

Success is Long-term



# Long-term Athlete Development related to the journey through Swimming



## Introduction

the asa Technical Swimming Committee has produced this document to help parents and club helpers understand the principles behind training and competition for young swimmers. Although swimming, as a dynamic sport, will continue to change and develop, this will not alter the basic principles behind the long-term development of young swimmers.

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# The Journey Through Swimming

“Success is a journey not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome.”

Arthur Ashe - US Champion 1968,  
Australian Champion 1970,  
Wimbledon Champion 1975

This is a guide from Club through County, Regional and National competition to possible selection for international representation. It endeavours to explain, not just what can be expected at each level, but why. Some swimmers will journey all the way, some only part of the way, but all will have the best chance of reaching their full potential if they are treated as individuals.

It is important that within the competitive programme, individuals can compete in events appropriate to their stage of development and talents.

These are reflected in the different formats for competition at County, Regional and National levels, and also in the levels of licensed meets. This helps to ensure that the coach can select levels of competition appropriate for their swimmers.

## Long-term Athlete Development - Growth & Development

Long-term Athlete Development (LTAD) is about achieving the correct training, competition and recovery throughout a young athlete's career, particularly in relation to the important growth and development years of young people. It provides a framework within which all sports should plan their training and competition programmes. Swimming has recognised this framework since undertaking a review of age group swimming at the end of the 1990's.

Age Group swimming is about providing the appropriate opportunities for young people with particular reference to their growth and development. All human beings go through the same developmental stages from childhood to adulthood, though these stages can be at different times and each stage can vary in length. There is also a gender difference in that girls tend to develop earlier than boys.

One of the central messages from the LTAD swimming framework (see the back page of The Swimmer Pathway) is that competition should be regarded as an integral part of a swimmer's training programme. Age Group and Youth swimming provide opportunities for young people to develop their potential in preparation for senior swimming. Towards this goal, consideration should be given to the physiological, psychological and emotional development of the young swimmer.

There are five stages, which can be used to describe growth and development. These equate to the five stages of the LTAD framework for swimming:

- FUNDamentals - Childhood
- SwimSkills - Late Childhood
- Training to Train - Adolescence
- Training to Compete - Early Adulthood
- Training to Win - Adulthood

### FUNDamentals - Childhood (Basic movement literacy)

The FUNDamentals stage should be structured and fun because a child's attention span is short and there is a strong need for positive re-enforcement. Growth is rapid due to the development of large muscle groups, and therefore the emphasis should be on developing basic movement literacy and fundamental movement skills.

The skills to be developed are:

- ABCs (Agility, Balance, Coordination, Speed)
- RJT (Running, Jumping, Throwing)
- KGBs (Kinesthetics, Gliding, Buoyancy, Striking with the body)
- CPKs (Catching, Passing, Kicking, Striking with an implement)

In order to develop basic movement literacy successfully, there should be participation in a wide range of activities.

As the size of the heart increases in relation to the rest of the body, endurance should be developed using FUN and games. In addition, children should be introduced to the simple rules and ethics of sports to complement the beginning of their understanding into the need for rules and structure. These activities should be part of well-structured programmes with proper progressions that are monitored regularly.

Above all else, children should have FUN and be active during this stage.

### SwimSkills - Late Childhood (Building technique)

During the SwimSkills period, the nervous system is almost fully developed and there are rapid improvements in the coordination of movement skills. As a result, young people should learn how to train and develop sport specific skills. This is a good time to work on developing excellent technique in all four strokes as well as starts, turns and finishing skills. A multi stroke approach to training and competition will not only reduce the likelihood of injury but also ensure interest levels will remain high with the result that swimming should continue to be fun.

Studies have also shown that swimmers who do not specialise early may have a slower initial increase in performance; however, they ultimately reach a higher level of achievement and are more likely to have a longer life in the sport. This is in contrast to early specialisation, which may produce an initial rapid increase in performance, but a lower level of achievement and early retirement.

It is often a good idea to participate in complementary sports i.e. those sports, which use similar energy systems and movement patterns.

Training should include the use of 'own body weight' exercises; medicine ball and Swiss ball exercises as well as developing suppleness. Swimmers should also learn the basic technical and tactical skills, (known as the ancillary capacities) which include:

- Warm up and cool down
- Stretching
- Hydration and nutrition
- Recovery
- Relaxation and focusing

Although the focus is on training, competition should be used to test and refine skills. The recommended training to competition ratio is 75% to 25%. This should be planned over one annual cycle.

