

So you want to enter a gala?

If you have just joined the Borough of Southend Swimming Club it is likely you may well be new to the world of competitive swimming. After becoming a member it will soon be apparent you have joined a club dedicated to the sport and through its coaching team BOSS is committed to maximising the full potential of your child whatever level that may be. The club boasts a rich history for developing swimming talent that ranges from county, regional, national and even international level.

As a new member to the club, entering galas can seem a daunting task and full of jargon. We have therefore produced this guide to help you so that your child can get the most out of competing and hopefully become our “champion” of the future. While the guide is quite comprehensive, you will always find “seasoned campaigners” ready and willing to help you with any additional questions you may have.

The basics

The BOSS approach to galas is:

1. At regular intervals the BOSS Gala Secretary will distribute a Gala Calendar.

- a. The calendar contains the list of galas that the coaching team have chosen as being suitable for our club to enter.
- b. For each gala, a hyperlink to the hosting club website provides details of the gala including schedule of events, qualifying times and general conditions of entry.
- c. The calendar also contains the BOSS closing date for entries. This is an important date and is usually before the actual gala closing date to allow the BOSS Gala Secretary time to collate all the BOSS entries and formally enter the swimmers.

2. You need to choose which galas to enter.

This will depend on:

- the dates of galas and your personal situation
- any qualifying times for the gala
- recommendations from the BOSS Coaching Team

3. Complete the standard BOSS Gala Entry Form

This form contains information about the swimmer and a list of standard events. The BOSS Coaching Team may identify the appropriate events for your child to enter for each gala. Based on any recommendations from the BOSS Coaching Team and any qualifying times, select the events you wish the swimmer to enter. If in doubt of which events please seek guidance from the BOSS Coaching Team.

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Note: don't leave completing the form to the final BOSS closing date. This gives no time to have discussions with the BOSS Coaching Team. Complete the form early.

4. Hand in your completed BOSS Gala Entry Form

Completed forms should be handed to the Gala Secretary/Treasurer at the Club desk on a Monday evening together with the correct entry fees (calculated based on the number of events and cost of each event).

5. Confirmation of Entry

Once the club have collated all entries and submitted them to the Host Club who is organising the gala, there will normally be a confirmation of the events each swimmer has been accepted for.

Note: sometimes due to over-subscription to events at a gala, the organisers may reject some of the slowest swimmers in the event.

6. Attend the Gala and enjoy watching your child do their best

Why not wear a BOSS Supporters T-Shirt and encourage your child by shouting as loud as you can!

Your questions answered...

a. The Gala Calendar mentions different levels of galas – what does this mean?

In simple terms the different levels of gala indicate how good (fast) the swimmers will be. While there are official criteria produced by the ASA which describes the different levels, a very simple rule of thumb is:

Level 3: Club standard swimmers

Level 2: County and Regional standard swimmers

Level 1: National standard swimmers

Level 1 & 2 galas have qualifying times that exclude lower standard swimmers. Some level 3 galas may have qualifying times that exclude faster swimmers to make it fairer for the club standard swimmers.

While we tend to use the name Gala for all competitive events there are actually two types:

1. League Galas - a series of competitions involving the same clubs within a league, such as the "Diddy League", where the swimmers swim as a team.
2. Open Meets or Open Galas - are competitions that are usually organised by one club and held as a single event on one day or over a weekend. They aren't part of a League and the important difference is that a swimmer is swimming as an individual representing their club. They usually have medals awarded in each event for either top 3, top 6 or top 8 places.

b. What information is provided for each gala?

In most cases the information provided by the organising club is:

1. Gala information and conditions
Where the Gala is being held; General Rules & Conditions of the Gala; Description of age groups (e.g. for medals); Cost of entry to the events; Competition information (i.e. how the gala will be run on the day).
2. Schedule of events
Most Open galas are run over 2 days and split into sessions (with breaks for lunch/tea). The schedule details the running order of events and the start of the warm up sessions.

