



ROLE OF THE GMAC PARENT

Parents play an important role in helping provide their swimmer with a pathway to success in the pool. Being a swim parent is often a thankless and tiring job. It requires early morning wake ups, late night drives, feeding an army and weekends at a hot stuffy pool. What makes the job of a swim parent one of the most rewarding is watching your swimmer learn, adapt, grow, fail, fight, succeed and be proud of what they have accomplished, whether all happen in a day, a week, a month, a season, or a career. One of the most important things to remember is that the journey you are helping provide is your child's journey. Be supportive, loving and proud of the time and commitment your child is investing in a sport they have chosen to pursue.

Throughout your child's swimming career there are many moments of uncertainty. Whether it be a question that may arise; what and how to discuss certain swim topics with your swimmer; the typical swim schedule; swim meets and more. The role of the swim parent is important in keeping the swimmer happy, motivated and healthily engaged in their own swimming career. Having an understanding that not everyone can become the next Olympic Champion or World Record Holder, and helping the coaches and swimmers create a safe, welcoming, encouraging and self rewarding environment requires work on everyone's part.

While every parent feels they are doing what's best for their own swimmer, there are a few areas parents, swimmers and coaches can improve.

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Communication

I have a question, who should I be asking?

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- A. Administrative, financial or club operations questions should be discussed with the General Manager at gmacswimclub@gmail.com or 519-546-9724
- B. Program and swimmer specific questions should be addressed with your child's immediate group coach.
- C. Carpooling, schedule clarifications, some general questions can be answered through your swimmer's Group Parent.

I have a concern about my child or the programming who should I address it with?

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- A. Address your concern with your child's immediate group coach. If after discussing your concern with your child's coach you aren't satisfied with the outcome, you should then discuss your concern with the Director of Swim Development (Kendra). If after discussing your concern with the Director of Swim Development you aren't satisfied with the outcome, you should then discuss your concern with the General Manager.

How to make progress solving your issues



- B. The coaching staff welcomes comments and feedback, but won't address phantom, anonymous or "complaints on behalf of others who wish to remain anonymous". The coaching staff is happy to discuss concerns directly with those who wish to raise them.

Is it important to support the coach?

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- A. Yes. Showing your belief in the program will help build your swimmers confidence in what the coach is asking them to do. Parents need to trust the coaches are making decisions in the best interest of each individual swimmer. If, as a parent, you have questions about the program or need further clarification address the issues with the coach (away from the swimmers) as they arise. Talking poorly or negatively about a coach can silently undermine a swimmer's confidence in the coach's ability to teach, train and create successful performance opportunities for the swimmers.

What are some ways I can support my swimmer?

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- A. As a parent, you want to make swimming an easy choice for your child. Encourage them to put forward their best effort every day, communicate effectively with their coach, have fun with teammates and enjoy swim practice.
- B. Provide healthy food options for meals and snacks within the normal weekly routine as well as snacks for swim meets. The better they are fueled the easier it is for the proper recovery and performance.
- C. Help guide your child with time management to allow them to better balance all of their activities. Help them stay on top of their homework and school projects, and realize the value of getting assignments done before the deadline.
- D. Provide the opportunity to stay balanced between swimming, school and other sports and activities. If a conflict arises between activities, helping the swimmer communicate with the coach and ensuring a "give and take" is done between the conflicting activities.
- E. Remain positive in the stands when watching your swimmer at a practice or swim meet. Swimmers often look to see if someone is watching from above. Refrain from waving or distracting them during practice or prior to a race.



What are some things to remember when speaking with my swimmer after a race or meet?

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- A. Immediately after a race, swimmers should be going to speak with their coach. If they approach you first send them to the coach for immediate post race feedback. Swimmers should remain on the deck with the coaches and team. Limiting text and phone conversations with your swimmer during the session will allow them to maintain focus on swimming and be more engaged in the meet. You will have plenty of time and opportunity to speak with your swimmer after the session.
- B. Acknowledge and praise swimmers efforts not results. Not every race will be a best time, but swimmers need to be recognized for the efforts they put forward. Rewarding swimmers for results is strongly discouraged. Recognizing, congratulating and celebrating a successful outcome will help your swimmer remain motivated. Try to keep the conversations around swimming light and swimmer lead.
- C. Avoid conversations about technique, race strategy and placing as they can contradict what the coaches are asking the swimmers to accomplish.
- D. Results can't be changed after the fact. If your swimmer expresses frustration after a race, encourage them to focus on the process and challenge them to be better on their next opportunity.

Program

What does the GMAC program involve?

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- A. You and your swimmer have made a commitment to the swim program. In making that commitment, you should be doing your best to make the swim schedule a priority. Help teach your swimmers the value behind the commitment.
- B. Swim practices are typically early morning (5:30-8:00am) and after school (4:00-8:00pm). Once you know your group schedule, plan and coordinate other activities around the published swim schedule. Understand that taking extended holidays and long weekends when practices are scheduled will affect the swimmers progression and performance. Communicate with your swimmers coach if you are planning any significant time away from the practice schedule.
- C. Racing at swim meets is an important part of the swimmers success. The coaches carefully select a meet schedule best suited for their group. It's important for the swimmers to race throughout the season in order to see personal improvement with skills, strategy and final times.

How are group placements determined?

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- A. Group placements are coaching decisions. The coaches carefully evaluate all swimmers within the program and place them into a group designed to provide continued individual and group success. Swimmers are typically placed by training ability and in a group with swimmers who are of similar age. Parents do not have a say in which group their swimmer is placed.

