



# The ASA Masters Handbook



swimming • open water • diving • synchronised swimming • water polo

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## Introduction

**“The vibrant Masters movement actively promotes fitness, friendship, understanding and competition through its five disciplines; swimming; diving; water polo; synchronised swimming and open water swimming.”**

### - World Masters

The above sentiment, taken from the international governing body for aquatics (FINA), encapsulates the essence of Masters swimming from across the globe and summarises the culture of its community. Within the UK, our motto is a little simpler - ‘fitness, friendship and fun’.

## ► What is Masters Swimming?

A Masters swimmer is anyone over the age of 18-years-old who swims regularly and is a member of the ASA. At the age of 18, you can start to swim in Masters competitions but you will be classed as a senior swimmer until you reach the age of 25-years-old. Although FINA rules define a Master swimmer as 25 years and above, in England we choose not to exclude swimmers between the age of 18 and 25, allowing them to compete in the senior age group category.

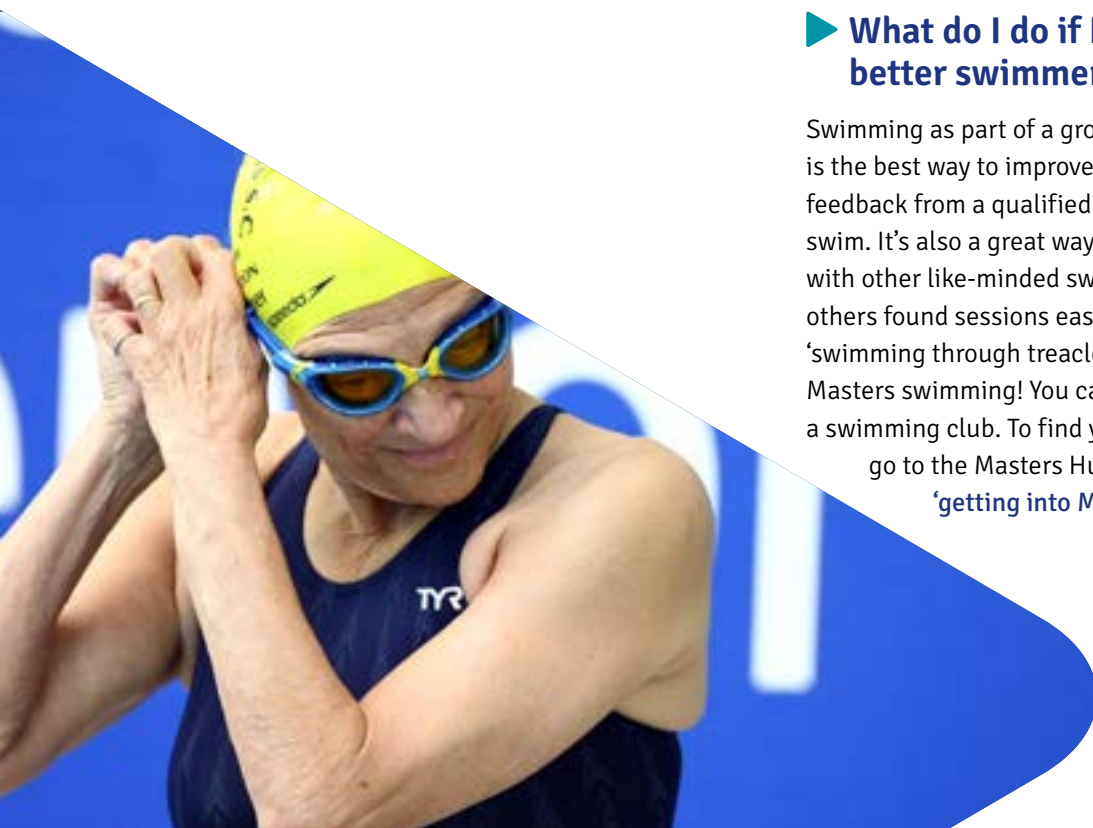
## ► Who is Masters swimming for?

Masters swimming is for anyone who wants to swim regularly with like minded adults in a structured environment.

