



Swim Meet 101



Congratulations and welcome! You have made a great decision to take part in the wonderful sport of swimming. As you may have already learned, competitive swim teams require their members to enter and participate in swim meets. Since you might be new to swimming/competitive swimming, we suggest that you take a moment and read this packet carefully.

The purpose of this packet is:

1. To, briefly, educate you about competitive strokes
2. To provide detailed information about swim meets and what you and your swimmers should know and do while at a meet.
3. To educate you about *timing* at swim meets.

Please know that our coaching staff are always available to answer any questions you may have about swimming, swim meets, and all swimming related issues.

Mohammad Khadembashi

COMPETITIVE STROKES

The four competitive strokes are

(1) Freestyle, (2) Backstroke, (3) Breaststroke, and (4) Butterfly.

Events are held in all of the competitive strokes at varying distances depending on the age-group of the swimmer. In addition, there is a combination of the strokes swum by one swimmer called the individual medley. Other swimming events include relays, which are a group of four swimmers who either all swim freestyle (freestyle relay) or each swim one of the competitive strokes in the order of backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle (medley relay).

SWIM SEASONS

The swim year is divided into two seasons. **The winter, or "short course", season runs from mid-September to mid-March.** The meets are held in a 25-yard pool. **The summer, or "long course", season runs from early April to mid-August.** Meets are generally held outside in 50 meter pools (Olympic size).



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MEET SCHEDULE:

Each season's meet schedule is distributed at the outset of the season.

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SWIM MEETS...BUT, WERE AFRAID TO ASK (or didn't know who to ask):

Swim meets are a great family experience! 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.

- **Before the Meet Starts**

1. Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled call time. This time will be emailed to each parent a day or two before the meet.
2. Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's blankets, swim bags, folding chairs and/or sleeping bags. The team usually sits in one place together, so look for some familiar faces or team banners/tents.
3. Have your child find the check-in place and either you or your swimmer will need to check themselves in.
 - A. There will be a table set up on the pool deck or at a designated area. Your child's name will be highlighted on a list, and they will be given a Sharpie pen to write their race numbers on their hand or forearm.
 - B. Check for signs posted around the pool area. Workers at the table will help the swimmers check in. If there is any trouble, keep calm, check with the meet manager or come to a coach for assistance.
 - C. This is done so that the people running the meet know who is actually at the meet.
4. Once "checked in", write each event-number on your swimmer's hand in ink. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen for.



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5. Your swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the coaches for warm-up instructions. It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team. Swimmer's bodies are just like cars on a cold day-he/she needs to get the engine going and warmed-up before he/she can go all out.
6. After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her towels are and sit there until the next event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled in.
7. The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after all warm-ups are over.
8. 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 the coaching staff. They, in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.
9. Meet program. A "Meet Program" is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. Meet programs generally sell for one to two dollars per day. 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 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".

- **Meet Starts**

1. 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 after checking in). He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.
2. Once the meet begins for the day the event numbers will show up on the scoreboard at most pools. If there are any questions as to when your child is swimming please have them come talk to their coaches. Each swimmer should



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report to a coach at least 3 events prior to their event for final reminders/instructions.

3. As your child's event nears their heat & lane assignments will be posted. Each event is broken down into heats of 8 swimmers (1 per lane) depending on their entry time. Once they have this information they should report it to the coach.
4. After reporting to the coaches, the swimmer swims their race.
5. **After each swim:**
 - A. He/she is to ask the timers (people behind the blocks at each lane) his/her time.
 - B. He/she should go immediately to their coach. The coach will ask him/her their time and discuss the swim with each swimmer.
6. **Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:**
 - A. The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with them. You need to tell him/her how proud you are and what a great job he/she did.
 - B. Take him/her back to the towel area and relax.
 - C. This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, get a drink or something light to eat.
 - D. The swimmer now waits until his/her next event is called and starts the procedure again
7. When a swimmer has completed all of his/her events he/she and their parents get to go home. **Make sure, however, you, as a parent, check with the coach before leaving to make sure your swimmer is 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/she is not there. (The coaches speak from experience on this issue).

What Happens If Your Child Has a Disappointing Swim?