If a young swimmer misses this stage of development then he/she is unlikely to reach their full potential. One of the main reasons athletes plateau during the later stages of their careers is because of an over emphasis on competition instead of taking full advantage of training during this very important stage.

### **Training to Train - Adolescence (Building the engine)**

For many years the way that the body produces energy has been known. For adults, in short events e.g. less than 45 seconds in duration, energy is derived predominantly anaerobically. For longer events e.g. greater than 1 minute 30 seconds energy requirements are derived predominantly aerobically. For events between 45 seconds and 1 minute 30 seconds energy is provided through both aerobic and anaerobic metabolism. However, prior to puberty, the greatest proportion of a young person's energy is derived aerobically. Anaerobic metabolism, as a proportion of overall energy output, is small. After puberty, aerobic capacity increases significantly and an increased proportion of the overall energy requirements are met from anaerobic metabolism. Therefore, energy derived aerobically is very important in swimming.

During the Training to Train stage, there should be an emphasis on aerobic, or endurance, conditioning.

The cardiovascular system, determines the efficiency of the heart and lungs. These organs are developed through building up work on longer distances. Swimming is an endurance sport - most events last 45 seconds or more and none are similar to the 100m track event, which lasts a few seconds. Training and competition for young swimmers should therefore have an endurance base. Even at senior level it is common practice for swimmers in the sprint events (50 and 100m) to train and compete in the distance above (200m). It is recognised that a swimmer may compete successfully at a distance "down" (shorter) but that it is very difficult to compete successfully in an event, which is a distance "up" (longer).

This should be the stage of greater individualisation of fitness and technical training. The focus should still be on training rather than competition and the training should be predominantly of high volume, low intensity workloads. It is important to emphasise high volume, low intensity training cannot be achieved in a limited time period and therefore the time commitment to training is likely to increase significantly. As the volume of training increases, there is likely to be a reduction in the number of competitions undertaken. However, there should now be specific targets for each competition, with a view to learning basic tactics and mental preparation. There should be either one or two training cycles during the year.

During this stage, training should continue to develop suppleness and include the use of 'own body weight' exercises such as medicine ball and Swiss ball exercises. Towards the end of this stage however, preparations should be made for the development of strength, which for girls occurs at the end of this stage and for boys at the beginning of the next stage. This should include learning correct weight lifting techniques without any resistance; the knowledge base of how to warm up and warm down; how and when to stretch; how to optimise nutrition and hydration; mental preparation; regeneration; how and when to taper and peak; pre-competition, competition and post competition routines.

Similar to the previous stage, if insufficient time is devoted to this stage or it is missed, the young swimmer is unlikely to reach their full potential.

### **Training to Compete - Early Adulthood (Optimising the engine)**

During the training to compete stage there should be a continued emphasis on physical conditioning with the focus on maintaining high volume workloads but with increasing intensity. The number of competitions should be similar to the end of the previous stage but the emphasis should be on developing individual strengths and working on weaknesses. This should be achieved through practising technical and tactical skills based around specific strokes at all distances, or specific distances across a range of strokes. As a result, the year should be divided into either two or three cycles of training and competition and the ancillary capacities should be refined more specific to the individual's needs.

Although the muscular system develops throughout childhood and adolescence, significant strength gains tend not to respond to training until after puberty. Therefore, training should also focus on developing strength gains through the use of weights, but only when the correct lifting techniques have been learned. This should be coupled with continued work on core body strength and maintaining suppleness.

### **Training to Win - Adulthood (Maximising the engine)**

This is the final stage of athletic preparation. The emphasis should be on specialisation and performance enhancement. All of the swimmer's physical, technical, tactical, mental and ancillary capacities should now be fully established with the focus shifting to producing the best possible performance. Swimmers should be trained to peak for specific competitions and major events, therefore, all aspects of training should be individualised for specific events. There should be two, three or more training cycles, depending on the events being trained for. During this stage, training should continue to develop strength, develop core body strength and maintain suppleness.

## Appropriate Competition

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

Mission Statement

### Which Competitions?

It is important for meet organisers, club officials, coaches and parents to appreciate that not all swimmers who compete at County level will reach Regional or National levels.

What is appropriate competition for a few talented individuals at National level is not necessarily appropriate for the hundreds of swimmers who compete at County level.

Equally it may not be beneficial for a swimmer competing with distinction at National level, to include County or even Regional Championships in their planned programme.

In order for swimmers to compete in "appropriate competition", it is important that there are provisions for all swimmers in a planned and accessible programme of open competition.