To be classed as a Masters swimmer in England, you need to be registered with an ASA swimming club. This could be a Masters only club or a club that is open to both adults and junior swimmers – it really doesn’t matter. All Masters swimmers have one thing in common – they want to swim and swim regularly. Some people swim in public sessions and do their own thing, getting advice from professional coaches wherever they can. Others swim as part of a club session but may not have a dedicated coach and some prefer to be in a formal session where the coach tells them what to do. You do not have to be an expert swimmer or take part in competitions. Being a Masters swimmer simply means that you enjoy taking part in adult swimming and like to set your own individual goals. Whether you’re joining in for the social scene or wanting to race against the best, Masters swimming has something for everyone.

## ► What do I do if I want to become a better swimmer?

Swimming as part of a group in a structured session is the best way to improve your technique and get feedback from a qualified coach who can watch you swim. It’s also a great way to share your experiences with other like-minded swimmers, finding out if others found sessions easy, hard or like they were ‘swimming through treacle’ – a common term in Masters swimming! You can have all of this by joining a swimming club. To find your nearest club, please go to the Masters Hub and have a look at our [‘getting into Masters’](#) page.



## ► Why should I join a club and the ASA?

There are so many benefits to joining a club and, as part of joining, you also become a member of the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) – the national governing body for aquatics in England. Here are just a few of the key benefits of joining a club:

- Access to all the ASA products and services which include: the ASA handbook and Code of Ethics
- Access to personal advice from the ASA Membership Services team
- Access to a dedicated Masters Officer within the ASA
- Access to county and regional representatives who will listen to your views and put them forward to the Masters Swimming Committee
- Membership to a club which operates at an ASA approved standard, including qualified coaches who have access to lots of continued personal development (CPD) courses
- Eligibility for two major competitions per year and access to a calendar showing all of the competitions around the country throughout the year
- Access to volunteers who are well trained and meet the needs of Masters swimmers
- Access to the ASA's online database which holds an electronic log of all results and rankings from competitions within the UK
- Access to variety of newsletters e.g. Masters Corner and Your Sport
- Eligibility to attend a yearly Masters conference
- Insurance cover which includes Civil Liability Cover, Employer's Liability, Personal Accident Insurance (under 75 yrs and limited insurance for 70 – 80 yrs) and Legal Expenses Insurance, both at home and abroad.
- Legal support
- Offers and discounts from ASA partner organisations

More benefits become available every year, so be sure check back on our [membership benefits page](#) for updates.

## ► How do I find a club near me?

Here at the ASA, we've tried to make it as easy as possible for you to find your local club. By visiting the ASA website and using our '[Poolfinder](#)' tool, you can enter your postcode and all your closest swimming pools will appear in the search results. Each pool will

be used by different clubs and their details will be on the corresponding page. If you are still having trouble, get in touch with a Masters representative in your area who should be able to help you. See the [contacts page](#) on the Masters Hub for details.

## ► How do I join a swimming club?

Most clubs in England offer a free trial period, allowing prospective members to experience a club session first-hand. To get in touch and organise a trial, your first point of contact will be via the clubs website where there will be contact details and instructions on how to go about joining. Once you have completed your trial session – and if you are happy – you can complete the ASA membership form and away you go.

## ► What are the different membership categories?

In order to join an ASA club, you must also become a registered member of the ASA. ASA memberships come in three different categories listed below:

### ASA Category 1

This category is for anyone who wants to swim but only wants to enter 'Low Level Competitions' ie. anything county level and below.

### ASA Category 2

This category is for anyone who wants to swim, train and compete in any type of competition.

### ASA Category 3

This category is usually for those people who volunteer in their club and do not want to train or compete.

For full explanations, please read our [membership category](#) section on the website

You can check your membership details at any time and remind yourself which category you have selected with the [Online Membership Checker](#).

You can also change your details using the [Online Membership Service \(OMS\)](#).

## ► What do I do if I want to compete?

The first step into the world of competitions for many Masters swimmers is to enter a low level local meet. Initially, talk to your coach (if you have access to one) or other swimmers who have entered competitions, as they will be able to advise you on which races to



enter and which competitions would suit you the best. If making this decision on your own, try and establish which strokes and distance you like most in training.

