



ROLE OF THE GMAC SWIMMER

Swimmers are at the heart of what we do. Coaches, parents, and board members all feel they are doing what the swimmers need to get the most out of their swim experience. Coaches write workout, parents drive to the pool and pay bills, officials run meets - it may seem like all the athletes have to do is show up and swim. Well that is an entry level way to look at sport and short-sighted on potential gains GMAC and our swimmers can have.

This document is an outline of all the roles swimmers can play in their sport. Commitment and contribution can lead to a more meaningful experience and a stronger club.

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Communication

I am having trouble with what is being asked of me. What should I do?

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- A. Everyone learns differently. It's ok to ask for clarification or more detail on what is being asked of you.
- B. Just try your best. Sometimes we want everything to be perfect and we want to feel confident prior to attempting something, but to learn a new skill you might have to step outside your comfort zone. GMAC practices are safe environments and simply trying is always encouraged. Failure is the first and most important part of success.

What are parent/swimmer/coach meetings and how can I use them to make my season better?

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- A. Participate in available meetings. Schedule is usually based on a sign up so families can choose a convenient time, but ensure you do take part with your family. Having all parties on the same page makes for a more effective support team.
- B. Come Prepared. Know your family schedule so that the planning for meets, workouts etc can take place knowing when you may be away or over committed. Have your goals prepared and ready to share. Remember a goal should be challenging, motivating and measurable. I want to make Festivals is not a good enough goal. I want to make 1:14.04 the festival standard by the end of Jan (deadline for festivals) is a goal.
- C. Speak up and lead the meeting - it is your swimming. Coaches and parents are your support network. If you need your parent's help, no problem, that is what they are there for.
- D. Why do some swimmers get their meeting at the start of the year and some meetings later? Older more experienced swimmers are more aware of their goals and the steps to reach those goals. Coaches have usually worked with those swimmers before and they have a head start. Later meetings give coaches and swimmers a chance to see what is possible, where you are starting and the roadblocks that may get in the way.
- E. If you wait till the end of the season to start this type of work we may miss out of opportunities to reach your goals. You need to get your sights set in the right direction and then have your support team ready to help you. Having these meetings will make the season better for you!

I don't feel I am getting closer to my goals. What should I do?

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- A. Did you have a parent/Swimmer/coach meeting? No? then do so. Yes? Are you sticking to the game plan? Is your coach giving you the things you need and asked for? Make sure the plans you made are being followed.
- B. Complete practices as they were intended and meet workout expectations to the best of your ability. Often a swimmer does the workout without the detail, intensity, or purpose behind it. We need to do the things in training to get the results in a race. We need to stick to the plans in a race to get to the right plan.
- C. Are you recovering? Working hard is only one piece of the puzzle. Without proper recovery your hard work won't stick. Sleep, hydration, and nutrition are the building blocks that get you to the next level. If you are doing your best on all of the things above you should check in with your doctor to make sure he or she agrees that your health is optimal for reaching your goals.
- D. Is your fast, fast enough? Is your underwater long enough? Is your stroke count optimal? Reaching your goal will require you to push yourself. Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Check in with your coaches to make sure you have a common understanding.



What are some things to remember when speaking with my coach and parents after a race?

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- A. Immediately after a race, you should speak with your coach. This is so the race is fresh in your mind and we can continue to learn from it. Swimmers should remain on the deck with the coaches and team. Limit text and phone conversations with your parents and friends during the session will allow you to maintain focus on swimming and be more engaged in the meet. You will have plenty of time and opportunity to speak with your friends and family after the session.
- B. Listen to the good and think about the items for improvement. No race will be perfect. We are always just striving for better. What was better? What is left to work on? Are those things to work on a right now fix, or a back to practice fix? If you have trouble focusing and remembering, use your log book and write those things down.
- C. Give accurate feedback to the coach. What was the plan, what were you thinking, how were you feeling? The more self aware you are the easier it is for the coach to work with you and identify things helping or hindering performance.
- D. Your parents love you and want the best for you. If you are happy, celebrate with them and let them know why you are pleased with your race/meet. If you are not happy explain your disappointment but don't expect them to make it better, they can't. Hugs, love, and understanding is all they can give and all you need.
- E. If you need help from your parents or coaches let them know. Email/meeting any format you feel comfortable. Ask for the help and support you need.