So you want to enter a gala? (Continued)

3. Qualifying times

These indicate who are eligible to swim in each event of the gala. They are used to ensure the correct standard of swimmers are taking part in the gala events and to limit the number of entries.

c. *What does Long and Short course mean?*

Essentially this refers to the length of the swimming pool. Long course is a 50m pool whereas Short course is a 25m pool.

d. *What do the qualifying times mean?*

“Qualifying times” are set by organisers for each event in order to control the number of entries in the gala. There will either be 1 or 2 “qualifying times” for each event.

A qualifying time is the time that a swimmer must achieve to enter the gala i.e. they need to be faster than the specified time – their personal best (PB) time must be smaller than the qualifying time.

An upper time is used to exclude swimmers who can swim faster than the specified time i.e. if their PB time is quicker (smaller) than the upper time then they aren’t eligible to swim in the event.

For two times, these will be a qualifying time and an upper time limit. So when two times are provided, the swimmers must have PB times between the two times in order to compete.

For 1 time it can either be a qualifying time or an upper time. This will be specified in the general conditions of the gala and specified on the qualifying times.

e. *Where can I find my child’s personal best (PB) times?*

Firstly, all swimmers should know their own PB times as they are used during training as well as for gala entry. A PB time is achieved by swimming faster than you have done before in a particular event. Swimmers, or their parents, are encouraged to keep a record of the PB times for each event by recording the times achieved at galas.

For all ASA licensed galas, the time swum for each event are maintained in an ASA central database. These can be viewed at the British Swimming web site:

<http://www.swimmingresults.org/>

On this web site there are options to look at rankings for events to see where your child is in relation to other swimmers.

To look at your child’s PB times go to:

<http://www.swimmingresults.org/individualbest/>

You will need to enter your child’s surname and select the appropriate swimmer from the list produced. This produces a list of all the registered fastest times your child has achieved in each event at Long and/or Short course, and when they achieved them. These can be printed or downloaded for your records.

f. *What happens when we arrive at the gala?*

The first thing you should do upon arriving at the swimming pool for a gala is to “sign in” (where appropriate), then seek out the BOSS Gala Team for further advice. Many galas operate a signing in process where swimmers indicate for each event whether they will be swimming or not. This is so the organisers can ensure the heats don’t have empty lanes for swimmers who don’t attend. Signing in will close a certain time prior to the start of the gala and it is important that swimmers sign in prior to this time – if you don’t organisers will not let them swim. Warm up sessions occur prior to the start of the actual competition and the warm up times are usually published in the gala information from the organisers.

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g. Can I watch the swimmers at the gala?

At most open and league galas, family and friends are able to watch the swimmers and we encourage you to cheer for all the swimmers in our club. Those wishing to watch should get there early to queue prior to the “doors opening” as some facilities have limited seating and many organisers have strict rules on seat saving. As a “rule of thumb” if you want to get the choice of your seat you will need to be there at least an hour before warm up starts. The swimming pools can become quite hot so make sure you dress appropriately.

h. Why is my child swimming against older and younger swimmers?

This is because your child is competing against other swimmers that have a similar personal best time to theirs regardless of age. This occurs when events are run as Heat Declared Winner (see below).

i. What does Heat Declared Winner (HDW) mean?

When an event is swum as “Heat Declared Winner” or “H.D.W”, this means that there are no finals and the winner of the event in the various age groups is determined by the swimmer’s time alone. Organisers of the event sort swimmers into heats (regardless of age) based on current personal best times with the slowest in the first heat and ensuring that the final heat has the fastest swimmers. If a swimmer has no current time in a particular event, that swimmer will usually swim in the early heats with others with no time (age will be taken into account). Once all the heats have been swum, the placings will be awarded according to the fastest swimmers of each age group overall, not the winner of any particular heat.

Sometimes heats will also be “spearheaded” where the swimmers are placed in lanes so that fastest swimmers are placed in the central lanes and slower swimmers in the outer lanes - hence the name “spearheaded”. For an 8 lane pool, the PB swimming times are placed in lanes in the following order (fastest first) - 4, 5, 3, 6, 2, 7, 1, 8.