



YOUR FIRST USA SWIM MEET

What to Bring:

- Swimsuit (BCP swim suit),
- BCP Swim cap & Extra in case one tears/breaks
- Goggles & Extra in case one breaks
- 2-3 towels (cheap towels are thin and pack easier, some kids like microfiber towels)
- If the venue allows a Chairs for mom & dad (and for your swimmer if that's their preference)
- Cold weather meets - Blankets for the swimmer – to wrap up in, lay on, etc.
- Flip flops – set up is often in grass or on concrete and bare feet can get hurt
- Dry clothes for the ride home – not everyone likes a soggy ride after the meet
- Hoodie / PJ pants / Sweats for between events (many swimmers like to stay warm between events and will bundle up and even wear socks)
- Activities for between events – solo things, things to do with friends – this goes for swimmers AND parents! Parents can fill at least an hour each meet by TIMING! (details later)
- Sharpie (especially for younger swimmers to mark Event / Heat / Lane assignments on their arm)
- Extra hair ties for girls
- Snacks (fruit, cheese sticks, nuts, granola bars - things that are light and easy - nothing heavy or sugary)
- Water bottle
- Plan for the weather - warmer clothes when it's cold, a tent for sun protection if it is warm. If you are unsure, ask the parent of an older swimmer
- Yes, you will feel as if you are moving into the pool facilities for all the stuff you tote!

Before the Meet:

- Meet announcement / timeline / timer assignments / warm up assignments are on the team website - familiarize yourself with these details, and print or save to your phone if you'd like. (Keep in mind that timelines are estimated start times for each event and that deck entries and scratches the day of the meet could alter these timelines. If you tell grand-mom that Suzy is swimming the 200 IM at 9:28am because that's what the timeline said – it could be 9:15 or it could be 10:00am depending on many variables.)
- Confirm what sessions your swimmer is swimming in as it sometimes is different from meet to meet if you are afternoon or morning - Open meets have up to 5 sessions over the weekend - Different age groups swim different sessions - You need only attend warm up / meet during your sessions
- Check what events your swimmer is entered in. This information is available on the team website.
- Sign up as a Parent Volunteer Timer and other volunteer positions - At every meet we have a responsibility to provide timers based on the number of kids we have entered into the meet. Please sign up to help. 1) It's the best seat in the house, 2) It's easy to do, 3) It's much more interesting than just sitting and waiting between events. A signup on our website is created for each meet.

Arriving at the Meet:

- Arrive NO LATER than the assigned Arrival Time. Arriving on time gives your swimmer time to find other teammates, get settled in, and get ready to warm up. These meets are hectic enough that adding the stress of a late arrival is not what your swimmer needs.
- If the meet is Deck Seeded, make sure your swimmer Checks in at the Check-In Desk immediately. A swimmer who does not check in will NOT be seeded in the meet. To check in, the swimmer (parents are not allowed to check in for swimmers) will find their name, circle their events and initial.
- Look for the blue tents with a panther head. There are usually several tents brought by parents that the kids "camp" under for the duration of the meet. Swimming is much more fun with friends!

- Heat & Lane Assignments – for a Pre-Seeded meet, there will be a Heat Sheet that is the list of all the events in the order they will be swum, listing the names of each swimmer in each heat and lane. For a Deck Seeded meet, the heat and lane assignments will be posted at least 30 minutes before an event is scheduled to swim. These single event heat sheets will be posted in a couple of spots around the pool.
- Some meets now allow you to buy a digital heat sheet through a dedicated site or through the Meet Mobile App. Meet Mobile provides real-time results (although sometimes there's a lag).
- Locate your child's Events / Heats / Lane numbers. Swimmers are responsible for getting to their lane prior to their heat swimming. Mark Event / Heat / Lane info on younger swimmers arms in Sharpie. The swimmer can ask the timer if they are in the right lane – the timer's sheet will list all swimmers swimming in that lane
- Parents are NOT allowed on deck during meets, just like at practice - Yes, swimmers sometimes miss their events. The world will not end, I promise.
- Event – a specific race (stroke & distance) for a specific gender and age group
- Heat – since more than 8 kids swim in most events, there are heats within an event. The heats are swum from fastest to slowest by seed times and swimmers with “NT” entry times (No Time) are in the final heats.
- Lane – Most pools we swim in have 8 lanes. Each heat of swimmers is arranged so that the fastest seedtime swimmer is in the middle of the pool (typically lane 4) with slower seed times in the outside lanes.
- USA Swimming Motivational Times - Motivational time standards are broken down as B, BB, A, AA, AAA, and AAAA times with B as the slowest cut, and AAAA the fastest. These are sometimes used to designate eligibility for certain meets, ie “swimmer must have at least 3 AA times to qualify for this meet.” For most swimmers the Motivational Time Standards become good goals and ways to gauge progress. You can find the Motivational Time Standards on www.usaswimming.org.

