

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.

For 2021, times from the past three years will be accepted for USMS Short Course and Long Course Nationals.

2. How are they determined?

Under article 104.5.3.C of the rule book, the Championship Committee with the approval of the House of Delegates determines the procedure for determining the qualification time.

Currently, short course yards NQTs are calculated as follows: 10th place + 15 percent for sprints and 10th place + 10 percent for events 200 yards and longer (with the average of the last three years). Long course meters NQTs are calculated as follows: fifth place + 15 percent for all events. Note: We use the USMS Top 10 times, not fifth and 10th place from Nationals, and we use a rolling three-year average. For SCY NQTs, if there are no 10th place times in at least two of the previous three years, we use fifth place + 20 percent for sprints and fifth place + 15 percent for events 200 yards and longer. If there are no fifth place times in at least two of the previous three years, there is no time standard for that event. There are no time standards for all events in 85-89 and older age groups.

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.

For 2021 USMS Short Course and Long Course Nationals, times from 2017-19 are being used to calculate NQTs since very few meets were held in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Can a USA-S meet, a nonsanctioned meet or a time from my coach during workout count as achieving the NQT?

It does not have to be swum at a USMS 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 championship since they were instituted. Per article 104.5.3 C, "There shall be qualifying times 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! Times achieved at an altitude of 3,000 feet or higher may be adjusted. The formula for altitude adjustment is in the rule book at article 104.5.3(1).

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

For USMS national championships, your time will be recorded even if you swim slower than the NQT. For FINA Masters world championships, if you do not swim as fast or faster than

the qualifying times, your time will not be recorded. This is a major difference between world championships and our national championships.

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. In 1987, 2,328 swimmers attended Spring Nationals (nearly double the previous record attendance from 1986). 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 hours of the meets dragged on into the evening. There were events starting at 11:00 p.m. As a result, 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 provisions 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 championship that used the NQTs was the 1993 USMS Spring Nationals that were held at Santa Clara, Calif.

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. You may use any converter you wish such as tools from [Swimming World](#) and [SwimSwam](#).

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

The rule in 'normal' years 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 meet reported to the USMS national database. You could have achieved the time at a USA-S meet, a YMCA meet, a practice meet or in practice, but you should have swum the event.

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

There is no requirement as to 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.

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