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New Zealand Olympic Ambassador

# Melissa Ingram

**Olympian number:**  
1049

**Discipline:**  
Swimming

**Specialist event:**  
200m Backstroke

Melissa Ingram was born in Henderson in 1985. She got into swimming early, and joined the North Shore Swimming Club in 1999, when she was just 14. North Shore Swimming Club has produced many international swimmers, Olympians and world champions since it started in 1897.

The club provided great support for Melissa, helping her become a top swimmer. She qualified for her first senior team at just 16. It was a momentous age for Melissa – she was still only 16 when she competed at her first international competition, the Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games. Melissa was nervous before her first race (the 200m freestyle heat). She was shaking so much on the starting blocks that she felt like she was going to fall in! Melissa competed in four events: the 200m freestyle, and the 50m, 100m and 200m backstroke. Her best result was in the 200m backstroke, where she made it to the finals.

After the Commonwealth Games, Melissa decided that she wanted to compete at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. She trained harder than ever before, so she

## Quick facts

**Favourite food:** Sushi

**Favourite movie:** *Alex*

**Favourite music:** Everything except country and hard rock

**Childhood hero:** My family

**Current favourite athlete:** Natalie Coughlin

**Most rewarding moment in sport:** Breaking my own New Zealand record in the 200m backstroke heats at the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008

**Talents other than sport:** Writing

**Biggest injury:** I was lucky and smart enough about prevention to not get one during my swimming career.

**Biggest sacrifice:** Having wet hair all the time!

**Job outside sport:** Communications & Marketing Officer for Swimming New Zealand

**Other fun facts:** I love running half marathons and want to do an Ironman one day



**New Zealand  
Olympic Education**

was disappointed to miss out on selection. She even thought about switching to rowing! But the year was still a success for her – she competed at the world short-course championships in 2004, and returned home with a Bronze Medal.

Melissa continued to race well back in New Zealand, and she qualified for the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games. She had a busy schedule in Melbourne, competing in the 50m, 100m, and 200m backstroke; the 200m and 400m freestyle; and the 4x200m freestyle relay. The relay team of Lauren Boyle, Helen Norfolk, Alison Fitch and Melissa won Bronze in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay, beating Canada by two hundredths of a second.

When she was 22, Melissa experienced one of the highlights of her career. At the National Championships, she became the first New Zealand woman to complete a 200m backstroke race faster than two minutes and ten seconds, finishing with a time of 2:09.61. This record-breaking time qualified her for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. In Beijing, Melissa came eleventh in the 200m backstroke, beating her own New Zealand record with a time of 2:09.34.

Melissa continued to make her mark on the international swimming scene. In 2010, she competed at the Delhi 2010 Commonwealth Games, her third Commonwealth campaign. Melissa finished seventh in both the 100m and 200m backstroke. She broke a Commonwealth record in her 200m heat, finishing in 2:09.43.

After Delhi, Melissa spent 2011 training and competing offshore. She received specialist coaching in Brisbane from Michael Bohl, who coaches triple Olympic Gold Medallist Stephanie Rice and Commonwealth Games backstroke Gold Medallist Meagen Nay. Training against Meagen gave Melissa confidence and she got “really fit, really fast”. That same year, she raced in the Asian legs of the World Cup 25m short-course circuit, winning Gold at Tokyo and Beijing in the 200m backstroke, Bronze in Singapore in the same event, and Silver in the 400m freestyle at Tokyo (she also broke another New Zealand record in this race).

Melissa was well prepared for her second Olympic Games in 2012. In London, she competed in the 100m

## Honours

**2008** Supreme Award For Excellence, North Harbour AIMS Awards

## Career highlights

**2012** London Olympic Games: 4 x 200m freestyle relay (Eleventh)

**2010** Delhi Commonwealth Games: 200m backstroke (Seventh). Broke the Commonwealth Record.

**2008** FINA World Cup Circuit (9 x Gold)

**2008** Beijing Olympic Games: 200m backstroke (Eleventh)

**2006** Melbourne Commonwealth Games: 4 x 200m freestyle relay (Bronze)

**2005** Montreal World Championships: 4 x 200m freestyle relay (Finalist)

**2004** Indiana World Short-Course Championships: 200m backstroke (Bronze)



and 200m backstroke and was part of the team that came fifth in the second heat of the 4 x 200m freestyle relay.

Throughout her ten-year swimming career, Melissa would often train for 30 hours a week. With two Olympic Games, three Commonwealth Games, three World Championships, three World Short Course Championships and three Pan Pacific Championships under her belt, Melissa is one of New Zealand's top-performing swimmers.

Melissa's passion outside the pool is communications and public relations. The double Olympian managed to balance her competitive swimming career with her studies and graduate from the University of Auckland in 2012 with a Bachelor of Arts. In March 2013, at age 27, Melissa felt that she had put everything she could into her swimming career and was ready to retire. She is now the communications & marketing officer for Swimming New Zealand. She lives on Auckland's North Shore and one of her favourite things to do on a Sunday afternoon is buy a coffee from her local café and walk along the waterfront. In 2013, Melissa was named as a New Zealand Olympic Ambassador for the New Zealand Olympic Committee.

## Links

Melissa Ingram's Olympic Museum profile:  
<http://imuseum.olympic.org.nz/museum/athlete/profile/2015>

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## Official Olympic Sport

# Swimming

**Men's swimming has featured at every modern Olympic Games since they started in 1896. Women have competed in swimming since 1912. In 1896, there were only four medal events in swimming. At London 2012, the number of events had increased to thirty-four.**

## The pool

At the 1896, 1900 and 1904 Olympic Games, the swimming events were held in open water. But in 1908, they moved to a pool. At the 2012 Olympic Games, all swimming events took place in the pool, except the two open-water marathon races.

An Olympic pool is 50 metres long, 25 metres wide, and at least 2 metres deep. There are ten lanes, but only the eight in the centre are used for competitions.

## The basics

There are four strokes used in Olympic swimming:

- Freestyle (can be any stroke, but the most common is the front crawl)
- Backstroke
- Breaststroke
- Butterfly

In a *freestyle relay*, a team of four competitors take turns to swim freestyle over equal distances of either 100 metres or 200 metres.

In an *individual medley*, one competitor swims equal distances of all four strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle.

In a *medley relay*, a team of four competitors take turns to each swim one of the four strokes in the following order: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle.

In a swimming race, the first swimmer to touch the wall at the end of the race wins.

Most events start with heats, and the top swimmers from the heats progress to the finals.



# Olympic events

## Men

- 50m freestyle
- 100m freestyle
- 200m freestyle
- 400m freestyle
- 1500m freestyle
- 100m backstroke
- 200m backstroke
- 100m breaststroke
- 200m breaststroke
- 100m butterfly
- 200m butterfly
- 200m individual medley
- 400m individual medley
- 4x100m freestyle relay
- 4x200m freestyle relay
- 4x100m medley relay
- 10km marathon

## Women

- 50m freestyle
- 100m freestyle
- 200m freestyle
- 400m freestyle
- 800m freestyle
- 100m backstroke
- 200m backstroke
- 100m breaststroke
- 200m breaststroke
- 100m butterfly
- 200m butterfly
- 200m individual medley
- 400m individual medley
- 4x100m freestyle relay
- 4x200m freestyle relay
- 4x100m medley relay
- 10km marathon

## Important points

There are lots of things for swimmers to be aware of in their races. Some important ones are:

- a good start (a false start results in disqualification)
- fast turns
- correctly touching the wall at the end of each length
- changeovers in relay events
- sprinting to the finish.