During the Meet:

- Meets can be long, but they can also be a LOT of fun. This is a great time for parents to meet other parents. Look for other team parents and introduce yourself to those

parents. If you're new and they're a seasoned swim parent, they will be happy to answer questions. We're a friendly bunch.

- Congratulate other swimmers on great swims. The more you pay attention the more you learn, the more people you meet, and the more fun is had by everyone. Before long you will know who's a great breaststroker and who just swam their first 100 or 200-yard butterfly. Recognizing the achievements of teammates is an important part.
- Timing and other volunteer positions - At every meet, we have a responsibility to provide timers based on the number of kids we have entered into the meet. Please sign up to help. 1) It's the best seat in the house, 2) It's easy to do, 3) It's much more interesting than just sitting and waiting between events. A signup on our website is created for each meet. Double-check which session your swimmer will be competing in and sign up for a time slot. Don't be intimidated! We were all "first time timers" once and are more than happy to show you the ropes. If you can push a button, you can be a timer! - Please be ON TIME to your timing shift. There is someone waiting for you to arrive, so consider arriving a few minutes early to our assigned lane.
- The Warm Up Pool – most facilities we compete in will have a main competition pool and a warm up pool. Warm up pools are for warming up just prior to an event or a warming down after an event. They are not for playing. They all require swimmers to enter the water feet first. Make sure your swimmer observes the rules of the warm up pool.
- Before an event your swimmer should talk to their coach. They'll get warm up instructions, talk about the race they are about to swim, and get encouragement from the person who knows their swimming better than anyone. Remind young swimmers to talk to coach before their swim.
- After an event your swimmer should talk to...you guessed it...their coach! They'll get feedback, kudos, and should the race not have gone the way they'd like - encouragement. REMEMBER – you are the cheerleader, the chef, the chauffeur, the checkbook, but you are not the coach. Please allow the coaches to coach. We don't want swimmers confused by mixed messages.
- If a meet has relays, please find out if your child is a part of a relay. It's a huge bummer for the 3 other kids if one swimmer disappears without telling anyone and a relay team has to scratch (withdraw) rather than swim. Plus, relays are one of the

most fun and exciting events in a swim meet! You'll want to watch them every chance you get.

- As your child gets older they may swim distance events (things like the 500 yd free, the 1000, the mile, the 400 IM). For these events, the swimmer needs to provide their own 2 timers (people, not the watch), and a lap counter for events longer than 500 yards. Many kids will ask teammates to be their lap counters. The crowd dissipates for distance events as they are usually at the end of a session, so counting for other swimmers and cheering them along is a great way to be a good teammate.
- Flyover starts / Chase starts – these are starting methods used to keep a meet moving as quickly as possible
 - During short course season (Sept-March and swum in 25 yard or 25 meter pools), most meets will use flyover starts. When the swimmer finishes their race they remain IN THE POOL until the next heat of swimmers begins their race, diving over them, hence the term flyover. Only then does the previous heat of swimmers exit the pool.
 - During long course season (April – August and swum in 50 meter pools / Olympic size pools), most meets will use chase starts. Even and odd heats of events over 50 meters will start from opposite ends of the pool. When one heat is about halfway on their final length of the pool, the next heat will be launched from the opposite end of the pool, so two heats are in the water for a time with one heat “chasing” the other. It's surreal the first time you see it!
- DQs or disqualifications happen to every swimmer at every level of the sport. Disqualifications happen for a variety of reasons – false starts, violation of a stroke's rules, etc. Being DQ'd means that the swimmer has something to correct in their stroke. Their time for that swim is not recorded as a legal time and a “DQ” will appear in the results. They still swam the race. They know what they are now capable of and their coach knows what they need to correct/work on. THEY HAPPEN TO EVERYONE! Every child cries over a DQ at some point. Help your swimmer realize there will be many more swims, and it's not a big deal. If they don't believe you, have them go ask one of the older swimmers if they've ever been DQ'd. There's not one who can say no.