How can we create a better team atmosphere?

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- A. Parents, swimmers and coaches need to work together with the end goal of swimmer success. Parents and coaches need to support the athlete; swimmers need to respect the parents and coaches.
- B. Swimmers should be proud to wear their GMAC Team attire. Parents need to ensure all proper GMAC attire is purchased for the swimmers, swimmers need to ensure they have properly packed for every swim meet. Swimmers and parents should be proud to be a part of the GMAC Team.

Why are we asked to take part in fundraising?

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- A. Swimming is an expensive sport. Fundraising is required by all families to help reduce your program fees.



Meets/Competitions

Why do swimmers attend competitions?

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- A. Swim meets are the reward for the all of the hard work completed in practice. It allows the swimmers and coaches to see what improvements have been made and what can be further worked on in practice.

What is the role of the parent when it comes to a swim meet?

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- A. Parents and swimmers should be looking at entries when they are posted on the website. Parents will need to ensure they are available to get their swimmer to and from all sessions of the meet. If there is a conflict, consider carpools to allow the swimmer to compete at the meet. If a swimmer is unable to attend any (or all) of the meet, it should be communicated in writing to your swimmers individual coach (and gmacswimclub@gmail.com) as soon as possible. Swimmers who are 13&Over need to know if the meet is timed finals or heats and finals. If there are heats and finals, parents and swimmers need to plan on attending all 13&Over sessions.
- B. GMAC hosted swim meets as well as championship meets (Western Region Championships, Festival, Provincial) are where parents complete their volunteer hours.

How is the meet schedule determined?

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- A. The GMAC Coaches plan out the meet schedule together. Each coach ensures they have enough racing opportunities for their swimmers. Coaches are looking for a variety of meets that will service all the needs of the swimmers. Ideally within the season, swimmers will race at meets where they are successful (at the top of the pack), competitive (at the same level as most of the swimmers), and are inspired by other fast swimmers (slower than the majority of the swimmers). Each group will have enough opportunities to achieve qualifying times prior to championship meet season. Swim meets may include local, away and team travel meets.

What meets have qualifying times?

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- A. Generally speaking, championship meets (Western Region Championships, Ontario Festival Championships, Ontario Youth and Junior Championships, Ontario Provincial Championships, Canadian Junior Championships, Canadian Eastern/Western Championships, Canadian Swimming Championships, Canadian Trails) have qualifying time standards. There are also some invitational meets that have qualifying times.

Where can qualifying standards be found?

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- A. Time standards for invitational meets can be found in the individual meet packages.
Time standards for Western region can be found on the GMAC website (www.guelphmarlins.ca)
Time standards for Ontario championship meets can be found on the GMAC website or the Swim Ontario website (www.swimontario.com).
Time standards for Canadian championship meets can be found on the GMAC website or the Swim Canada website (www.swimming.ca).

Should parents be concerned with time standards?

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- A. Parents can guide their swimmer to where time standards can be located. Swimmers should be the ones to research time standards and set their own goals. While parents may want to know if they need to plan on attending certain championship meets, please discuss where your swimmer may be heading with the coach instead of your swimmer. Direct or implied pressure on the swimmers can affect their preparation and performance as they strive to reach their goals. If swimmers wish to discuss their goals and what time standards they are striving to achieve with their parents, let the swimmers lead the conversation.



What are some things to know about GMAC Team Travel?

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- A. When GMAC decides to travel as a team, there is a reason behind the decision. Whether it's for team building, protected performance, ease of transportation, training camp, etc. team travel means the swimmers will be traveling with the coaches and/or chaperones. Swimmers will travel with the team from the designated departure time and location until the team return and sign out of swimmers.
- B. Information will be emailed out about upcoming team travel. Parents need to register their swimmer online through the GMAC website by the registration deadline.
- C. Payments and forms need to be completed on time. Be sure to indicate any dietary restrictions on the forms as catering is coordinated long before the team departs.
- D. Swimmers learn several life lessons while on team travel. Part of the experience is learning how to deal with other swimmers, be self sufficient and learn to deal with any small issues that may arise. The swimmers will learn best if they are with the team (coaches, chaperones, teammates). While it's sometimes harder for the parents to let the swimmers go than the swimmers to spend time away from home, the swimmers will learn to adapt to the environment better if they work within the team environment from departure to return.

Why do swimmers improve at different rates?

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- A. There are several reasons swimmers improve at different rates. The swimmers age, gender, growth and development, and swimming history are all factors in how they improve. Practice attendance, work ethic, injury and illness also contribute to results on race day.
- B. Every swimmer is different. Refrain from comparing your swimmer to any other swimmer in the pool. Each swimmer should to be looked at based on their own accomplishments and improvements, not compared to the rest of the field.
- C. Generally speaking (with data from Swimming Canada) here are some rates of improvement:
Female: 12 (-5.92%), 13 (-4.35%), 14 (-3.05%), 15 (-2.01%), 16 (-1.25%), 17 (-0.76%), 18 (-0.48%), 19 (-0.35%)
Male: 12 (-7.47%), 13 (-6.19%), 14 (-4.82%), 15 (-3.65%), 16 (-2.66%), 17 (-1.84%), 18 (-1.22%), 19 (-0.82%)

Transportation

When does my swimmer need to be at the pool?

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- A. Swimmers should be at the pool 10-20 minutes prior to the start of all practices and a minimum of 15 minutes before the scheduled start of a meet warm up. The more often your swimmer is at the pool in the week, the easier transportation becomes if you're able to coordinate a carpool.