Paralympic Swimming

When athletes come together from around the world to compete in the Olympic and Paralympic Games, they are fulfilling their dreams and competing at the highest level. Billions of people across the globe join in: watching, listening to and reading about the greatest global celebration of sport. To celebrate the London 2012 Games, the British Council is making a wide range of classroom resources available for learners of English worldwide.

The sport of swimming dates from Ancient Egyptian and Ancient Greek times. It has featured at every modern Olympic Games. Paralympic Swimming has the second largest number of athletes and events at the Games and is one of the most popular Paralympic sports. Do you know how to swim? If so, have you ever been in a race?
1. Vocabulary

a. Write the correct words in the spaces provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. lane</th>
<th>b. standing starting position</th>
<th>c. blindfold or blackened goggles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d. water start</td>
<td>e. amputee</td>
<td>f. swimming costume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. swimming pool</td>
<td>h. prosthetics</td>
<td>i. tapper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Diagram with numbered boxes for matching exercises]
### 2. The rules of Swimming

#### What is it?
The sport of swimming dates from Ancient Egyptian and Ancient Greek times and has featured at every Paralympic Games. The rules are the same as those for Olympic swimming, but are adapted for athletes with a disability.

#### Who can participate in swimming at the Paralympics?
Swimming is open to all disability groups.

#### Classifications
Classification numbers are assigned according to two factors: the type of disability and how an athlete’s disability affects his/her ability to perform in each event. Lower numbers within a category indicate a more substantial disability.

- **S1 to S10:** athletes with a physical disability (i.e. S2 has a larger disability than S7)
- **S11 to S13:** athletes with visual impairment
- **S14:** athletes with intellectual disabilities

Because different swim strokes require strength in different muscle groups, an athlete’s disability may have little impact on one event and a significant impact on another. For example, breaststroke requires relies more on the legs for moving forward than any other swimming stroke. Therefore an athlete with a lower limb disability may have a different classification for breaststroke than for freestyle. This change in difficulty level is also important when athletes compete in the individual medley.

#### How is it played?
- All races take place in a 50 metre pool and the winner is the person to complete the race in the quickest time.
- There are 4 strokes used in Paralympic competition: freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly.
- All four strokes are included in the medley relay and 200 metre individual medley events.
- Athletes may start races in different ways: from a standing start; using a dive start from a sitting position; and from in the water.
- All swimmers with visual impairments must wear blackened goggles so that no athlete has an advantage. Goggles are checked by officials at the end of the race.
- In events for visually impaired swimmers there are "tappers" who use signals to inform athletes that they should turn or finish the race.
a. Match the words in the table with their definitions below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. backstroke</th>
<th>b. blackened goggles</th>
<th>c. breastroke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d. butterfly</td>
<td>e. dive</td>
<td>f. freestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. medley</td>
<td>h. relay</td>
<td>i. standing start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. tapper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. A person who stands at the end of the pool and signals to inform visually impaired swimmers that they should turn or finish the race.

2. A race between two or more teams in which each person in the team swims part of the race.

3. A type of glasses or eye covering which make it impossible to see, and mean that nobody has an advantage.

4. A way of starting a race, in which a swimmer dives into the water from a standing position.

5. A way of swimming in which you lie on your back.

6. A way of swimming in which you raise both your arms together out of the water and then bring them down in front of you.

7. A way of swimming in which you raise one arm after the other out of the water and then bring them down in front of you.

8. A way of swimming in which your arms always stay under the water.

9. An event in which a swimmer or team swims different strokes during different parts of the race.

10. To jump into the water head first.
3. Reading

Jessica Long

Heard of Jessica Long? Here is a clue: she belongs to an exclusive club which includes famous athletes such as swimmers Mark Spitz and Michael Phelps, runners Carl Lewis and Michael Johnson, and diver Greg Louganis. Give up? They all won the James E. Sullivan Award.

The James E. Sullivan Award is a prize which has been awarded each year since 1930 to the outstanding amateur athlete in the United States. In America it is known as the "Oscar" of sports awards, and it "goes far beyond athletic accomplishments and honors those who have shown strong moral character". In 2007, Jessica Long became the first Paralympic athlete to win the award.

Jessica Long was born in Siberia and when she was 13 months old she was adopted by American parents. Some months later her legs had to be amputated because she suffered from a condition called fibular hemimelia. She learned to walk using prostheses or artificial legs.

Jessica began competitive swimming when she was 10 years old, and two years later, she was the youngest athlete in the US team at the 2004 Paralympic Games. Not only that - she won three gold medals!

In 2006 she broke 18 world records and won nine gold medals in nine events at the World Swimming Championships. These achievements led to her winning the World Disabled Swimmer of the Year award.

And the Beijing 2008 Games? That’s right - six medals, including four gold, and setting three new world records.

Since then she has continued ‘collecting’ medals at every major Championships she competes at. In 2011 she was awarded the World Disabled Swimmer of the Year award for the second time.

The James E. Sullivan Award has never been won twice by the same athlete, but don’t be surprised if that changes in the near future!
a. Put the events in chronological order.

1. She was adopted by American parents.
2. Her legs were amputated.
3. She broke 18 world records and won the World Disabled Swimmer of the Year award.
4. She was awarded the World Disabled Swimmer of the Year award for the second time.
5. She was the youngest athlete in the American team at the Paralympics.
6. She won six medals and set three new world records at the Paralympics.
7. She won the James E. Sullivan Award.
8. The James E. Sullivan Award was first given.

b. Use the words in the table to complete the gaps in the sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. as</th>
<th>b. at</th>
<th>c. by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d. from</td>
<td>e. to</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. The prize is given (******) the outstanding amateur athlete in the United States.
2. In America it is known (******) the "Oscar" of sports awards.
3. Since 1930 it has been presented (******) many famous athletes.
4. When she was 13 months old she was adopted (******) American parents.
5. She suffered (******) fibular hemimelia.
6. These achievements led (******) her winning the World Disabled Swimmer of the Year award.
7. She has competed (******) every major Championship.
4. Solution

Exercise 1a
1. d; 2. f; 3. b; 4. c; 5. i; 6. a; 7. e; 8. g; 9. h

Exercise 2a
1. j; 2. h; 3. b; 4. i; 5. a; 6. d; 7. f; 8. c; 9. g; 10. e

Exercise 3a
8; 1; 2; 5; 3; 7; 6; 4

Exercise 3b
1. e; 2. a; 3. e; 4. c; 5. d; 6. e; 7. b