Open competitions are provided by a number of different organisations or combinations of organisations:

- British Swimming
- the asa
- the asa Affiliated Regions
- the asa Affiliated Counties
- Groups of Affiliated Counties
- Clubs
- Groups of Clubs
- Local associations

The strategy for the approval of open meets is not left to market forces, but is part of a calendar planning exercise for all levels. The aim is to provide the following:

### • Competition at all levels

It is important that the qualification opportunities for swimmers at National, Regional, County and Club competitions reflect the principles of the Long-term Athlete Development Model.

In addition there must be competitive opportunities for those swimmers who compete at County Championships, but do not go further to Regional and National events. It is estimated that there are some 20-25,000 swimmers in this category.

### • Competition that complements training cycles

It is acknowledged that, as swimming training is based around cyclic intervals, it is important for competitions to be planned throughout the year to complement their training cycles.

Most clubs will be training swimmers who are County, Regional and National qualifiers and need to be able to target competitions at all these levels at the same time in their training cycle. So, for example, it helps a coach to make their training sessions appropriate for all their swimmers i.e. to have competitions for County level swimmers at the same time as Regional Championships.

Top Right: Englands Gold Medal winners in the mens 4 x 100m freestyle (L-R) Dean Millwain, Alex Scotcher, Simon Burnett and Ross Davenport

Bottom Right: Great Britains 4 x 100m Medley relay team (L-R) Fran Halsall, Kate Haywood, Jemma Lowe and Elizabeth Simmonds celebrate winning with their gold medals





## How Often Should A Swimmer Compete?

“British Age Group swimmers compete too often and train too little.”

Bill Sweetenham, GB National Performance Director (January 2001)

As a general rule, swimmers should not compete more than 12 times in a year in events which require them to alter or modify their training programme and all events that include a taper or rest from training should have clear performance targets set by the coach for the individual swimmer.

Many swimmers will “train through” some competitions or use them as part of their training programme. A swimmer may complete a full training programme and represent their club in an event on a Saturday evening, or may use a day competing in as many events as possible at County or Regional level to swim as part of their training programme.

The important issue is that this should be part of the competitive programme planned and evaluated by the coach and swimmer.

### Improving Standards and Increasing Challenges

In order to ensure swimmers can meet the challenges facing them when they compete at their highest level, some of the policies which have been introduced at GB level for senior and junior international swimming have been adapted and adopted into the foundations laid in Age Group swimming. Two major issues were seen to be:

- How to encourage better performances in long course (50m) pools
- How to perform well away from the home environment against unknown opposition

### Long Course/Short Course Pools?

Whilst the vast majority of pools in the UK are short course (25m), most of the major championships are swum in long course (50m) pools therefore it is important for swimmers to learn to compete in 50m pools.

For the British Long Course Championships, qualifying times must have been achieved in a long course pool.

However, with the restriction created by the lack of 50m facilities in this country, this cannot apply to all competitions. Therefore, in all the [asa](#) National events there are two sets of qualifying times - 50m times and 25m times. Swimmers entering an event with a long course (50m) qualifying time will be seeded in the event according to their entry time in the usual way. Swimmers entering with a qualifying time achieved in a short course (25m) pool will have their entries accepted and these entries will be seeded in the slowest heats. However, as there is a significant difference in competing in long course and short course pools for the 800m and 1500m freestyle, in these events only times achieved in a 50m pool are accepted.

This system still allows swimmers to qualify for most National events in 25m pools, but gives an advantage of being seeded to those swimmers with long course qualifying times. As all swimmers at National level should have had the opportunity to swim in their Regional Championships, which are in 50m pools, they will have the opportunity to achieve a Long Course Qualifying Time.

Below National level, times from different pool lengths can be converted using equivalent performance tables which can be accessed online from the British Swimming website ([www.britishswimming.org](http://www.britishswimming.org)) or purchased in book form from the [asa](#) Awards Centre - details also available from the same website.

### Varying Opponents (Age Qualifying Date)

There was a view that competing in Britain was too predictable and swimmers needed more challenges. The system of organising competitions in the country based on age as of 31st December in the year of competition, meant swimmers generally competed against the same group of swimmers all year, each year. By altering competition to link the age for events with the date of the meet or series of meets, this gives a different mix of swimmers at events as they change age during the year, and as meets are held on different dates from year to year.

For competitions which involve a series of meets, such as County Championships, the age qualifying date is the age on the last day of the series of meets e.g. if the series lasts from February to April with the date of the last meet being 3rd April, all ages are calculated as of 3rd April for that competition.

Organising competitions with age on the day, also gives the opportunity at some time during the year for a swimmer to be the oldest swimmer in an age group, with all the advantages that this brings.

