

Swim Team 101

Welcome to swimming, a sport that your child can do for the rest of his/her life. Your child will make friends, work for goals and develop personal character. Swimming, with components of both team and personal achievements, is a unique sport. Success is best measured in personal improvement against the clock, not in just place achieved. As part of the YMCA program swimmers are awarded "Lifetime Best Time" ribbons for every time they improve their race time at a meet. So it does not matter against whom they are racing because if they improve their time they are recognized. The dedicated attention from the coaching staff gives each swimmer the ability to continuously improve their strokes and times.

The goal of the YMCA swimming program is to develop caring, honest, respectful, responsible and successful swimmers. The focus of the program is on more than successful swimming. Swimming at the YMCA is about fostering a partnership between coaches and parents that will help a swimmer strive and develop into the best person they can be.

Parental Role

The support you provide to your child plays an essential role in continual growth and success in competitive swimming.

- Encourage a positive attitude.
- Trust in the coach.
- Be active with the team, other swimmers and parents. Show your swimmer your commitment is more than chauffeuring them back and forth to practice. Take the time to actively learn about the team and the sport.
- Take care of your swimmer. This includes all of the things you would expect; eating right, practice, resting. Mental preparation also plays a key part in your swimmer's success. Remember to emphasize the importance of improvement versus winning. Swimming competition is a swimmer against themselves and his/her past times. Celebrate and praise the Lifetime Best Time ribbons.
- Encourage your swimmer to set goals. A beginning goal can be to make it through practice! Eventually, the goals will become more specific based on your swimmer's interests and strengths.

What Do I Talk about with My Swimmer?

In general it is always good to show an interest and show some knowledge of the sport. Here are some starter questions.

1. "Did you enjoy practice?" Of course, the eighth repeat of a set of ten will not be "fun" but your swimmer should enjoy the experience. They will have been given a challenge and will have succeeded.
2. "What is the coach telling you?" Coaches will make suggestions and point out the good things your swimmer is doing. Have your child repeat those to you and you can reinforce them.
3. "How do you feel?" Physically they will be tired after practice but they should recover after eating and sleeping.
4. "What do you want to work on during your swimming?" Most beginning swimmers do not know what strokes they will be doing best but they can say they want to master a particularly tough stroke. Encourage them as they set and work towards realistic goals. Only a maximum of 52 swimmers out of approximately 500,000 swimmers make the Olympic team. But everyone can master the strokes.
5. "What do you want to swim at the meet?" Your swimmer has been working hard at practice and should be allowed to swim every stroke they feel comfortable swimming. Talk about the meets and even encourage your swimmer to take a risk. If you have any doubts, check with the coach.
6. "Did you swim as well as you thought you would at the meet?" Do not focus on finish place for a new swimmer. Finish place is a function of who shows up at the meet, which you can't control. Focus on the good; for example he or she swam a personal best time. Use this time to look ahead to the next meet and set another goal or goals. If a disqualification happened, remind your swimmer that even Olympic athletes get disqualified.
7. "I noticed you were doing better this meet/practice. Do you think you were doing better?" To use this you need to e-mail the coach and ask what they have been talking about to your swimmer. Look for that in your swimmer either at meets or if you watch during practice.

Nutrition

1. A balanced diet; your child will burn more calories at a practice than at any other time during their day. This is true even if they participate in another sport. Make sure they eat proper food before either a practice or a meet.
2. Water before, during and after practice. Bring a water bottle to the pool when practicing for drinking between sets.
3. Carbohydrates are required for swimmers. This is where they get the energy to do those final sets at practice. Unless your child is obese, allow them to eat as many "carbs" as they want during swimming season. The rule of thumb is 0.5 to 2.0 grams of carbohydrate per pound of body weight 1 to 4 hours prior to exercise.
4. Plan to have your child eat something very soon after a practice- within 1-2 hours. This will replenish the energy used and will build the muscle needed.
5. Protein is necessary. They will be building muscle and need protein as a building block.
6. Water vs. sports drink? Water is preferred but sports drinks taste good so sports drinks are fine. Keep away from soda pop and caffeine-filled drinks. Soda pop has extra sugar, soda pop has acid and your swimmer will be making enough acid they do not need more; soda pop has gas that can unnecessarily bloat his/her stomach. Caffeine-filled drinks actually contribute to fluid loss.
7. Fat is not an enemy. Sugar is not an enemy. But both should only be used in moderation.
8. Minerals are needed but the best source is fruits and vegetables. Bananas, oranges, "veggie-bags" at meets.
9. Dietary Supplements are a very real part of modern athletics. USA Swimming has a good review of supplements found at the web site. This topic may not be as far away as you think. Sports drinks and energy bars are dietary supplements.

What is a Swim Meet?

Swim meets provide your swimmer the opportunity to demonstrate the skills they have learned over the past months. Swim meets are for the swimmers first. They also provide an opportunity for relatives and friends to enjoy their swimmer's success. Below are listed swim meets available to swimmers from Wisconsin in rank of easiest to hardest for which to qualify:

Olympics
USA Swimming Nationals
YMCA Nationals
Zone Meet
USA Swimming A+ Meet
YMCA State Meet
Wisconsin Swimming State Meet
Sectional Meet
Open Meets

What About Swim Meets?

Swim meets provide your swimmer the opportunity to demonstrate the skills they have learned over the past months. Swim meets are for the swimmers first. They also provide an opportunity for relatives and friends to enjoy their swimmers success.

At "home meets" or those at the Green Bay YMCA, it is a requirement that a parent participate in the meet. This typically is completed by timing, doing food service or a variety of other activities. These "work assignments" are coordinated by the Meet Committee and assignments are made known the week leading up to the meet. By helping out at the meets, parents help keep down the costs of the swimming program and help the swimmers develop organizational skills.

