



Midnight sun swim team Swim meet 101

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Before the meet

Meets and competition is an important part of competitive swimming. It is important that swimmers take advantage of the opportunities to compete to measure their improvement and be recognized for their success. Swimmers from a young age should be competing as frequently as possible, and become more specific in the meets they would travel to as they age and become Senior swimmers.

There are meets for every level swimmer on the team, and opportunities for each one of these swimmers to succeed

Age Groups

There are seven different age group classifications recognized by USA Swimming Inc.: 8-Under, 10-Under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18, and Senior. The senior classification includes any age registered swimmer who has achieved the qualifying time for the event. Not all age group classifications are offered at every swim meet. The swimmers age on the first day of a meet will govern the swimmers age for the entire meet.

Meet Descriptions

USA Meets are broken down into different categories and tiers to best suit each swimmer's ability. All meets that MSST competes at are sanctioned by USA Swimming, meaning that each meet is held to the exact same rules and standards as any other meet sanctioned by USA Swimming nationally. Sanctioned meets allow swimmers to achieve and earn official times that can qualify for any level USA Swimming meet. From the beginning age group swimmer to the elite senior athlete, there are different level meets to set goals to qualify for and compete at, as well as meets to compete in to achieve those goals. The structural breakdowns of common meets throughout the seasons are as follows:

Time Trials – As an opportunity to offer competitive opportunities for our swimmers to better themselves and qualify for higher level meets, we offer Time Trials throughout the season. These meets are held at our own pool and are for our own team. Events are set up and swimmers compete against each other. These events are free and require parents volunteers to help run. All swimmers regardless of group should be in attendance for these meets.

Open Qualifier – These are one of the most common meet types through the seasons. Open qualifier meets are those that do not require swimmers to be faster than a certain time or slower than a certain time. Any ability athlete may enter these meets.

Slower Than Meet – These meets are primarily for newer swimmers to the team or the sport itself. Although no meets of this type are held in Alaska, they are a common meet in the Lower 48. Swimmers with a time slower than the listed time standard in the meet information may enter these meets. Athletes who have not swam an event, and thus do not have a time yet, may enter these meets. Athletes are not penalized for swimming faster than the time standard in the meet. These meets are great for all swimmers just starting out.

Faster Than Meet – Swimmers need to qualify for these meets with previous swims where they swam faster than the cut off time. Qualifying times are usually in line with the National Age Group Motivational Time Standards (NAG16). Meets may require 'B' times or 'A' times to have been previously achieved in order to enter these meets. Cut off times are specified in the individual meet info as well as the meet schedule.

Preliminary/ Final Meet – Many faster than meets are swum as preliminary/ finals. This means that there are multiple sessions in the same day for the same age group. In prelims, all athletes entered in each event compete in various heats in order to qualify to swim at finals. Finals are what every swimmer works to compete at, an opportunity to race all of your competition at once without other heats. Finals are typically held in the evening and consist of the top swims from preliminaries. All finals include a Championship (A) final consisting of the top 8-10 swimmers from preliminaries depending on the number of lanes in the venue. Some events offer a Consolation (B) final of the next 8-10 fastest swims, few meets offer a bonus (C) final and even a D final. Only athletes competing in finals score team points and are eligible for awards. Swimmers can only place in their own final; meaning if a swimmer in the B final swims faster than someone in the A they would not place higher than first place in the B final.

Championship Meets – These meets are typically faster than meets held as preliminary/finals. These are the focus meet of most athletes on the team each season with coaches planning their season work to prepare the athletes to swim their best here. Senior athletes and some age group swimmers have their best shot of qualifying for the Sectional meet and higher at these meets.

Championship meets are always held at the end of the season and are the climax of the season. All athletes that qualify for these meets are expected to attend each day offered.

Zones – This is the highest meet that age group swimmers can qualify for. Qualification to the Zone Championships requires swimmers to achieve 'AAA' time standards in their age group. Athletes in Age Group Performance and Senior group will typically have goals of swimming at this meet. Swimmers who qualify here travel with the rest of the athletes from the district to compete together as the Alaska All Star team. Each district fills their roster with all their qualifiers and then competes against the other districts. This is a very fun and prestigious meet for age group swimmers. Senior Zones has similar qualifying standards, but is open to all age athletes 19 years and younger.

Additional information on more meet levels and qualifying times for these meets can be found on the MSST website.

