

NEW PARENT GUIDE TO SWIMMING

THE FOUR STROKES

The four competitive swimming strokes are freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. The combination of all four strokes is called individual medley.

In freestyle events, the competitor may swim any stroke. The stroke most commonly used is sometimes called the crawl, which is characterized by the alternate stroking of the arms over the surface of the water surface and an alternating (up-and-down) flutter kick.

Backstroke consists of an alternating motion of the arms with a flutter kick while on the back. On turns, swimmers may rotate to the stomach and perform a flip turn and some part of the swimmer must touch the wall. The swimmer must finish on the back.

The breaststroke requires simultaneous movements of the arms on the same horizontal plane. The hands are pressed out from in front of the breast in a heart shaped pattern and recovered under or on the surface of the water. The kick is a simultaneous somewhat circular motion similar to the action of a frog. On turns and at the finish, the swimmer must touch the wall with both hands simultaneously at, above or below the water surface.

Some consider the butterfly to be the most beautiful of the strokes. It features a simultaneous recovery of the arms over the water combined with an undulating dolphin kick. In the kick, the swimmer must keep both legs together and may not flutter, scissors or use the breaststroke kick. Both hands must touch the wall simultaneously on the turns and the finish.

The individual medley, commonly referred to as the I.M., features all four strokes. In the IM, the swimmer begins with the butterfly, then changes after one-fourth of the race to backstroke, then breaststroke and finally freestyle.

COMPETITION 101

RULES - The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition and to promote uniformity in the sport. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair competitive advantage over another swimmer.

COURSE - Competition pools may be short course (25 yards or 25 meters), or long course (50 meters). The international standard (as used in the Olympics) is 50 meters. World records are accomplished in 25 and 50 meter pools. USA Swimming maintains records for 25 yard, 25 meter and 50 meter pools.

COMPETITION - Participants compete in different age groups and meets depending on their achievement level and how old they are on the first day of the meet. Traditionally recognized age groups are 10 and under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, 17-18. Many local meets feature 8 and under, single age groups, or senior events. Team practice groups are usually determined by age and/or ability.

OFFICIALS - Officials are present at all competitions to enforce the technical rules of swimming so the competition is fair and equitable. Officials attend clinics, pass a written test and work meets before being certified. All parents are encouraged to get involved with some form of officiating.

MUST HAVES FOR THE NEW SWIMMER

- Goggles: Swimmers use goggles to protect their eyes from the chlorine as well as to gain a clear view of their surroundings in the pool. There are a variety of colors and styles depending on the preference of the swimmer. Goggles range from \$6.50 – \$29.99.
- Caps: Caps are designed to keep the hair out of swimmers' faces and goggles straps into place. Caps range from \$3.99 - \$19.99.
- Women's Practice Suit: Practice suits are used during workouts. They are created with a stronger material for durability. Some may create extra drag to make the workout more challenging. Women's practice suits range from \$33.00 - \$76.00.
- Men's Practice Suit: Practice suits are used during workouts. They are created with a stronger material for durability. Some may create extra drag to make the workout more challenging. Men's practice suits range from \$22.00 - \$47.00.
- Competition Suits: Suits which are utilized during the meet. The Sharks have a team suit which you can purchase through Just Add H2O and it will have the Team Logo on the hip of your swimmer. This is a solid black Speedo Endurance suit. These suits are typically sized to ensure maximum fit, which translates into speed!

SWIM MEET BASICS

Swim meets are a great family experience. They're a place where the whole family can spend time together.

Listed below are some very in-depth guidelines geared to help you through your first couple of swim meets. It may seem a little overwhelming, but we tried to be as specific and as detailed as we possibly could. If you have any questions, please ask your coach.

BEFORE THE MEET STARTS

- Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information handed out to all swimmers and also in the team newsletter.
- Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's blankets, swim bags and/or sleeping bags. **The team sits in one place together, so look for some familiar faces. Parents are never allowed on the deck!**

- Find the check-in place. Parents are not allowed on deck so this may be a responsibility of your swimmer or your swimmer's coach. Make sure your swimmer checks in with his or her coach! Check for special posted instructions in the check-in area. Usually one will need to highlight the swimmer's name or "#" before each swimmer's name, in each event he or she is swimming, that day. If this is not done, the swimmer will not be allowed to swim that event. Check-in is required so that the people running the meet know who is actually at the meet. After check-in, the meet administrators "seed" the swimmers into heats. Heat and lane assignments will be posted, so be sure your swimmer knows where to look!
- Write each event-number on your swimmers hand in Sharpie. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen or watch for.
- Once checked in and settled on deck, your swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the coach for warm-up instructions. It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team. A swimmer's body is just like a car on a cold day-he/she needs to get the engine going and warmed-up before he/she can go all out.
- After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her team is sitting and wait there until his first event is called. This is a good time for swimmers to use the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled in. **If your swimmer is leaving the deck for any reason, he or she must first check in with the coach.** The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after warm-ups are over.
- According to USA Swimming rules (because of insurance purposes), parents are not allowed on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity. Similarly, all questions concerning meet results, an officiating call, or the conduct of a meet, should be referred to a coach. He or she in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.
- Psyche Sheet or Heat Sheets. A psyche sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. It lists all swimmers in each event in order of "seed time". When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time (up to the date that the entry was submitted) in that event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as a "no-time" or "NT". A "no-time" swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats of the event. A Heat sheet may be available close to the start of the meet that lists the actual heat and lane a swimmer will be competing in. On Deck Parent (Team Unfy App), Deck Pass (USA Swimming App), and Meet Mobile are all helpful SmartPhone Apps that many parents often reference in the stands.

