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1. What are NQTs?

National Qualifying Times (NQTs) are time standards that a swimmer must meet in order to be permitted to swim more than three events at U.S. Masters Swimming national championship meets.

2. How are they determined?

Under section 104.5.3.C of the Rule Book, the Championship Committee with the approval of the House of Delegates shall determine the procedure for determining the qualification time.

Currently SCY times are calculated as follows: 10th place + 15% for sprints and 10th place + 10% for events 200 yards and up (with the average of the last 3 years). LCM times are calculated as follows: 5th place + 15% for all events. Note we use the USMS Top Ten times, not 5th and 10th place from Nationals, and we use a rolling three year average. For SCY, if there are no 10th place times in at least two of the previous three years, we use 5th + 20% for sprints and 5th + 15% for 200+ events. If there are no 5th place times in at least two of the previous three years, there is No Time for that event. There are No Times for all events in all age groups over 85.

Past computation methods do not necessarily reflect future computations. Moreover, upon request by a meet host or if the Championship Committee deems it necessary, the formula can be changed for any particular meet.

3. Where can I swim my times, e.g. does it have to be a USMS meet?

Can a USA-S meet, a non-sanctioned meet, or a time from my coach during workout count as achieving the NQT? It does not have to be swum at a U.S. Masters Swimming sanctioned meet. It can be swum at a USA-S meet, a YMCA meet, or during a time trial or in a workout with your coach.

4. Are NQTs used at every national meet?

National Qualifying Times have been used at every National Championships since they were instituted. Per Rule 104.5.3 C There shall be qualifying time for national championship meets unless otherwise determined by the Championship Committee.

5. What if I swim a time at altitude close to the NQT but slightly slower? Does that make a difference?

Yes!! Time achieved at an altitude of 3,000 or higher may be adjusted. The formula for altitude adjustment is in the rule book at 104.5.3(1).

6. What happens if I have made the NQT but swim slower than the NQT at nationals?

For U.S. Masters Swimming National Championships, you will get a time even if you swim slower than the NQT. For FINA World Championships, if you do not swim as fast or faster than the Qualifying times, you will not get a time. This is a major difference between World Championships and our National Championships.



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7. Why are NQTs used?

USMS has always been an organization focused on inclusion. Swimmers of all abilities, from beginners to Olympians, are welcome to join and participate in meets. Back in the early days of Masters Nationals, there were no qualifying times. Anyone could enter and swim at Nationals.

As USMS grew, so did the two annual national championship meets. 1987 saw the largest SCY Nationals ever, with 2328 swimmers attending. At this point, there were still no qualifying times.

The next few years saw good attendance at Nationals. But allowing anyone to enter meant that the meet days dragged on into the evening. There were events starting at 11:00pm.

The next year the House of Delegates instituted National Qualifying Times. The current system of qualifying times was the compromise. The system works as follows:

- ANYONE can enter Nationals, and enter up to three individual events, without meeting any qualifying times.
- Swimmers who want to enter more than three individual events must meet qualifying times for those additional events.

The rationale behind these two rules is that we can still allow anyone to enter the meet, but by limiting the number of events swum by the slower swimmers, we can control the length of the meet days.

This system only works as long as everyone is honest. Beyond the first three events, swimmers are on the honor system when they enter the meet. USMS is relying on swimmers to be confident that they can actually achieve the qualifying times.

The first National Championships that used the NQTs was 1993 USMS Short Course Nationals that were held at Santa Clara, California.

8. What if I don't have a time in the course for nationals, e.g. I swam a short course yards time but do not have a meters time?

You can convert your time from one course to another, however, you have to do the conversion yourself. One conversion table can be found at www.swiminfo.com (Tools Tech Tips), however, you may use any converter you wish.



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9. My LMSC does not always send in the meet results to the USMS national database. Is this a problem?

The rule is that you have swum the event at the national qualifying time or faster at some time in the past two years. You do not have to swim the event in a reported meet to the USMS national database. You could have swum the meet at a USA Swimming meet, a YMCA meet, a practice meet or in practice, but you should have swum the event.

10. If I achieve a time in one age group, can I use that time in the next age group when I age up?

The NQT is that you have swum the event at the qualifying time within the last two years. There is no requirement on age group (although the older the age group, usually the slower the NQT).

11. I have no NQTs and would like to swim more than three events. I am really close to one or two NQTs - can I still swim those extra events?

NO! This is the honor system. If you did not swim the NQT or faster, then you did not make the NQT.