

Swim Meets 101- A Guide to Swim Meet Survival

Part 2

We hope that 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 exactly 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. We have the best swim parents who are more than willing to help a new family!

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 want 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 and athletic shoes
- Chairs and/or a tent/awning if it is an outside meet

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. Theft can happen anywhere.

Your child's events- The Heat Sheet

Note- please do not wait until the night before a meet to email the coach with a question about what your child is swimming. Because our file with everyone's events in it has to be sent to the host team in advance, you should be able to see their events on Team Unify at LEAST a few days prior to the meet if not a week or more.

The Heat Sheet is a list of each event that is happening in that session in event specific order. You can find your swimmers events on the Event site, but they are going to need to know what heat and lane to swim in also. If the host is sending heat sheets in advance, they will be on the KYA Event page for that meet as one of the links. Heat sheets are usually one of the last links we receive from a host team, so they may not be available until the night before. You can print them at home and have their arm or a sheet of paper ready for them to use in the morning.

A very convenient place to write your swimmers events is on the back of your child's hand or arm. 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 event

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

We will cover what to do if heat sheets are NOT sent in advance in a later section.

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 in between events. Don't forget to download the Meet Mobile app so you can follow along and get results in real-time. You may want to consider bringing some of the following:

- A comfortable folding chair (rock-hard gymnasium floors and unforgiving bleacher seats will get uncomfortable as the day progresses)
- Ball-point pen, magic marker, highlighter
- Book, paper, magazine * If this is a home meet that we are hosting, you will likely be busy helping with one of the many volunteer positions and won't need to bring these kinds of items. If you 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 If you opt to pack food/drinks, here are some good and bad swim meet food 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
 - Plain or 5 grams of sugar or less yogurt
- Think natural energy, Easily digestible, portable foods are your best choices.

Bad:

- Candy & sweets (anything with heavy sugar content)
- Fatty foods, fried foods, chips (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 meet 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.

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? Swimmers should arrive already dressed in their swim suit with warm clothes and tennis shoes on. When they arrive, they should take their cap, goggles and towel and immediately report to their coach in the pool area. Swimmers are required to sit with the team in the team area. Typically for younger swimmers, a group parent will be with them as well

as a coach. In most instances, parents will be asked to sit in another part of the pool deck. Just as you wouldn't sit with your football, baseball or soccer player, swimming is no different.

Heat Sheet

Find a heat sheet. If you couldn't print one prior, they may be selling them at the pool or, they are electronically available on the Meet Mobile app. While your swimmer is warming up, this is the time to get out your highlighter and mark your swimmer's events. Once your swimmer returns, make sure they drink something and immediately put on clothing and shoes (and parka if it is cold). They should just hang out and rest for their first race! It is also a good time to make sure they know their events.

Don't worry too much; your child will get a helpful reminder from their coaches and also on deck before they jump in the water. The important thing is that your child remains either on the pool deck in the team area so they can hear or see what event is in the water.

Chapter 3 – The Meet

If this is a meet we are hosting, head to your volunteer post. Just keep an eye on your child's event numbers so you have plenty of time to watch their swim. Don't worry, your volunteer coworkers all have the same idea – we work together to make sure we don't miss our children's events. If we're at another team's hosted meet, this is a great time to scope out their facility a bit. Make sure you know where the restrooms are and of course the pool area, and finally how to get back to your team area. Make sure that your swimmer stays warm and hydrated.

The body uses energy to warm itself and energy is something to conserve before events. Make sure that they keep up with their cap and goggles – there's nothing more nerve wracking than searching for caps and goggles seconds before its time to report. If they keep their caps on and goggles on their forehead, they're less likely to lose them. Your main job at this point is to make sure your child stays nearby between events as opposed to wandering the facility.

The heat sheet is the most important resource for your swimmer at a meet. They should learn early in their swimming career how to read the heat sheet and when to start getting ready to swim. For 10 and Under swimmers, a coach will tell them when to start getting ready for a race and if it is appropriate to do a warm-up swim first. This can change from meet to meet so it is important that they pay attention. Typically, meets events either run youngest to oldest or oldest to youngest. Events will ALWAYS be for girls first and then boys.

Typically, a coach will ask your swimmer to be behind the block to wait when the event for Girls or Boys before theirs starts. Here is an example:

Event 2 Boys 11-12 50 Backstroke 4 heats total
Event 3 Girls 8-U 100 Freestyle 4 heats total
Event 4 Boys 8-U 100 Freestyle 3 heats total
Event 5 Girls 9-10 100 Freestyle 2 heats total
Event 6 Boys 9-10 100 Freestyle 5 heats total

If your swimmer is A 9-10 Girl in Heat 3 of Event 5, they should be behind the block when the GIRLS event before hers starts, which is Event 3. If this seems confusing, do not worry. The coaching staff will help them every step of the way. If a swimmer is going to be up and waiting for their event, we would prefer they wait behind the block instead of in the team area. Waiting

behind the block also gives the coach a chance to have some last-minute pep talks and give advice or just to encourage and help them relax.

One of the main reasons why attending meets is so important for a young swimmer is to get to understand how meets work and how to problem solve. You would be surprised how quickly the younger swimmers catch on to the cadence of a meet.

Please remember that as a parent you are not allowed behind the blocks, to discuss time with the timers, or approach the stroke and turn judges. If there is a question or problem, you should ask your coach who will then handle it for you. Note: It is very important that your child speaks to their coach both before and after their race. This is a great way to get immediate feedback during a race setting.

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 be 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. Remember that this is a learning opportunity and the 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. After the meet the team receives the DQ slips and your swimmer should talk with their coach about the DQ.

Race Results

The Meet Mobile app is your fastest source of information. However, times displayed on Meet Mobile are NOT to be considered final. Meet Mobile gets all of its information straight from the computer system operating the meet and, just like with anything else, often times there are errors that need to be corrected after each session.

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. Ribbons and medals are awarded at bigger meets a few times per season. Ribbons are usually given for 1st through 6th place finishes in each event. Medals are usually awarded for High point winners and runner ups. High point winner are the swimmers who scored the most points in their age group during the meet. Awards are distributed at practice, usually a couple of days following the meet.