Some meets are away meets. So at the "away meets" or meets not held at the Green Bay YMCA parents should continue to support and enjoy their swimmer's success. But you may not want to sit and watch everyone swim. So bring something to do or recall that YMCA facilities have reciprocity and as a YMCA member you are free to use these other facilities. However, know your swimmer; depending on their age and independence they may want to be with you when they are not swimming or they may want to be with their friends.

How Do We Pick What to Swim at a Meet?

You will need to pick wisely to balance challenge with realism. Some things to consider:

1. What does your child enjoy? Always choose something that he or she enjoys doing.
2. What does your child do well? Do not always choose what your child does well, particularly during the first few years of competition.
3. What event hasn't your child raced? Some swimmers try one new stroke or distance every meet. Hey, you get a personal best time every meet that way.
4. When do the events occur in the meet? Too many events too close together may make your swimmer too tired. Or, scheduling events close together will help your swimmer keep focus.
5. What does the coach think? The coach will always be able to make recommendations about what your child should swim.

What to expect at a Swim Meet

A swim meet can make for a long day, but your swimmer will enjoy every last minute!

The week leading up to the swim meet "heat sheets" become available via e-mail for parents to review and print off. Heat Sheets will identify each and every event, i.e. Event #1, Girls 8 & under 25 yard freestyle; each and every heat, most events have more than one heat; and the lane that each swimmer is assigned to. Often the heat sheets or "psych sheets" will also have the anticipated time each heat will start. These anticipated times are very good estimators of when a swimmer should expect to swim; however, each meet goes at it's own pace, therefore take note these are anticipated start times.

You need to allow extra time when traveling to an "away" swim meet. Your swimmer needs to be on the pool deck 5-10 minutes before the team is scheduled for warm ups. Remember that the moment you turn into the parking lot is usually at least 10 minutes before your swimmer will make it onto the pool deck.

At a home meet there is an assigned rest area for the GBY swim team. At an away meet there will be a designated rest area for visiting teams. The "rest" area is where most people "set up camp" with their coolers, chairs, sleeping bags, and swim gear. This is where your swimmer will be able to rest between races. There are instances when the time between races can be hours.

If your swimmer is 8 or younger, they will be assisted in getting to the proper block at the proper time for the proper race. The home team will have a "clerk of course" (a group of people who assist the younger children).

If your swimmer is 9 and older, they are responsible for getting to the blocks in time for their race. Often times same age swimmers know when they swim the same events and assist each other to get to those events timely. A very common practice is to use a sharpie and write, yes write, on the arm of a swimmer their event, heat and lane assignments.

After your swimmer is done with any race, they must go to the coaches table and conference with the coaches. This is where your swimmer will receive feedback on their race and Lifetime Best Time ribbons when merited.

Do not criticize your swimmer about their performance; the coach will let them know how they did, and what they need to work on. If your swimmer asks for your input, focus on the positive.

You may want to write your swimmer's finishing time on your heat sheet. If you do not catch it, you can always get their time from the meet result sheets that are posted.

What to Bring to a Swim Meet

It may feel like you have packed everything but the kitchen sink, but there is a long checklist to consider.

1. Racing swimsuit – recommend that they do not wear it if you need to travel 1 hour to the meet.
2. Spare swimsuit
3. Goggles – good pair and at least one other pair.
4. Swim cap – two for girls and at least one for boys.
5. Towels – 2: one for on deck, one for after showering.
6. Bath robe, sweats or warm-ups, pj pants, fleece; your swimmer may be very cold between races. This can be adjusted after a few meets to what is comfortable for your swimmer.

7. Flip-flops for wearing between swims.
8. Swim bag to hold items #1-#7.
9. Folding chair(s) for mom or dad. It may be a long meet and you may not want to sit on the bleachers the entire time.
10. Some families bring sleeping bags, pillows, blankets as well.
11. Something to read for parents. Long meets have a lot of swimmers and you may not want to watch all of them.
12. Games that are easy to play and easy to stop. Swimmers will need to get to the pool from the resting area quickly and at the most inopportune times during a meet.
13. Sharpie marker for marking arms or legs, keeping track of times, etc. See the attached diagram for instructions on marking event information on arms or legs.
14. Highlighter for marking the heat sheet indicating when your child and others of interest to you are swimming. A clipboard is also useful.
15. Food and drinks to be eaten throughout the day. Snacks and drinks are sold, but may sell out.
16. Money for heat sheets, admission, food and drink, swim gear, etc.

Additional Things for an Away Meet:

17. Directions and Dave's cell phone number.
18. Parent's work out gear. There is always an hour of warm up and you can get in a nice work out during that time. All YMCA's recognize the GBY card.
19. Pillow for the trip home. Your child will want to eat, go to the bathroom and then sleep on the way home.

Parents are responsible for writing the swimmer's event information somewhere on their skin, (usually arm, hand or leg) to help the swimmer identify his/her event #, heat # & lane # assignments.

If you just remember **E-H-L-S**, which stands for Event, Heat, Lane & Stroke, you will be fine.

After buying a heat sheet at the entrance to the Meet, sit down with a Sharpie marker and just draw a little grid on your swimmer's arm or leg so that both the swimmer & coach can see what your child is scheduled to swim.

Here is an example of how it would look on your Swimmer's arm or leg:

E	H	L	S
3	1	2	Med Relay #2 swimmer – Breast
25	5	4	50 free
37	4	6	25 breast
43	3	1	25 back
61	2	4	Free Relay #3 swimmer

(Coaches may be able to assist new or young swimmers at **home meets only**).