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If your child has a poor race and comes out of it feeling bad, talk about the good things. You never talk about the negative things.

Tell them “I love to watch you swim”, and send them to talk to the coaches.

What To Take To The Meet

1. **Most important:** Swim Suit and Team swim cap--and goggles.
2. **Towels**-Realize your swimmer will be there awhile, so pack at least two.
3. **Something to sit on.** Example: camping chairs, sleeping bag, old blanket, or anything that will be comfortable to sit on. The swimmers will be spending a lot of time on it.
4. **Sweat suits/Parka** – staying warm at meets is key!
5. **T-shirts:** Two or three.
6. **Games:** travel games, coloring books, books, anything to pass the time.
7. **Food/Fuel:** Each swimmer is usually allowed to bring a small cooler. It is better to bring snacks. They usually have snack bars at the meet, but the lines are long and most of the time they only sell junk food. Suggestions for items to bring:
 - Drinks: Water, Sports drink, coconut water, chocolate milk, etc.
 - Snacks: Granola bars, Fun fruits, yogurt, cereal, sandwiches, etc.

Once you have attended one or two meets this will all become very routine. Please do not hesitate to ask any other parent for help or information!

These meets are a lot of fun for the swimmers! He/she gets to visit with his/her friends, play games, and meet kids from other teams. He/she also gets to "race" and see how much he/she has improved from all the hard work he/she has put in at practice.



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Very Basic Swimming Rules

- **Starts**

The swimmers are not allowed a false start. If they jump the start and the starter thinks they are trying to get an advantage (whether intentional or not-it does not matter), they will be taken out of the race.

- **Turns and finishes**

1. Freestyle: feet have to touch the wall
2. Backstroke: swimmers have to remain on their backs for the duration of the race.
3. Breaststroke and Butterfly:
 - a. Swimmers have to touch the wall with both hands at the same time.
 - b. A swimmer may not freestyle kick off the wall in either breaststroke or butterfly.
 - c. When swimming butterfly, both arms must move at the same time.

Timing 101

(Fear not the pickle!)

A swim race has few basic needs: pool, swimmers, and timers. **You are the timer.**

Every family that has a child entered into a meet must time at that meet. Most often, the timing requirement is one hour per child entered; however, sometimes two or more hours are needed to fulfill our team's timing commitment.

What's a timer?

- At every race, each lane has three corresponding "chairs" – timers responsible for that lane.
- Chairs are allocated to teams based upon the number of swimmers they have entered into the meet.
- We usually have at least 3 or 4 chairs to fill.

How does one time?

- It's easy! Every chair has a "pickle" – a button connected to an automatic timing system. When the swimmer in your lane touches the wall, push the button. That's it!
- One of the three chairs is also responsible for hand timing using a stopwatch.



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- o Make sure you know how to run the watch before the first race.
- o Start the watch at the *flash of light* which goes off at the start of each race. Do not start from the beep.
- o Stop the watch when the swimmer touches the wall.
- o If you miss a start, don't worry! Call for a back-up watch, and you're back in business.
- One of the three chairs is also responsible for the clipboard.
 - o One clipboard per lane holds sheets listing the swimmers in your lane by race.
 - o Call the swimmers' names prior to their heat.
 - o If your swimmer isn't there, call their name a few times – they may be in the wrong lane.
 - o Record the hand time (stopwatch time) in the space provided on the sheet. An official will deliver and pick up the sheets from time to time.
- Timing responsibilities are explained by a meet official prior to every race.
- Stay at your post until you are relieved by the next timer. If your relief is late, ask another Westside Aquatics parent to help find your replacement.

Best seat in the house

- Relax – timing is fun: you interact with the kids, get yummy snacks, meet other parents, and you have the best seat in the house to watch some great swimming!

Timing assignments

- IF your child is signed up for the meet, you will be assigned a timing slot. So please make all arrangements to fulfill your duty.
- The timing assignments will be emailed out one or two days before the start of the meet.
- If you are unable to report for the scheduled time, please contact the coach immediately or switch with another parent and contact the coach about the change.

Questions?

- Just ask a coach to point out a timing “expert.” *You’ll* be the expert in no time.

If you're at the meet, you've got a seat!

Thanks!