in – not just the stroke but the number of lengths!

Make sure you have all your equipment and that it is clearly marked:

* Costume or trunks
* T-shirt, Shorts, onesie
* Swimming hat & a spare
* Towel(s)
* A pair of comfortable goggles that don’t need any adjustment on the poolside, a spare if you have them
* Water Bottle & healthy snacks and drinks

**On arrival – REMEMBER NO OUTDOOR SHOES**

When you arrive you may not be allowed into the changing rooms or the pool hall. Please follow the instructions given by the volunteers. If required sign in at the door. When allowed change and put your belonging in a locker. Then go onto the poolside (with equipment as above) and look for Coach or Team Manager. If you don’t want to swim an event make sure they know. The Team Manager or coach will remind you when to warm up and to go for your events, when you are not racing wait with the swimmers in your group/ team.

Galas can be very noisy and people can get both excited and stressed. Try to remain calm and enjoy the excitement. It is important to keep quiet – especially at the beginning of each race so that swimmers can hear when to start.

**What is a heat?**

Because there are different age-groups, different strokes, and male and female swimmers, each stroke is split by age-group, sex and by length of race so that there are a number of “events” to be swum.

For example, an event might be: 25m BREASTROKE, U9 girls. However, all the under-9 girls who are swimming 25 meters breaststroke can’t swim at once so they are separated (by their latest times if they have them) into “heats” or groups of 6 (in a 6-lane pool). This means that there may be, for example, six heats within one event.

As the gala goes on, names will be read out advising those who have won medals for each event. This is another good reason to try and keep quiet on the poolside – you may hear your name called out for a medal!

**The start of the gala**

All galas are run to strict ASA rules and these will be read out at the beginning of the gala. and how to touch at the end. Listen carefully so that you can be confident and comfortable with this – and to be sure you do your best!

**The warm-up**

Before the gala starts, you will be allowed some time to warm up. This is a good opportunity to swim a few lengths and get your muscles warm. It is up to you how long you swim for but you will generally be allowed about 20 minutes.

After the warm-up, put your T-shirt on to keep warm. Your Team Manager/Coach will line you up into the right order for each of your races. Listen carefully in case your name is called out. If you need to leave the poolside at any time, ask the Team Manager/Coach 1st.

Before each event:

* Your whip will line you up with others in your age-group in the order that you will swim in.
* Keep in this order as you move around the pool – you will be guided by your whip.
* Make sure you know what stroke you are swimming – and the length of the race.
* You can keep your T-shirt on until the last minute.
* At the start of the heat before yours, you will be asked to stand near the lane you will be swimming in.
* Wait for instructions before taking your place at the end of the pool /on the blocks.

**After each event**

After you have swum, wait until you are told to get out of the pool, then return to your Team Manager/Coach and put on your T-shirt. When you’ve finished all your races, you may leave but please let your Team Manager/Coach know first. If you leave before your last race, this is particularly important.

**Disqualification**

All galas are held under strict ASA guidelines. Unfortunately there are a number of reasons why swimmers can be disqualified – for example for not touching with two hands in Breaststroke or for an incorrect leg kick. Don’t worry if you are disqualified – learn from it and try to remember not to make the same mistake next time.