To sign up for a meet

1. Navigate to the team unify page or your OnDeck app. Click on the "Events" tab
2. Find the event you would like to attend and click on "Edit Commitment," which appears immediately below the event title.
3. Click on your swimmer. (It will show under the column titled "Member Commitment" as Undeclared)
4. In the "Declaration" box, click on: "Yes, please sign [swimmer name] up for this event." You can also put a note for the coaches if you cannot attend one of the days, for instance, or if you need to leave early with your swimmer.
5. Please note that when meets have "qualifying times," if your swimmers times don't meet the criteria, their times will be shown in red, indicating a no qualifying time. On the right side of each event will be listed the time needed to participate.
6. Please read the meet information. It lists how many events per day a swimmer can participate in. The host is not required to refund monies if there is an error. It is a parent's responsibility to verify entrance into the meet has been done correctly.
7. Some larger out-of-state meets require quick and early entry deadlines to sign swimmers up before a meet fills. Swimmers aged 12 and Under make up the largest portion of swimmers nationally and many times teams are closed out by sessions that are estimated to run longer than four hours.

Entry Fees and Surcharges

Each event/race a swimmer enters at a swim meet carries an entry fee, also known as meet fee or splash fee. Swim meets sanctioned by Alaska Swimming, Inc., in accordance with the governing rules of USA Swimming, Inc., may determine the amount that may be charged for each event. This fee can range from \$2 to \$20 per

race. In addition to the meet fee for each individual event, the hosting team may require a surcharge or facility fee for each swimmer participating in the meet. Meet entry fees and surcharges are due to the hosting team prior to the start of the swim meet. These fees will be added to your account in the next billing cycle.

Preparing: Day of meet

1. Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information- usually sent out by email blast.

2. Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's gear on deck. The team usually sits in one place together, so look for some familiar faces.

3. You will need to purchase a meet program (Heatsheet) or find the events posted on a wall to find the event number, heat and lane assignments for your swimmer's events. You can also purchase a yearly MeetMobile app subscriptions to track your swimmer's events.

4. Write each event number, heat and lane on your swimmer's arm in permanent marker. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen for.

5. Warm-up: It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team. Swimmer's bodies are just like cars on a cold day-he/she needs to get the engine going and warmed up before he/she can go all out. Once warm-up is done, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her towels are and sit there until the next event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled in.

6. Heat Sheets or Meet Programs. A heat sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. Heat sheets or meet programs usually sell for four or five dollars. It lists all swimmers in each event in order of "seed time". When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time in that event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as a "no-time" or "NT". A "no-time" swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats of the event.

7. Keeping Track: In addition to heat sheets there are convenient digital ways to keep track of events, seed times, and goal times.

- Within the OnDeck app, you can access your swimmer's previous best times. You can use this as well to see qualifying times they hold, and how much time they need to drop to qualify for specific events. This can be found by clicking on "Membership > Best times > Swimmer name. You can then select the time

standard you would like to compare against, and your swimmer's times will be displayed below.

- Within the MeetMobile app (subscription required), you can see events and swimmers within a meet, seed times, heat and lane assignments, and results. To access this you will need to search for the name of the specific meet, and then you can search by swimmer or event. This updates in real time and is helpful for following along.

Volunteering

The success of the Midnight Sun Swim Team (MSST) relies on parent participation. Unlike other youth sports, where generally a handful of people can run the team, a swim program simply cannot be run without help and participation from team parents. **MSST has a mandatory participation policy of 12 service points per year per family.**

How to Sign Up to Volunteer

Each event is posted on TeamUnify, under the Events and Meets tab. Look for “Job Sign Up” under the date of the event. When clicked, the user is directed to a page that offers the different jobs available, with various time slots to sign up for. Job slots will be available to sign up 2 months prior to the event and be on a first come, first served basis. In the event all of the job positions are full, you can contact the head coach or meet director if additional help could be used.

Volunteer Positions

There are many opportunities to volunteer within a meet. From donating food items for hospitality, being a lane timer, deck set up/take down and beyond. MSST board members and coaches will walk you through all job descriptions and provide you the necessary support to complete the jobs- no experience necessary!

Full job postings and descriptions can be found online or on the OnDeck app.

Results

As they become available, results will be posted on the wall during the swim meet.

If a swimmer was disqualified from an event for any reason you will see it here as well. If a swimmer was disqualified from an event, their time will still show, but it will not count as an official meet time.

Results can also be found in the MeetMobile or OnDeck apps.

When viewing your results you will be able to see if time was added or dropped from your personal best time for that specific event. This can be helpful in planning for future meets or building specific training plans.