Within Masters, you compete against people of your own age to make sure it's a level playing field for everyone. The age groups increase in five year age bands, eg 18-24 years, 25-29 years, 30-34 years and so on. Races are then organised to ensure that you are competing against swimmers with a similar entry time for example if it takes you 1min 20secs to complete 50m freestyle you won't be swimming against someone who only takes 30secs.

The easiest way to find competitions is by looking on the [Masters Calendar](#), although some local meets may not be listed. For these, you will need to search on your county or regional website.

Before entering an event, please remember to make sure you have the correct category of membership. You may be asked to enter either by completing a paper form and sending it off, or entering online. If it is online, you will need to complete the form and pay at the time of entering.

It's always a good idea to read the 'conditions' of any competition before entering. These will help you understand the rules of the event, what you **can** do, what you **cannot** do and what you **have** to do. Many people make the mistake of not reading these conditions and end up disappointed on the day because they can't swim or are disqualified.

### ► I competed as a child is Masters any different?

In some ways, Masters swimming is different to the competitive swimming you may have experienced as a child, but in others it's just the same. Masters events are much more relaxed and most people are there to enjoy themselves; there is no pressure to win (unless you want to) from other people. A key similarity is that competitions are organised in much the same way. There is a warm up, a programme of events to stick to and everyone must enter before the day to compete. If you haven't swum since childhood and you aren't sure if it's for you, have a look for a [local meet](#) and go along and watch. You're always guaranteed a warm welcome.

### ► What are the rules for competitions?

All domestic Masters events must comply with the ASA's regulations and rules. These rules govern how the event must be run and the criteria swimmers must meet whilst competing. For example, how each stroke has to be performed, how to turn at each end of the pool, and how to finish a race. These rules follow the guidelines set out by FINA. You can take a look at the rules relating to Masters on the [FINA website](#), the [European Federation \(LEN\) website](#) or in the [ASA handbook](#). Unfortunately, there are too many to mention in this publication, but a coach will be able to give you lots of hints and tips about how to avoid being disqualified in a race.

### ► What is LEN?

LEN is the European governing body for aquatic sports and the Continental Association for Europe. It was formally organised in 1927 in Bologna, Italy, and since 2010, the headquarters are based in Luxembourg.

LEN comprises 51 national swimming federations in Europe and is overseen by an elected Bureau (board) of members representing 17 different Federations. LEN governs all aquatic disciplines in Europe, including diving, swimming, open water swimming, synchronized swimming and water polo.

### ► What is FINA?

FINA, the Fédération Internationale de Natation, is the International Swimming Federation recognised by the International Olympic Committee for administering international competition in aquatics. It is based in Lausanne, Switzerland.

FINA currently oversees competition each of the five aquatics disciplines; swimming (including Masters), diving, synchronized swimming, water polo and open water swimming. Since 2013, high diving has also become an emergent discipline within FINA.

### ► What do I do if I want to enter national events?

There are two key national competitions to keep in your diary if you are looking to compete against the best of British.

The British Masters and Senior Age Group Championships are long course competitions that allow

competitors to test their training in an Olympic-sized 50 metre swimming pool. Usually held in the summertime, these championships comprise both individual and team events.

Similarly, the ASA National Masters and Senior Age Group Championships are held in a short course (25 metre) pool, usually in the autumn, and allow for both individual and team entries. Both of these meets are national events and are the most widely recognised competitions for Masters in the country. They are held once a year and anyone with an ASA Category 2 membership can enter.

The venue and details are announced on the [Masters Calendar](#) each year. It is very important to read all the entry instructions and event conditions carefully to make sure you comply with all of the rules. It is always an electronic entry system which will automatically check your ASA membership details.