Program

What does the GMAC program involve?

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- A. You 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. There is value in commitment.
- B. Swim practices are typically early morning (5:30-8:00am) and after school (4:00-7:30pm). 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, performance, and enjoyment with the program. Communicate with your coach if you are planning any significant time away from the practice schedule.
- C. Racing at swim meets is an important part of the swimmer's 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. Some athletes will never know what they are truly capable of until they race.
- D. Coaches encourage recovery from training with use of good nutrition, hydration, and adequate rest. Those three things can make or break results from training.

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 with athletes of similar age. Parents and Swimmers do not have a say in where the swimmer is placed. Technique, speed, coachability, and consistency are some key factors that go into the decision making process. If you have questions or concerns with your placement you should speak to your coach.

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 athlete success - and that doesn't just mean in the pool. Swimmers need to respect their parents, peers, competitors, volunteers, and coaches.
- B. Swimmers should be proud to wear their GMAC Team attire. Ensure you have properly packed for every swim meet. Know that what you do when wearing team attire is a direct representation of GMAC.



- C. Grass looks green from afar. Lets keep tending to our grass and know that every group and every team has their own set of strengths and weaknesses. GMAC and our groups are no exception to this. Contribute to the team atmosphere by attending regular practices, arriving on time, encouraging teammates, performing at the best of your ability, respectfully listening to coaches explanations and corrections, and asking for help when needed.
- D. Adhere to Swimmer Code of Conduct
- E. Keep change room talk positive, appropriate and supportive.

Meets/Competitions

Why do swimmers attend competitions?

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- A. Swim meets are the reward for 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. They test our skills under stress.
- B. All races matter, do not waste opportunities. Finals are an extra opportunity that should be valued.

I want to be entered in a new/favorite/different event. What should I do and when?

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- A. 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 days of the meet, it should be communicated in writing to your swimmer's 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. Final entries are usually due 2 weeks prior to the meet. This means the coach needs to know your requests the week prior to that.
- C. Often, meet entries for one meet are complementary to entries for another meet. If you change entries at one meet it may affect other meets. Take a big picture look with your coach. As well, know that always swimming the same few events is not helpful in your overall development.
- D. Make sure all your requests are in writing, a quick discussion on deck can easily be forgotten.

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 Trials) 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).

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 teams return and swimmers are signed out.
- B. Information will be emailed out about upcoming team travel. Parents need to register their swimmers online through the GMAC website by the registration deadline. Make your parents aware that you wish to attend so they are on time for sign up
- 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).
- E. All meets for Ontario and Canada are Team travel so the skill needs to be practiced before swimmers get to that level. How to eat properly when they don't get food choice. How to sleep without their home comforts. How to race at their best without their cheerleaders and coach.

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 results to any other swimmer in the pool. Each swimmer should 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%)
Note that these are average of all distances and strokes.
- D. Long Term and optimal improvement starts with improvements from technical gains. Don't try to rush to the next step! Going faster is great but if you are still making all the same mistakes at some point you will need to go backwards and make those changes (which results in a slow down prior to a speed gain).

What are some things to remember when speaking to my coach after a race?

- A. You went to your race with a couple of things to accomplish or focus on. Post race discussion will revolve around those points. Best times, heat winners etc are great but those things don't help you learn to follow a race plan. Your coach needs to know what you can and can't do under pressure. This allows them to direct future race plans and training to address strengths and weaknesses.
- B. Don't let a good or bad result deafen you from hearing the constructive and valuable comments.
- C. The more details and honesty you can bring to these debriefings the more valuable they will be. If the coach asks "how did you feel on your last 50?" and you say something like "good" Bad" that is not helpful. If you say "I was panicked for air so my last underwater was short and then I felt spinny" this helps the coach know that you knew you were supposed to have a better underwater but need more training under stress and that your feel for the water is being affected by fatigue and resulting in too high a stroke rate, too high a stroke count or some other issue you can spend time solving.
- D. Be a good sport in front of your coaches, your team mates, officials and other competitors.

When do I need to be at the pool and why?