### National Ranking Lists

All times from County, Regional and National competitions together with those from Licensed Open Meets are included in a national database from which ranking lists are produced. These can be viewed on the British Swimming website.

# The Competition Programme

The conclusions which can be drawn from the evidence of the growth and development of young people, clearly indicate that swimmers in the 9 -13/14 age groups should be encouraged:

- To compete in a range of events
- To compete in a range of distances
- Not to compete in 100m events too soon

The County, Regional and National programmes are therefore designed to reward swimmers in this age group who are successful over a combination of events - determined by the age of the swimmer and over 50m, 100m and 200m distance freestyle and the individual medley. This is done with a points system (see section on Points Systems) and awards are made to those swimmers with the most points over an agreed range of events rather than to the individual winner of single events. The event categories and in some cases the events included within a category recognise the different rates of maturation between girls and boys (see British Age Group categories - BAGCATS).

In the next group, Youth, it is important swimmers learn to develop other skills central to competing successfully. At this age they should begin to specialise and learn the skills required for competing in heats, semi-finals and finals.

The starting ages for County, Regional and National events are progressive and the change from Age to Youth Championships is different for boys and girls to recognise the difference in maturation rates. The Youth Championships for Girls begin at 14 years and for Boys at 15 years.

## County Championships

These events take place in the Spring. The Age and Youth Championships generally combine with senior events in the programme. The Youth events will include heats and where time allows, finals. If finals are included in

the programme, the suggested order of preference of inclusion is as follows: 200m Individual Medley, 200m form strokes (Backstroke, Breaststroke and Butterfly), 200/400m Freestyle and 400m Individual Medley, 100m all strokes.

Entry to County Championships (and to Regional and National Championships) is by achieving qualifying times, which are published each year (see Long Course and Short Course pools).

For the younger swimmers these will take the format of British Age Group Category (BAGCAT) events to encourage swimmers to compete over a wide range of events, determined by heat declared winners (no finals). These events are (mostly) swum in 25m pools and include 50m events to give swimmers the opportunity to use all the same skills of starting, turning and finishing as in a 2 length swim in a 50m pool, together with distance events requiring more endurance.

The youngest age groups will not swim 100m events as part of the County BAGCAT programme, as most swimmers at this level do not have the physiological development required to swim this event correctly. The distance is included in the Regional and National programme but only for those swimmers with Regional or National qualifying times on the corresponding 200m event.

## Regional Senior, Youth and Age Group Championships

These are generally all swum in 50m pools and therefore offer the main opportunity for swimmers to achieve a Long Course National Qualifying Time. The programme, similar to the National programme, is divided into two Championships, Youth and Age. The Youth Championships take place at the beginning of May and the Age Championships in June.

The Youth Championships introduces dual age bands as a progression from Age Group swimming in single age bands, to open swimming at senior



Above: Xavier Mohammed wins Gold in the Men's 17/18 Yrs 400m IM Final at the ASA Youth Championships 2007 - Ponds Forge, Sheffield, England

level. The relay events are included in the four-day programmes to introduce the concept that swimmers must be able to produce good times in individual events and then reproduce these times in team events, which may be in the same session.

The Age Group Championships follow the BAGCAT format, but to discourage the "bash & dash" approach of one-length events, do not include 50m swims. As Regional competitions are in long course pools, the 50m events have no turns and do not offer the same opportunity to develop skills as the 50m events in 25m pools. However, there are 100m events for all ages. These are included for the younger swimmers at this level to provide an opportunity for the small number of early developers who have the talent and physiological development to begin to experience competing at this event.

Entry at Regional (and National) level for the 100m events, for the 10 year old boys and girls and the 11 years boys age group, is only open to those youngsters who have achieved the corresponding 200m qualifying time. This recognises the majority of swimmers in these ages will not benefit from competing over 100m, but those who have the ability achieve a Regional or National qualifying time on the 200m will be able to swim

down a distance and experience competing in the shorter event.

There are only 4 categories at Regional level and so it is feasible to include some finals in the programme. If finals are to be in the programme, the suggested order of preference for inclusion is as follows: 200m Individual Medley, 200m form strokes, 200/400m Freestyle and 400m Individual Medley, the 100m all strokes.

**National Age Group, Youth Championships**

The National Age Group Championships (girls 11-13 years and boys 11-14 years) and the National Youth Championships (girls 14-17 years and boys 15-18 years) are usually held at the end of July/ beginning of August.

The last opportunity to achieve qualifying times for National entry will be the date of the last day of the Regional Age Group Championships usually held in mid June (see Long Course/Short Course Pools).

