

Swimming

Olympic swimming is one of the most enduring and popular Olympic sports and has the most events (34) on the Olympics programme.

Pool events are held in freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly or a medley of all four over distances that range from 50m to 1500m. There are also relay events featuring teams of four swimmers, and one open water event – the men's and women's 10km marathon.

Qualifying – the road to Rio

Qualification for the New Zealand **pool swimmers** is dependent on the performances at two Olympic qualification events – the New Zealand Olympic Trials in March 2016 and the Canadian Olympic Trials in April 2016. New Zealand athletes will need to record times equal to or better than the FINA A Qualifying Times to qualify for spots at Rio.

For **relays**, the first 12 teams at each relay event at the 2015 FINA World Championships in Russia automatically qualified, with the remaining four places assigned based on the fastest times in the world rankings between March 2015 and May 2016.

New Zealand **open water swimmers** must prove they can finish in the top 16 in the world at target meets of the 2015 World Championship and the final Olympic qualifier in 2016.

“Swimming New Zealand will be looking to experienced campaigners and young up-and-coming swimmers to make continued progress on the world stage in Rio.

Clearly with Lauren Boyle, New Zealand has its highest world-ranked swimmer since Danyon Loader, while at the other end of the spectrum are several young swimmers who will be looking to qualify for Rio as they progress to their major goals in Tokyo 2020.

As a true world sport, swimming is arguably one of the most competitive globally and therefore a performance into semi-finals and finals will be worthy of celebration.

Swimmers will need to overcome a considerable challenge with afternoon sessions for heats and finals that will stretch past midnight to fit with television audiences in North America.” – Christian Renford, CEO Swimming New Zealand

Competition at Rio

When: The Rio Olympics swimming competition will take place from Saturday 6 August to Saturday 13 August, with the marathon swimming events taking place over 15/16 August.

Where: Olympic Aquatics Stadium, Barra Olympic Park (Pool)

Fort Copacabana, (Open Water)

A total of 900 athletes will compete in 32 events in the pool, covering the four different strokes – freestyle, butterfly, breaststroke and backstroke – the medley and relays.

Men's Events (16)	Women's Events (16)
50m Freestyle	50m Freestyle
100m Freestyle	100m Freestyle
200m Freestyle	200m Freestyle
400m Freestyle	400m Freestyle
1500m Freestyle	800m Freestyle
100m Backstroke	100m Backstroke
200m Backstroke	200m Backstroke
100m Breaststroke	100m Breaststroke
200m Breaststroke	200m Breaststroke
100m Butterfly	100m Butterfly
200m Butterfly	200m Butterfly
200m Individual Medley	200m Individual Medley
400m Individual Medley	400m Individual Medley
4x100m Freestyle Relay	4x100m Freestyle Relay
4x200m Freestyle Relay	4x200m Freestyle Relay
4x100m Medley Relay	4x100m Medley Relay

In the pool at Rio, swimmers compete in heats of up to eight swimmers. In 50m (freestyle only), 100m and 200m events, the fastest 16 swimmers progress to two semi-finals, then the winner of each semi-final and the next six fastest swimmers join them in the final. The middle lanes in the semis and finals are assigned to the fastest qualifiers.

In events over longer distances, or in relay events, the eight fastest finishers in the heats move straight to the finals.

The open water events are a straight final.



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Olympic Medals

3 gold, 1 silver, 3 bronze

GOLD

1912 Stockholm	Malcolm Champion	4x200m Freestyle Relay – Men
1996 Atlanta	Danyon Loader	200m Freestyle – Men
1996 Atlanta	Danyon Loader	400m Freestyle – Men

SILVER

1992 Barcelona	Danyon Loader	200m Butterfly – Men
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BRONZE

1952 Helsinki	Jean Hurring	100m Backstroke – Women
1988 Seoul	Paul Kingsman	200m Backstroke – Men
1988 Seoul	Anthony Mosse	200m Butterfly – Men

The Stars of Swimming

Still a teenager, Katie Ledecky from the USA is the most dominant woman in distance swimming. She already holds three individual world records – in the 400m, 800m and 1500m freestyle – and won gold as a 15-year-old over 800m in London. While there is no 1500m event for women at the Olympics, Ledecky could still be chasing multiple gold medals in Rio, with the 200m freestyle and 4x200m freestyle relay both likely targets and the 4x100m relay a possibility.