MEET STARTS

- It is important for any swimmer to know what event numbers he/she is swimming (again, why they should have the numbers on their hand). He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.
- Most meets are computerized. There are generally two ways a swimmer gets to his/her lane:
 1. A swimmer usually reports directly to his/her lane for competition a number of heats before he/she actually swims. Check with your swimmer's coach for specific instructions.

2. In some novice meets, a swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and he/she will be asked to report to the "clerk of course" or "bullpen". Swimmers should report with his/her cap and goggle. Generally, girls events are odd-numbered and boys events are even-numbered. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 50 freestyle, report to Clerk of Course." The "Clerk of Course" or "bullpen" area is usually where all swimmers checked in before the warm-up. The clerk will usually line up all the swimmers and take them down to the pool in correct order. You can expect at least 4-8 heats of each event.
- The swimmer swims his or her race.
 - After each swim: He/she is to ask the timers (people behind the blocks at each lane) his/her time. The swimmer should then go immediately to his or her coach. The coach will discuss the swim with each swimmer. Depending on the coaches instructions, the swimmer may be asked to do some recovery swimming if a "warm down" pool or lanes are available.
 - Generally, the coach follows these guidelines when discussing swims:
 1. Positive comments or praise
 2. Suggestions for improvement
 3. Positive comments
 - Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim and or meet:
 1. Tell him or her how great they did! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with your swimmer. You need to tell him how proud you are and what a great job he did. The phrase "I love to watch you swim!" is often spoken in many swim homes.
 2. If your swimmer has left the deck (remember must have coach permission first!), encourage them to hydrate, eat a light snack, visit the bathroom if needed, and return to the team area to relax and prepare for his or her next swim.
 - The swimmer now waits until his next event is called and starts the procedure again. When a swimmer has completed all of his or her events, swimmers should check with the coach before leaving to make sure they are not included on a relay. It is not fair to other swimmers who may have stayed to swim on a relay where your swimmer is expected to be a member and he or she is not there.
 - Results are usually posted somewhere in the facility. Awards are often gathered for a team and given to the coach at the end of the meet. The coach will give the awards to the swimmers at a later time.

RULES PRIMER

The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition and to promote uniformity in the sport. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair competitive advantage over another swimmer.

Trained officials observe the swimmers during each event to ensure compliance with these technical rules. If a swimmer commits an infraction of the rules that is observed by an official, a disqualification (DQ) will result. This means that the swimmer will not receive an official time and will not be eligible for an award in that event. A disqualification may result from actions such as not getting to the starting blocks on time, false starting, performing strokes in an illegal manner, or unsportsmanlike conduct.

DQs are also a result of technical rules violations. They include but are not limited to:

- **Freestyle:** Walking on the bottom, pulling on the lane rope, not touching the wall on a turn, or not completing the distance.
- **Backstroke:** Pulling or kicking into the wall once a swimmer has turned passed the vertical onto the breast. Turning onto the breast before touching the wall with the hand at the finish of the race.
- **Breaststroke:** An illegal kick such as flutter (freestyle), dolphin (butterfly), or scissors (side stroke); not on the breast; alternating movements of the arms; taking two arm strokes or two leg kicks while the head is under water; touching with only one hand at the turns or finish.
- **Butterfly:** Alternating movements of the arms or legs; pushing the arms forward under instead of over the water surface (underwater recovery); a breaststroke style of kick; touching with only one hand at the turns or finish.

For specific language on any technical rules consult the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations book. Violations of the rules are reported to the Referee. The rules require that every reasonable effort be made to notify the swimmer or his coach of the reason for the disqualification. If your child is disqualified in an event, be supportive rather than critical. For beginning swimmers, a disqualification should be treated as a learning experience, not as a punishment. A disqualification alerts the swimmer and coach to what portions of the swimmer's stroke need to be corrected. They should be considered in the same light as an incorrect answer in schoolwork-they point out areas that need further practice. Disqualifications are necessary to keep the competition fair and equitable for all competitors. A supportive attitude on the part of the official, coach, and parent can make a positive situation out of the disqualification.