LAYMANS GUIDE TO CLASSIFICATIONS USED BY USA SWIMMING AND THE INTERNATIONAL PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE

Swimming is the only sport that combines the conditions of limb loss, cerebral palsy (coordination and movement restrictions), spinal cord injury (weakness or paralysis involving any combination of the limbs) and other disabilities (such as Dwarfism (little people); major joint restriction conditions) across classes.

Classes 1-10 -are allocated to swimmers with a physical disability.
Classes 11-13 -are allocated to swimmers with a visual disability.
Class 14 -is allocated to swimmers with an intellectual disability.

The Prefix S to the Class denotes the class for Freestyle, Backstroke and Butterfly.
The Prefix SB to the class denotes the class for Breaststroke.
The Prefix SM to the class denotes the class for Individual Medley.

The range is from the swimmers with severe disability (S1, SB1, SM1) to those with the minimal disability (S10, SB9, SM10). In any one class some swimmers may start with a dive or in the water depending on their condition. This is factored in when classifying the athlete. The examples are only guide -some conditions not mentioned may also fit the following classes.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM
PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

S1 SB1 SM1
Swimmers in this class would usually be wheelchair bound and may be dependent on others for their every day needs.
Examples: Swimmers with very severe coordination problems in four limbs or have no use of their legs, trunk, hands and minimal use of their shoulders only.
Usually only swim on their back.

S2 SB1 SM2
Examples: Swimmer able to use their arms with no use of their hands, legs or trunk or have severe coordination problems in 4 limbs.

S3 SB2 SM3
Examples: Swimmers with reasonable arm strokes but no use of their legs or trunk; swimmers with severe coordination problems in all limbs and swimmers with severe limb loss to four limbs.

S4 SB3 SM4
Examples: Swimmers who use their arms and have minimal weakness in their hands but have no use of their trunk or legs; swimmers with coordination problems affecting all limbs but predominantly in the legs; swimmers with limb loss to 3 limbs.

S5 SB4 SM5
Examples: Swimmers with full use of their arms and hands but no trunk or leg muscles; swimmers with coordination problems;

S6 SB5 SM6
Examples: Swimmers with full use of their arms and hands with some trunk control but no useful leg muscles; swimmers with coordination problems (usually these athletes walk); swimmers with major limb loss of 2 limbs; Dwarfs (130cm for women and 137cm for men)

S7 SB6 SM7
Examples: Swimmers with full use of their arms and trunk with some leg function; coordination or weakness problems on the same side of the body; major limb loss of 2 limbs.

S8 SB7 SM8
Examples: Swimmers with full use of their arms and trunk with some leg function; limb loss of 2 limbs; swimmers with the use of one arm only

S9 SB8 SM9
Unless there is an underlying medical condition usually all of these athletes will start out of the water.
Examples: Swimmers with severe weakness in one leg only; swimmers with very slight coordination problems; swimmers with one limb loss

S10 SB9 SM10
Examples: Swimmers with very minimal weakness affecting the legs; swimmers with restriction of hip joint movement; swimmers with both feet deformed; swimmers with minor limb loss of part of a limb.

VISUALLY IMPAIRED

S11 SB11 SM11
These swimmers are unable to see at all and are considered totally blind. They must wear blackened goggles if they swim in this class. They will also require someone to tap them when they are approaching a wall.

S12 SB12 SM12
These swimmers can recognize the shape of a hand and have some ability to see. There is a large range of vision ability within this class.

S13 SB13 SM13
Swimmers who are the most sighted but are legally considered to be blind.

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

S14 SB14 SM14
Swimmers who have a recognized intellectual impairment according to international standards as recognized by the World Health Organization i.e. IQ testing of 75 and below.