The Age Group Championships follow the format of British Age Group Category (BAGCAT) events with the BAGCAT points being taken from the heat swims. At this level, all events have finals (except 800/1500m free) and are used for the selection of swimmers for World Class Programmes. This addresses the skill of swimming fast heats and then even faster finals.

It is practical to include finals in the BAGCAT programme at National level because, with harder qualifying times than for County and Regional events, an individual swimmer will qualify in fewer events in each category. This allows them, within the 4-day programme, to cope with the inclusion of finals, and relay events.

**National Championships**

the asa and British Swimming promotes the British Long Course Championships. These act as trials for the major international events (Olympic Games, World Championships, European Championships,

Commonwealth Games). Also, they act as trials for the major international youth and junior events (European Junior Championships and European Youth Olympic Days) at which British Teams compete. The British Long Course Championships normally take place 15 weeks prior to the major international event. They may be followed by three competitions at 10 weeks, 7 weeks and 4 weeks out from the major international event. These Stage meets may coincide with the English, Scottish and Welsh Long Course Championships organised by the respective home country swimming associations.



Bottom Left: Winner Liam Tancock at the ASA National Championships (50m) 2007 - Ponds Forge, Sheffield, England

Bottom Right: the ASA President Robert Margetts presents Gallica with the Top Club Award at the ASA Age Group Championships 2007





# Open Meet Licensing

## Levels of Open Meets

There are four tiers of structured competition. Open Meets are licensed according to the purpose of their competition as Level 1, 2, 3 or 4.

- **Level 1** is aimed at National qualifiers and swimmers close to National qualification looking for opportunities to achieve National qualifying times. These meets will have qualifying times for entry, which will be just below the national times (see section on Qualifying Times and Upper Limit Times).
- **Level 2** is aimed at Regional qualifiers and swimmers close to Regional qualification. They have qualifying times and upper limit times. Access to the *asa* ranking information can be used to enable meet organisers to verify entry times submitted by swimmers fall within the stated range.
- **Level 3** is for Club swimmers who seek County qualifying times. They have qualifying times and upper limit times set at an appropriate level. These meets will provide a programme throughout the year to support the requirements of swimmers below Regional level.
- **Level 4** is for Club swimmers and those beginning to enter individual open competition.

National qualifying times will be accepted from meets licensed at Levels 1 and 2. Regional qualifying times will be accepted from meets licensed at Level 1, 2 and 3.

## Championships & Inter Team Events

Championships at Local, County, Regional and National level (as defined in the *asa* Laws) are expected to conform to the technical requirements of licensing as appropriate to the level of competition e.g. officials, results, electronic timing etc. However, these competitions are open to all qualifiers i.e. there are no upper limit times (ULT).

This principle is the same for any inter-team events that are granted a Licence e.g. Inter-Counties galas or Speedo League Final.

## Qualifying Times and Upper Limit Times

These are times set by meet organisers for each event in the programme in order to control the number of entries in a meet. A Qualifying Time is the time that a swimmer must have already achieved in order to enter the competition.

However, some meets will also have an ULT for each event, which means that swimmers who have previously achieved times faster than the ULT are not eligible for this event. The effect of having Qualifying Times and ULTs for a meet is to target swimmers in a particular time range.

Qualifying Times are set for National, Regional and most County competitions and these also provide a standard which coaches can use to indicate the level of their swimmers. For example, within a club, swimmers may be selected for particular training groups if they have County, Regional or National qualifying times.

The requirement of having achieved a Qualifying Time in order to enter for an event relies significantly on the integrity of coaches, swimmers and parents to submit correct, truthful information. This is a clear expectation within the *asa* Code of Conduct. However, with more times being submitted into the National Ranking system it is also possible for times to be checked for accuracy.

## Licensing

The National Licensing Panel, is responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with the "Mission Statement"
- Issuing the Licenses
- Applying of any sanctions for non-compliance

- Developing common standards
- Promoting best practice

The Regional Licensing Panel is responsible for:

- Influencing the content of meets within their Region
- Monitoring and influencing the provision of adequate, appropriate competition for all levels of ability
- Influencing compliance with calendar planning
- Making recommendations, regarding Licensing Applications, to the National Licensing Panel
- Monitoring the process (quality control)

**The issue of a Licence means that swimmers, coaches and parents can assume that the meet is a "quality competition" which complies with a standard set of requirements.**