- A. 15 min prior to warm up the team will do activation. This allows athletes to be ready to get the most of their warm up. Most meets we attend there is only one warm up period and it is 45min to 1 hr.
- B. Arriving 15 min prior to warm up allows the coaches to speak to the swimmers about meet logistics, specific issues with their events or races and the content of their warm up.
- C. After this 15 min window coaches must hand in scratches to the meet manager, fill in relay cards and let other athletes know any changes they have had to make. If you are late to warm up you will be scratched and not part of relay teams because the coach has to do those things for the meet manager to make the meet run smoothly
- D. If you run into trouble on your way to a meet and will be late, text your coach to let them know (Don't call, it is too loud on deck for them to hear you most of the time)
- E. At some larger meets there is a warm down pool that allows for swimmers to come at a more specific time to their races. All of these meets post timelines that give you an idea of what time your race will be. Ask your coach if you can arrive later for your events on these occasions.

What is Warm Down and why is my coach asking me to do it?

- A. Warm down/active rest is to allow the body to recover faster from the exertion of your race or workout. It allows for some corrections, some improvements and most of all it ensures a better outcome in the following effort.
- B. Coaches try to strike a balance between warm down and getting home to bed at meets where finals are running late. Swimmers should go to warm down immediately after their race to minimize the extra time parents have to wait around

How do I know if I am on a relay ? Why do I want to be on relays?

- A. Relay entries may be posted with Individual entries for each meet. These are based on current best times. Often some swimmers will not be at certain sessions etc so those relay teams may change on the day of the meet. Coaches will let athletes know at warm up of these changes.
- B. If you can't be on a relay you should let the coaches know prior to the meet or at the latest, prior to warm up
- C. Relays allow for a team effort that often results in personal bests and attempts to step up for the team in ways we often can't figure out for ourselves quite yet.
- D. At championship meets we will put our best performing available athletes on the team. Smaller meets we may create teams to allow for atmosphere and performance.
- E. They are fun! They are another chance to race and learn

Training

When do I need to be at the pool and why?

- A. Swimming is Awesome... but you don't have a lot of time to talk. Getting to the pool 15 min before workout lets you get your activation done and gives you time to talk with your teammates and coaches.
- B. If you can't arrive early please come and join in when you can get there. Look at the board or workout written and join in. The coaches will catch you up.
- C. If you are always late you can't always skip activation or warm up... come up with a plan with the coach to get you the best mix for overall development.

What do I do if something I am being asked to do is hurting me?

- A. Watch and listen to make sure you are doing it properly
- B. Ask the coach to watch and let them know where it is hurting you
- C. If you are not able to find a way to do it without pain, you and the coach will come up with a plan to substitute until the problem can be solved.
- D. If pain is lasting more than 3 days of trying to solve it, it is time to see a professional (physio/doctor/ etc)
- E. If hurting is more like fear or dislike... same thing... watch and listen for tips and tricks. Ask the coach and maybe you need to take a step back to get ahead. If you are still struggling, set up a meeting to make plans to move forward.

I don't understand what we are supposed to be doing at work out. What should I do?



- A. Your coach asks if everyone understands after each explanation. If you don't feel comfortable asking right then, wait and ask before you start the set, or for larger topics email your coach later.
- B. If I think I get it but I am not sure → watch others and ask if that is correct
- C. ask the coach to watch you and let you know if you got it right.

What are some things to remember when speaking to my coach at workout?

- A. Make sure you are on time and listen the best you can! Each time the coach has to repeat or take extra time with those who were late then those who were on time lose out on practice time.
- B. If you need something specific or something that may take more than 2 minutes... its best to set up a meeting or some extra help to get the help you need.
- C. Remember that you should try to ask for help prior to the start of the set and then try to not stop in the middle of the pool.

What happens when I miss a workout?

- A. Sometimes we need to miss a workout. Let your coach know that this will happen with as much notice as possible. Ask your coach if there is an opportunity to make it up, they will let you know.
- B. Don't worry and stress about it. Life is about balance and you try your best to keep all your commitments and when you can't you make the best choices for you and your goals and you can.

How can I be a great teammate at workout?

- A. Show up on time and prepared!
- B. Listen when it's time to listen
- C. Help out those around you with set, content and pace clock
- D. Encourage others to do their best
- E. Always put forth your best effort and have the best attendance possible
- F. Try to leave your bad day at the door and use your training as stress relief and escape
- G. When you are having a bad day, try to help someone else
- H. Lane placement for best practice not for social cliques
- I. Always try to improve
- J. Inspire others to want to be better
- K. Be inspired by your teammates and allow their greatness to make you better