

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR SWIMMING PARENTS

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(ADAPTED FROM ED CLENDANIEL'S 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR LITTLE LEAGUE PARENTS)

I. THOU SHALL NOT IMPOSE THY AMBITIONS ON THY CHILD

Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual.

II. THOU SHALL BE SUPPORTIVE NO MATTER WHAT.

There is only one question to ask your child after a practice or a competition – "Did you have fun?"

III. THOU SHALL NOT COACH THY CHILD

Do not undermine the professional coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to provide love and support. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job.

IV. THOU SHALL ONLY HAVE POSITIVE THINGS TO SAY AT A SWIMMING MEET.

You should be encouraging and never criticize your child or the coach. Both of them know when mistakes have been made. Make sure your child is fed, hydrated and rested. Listen to them and then wait 24 hours. Big emotions can be overwhelming in the moment. Problems or mistakes might not seem so big after 24 hours.

V. THOU SHALL ACKNOWLEDGE THY CHILD'S FEARS.

New experiences can be stressful situations and can trigger some big emotions. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Your job is to encourage and assure the child that they can do it.

VI. THOU SHALL NOT CRITICIZE THE OFFICIALS

Please don't criticize those who are doing the best they can in purely voluntary positions.

VII. HONOR THY CHILD'S COACH.

The bond between coach and swimmer is special. It contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child.

VIII. THOU SHALL BE LOYAL AND SUPPORTIVE OF THY TEAM.

An age-group swim team consists of members from ages 5-18, like no other sports team. One of the most fun parts is to see the young age groups cheering for the older age groups and vice versa.

IX. THY CHILD SHALL HAVE GOALS BESIDES WINNING.

Most successful swimmers have learned to focus on the process and not the outcome. Giving an honest effort, regardless of the outcome, is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, "My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. Does this make me a failure? No, in fact I am very proud of that swim." What a tremendous outlook to carry on through life.

X. THOU SHALL NOT EXPECT THY CHILD TO BECOME AN OLYMPIAN.

There are over 250,000 athletes in YMCA and USA Swimming. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are about .0002%.