 **Galas: basic rules for the start, the strokes and the finish**

* **Starts**: The Referee signals that a race is about to start by a series of blasts on a whistle, followed, when the swimmers and officials are ready, by a single long blast. At this point the swimmers take up their position at the edge of the pool (on the blocks, the side of the pool or in the water - as appropriate). Swimmers who have not achieved the standard of the ASA Competitive Start Award must start in the water if the start is at the shallow end. Backstroke starts are always in the water.
When the swimmers are ready the Starter gives the command “Take Your Marks” followed by the signal to “Go”, which may be by shot, whistle, klaxon or command. Under the One Start Rule now in operation, any swimmer starting before the signal is disqualified at the end of the race. There is no recall of swimmers for a second start. However, if a faulty start occurs (e.g. there is a disturbance) the swimmers may be recalled by blasts on the whistle, and a rope is dropped into the water across the pool.
* **The one-start rule:** Any movement on the blocks is interpreted as the swimmer trying to gain an advantage. Therefore all swimmers must remain “completely still” once they are in the starting position! Any movement at this time will disqualify the swimmer (even to adjust goggles!).
* **Breaststroke:** Movements of hands and feet must be simultaneous and in the same horizontal plane. At some point during each stroke the head must break the surface of the water. At the start and turn only one complete stroke may be made under the water (i.e. one arm pull followed by one leg kick) before the head breaks the surface. At the turns and at the finish, the two hands must touch at the same time. Elbows should remain in the water at all times except on the turn.
* **Butterfly:** Movements of hands and feet must be simultaneous. Arms must be brought forward above the surface, and back on or below the surface. At the turns and at the finish, hands must touch at the same time at the same level. One or more leg kicks and one arm pull are permitted under the water at the start and turns.
* **Backstroke:** Swimmers must remain on their back during the race except when executing a turn. During the turn the shoulders may turn over the vertical to the breast but the swimmer must have returned to a position on the back when leaving the wall. Gliding into the turn is disqualifiable. At the turn a touch must be made by some part of the swimmers body. At the finish, the touch may be made by hand, arm, shoulder or head and the swimmer must remain on the back.
* **Individual medley:** Order of swim – Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle.
All of the above stroke rules apply. However, in addition, during the Backstroke to Breaststroke Turn, swimmers must touch the wall on their backs and then can push off on their front.
* **The finish:** The ASA laws have changed recently to allow swimmers to leave the water if they have finished their swim before other swimmers have completed their race. Although this law has changed it is advisable to stay in the pool unless told otherwise by the referee!
* **General Considerations:** All swimmers and spectators should be silent for the start of each race.
The flags across the pool are to assist backstroke swimmers and indicate 5m to the turn.

**ASA Laws and Rules**

1. All Swimming Competitions are conducted under Amateur Swimming Association Laws and Technical Rules (The full rules may be seen on request.)
2. All the Poolside Officials displaying a Middlesex County or Southern Counties badge on the blazer or T-shirt have qualified by attending tuition and passing a written and practical examination on the ASA Swimming Laws.
3. Poolside Officials. The diagram below indicates where poolside officials are normally positioned. It is essential that they are able to work without obstruction by swimmers or spectators: especially in the area near the start (shaded) and close to the edges of the pool.

The following is a typical arrangement for a one-length race.



N.B. For two-length races the timekeepers are at the other end.

**Who are the officials at a gala?**

The ASA laws and rules dictate the number and type of officials that should be officiating at a gala. All these officials ensure that galas are run smoothly and fairly. The following list describes briefly the role of the various officials. If more than one is required the number is shown in brackets.

* **Referee**: Has complete control of the competition, the venue and the other officials in all matters of the swimming laws, moral conduct and security. If judges disagree, then THE REFEREE’S DECISION IS FINAL.
* **Starter**: Starts each event, has certain powers of disqualification.
* **Stroke Judge (2)**: Patrol the side of the pool to observe the swimmers conform to the Laws of strokes.
* **Place Judge (2)**: Stand at the finish of each event to decide the official places, may also act as Turn Judge.
* **Turn Judge (3)**: Observe the swimmers conform to A.S.A. Law regarding turns and relay take-overs. One per two lanes of the pool.
* **Chief Timekeeper**: Records official time from each Timekeeper, if necessary adjusts them to suit the places with the supervision of the Referee.
* **Timekeeper**: Take and record the time of the swimmer in the lane allotted. This is the official time, which may be adjusted in accordance with A.S.A. Law to suit the official places, which take precedence over times. Timekeepers also act as Turn Judges.
* **Recorder**: Record the places and times on a master sheet, arrange the Finalists, or in the case of an Inter-Club Gala allocate the points gained by each swimmer on behalf of their club.
* **Announcer**: Announce results after they have been recorded, provides security awareness and any other relevant information.
* **Chief Whip**: Arranges the swimmers in each event into appropriate heats.
* **Stewards/Whips**: Organise swimmers for the events and supervise the conduct of competitors.

At club galas, whips are expected to arrange their allocated swimmers into the order on the programme, hand them over to the chief whips, and inform the chief whips of any swimmers who are missing.

**Questions?**

My age on the programme is wrong?

Galas set an “age at” for the competition most internal events are age at 31st December, so if the gala is in June and your birthday is in August your age on the programme will be plus one. In addition some competitions group age groups eg 10 & 11 years, so you could be 9 on the day of the gala but be swimming with against people who are already 11. These groupings are needed to manage the event. Organisers consider the objectives of the event when setting the age groups, it might seem though but it could also mean you can compete next year when you will be one of the older more experienced swimmers.