- The Level definition will identify the purpose of competition, for example, a swimmer seeking Regional qualifying times will be looking for a Level 2 meet
- The competition will include an appropriate schedule of events, consistent with level definition, for example a Level 2 meet will not include in an age group, events that are not in the Regional Championships for those swimmers
- The venue is appropriate, with particular reference to the pool length (25m or 50m)
- There will be appropriate warm up arrangements available and all Health and Safety Procedures will be in place
- The meet will comply with a maximum total length of programmed competition per day (7.5 hours)
- The Officials will be of an appropriate standard of qualification

- An electronic timing system will be used
- There will be a computerised results service to enable the data to go into the national ranking system

### Acceptance Criteria for Entries

There will also be a requirement for a clear statement to be included in the meet information regarding the acceptance criteria for entries. Even with qualifying and upper limit times, some meets will be over-subscribed i.e. there would be too many swimmers for the pool time available. All meets should, therefore, inform entrants what criteria will be used to control the number of swimmers accepted. This could include one or more of the following:

- Top (x) number taken in an event, based on the submitted entry times. This is a standard procedure for regulating the number of swimmers in an event, even if some of the other options below are adopted

- Entries only open to swimmers from a restricted area e.g. County, group of Counties, Regional
- First acceptances to swimmers from a particular area e.g. County, then the remaining places filled from outside the area
- First come - first served. This ensures that an individual swimmer is accepted in all the events for which they have the qualifying time, even though they may be slower in some events than those who are rejected. This is a useful procedure with the younger (BAGCAT) swimmers who are being encouraged to compete over a range of events. This method must not be used for controlling the number of accepted entries in a Level One meet where acceptance must be based on standard.

### Monitoring

Meet organisers are expected to send the computerised results to the asa within 5 days, to enable the data to be used for athlete tracking purposes. In addition, in order to help ensure the meet has continuing high standards; there is a Quality Control questionnaire. This is completed by, an official observer, if one has been appointed and also a random selection of the clubs taking part in the meet.

### Planning

In order to provide the appropriate opportunities for swimmers to qualify and to ensure there are competitions at the right time in the training cycle, a national calendar has been developed. This determines which periods during the year should be competition free as well as periods when competitions are needed.

Regional panels will monitor the competition opportunities in their area and are responsible for filling any gaps in provision.

Below: Herne Bay in Lane One at the start of the Girls 4x200m Freestyle Final at the ASA Age Group Championships 2007



# Points Systems

## What is the points system?

In order to support the multi-event approach to age group competition for the younger competitors, it was necessary to introduce a point scoring system into British Swimming. These points are used to identify talented swimmers for the first level of the World Class Programmes and to track their progress.

The system comprises two elements:

- British Comparative Performance Tables
- British Age Group Correction Factors

## Comparative Performance Points Systems

Comparative Performance Points Tables have been used in the UK since the 1970's in order to compare swimming times across the standard range of strokes and distances. British Swimming has used LEN (the European Governing Body) and more recently, FINA (the World Governing Body) tables. Both of these are based on world performances and reflect the parity between events at the top level of the sport. These tables have been used for scoring major open team competitions and are accepted by the swimming community as provision of a fair comparison across the range of events. Unfortunately, when these tables are applied to Age Group swimming, especially at the younger ages, the value of the comparisons across events becomes less valid. This is a direct consequence of the different rates of growth and development between individuals.

In light of these findings it was clear that a mechanism was required to establish a fair comparison across the genders, events and ages, and to satisfy the needs of multi-recognition awards.

Requirements were for:

- A mechanism for comparing performances across the range of events
- A method that reflected the different achievement levels as a consequence of age-related physical development
- A method related to world standards
- A method that recognised the achievement levels at the younger ages in British Swimming

British Comparative Performance tables (GB points) were developed in order to provide the sport with total ownership of the stability and availability of quality comparative performance tables. This arose as a consequence of the shortcomings in the FINA system.

FINA tables are published in both Long and Short Course versions and are based the average of the eight World All Time Best swims. The major problem with the FINA tables is that their publication date and availability are not within our control and the relationships between times and points can change significantly between annual revisions.

## British Comparative Performance Tables (GB points)

These have exactly the same upper end starting point as that used for the FINA tables i.e. 1,000 points corresponds to the average of the world all-time top eight performances. The essential difference being the lower end of the tables extends to defined slower times, in order to cater for the youngest age groups and ability levels.

## British Age Group Correction Factors

Everyone recognises that some events are relatively more difficult for the younger swimmers. This observation is proven by statistical analysis of the relative achievement levels of British Age Group swimmers since 1995.

In order to relate the performance of two different events within a single year age group a simple age correction factor has been determined between events within each gender and age group.

