



A Guide to Swim Meet Survival

We hope this guide will give you a general idea of what to expect. Once you get through your first meet, everything will make so much more sense!

No two swim meets ever run the same. It can be the same meet that the club hosts each year, but things will be different. The most important thing to remember is to be flexible. Swim meets are large undertakings and are run by humans who are fallible. It's ok to be a little confused at first. Don't be afraid to approach someone from our team to ask a question.

Chapter 1 – The Night Before

The Swim Bag

In addition to the routine stuff to bring to practice (swimsuit, towel, goggles and cap), you will need a few more things for a swim meet.

Here's a basic checklist:

- Extra-large towel or blanket for your swimmer to keep warm between races or sit on if necessary
- Towels...two are better than one
- Loose fitting, comfortable clothing to wear in between races
- Chairs and/or a tent if there is outside seating

The "Other" Bag

Do NOT underestimate the importance of "The Other Bag". This is the activity bag to keep your children happy and busy while they wait for their events to be called. Rest is important particularly at the Red vs Blue meet; here are some suggestions for quiet, yet fun activities:

- Electronic handheld games
- Cards, Travel Games
- Books
- iPod, iPad

Remember to label all your items and keep an eye on your things! You are out in public and at a large event where there are many people who are not always paying close attention.

What Parents Need

While some people enjoy watching the competitors and spend nearly all of their time in the pool area, other people prefer to relax with their children in between events. You may want to consider bringing some of the following:

- A comfortable folding chair (some facilities do not offer bleachers for parent spectating and if they do, the bleachers can get very uncomfortable)
- Book, newspaper, magazine, etc.

If we are at an indoor meet and dressed for cold weather, it gets VERY warm in the indoor pool area. Be sure to dress in layers or bring some lightweight clothing to change into.

The Cooler

Here are some good and bad swim meet food choices. Think natural energy. Easily digestible, portable foods are your best choices.

Good:

- Water, juice, sports drink (fluids are VERY important) NO SODA
- Bagels (hold the cream cheese)
- Carrot and celery sticks
- Fruit – grapes, bananas & apples (oranges can be messy)
- Granola bars, oatmeal
- Plain or artificially sweetened yogurt
- Chocolate milk (for the end of the meet only because milk is heavy on the stomach and can sit there for hours)

Bad:

- No cereal for breakfast (milk can be very heavy in their stomachs)
- Candy & sweets (anything with heavy sugar content)
- Fatty foods (takes too long to digest)
- Greasy, heavy foods (no nutritional value)

FLUIDS ARE VERY IMPORTANT! Even slight dehydration can cause cramping and fatigue and a bad swim experience. Encourage your swimmer to hydrate all day long. Moderate your child's food intake and remember less is better. Some kids think they're hungry when really they're bored and looking for something to do (visit "The Other Bag").

Now that you're all packed...tuck the kids in bed. Swimmers need a good night's sleep. Most meets start early! Make sure you know the warm-up times and have planned to arrive at least 15 minutes prior. Check to be sure you have printed out the directions to any away meets.

Chapter 2 – The Arrival

What do I do FIRST?

1. Upon arrival, it is best for your family to find a spot to set up shop first. The swimmer will be running back and forth from this spot so it should be a place they can easily find.
2. Swimmers should find their primary coach to “check in” and let the coach know that they have arrived.
3. Warm up typically begins 15 minutes after the scheduled arrival time. It is very important that all swimmers are in attendance for warm up. It is not okay to miss this!
4. Relax before the start of the meet. If you have any questions during the meet, if I’m not preoccupied, please feel free to flag me down for a quick question. You can also ask other parents.

Heat Sheet

We utilize an app called “Meet Mobile.” It keeps track of your swimmers’ events, heats, and lanes. You can also use it to keep up with your swimmer’s times. On occasion, there are heat sheets available for you to print but most of the time those sheets become obsolete due to late additions through on deck entries.

Swimmer Events

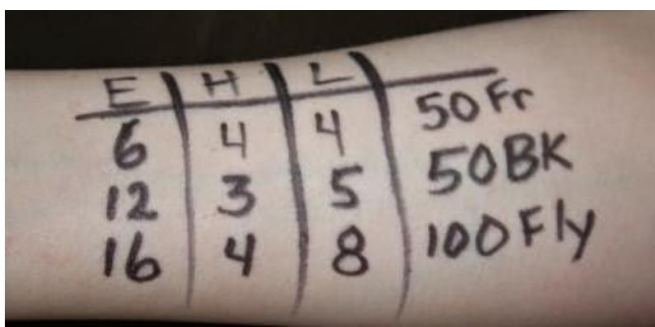
A very convenient place to write them down is on your swimmer’s forearm. Remember to use a waterproof marker or pen. Sharpies are perfect! You will see most of the 10 and under kids with this.

Here is an example:

The first number represents the event number, the second the heat number and the third the lane number and finally the distance and stroke abbreviation.

10/3/5 – 25 fr = Event 10, Heat 3, Lane 5 in the 25 free

16/2/4 – 50 bk = Event 16, Heat 2, Lane 4 in the 50 back



Chapter 3 – The Meet

Once the meet gets started it will flow quickly. Coaches ask that the swimmers come and talk to them about 1-2 events (3 depending on how quickly the meet moves) before they swim so that we can talk about their race and remind them of what we've talked about at practice.

Swimmer Disqualifications

It takes time and lots of practice to master the technical aspects of competitive swimming. Throughout your child's swimming career, they will increase their knowledge and improve their starts, strokes, turns and finishes. During a sanctioned meet, officials and judges monitor the competition to ensure that starts, strokes, turns and finishes are done in accordance with rule requirement. Some latitude is granted to younger swimmers, but it is important that proper stroke technique is learned early in a swimmer's career. ALL kids will at some time in their career, experience the disappointment of being disqualified (DQ'd) in an event, from beginners to professionals. Remember that this is a learning opportunity and a DQ is an excellent tool to help your child. Though it may be disappointing, you can help your child by offering support and encouraging them to always do their best. Let me be "the bad guy" and tell them about any disqualifications. They need you for comfort, reassurance, and positivity.

Race Results

Head back to your spot and get ready for your next event. After a couple of events, you can go looking for where the computer operators are posting the results. The results usually run a few events behind due to processing time. This is where you will find out what your swimmer's time was and how they fared among all the swimmers in their age group. The results are listed by event and show the swimmers in order of finish.

The only swim meets that give out ribbons and medals are our December and February Championship Meets. Our events are scored overall as well. This means that not every swimmer will receive something at one of those Championship meets, only those that place in the Top 8 in their whole age group.