

GASC GUIDE TO GALAS

An important part of our club is supporting and developing swimmers to compete in swimming galas (or “meets”).

Galas are an excellent way for swimmers to see how they are progressing, provide goals, and are a way to gauge their progress. Taking part in galas gives swimmers a great sense of achievement and helps create strong friendships within the club by cheering on and supporting each other.

When starting out in swimming, swimmers and parents enter a whole new world of terminology where galas are concerned. Hopefully, the information below will help you gain an understanding into the world of competitive swimming but if in doubt, just ask.

Except for our Club Team Championships where swimmers are competing with the aim to gain points for their team, swimmers competing in galas are swimming for themselves to achieve a personal best (PB) time. At galas, swimmers are usually separated into male and female and seeded into heats for each event from the slowest to the fastest using their entry times. Therefore, you will usually see a mixture of age ranges within one race. Upon completion of each event, officials will work out the ranking within each age group based on the times achieved within the events. Thus, an 11-year older swimmer may start a race against older swimmers and come last in the race but achieve a gold medal in their age group.

Phrases you may hear about galas

Long Course and Short Course Galas

- **Short Course** – this refers to a pool which is 25m in length.
- **Long Course** – this refers to a pool which is 50m in length.

Unlicensed Meets

Unlicensed meets usually have little or no restrictions as to who can swim. The times achieved are not viewed as “official” for entry into licenced meets and as such are not recorded on the British Swimming Database.

Licensed Meets

Licensed Meets are swimming events licensed by Swim England (the governing body of swimming in this country). Certain standards must be met to ensure fair competition. Times achieved at licensed meets are recorded on the [British Swimming Rankings Database](#).

Licensed Meets are graded into levels. You may notice the level referred to within in the gala conditions which are included as attachments in the Spond posts.

Level 1 and Level 2 – These meets have qualifying times to enter and cover National, Regional and County Championships. The purpose of these meets is to enable swimmers to achieve qualifying times for entry into, Regional and County Championships. Times from Level 1 meets only which are swum in the “Qualifying Window” can be used into both British and Home Nation National Championships.

Level 1 meets are long course (i.e. swam in a 50m pool) and Level 2 meets are short course (i.e. swam in a 25m pool).

Level 3 – these meets can be long or short course events (the meets are nearly always in a 25m pool though) and enable swimmers to achieve times for entry into Regional and County Championships and other Meets at Level 1 or Level 2. The meets usually have an upper cut off time for entry, i.e. cannot enter if your time is faster than xxx, and a lower qualifying time. The upper cut off time ensures these meets remain developmental for up-and-coming young swimmers.

All the above level meets will adhere to the ASA swimming rules and regulations which mean swimmers can be disqualified for a false start and breaching the individual swimming stroke rules.. Many (if not all) swimmers experience being disqualified from their events when they start competing, this is dealt with in a supportive manner with the Head Coach explaining what the disqualification was for to help the swimmer learn for their next race. Live results will indicate a disqualification code.

Level 4

Meets are entry level events defined as one club entry e.g. club championships. There are usually no minimum entry standards. Times recorded can be suitable for entry into County Championships (as specified by the County concerned) and Level 3 Meets.

Licensed Meets

Open Meets are so called because entry is open to any swimmer, from any club who meets the qualifying times and age requirements. Licensed meets are usually held over a full day or two over the weekend. Large Level 1 and 2 meets may hold longer distance events (800m and 1500m) on the Friday evening.

All open meets charge a fee to clubs for entering swimmers. This can vary but is usually around the £6 per event mark for level 3 meets.

The host club charges a fee as hiring a pool for a weekend and hosting a meet is very costly.

See [below](#) regarding responsibility for payment of fees.

Heat Declared Winner (HDW)

The majority of galas are swum in this format (similar to our Club Championships) is when there are no finals to be held. Some galas have awards (usually in the form of a medal). Awards are decided after all the heats of the event have been swum. Most open meets age groups are mixed within the heats depending on entry times so results are split into age group before winners can be decided. It is not the winner of each heat who wins the award, rather the fastest 3 swimmers of each age group of each event.

Finals

Some open meets hold finals of each event. These are usually per age grouping. Competitors are decided after all heats of each event have been swum. The finalists are the swimmers posting the 6/8 (depending on the number of lanes in the pool) fastest times in each age grouping in each event. Those competing within the final are the swimmers who receive an award (usually fastest). If a swimmer does not make it to the final, they will not receive an award even if they won their heat.

British Swimming Rankings Database.

British Swimming operate a database which records all swimmers' times from licensed meets along with the details of the meet where the time was achieved.

The link below takes you to the Individual Ranking database where you can see swimmers' times. This is a great and easy way to keep track of swimmer's official times.

[Individual Best Times | Swim England \(swimmingresults.org\)](https://www.swimmingresults.org)

Internal Galas

These are galas which are restricted to members of our club. We usually hold the following:

Club Teams Championships:

A new format of club gala being developed by the Head Coach; as such, formats may change slightly after each gala.

These galas are more informal and a great way for younger swimmers to experience competing in a more relaxed environment reducing the anxiety some young swimmers may experience at larger galas. They are usually held within the week on days that all squads train and may not have an official present to judge the events against the ASA rules – this means there are no disqualifications. Swimmers are divided into teams, lead by the Club Captains. Captains are given autonomy (within certain parameters of course!) to select which swimmers compete in each event with points awarded to the teams. Points are awarded against a variety of criteria such as points for personal best times, extra points for girls beating boys and extra points for playing their “joker” in an event.