These factors are based totally on observations of British Swimming performance levels. For each age group the reference times used are the average of the ten all time top British performances in each event. The factors are then determined by establishing the ratio between the number of points for the highest scoring event and each of the other events in each single year age group.

## Information Technology Assisting Competition

It is important that the *asa* records the maximum number of validated times in their ranking system, from the widest range of age and ability as possible. The development of the various standards and qualifying times are obtained through analysis of the data held on swimmer performances. Qualifying Times for Regional and National events currently use the data from the National Ranking system. The GB points system is updated every two years with reference to world data. However, the correction factors used in conjunction with GB points to provide Age Corrected Points for the British Age Group Category (BAGCAT) awards system, are particularly dependent on annual analysis of the times swum by 9-14 year old swimmers. It is important therefore to record the maximum number of validated times in the ranking system, from the widest range of age and ability as possible.

the *asa* IT system allow access to the data in order that meet managers can verify information and use the information to help plan their meets and qualifying times.



## England Talent Development & World Class Programmes

The England Talent Development Programme provides a series of clinics and camps for athletes. These events are programmed for the months of September, January & April of each season with selections based on the performances at the *asa* National Championships & Age and Youth Championships.

The age group for selection at Level 1 is 12/13 years, Level 2 being 14/15 years and Level 3 available to swimmers 13 years + (all ages as at date of the *asa* Championships). In each Region there will be 24 places available at Level 1 with a further 20 places to be selected at Level 2. These selections are made with approximately half the places selected by the England Talent Development team and the remaining places by each Region's "Coaches Forum". A further 48 places are available for selection on the Level 3 programme, at National level.

Level 1 & 2 clinics and camps are scheduled for the same weekends in every Region, delivering advanced swimming skills sessions, athlete education units, core stability landwork sessions, athlete screening and monitoring programme and a parents' programme.

The Level 3 programme is focussed on athletes aged 13 years and above, who are achieving competition performances consistent with those of potential international swimmers. It provides three opportunities per season of camps, screening etc, for groups identified on specific stroke disciplines. Included in this programme is an overseas camp, aimed at assisting development toward the World Class pathway.

the *asa* also provides an opportunity for swimmers aged 16-19 years of age, to participate in the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE). This is an English programme designed to meet the needs of elite swimmers aged 16 who wish to continue their sporting career and gain qualifications. This is a two-year programme.

Apprentices receive additional support and guidance within their swimming pathway and education.

The Apprenticeship framework:

- NVQ Level 3 Achieving Excellence in Sports Performance (specific to swimming)
- Technical Certificate: A choice or mix of A-Levels, BTEC Awards, GCSE's, Coaching Qualifications or any other professional qualification undertaken at school/college or appropriate body
- Key Skills Level 2 in Application of Number & Communication (please note those who have achieved Grade C above in GCSE English and/or Maths will be exempt, otherwise Apprentice's will complete key skills at their school/college)

Regional Talent & Development Coaches work with apprentices to guide and assist them through the NVQ Level 3. The NVQ isn't academic and is based on everything elite athletes undertake along their talent pathway to a world-class level.

The NVQ allows swimmers to achieve a nationally recognised qualification awarded by Edexcel for the work they are already putting into swimming. The NVQ helps to educate swimmers more about what they are doing in the pool and encourages them to further their swimming career.

AASE swimmers also attend an overseas camp as part of their programme. This is paid for by the *asa* as part of this scheme. Camps will take place annually focussed on a date to complement the competition calendar. Those swimmers who are World Class Programme athletes will not have to attend additional camps, as they will be assessed on the World Class Programme camps. This will contribute towards achieving the NVQ Level 3.

AASE provides clear pathways and exit routes for elite swimmers either to professional swimming career, university, employment or a mix.

The World Class Programme is divided into 3 categories as follows: the first is World Class Podium and is the part of the British Swimming programme that is allocated 34 places by UK Sport (including Open Water swimmers). This is subdivided into three further categories: A, B and C. The entry levels on to a category A and B are governed by UK Sport and are in line with all other World Class funded sports. British Swimming makes recommendations to UK Sport on the C category entry level.

- Category A is for medallists at the World Long Course Swimming Championships and Olympic Games
- Category B is for finalists at the World Long Course Swimming Championships and Olympic Games
- Category C is for swimmers who have recorded a top 16 world ranked time (two swimmers per nation) at specified meets. Swimmers meeting the criteria will be considered for inclusion on the podium programme

The second category is World Class Development. Athletes in this category will be identified and targeted as talented young swimmers who are thought to be 6 to 7 years from Olympic Podium, a philosophy applied across all of UK Sport's World Class Programmes.

