

Courtesy of [Elizabeth Wickham](#)

When I was a newer swim mom, I'd get all excited at meets and blurt out something to my kids that I'd later regret. I don't know if any other swim parents have been in my shoes, but I'm learning to measure and think about what I say before saying something less than helpful. I also try not to "hash and rehash" every race. One thing that makes me very uncomfortable at meets is overhearing parents berating their kids after a race. I wonder how long they'll last in swimming?

I've talked to many coaches and read books from sports parenting experts about what to say or not say to your kids after competitions. The number one thing the experts agree on to tell your kids, whether it's after practice, a race or an entire meet is: "I love to watch you swim."

Those simple six words say it all. It's non-judgmental, non-threatening and non-lecturing. Say those words and step back and listen. Allow your kids time to talk to you. If we take over the conversation after a race or on the drive home, our kids may withdraw and not want to listen to us. If we allow them room to reflect on their race and we offer support, they'll open up. Kids seek their parents' approval. If we criticize their swim, they'll believe we're disappointed in them as a person when all we're trying to do is offer advice and help them improve.

*Other positive things to say include:*

Did you have fun?

How did that feel?

I'm proud of you.

I saw how hard you tried.

I love you.

*Things to avoid saying are:*

Wow! What happened?

What were you thinking?

Why did you let Johnny beat you?

You're faster than that.

You should have won.

You need to...followed by technical advice.

I can't believe we traveled this far for you to add time.

What things do you think parents should or should not say?