## ► What are the European and World Masters Championships and how do I enter?

The European and World Masters Championships are bi-annual competitions, held on alternate years, which can be hosted anywhere in the world. A country will bid for the rights to host the event and as many as 12,000 competitors have been known to take part. They are fantastic competitions both for spectators and competitors, and are known to be just as friendly as any other Masters event. As each event draws nearer, a website will be launched with all of the information you could possibly need and there will always be a link to this from the [Masters Calendar](#). There will also be an entry booklet which will guide you through every aspect of the competition and how to get involved.

Both competitions have specific qualifying times which you will need to meet before you are able to enter. You should not enter these events unless you can prove you have met these times at a previous meet. Otherwise, you may travel to the destination only to find you have swum slower than the qualifying time. In this case, your name will not show on the results and it will appear as if you were never there. Conversely, if you manage to meet the qualifying time you have the opportunity to win an international medal - something to be very proud of.

If you're not sure about European or World competitions, but you like the idea of using your

swimming to travel abroad, keep an eye on different countries swimming federation websites.

## ► What is Open Water Masters?

Open water swimming takes place in any large outdoor body of water: seas, lakes, rivers, canals or reservoirs. In Masters open water swimming, participants can complete distances from 1km to 80km. However, at a competitive level, the traditional distances are 3km, 5km, 10km, and occasionally 25km.

## ► How do I get started with Open Water Masters?

The first place to start looking is on the [ASA Website](#). There are many groups and clubs that promote open water swimming, but we recommend you look for a recognised club and follow the [open water checklist](#). You can also explore the [ASA Swimfit®](#) web pages, which give you a lot of information on safe open water swimming.

## ► Are there any easy to enter competitions?

If you aren't sure if Masters competitions are for you, but would like to test yourself against other people in your age group, then you can enter the [ASA T-30 Challenge](#). This is a postal-entry competition where you see how far you can swim in 30 minutes. You then 'post' your result on the website and at the beginning of February all results are collated and can be viewed publicly, allowing you to see where you came nationally in your age group. A lot of people do this each year to test if they are getting better or need to do a bit more training.

## ► How do I set up a Masters Club?

If you have a group of people who come together for the common purpose of taking part in swimming and want to be organised on a democratic basis, then you can become an affiliated club to the ASA. In order to do this you need: a club constitution, a committee (comprising of at least a chair), a treasurer and a club secretary. Once these are in place, you can affiliate to your ASA region by contacting your regional administrator and paying a club affiliation fee (usually around £50). For further details, please see the [ASA Clubs & membership](#) web pages.

## ► Are there any special Awards for Masters?

Yes there are three awards which are pertinent to Masters:

**The Cherriman Award** is given to a person or group who have made the biggest contribution to Masters each year. It is named after Vivienne and Leonard Cherriman, who worked tirelessly to promote Masters in Britain in the 1980's. Without them, Masters in this country would not be what it is today. Anyone can nominate for this award and the British Masters Committee will chose a winner. Look out for the request for nominees on the Masters Hub in the early part of each year.

**The ASA Adult Participation Award and the ASA Masters Athlete of the Year** are given at the ASA Awards ceremony in recognition of an adults master's swimmer's outstanding achievement eg dedication to swimming over a number of years, a high level of success or they may have had to overcome many obstacles to keep swimming.

Look out for details on the [Masters Hub](#).

## ► Can Masters and children train together?

Yes. [Wavepower](#), the ASA's Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures manual, provides guidance on adults and children sharing the same lane. Wavepower recommends that a thorough risk assessment is conducted and provides some factors for clubs and squads to consider. The list is not exhaustive, but provides a starting point for clubs to evaluate the risks to all swimmers and raises points for consideration to keep sessions safe for all swimmers.

## ► Who can I contact if I have a problem?

Most counties have a Masters representative who will be able to discuss problems or enquiries regarding Masters swimming. If they cannot help, then you can contact your Regional representative. You will be able to find all of their details on the [Masters contact page](#).

If you cannot find the answers to your questions in these pages, then please feel free to contact the ASA Masters Officer – Sharon Lock, [sharon.lock@swimming.org](mailto:sharon.lock@swimming.org).

Tel: 01509 640134 / 07813 998538.

If you have any general queries regarding swimming in your local area, then you can find all the contact details you will need on the [ASA Contacts Page](#).