There is also a World Class Talent level, which encompasses athletes who have been identified as young swimmers who are considered to have the potential to be "fast-tracked" onto the World Class Development Pathway. These athletes will be offered opportunities to have their talent confirmed and approximately 20 unnamed athletes will be involved at any point in time.

## Training Camps

Throughout the Country there are opportunities for swimmers to be selected for training camps at different levels. Programmes based on County Sports Partnerships (collections of local authorities) will provide training camp opportunities for some County level swimmers. In addition, there are training camps at the asa Regional level linked to the World Class Programme.

More detailed information regarding selection and training camps for the World Class squads and other information is available from the asa and is on the British Swimming website [www.britishswimming.org](http://www.britishswimming.org)

## Remember:

“Success is a journey not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome”

the asa competition and training camp opportunities are designed to provide a pathway for ALL swimmers to access the level that is appropriate to them. The long-term development of a swimmer provides success along the way at different levels and in many different aspects - [enjoy your journey](#).



Top Right: 10th Fina World Championships 2003, Barcelona. Great Britain's Swimmers have their first training session in the pool, ahead of the World Championships in Barcelona.

Below: The 28th LEN European Swimming Championships 2006 - Budapest, Hungary. Great Britain's Medal Winners - Back Row, L - R: Todd Cooper, David Carry, Liam Tancock, Matthew Clay, James Gibson, Andrew Hunter, Ross Davenport, Kristopher Gilchrist, Simon Burnett. Front Row, L - R: Caitlin McClatchey, Rebecca Adlington, Kate Haywood, Kirsty Balfour, Joanne Jackson, Francesca Halsall, Rebecca Cooke. Absent - Melanie Marshall and Terri Dunning.



# British Age Group Category County Awards (BAGCATS) 25m pool

Boys			Girls		
<b>9 years</b>	Sprint Form Distance IM	- best 50m - best 200m form stroke - 200 free - best 100 / 200 IM	Sprint Form Distance IM	- best 50m - best 200m form stroke - 200 free - best 100 / 200 IM	
<b>10 years</b>	Sprint Form Distance IM	- best 50m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 free - best 100 / 200 / 400 IM	Sprint Form Distance IM	- best 50m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 free - best 100 / 200 / 400 IM	
<b>11 years</b>	Sprint Form Distance IM	- best 50m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 free - best 100 / 200 / 400 IM	Sprint 100s Form Distance IM	- best 50m - best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 100 / 200 / 400 IM	
<b>12 years</b>	Sprint 100s Form Distance IM	- best 50m - best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 100 / 200 / 400 IM	Sprint 100s Form Distance IM	- best 50m - best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 100 / 200 / 400 IM	
<b>13 years</b>	Sprint 100s Form Distance IM	- best 50m - best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 100 / 200 / 400 IM	Sprint 100s Form Distance IM	- best 50m - best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 100 / 200 / 400 IM	
<b>14 years</b>	Sprint 100s Form Distance IM	- best 50m - best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 100 / 200 / 400 IM	Note: Girls 14 years and over and boys 15 years and over will start to specialize in individual events which will have individual awards.		



# British Age Group Category

## Regional & National Awards (BAGCATS) 50m pool

Boys			Girls	
<b>Regional</b>				
<b>10 years</b>	100s Form Distance IM	- best 100m* - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 free - best 200 / 400 IM	100s Form Distance IM	- best 100m* - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 free - best 200 / 400 IM
<b>Regional &amp; National</b>				
<b>11 years</b>	100s Form Distance IM	- best 100m* - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 free - best 200 / 400 IM	100s Form Distance IM	- best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 200 / 400 IM
<b>Regional &amp; National</b>				
<b>12 years</b>	100s Form Distance IM	- best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 200 / 400 IM	100s Form Distance IM	- best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 200 / 400 IM
<b>Regional &amp; National</b>				
<b>13 years</b>	100s Form Distance IM	- best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 200 / 400 IM	100s Form Distance IM	- best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 200 / 400 IM
<b>Regional &amp; National</b>				
<b>14 years</b>	100s Form Distance IM	- best 100m - best 200m form stroke - best 200 / 400 / 800 / 1500 free - best 200 / 400 IM	Note: Girls 14 years and over and Boys 15 years and over will start to specialize in individual events and will swim in the Youth Championships.	
<b>100m events marked *</b>	These events do not have a qualifying time. Entry will only be open to those swimmers with a qualifying time on the corresponding 200m event. i.e. a swimmer qualifying for the 200m backstroke will be eligible to enter the 100m backstroke.			



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