New Zealand's Lauren Boyle is set to provide Ledecky with some of her toughest competition. Boyle came second to Ledecky at the 2015 FINA World Championships in both the 800m and 1500m freestyle events.

At the other end of the spectrum, Australian veteran Grant Hackett – winner of the 1500m freestyle in Sydney and Athens – has made a return to the sport after a 6 year absence and would be age 36 if he makes the grade for Rio.

Swimming terminology

'A' standard/OQT

Also known as the Olympic Qualifying Time, the FINA A standard is the time of the 16th fastest time in London 2012, and automatically qualifies a swimmer for Rio 2016 if achieved in the qualification period (up to a maximum of two competitors per event per country).



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'B' standard/OST

Also known as the Olympic Selection Time, the FINA B standard is the equivalent 'A' standard time plus 3.5 percent.

Backstroke

One of the four major styles or 'strokes' in international swimming. Swimmers are on their back, using their arms alternately pulling themselves through the water, while the legs also kick up and down alternately.

Breaststroke

One of the four major styles or 'strokes' in international swimming, breaststroke is the slowest of the four. Swimmers sweep their arms out from in front of them and then back while using a 'frog kick' with their legs.

Butterfly

One of the four major styles or 'strokes' in international swimming and regarded as the most difficult. Butterfly, or 'fly', events feature swimmers moving both arms forward at the same time in a circular motion that comes over the shoulder while the legs kick together as one.

FINA

Fédération Internationale de Natation, or the International Swimming Federation, administers the sport of swimming (and also diving, water polo and synchronised swimming) across the world.

Freestyle

One of the four major styles or 'strokes' in international swimming. While in technical terms swimmers in freestyle events are free to choose what stroke they employ, the front crawl is universally used, making the terms freestyle and front crawl synonymous. Swimmers are face down, propelling themselves with alternate arm strokes through the water while their legs kick up and down alternately.

Medley

Combines the four different swimming styles into one race. It is swum by one competitor in the individual medley or by four swimmers in the medley relay. Each discipline accounts for a quarter of the total distance in an individual medley, eg, the 200m individual medley comprises 50m of each stroke. The order is butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle.

Open water

Open water refers to an outside body of water (eg, ocean, lake or river). In the Olympics, the marathon is a 10km swim held in the ocean meaning swimmers must deal with factors like wind, surface currents and tides. The 10km marathon swim is usually swum in laps of 2.5km.

Relay

Teams of four swimmers from each nation take turns swimming a 'leg' of a race. A relay may be in the same discipline, eg, 4x100m freestyle, or a combination of the four disciplines, eg, 4x100m medley. In each race, subsequent swimmers may not start until the previous team-mate has completed their part.

Universality place

FINA reserves places for nations that do not have any swimmers who have met the two qualifying standards in any event. FINA may allocate one male and/or one female place.



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Timeline

- 1896** Swimming was included in the first modern Olympic Games and has featured in all editions of the Games since. The very first Olympic events were freestyle, and were only open to men.
- 1900** Backstroke was introduced to the Olympic Games in Paris.
- 1912** Women's swimming was introduced at the Stockholm Games. Since then, it has been part of every edition of the Games.
- 1920** Swimmer Violet Walrond, at age 15, became New Zealand's first female Olympian at the Antwerp Games.
- 1956** Butterfly was introduced to the Olympic Games in Melbourne.
- 1952** Jean Hurring (nee Stewart) won bronze in 100m backstroke at the Helsinki Games.
- 1988** Paul Kingsman (200 backstroke) and Anthony Mosse (200m butterfly) both won bronze at the Seoul Olympics.
- 1996** Danyon Loader became the first New Zealand swimmer to win double gold medals, and at one Olympic Games, with his 200m and 400m freestyle wins at the Atlanta Games.
- 2015** Lauren Boyle surpassed Danyon Loader as the New Zealand swimmer with the most world championship medals. Her two silver medals (800m and 1500m freestyle) at the 2015 FINA World Championships added to her three bronze medals won at the 2013 FINA World Championships.