After the Meet:

- Be prepared for a tired and hungry swimmer. “They only swam X number of events!” you’ll think to yourself and wonder why they are so tired. A lot of energy and concentration go into this sport. They may want a nap, but they will definitely want FOOD!
- Talk about the fun parts of the day. Don’t dwell on disappointments or try offering solutions. Some kids need quiet time to process successes or frustrations. Do not complain about the coaches or officials. Demonstrate good sportsmanship and you will have a swimmer with good sportsmanship!
- Don’t try to coach your child after the meet. “You should have...” “Next time you should...” “You need to work on...” It’s HAAAAAARD to bite our tongues sometimes as parents, but we pay very good coaches every month to coach.
- If a meet was great, go out for ice cream! If it was a disappointing meet, go out for ice cream!
- Our coaches enjoy talking to you about your child’s progress in swimming. But please remember that meets are exhausting for coaches. They are often at the pool for 10-12 hours each day of the meet and are “on” and thinking about a million different things (your swimmer included) for hours at a time. By all means be friendly, “Hi, Coach!” and seek them out if there is something immediately relevant – “My child has a fever and I’m taking him home.” But save non-emergency questions and conversations for a later date when the coaches aren’t in “meet mode.”

Miscellaneous:

- Concessions – every meet will have a concession stand with a variety of healthy AND not-so-healthy snacks and food (think candy, chips, pasta, pizza and sometimes Chick-fila). It’s a great place to turn should you not have packed snacks or find you need more than you packed. Most require cash.
- Swim Shop – most meets will also have a “swim shop” with all the basics – goggles, suits, caps, etc. They will also sell a variety of other things – t-shirts, hoodies, stuffed animals, goggle cases, the array is vast at times, so come mentally prepared for kids to ask to buy something! I’ve gotten very good at saying NO over the years. Most swim shops will take cash or credit cards.

- Ribbons and medals only happen at championship meets at the end of Short Course season and Long Course season. Help your swimmer learn to love their new personal best time as the reward for hard work.
- Deck Seeded Meets – some meets require you to “check in” ahead of a set deadline prior to the session starting each day. For these meets arrive in plenty of time for your swimmer to wait in a sizeable line, find their name in each event they are entered into, and circle their name to indicate that they are present and will be swimming in that event. Meets run this way are “deck seeded” meaning the computer team will not have heat sheets available until a little while after check in closes as they are only then placing swimmers in heats and lanes. This allows for far fewer no-shows as only swimmers who have marked themselves present and swimming will be seeded into heats and helps the meet run faster. Coaches will send emails reminding the team ahead of time if the meet is a circle in meet – it will NOT be a secret and you will definitely be aware if this is the case.

Who Makes a Meet Run:

- USA Swim meets are run SOLEY by volunteers, each critical to the success of the meet - USA Swimming Certified Officials - Parent timing volunteers for all team - Masses of volunteers from the host team
- Officials are the most visible volunteers thanks to the blue pants/shorts and white shirts they wear. All officials on deck have gone through a certification process (including a background check and Safe Sport training) for the different positions they fill. Many fill multiple roles each meet like Meet Referee, Deck Referee, Starter, Chief Judge, and Stroke & Turn official. - Unlike most sports, these officials aren't trying to catch swimmers doing something wrong. They're there to observe and ensure races are swum fairly. Disqualifications are not viewed as a penalty, but as an opportunity for the swimmer to learn what he or she did incorrectly so the swimmer and coach can work to help the swimmer improve for next time. The mantra of USA Swimming officials is, “The benefit of the doubt always goes to the swimmer!” - Only coaches are allowed to approach officials to question a call or inquire if a swimmer can be moved to a different heat due to missing their race (but the swimmer can ask on their own behalf). - Officials DO have the authority to remove parents from the pool area if they are not following proper rules of conduct or are interfering with the running of the meet.
- Timers – see the section “During the meet” for more on the role timers play in a meet

- Host Team Volunteers – the host team fills a multitude of roles at a meet. Some of the positions are Meet Director, Computer Console, Setup, Clerk of Course, Head Timer, Safety Marshalls, Awards, Heat Sheets – Please be gracious guests at any meet we attend. The team hosting has put a lot of time and energy into putting on this event.