As the format and rules are more relaxed compared to other galas, you will see mixed races with girls competing against boys and younger swimmers may compete against older swimmers too. It is all down to the Club Captains and the tactics they employ to win the event.

The gala provides the Captains and older members of the team great insight into how galas are run as they are responsible for deciding the races each swimmer will be entered, making necessary amendments for last minute changes where people cannot attend and ensuring the relevant swimmers are ready for their race in time. Captains work on their Teams as soon as they have been allocated so it is important to let them know if a swimmer cannot attend as soon as possible to aid in planning.

The gala is also a great way for parents to get involved and provide support. We always require assistance with timekeeping, acting as race starter and runners to take times to the Head Coach who will have stowed himself away in the cupboard frantically logging times and keeping track of points. Volunteers do not need any previous experience as all roles will be explained thoroughly to you.

The winning team are presented with a trophy at the end of the night.

Annual Club Gala

The annual club gala is usually held in July at Guisborough Swimming Pool, followed by a celebration evening at another venue.

Club records are up for grabs and trophies are awarded to winning swimmers. The winners are required to have the trophy engraved and return it prior to the next gala.

Again this is another event where we require parents to get involved and support the club. A variety of roles need to be filled such as starter, timekeepers, judges, marshals and runners. If you do not feel confident helping with the swimming tasks, there are other tasks where you can help such as manning the door taking entry fees, selling raffle tickets and helping organise the food for the evening celebration.

County Championships –Northumberland & Durham

GASC swimmers meeting the qualifying times are eligible to compete in the N&D's Championships which are usually held over two weekends in February each year. The qualifying standard is set to ensure that the best swimmers in the County compete against each other. The swimmer's age will be taken as age on 31 December of that year. Achieving a 'County Time' is a major achievement for swimmers as they are competing against all the best swimmers in the Northumberland and Durham County. Upon achievement of a county time to qualify for the event, swimmers are presented with a white swimming cap.

Swimmers who meet the qualifying times will be informed by the Head Coach of which events they are eligible to enter. These events can be the first-time swimmers experience a long course (50m) meet. They are usually held at Sunderland Aquatic Centre which is a large 10 lane pool. Entry fees for these events are usually more than other events (approximately £9 per event).

Regional Championships

GASC swimmers meeting the qualifying times are eligible to compete in the Swim North East Regional (also referred to as NER's) galas which usually take place in May & November. Summer NERs are held in a Long Course pool and Winter NERs are Short Course and the qualifying times are quite tough to achieve. As at the County Championships, the age will be as of 31 December.

National Championships

These championships are the highest level of competition and are held in July and August at Ponds Forge, Sheffield. This is a licensed level 1 competition with extremely fast qualifying times which can only be gained at a Level 1 Meet during a fixed qualifying window each year.

PROCESS FOR ENTERING GALAS

The Head Coach determines the calendar of gala events we propose to attend based around the training schedule. We aim to publish the schedule as far in advance as possible. No Galas are compulsory – it is completely up to the parents and swimmers if they want to enter a competition, although as a club, we encourage you to do so.

Galas are created as events on Spond prior to the gala entry closing date and swimmers are invited to confirm their attendance. Once accepted on Spond, this implies you will be attending therefore an entry will be submitted on your behalf for review and approval by the gala organisers. It is important to note that by indicting you can attend on Spond, swimmers remain responsible for

entry fees should they withdraw. The meet conditions are included in the event created on Spond. It is swimmers/parents' responsibility to make themselves aware of these conditions. Refunds are usually not issued other than on medical grounds which must be supported by documentary evidence e.g. doctors note (see GASC Payment of external gala fees policy).

Once you have expressed your attendance, the Head Coach selects the events you will be entered into. Usually swimmers are entered for a maximum of two events per session. Entries are usually varied for members of Squad 3 to ensure swimmers are not pigeon holed into a specific stroke as preferences can change as swimmers develop. As swimmers progress through the Squads, and they start to become more specialised, the Head Coach will normally focus on specific strokes/distances events swimmers are entered in. Swimmers/parents are always welcome to discuss this with the Head Coach.

Following the gala, the club treasurer will publish a post on Spond indicating what fees are owed for each swimmer and requesting prompt payment.

What should I take to a gala?

The following lists the items that are useful for swimmers to take to galas:

- Costume/trunks – some swimmers invest in “racing costumes” and change into these following the warm up session. It is recommended that ALL swimmers have a suit they use only for racing, i.e. not for training or for warm-up at a gala.
- Cap and a spare
- Goggles and a spare pair
- Towels – a spare towel to dry off on poolside can be useful
- Club t-shirt – all swimmers are expected to wear a t-shirt whilst on poolside. New members of the club can borrow a spare one for galas if they have not had the opportunity to purchase one – see/message on Spond Kate Hutton to arrange.

Feedback Following Events

Immediately following swimmers' races at a gala, all swimmers must see the Head Coach to receive immediate feedback. This is essential for all swimmers so they know what to work on for future races and which may be able to be implemented within the same gala.

- Sliders/flip flops
- Snacks – Swim England provide useful [guidance](#) on appropriate snacks for galas. Certain food items are not appropriate for galas e.g. crisps, chocolate, lollies. Remember food is eaten poolside and can end up on the floor and potentially in the pool!! We are a NUT FREE club therefore please do not bring anything to training or galas which contain nuts.
- Drinks – galas can be long days so ensure you stay hydrated which will help with your performance. Water or juice are ideal.