

# Swim Meets 101

## A Guide to Help You Through Your First Swim Meet Golden West Swim Club

### Entering a Meet

Entering a meet for the first time can seem confusing. However, the following procedures should make the process go smoothly. After a couple of meets, it will become automatic.

- **Look over the Meet Information Sheet:** Each meet has an information sheet. You can find it in several places: you can find it in the event details on our webpage, and it can be found in the [Upcoming Meet Section](#) at SCS's website. There are several important things to check for with each meet. The first is the meet registration deadline. This deadline is not the same as the team deadline. The team deadline is usually a day or two before the meet deadline; you can find the team deadline in the event details on our webpage. Secondly, you look to see if there are any minimum (*your best time in the event must be faster than the listed time*) or maximum (*your best time must be slower than the listed time*) times listed.
  - **Note:** Your first meet will likely either be a "Red, White, Blue Meet" or a "Red White" meet. These meets typically do not have minimum times.
- **Consult with your coach on event selection:** Your coach will have a good understanding of your strengths and weaknesses and which events will match up well.
- **Submit your entries through the [Meets and Events Section](#) of the GWSC website:** After logging in select "*attend this event,*" then select "*yes please sign me up for this meet.*" You will then be able to check which events you would like to swim. When you are done click "*save changes.*" If you need to make changes you can log back in and edit your entries until the team registration deadline.
  - **Note:** The system is designed to enforce qualifying times and will not let you enter events in which you have not met the standard. If you think you have met the standard and/or our records are not correct please leave a note in the notes box for our entry chairperson. They will check on your times and make the correction if you are eligible.
- **Our entry chairperson will submit the team's entries to the meet director:** After they have been submitted you will see "*approved*" next to your event listings.
  - **Note:** If you prefer or miss the team registration deadline, you can also submit your entries directly by mail to the meet director. These must be postmarked by the meet registration deadline. You can find the entry form on the [Resources Page](#).

### WHAT TO BRING TO A MEET

After attending a few meets, you will know what you and your swimmer need at a meet. Below are suggestions to get you started:

- **GWSC Team Suit**
- **GWSC Team Cap and Goggles:** Bring an extra pair of goggles and an extra cap in case the first one breaks.
- **Towels:** Realize your swimmer will be there awhile, so we recommend you pack one towel per event – especially in the colder months when the towels don't dry quickly.
- **GWSC Team Parka or Warm Ups:** In cold weather these can be essential, especially at outdoor pools.
- **Extra Clothes:** Depending on the weather conditions.
- **Sunscreen**
- **Food:** Each swimmer should bring a small cooler with appropriate snacks and plenty to drink.
- **Something to sit on:** Not all facilities have bleachers.
- **Book, Homework or Games:** Anything to pass the time – some meets can be long and there is some wait time between races.

## SWIM MEET PROCEDURES

### **Before the Meet Starts**

- **Getting there:** If you are swimming in the first few events you should plan on arriving about an hour before your session is scheduled to start. This will give you enough time to check in and warm up during the designated warm up time. If you are not swimming until later in the meet you should plan on arriving about an hour before your event is scheduled. This will give you time to check in and then warm up in the warm up space provided.
- **Checking in:** Once you arrive at the meet location you must check-in. Check-in helps the meet run smoothly so that only swimmers that are actually at the meet are placed in heats of the events that are being swum. The check-in area is usually well marked and near the entrance to the facility. ONLY the swimmer may check-in; parents may not check-in their swimmer. Tell the check-in person your name and the clerk will verify the events that you are swimming for only that day. Check-in is closed for each event approximately 30 minutes prior to each event. If you do not check-in, you will not be allowed to swim that event. If you decide you do not want to swim an event that you have signed up for, you may “scratch” that event at check-in time. You will not be penalized for scratching an event. However, you will be penalized if you do not show up for a race – you will not be able to swim your next event. If you arrive after the check-in is closed, and the event is more than 30 minutes away, you can check-in at the admin area. Swimmers must check-in each day of a meet.
  - **Tip:** Once checked-in, write each event # on your hand in ink. This makes it easier to remember what events you are swimming and what event # to listen for. Mom and dad may want to write them down too.
- **Warming up:** Once you are situated at the meet with your teammates, get your cap and goggles on and report to your coach for warm-up instructions. You'll find the coaches alongside the pool; they tend to sit in the same place at any particular pool. The purpose of these warm ups, which last 30-45 minutes, is to prepare your body to swim, help you get accustomed to a foreign pool and put you in a mindset to race. Furthermore, if there are 90

minutes before your first race or in between your races, you may need to warm up again. Your coach will guide you through this process.

- **Waiting:** After warm up, go back to the team area and listen for events to be called. Sometimes you cannot hear the announcer, so it is very important that you pay attention to the pace of the meet. Meets generally start on time.

- **Meet Programs:** A meet program is generally available for sale in the concession area of the pool. These programs sell for about \$3-5. The program lists all swimmers in each event according to their entry time. If you are swimming an event for the first time, you will be entered as a “NT,” meaning, no time.

### **During the Meet**

- **Know your Event Numbers:** That’s why it is a good idea to write it in ink on your hand.

- **Look for the Heat Sheets:** These should be posted by Girls events and Boys events in a central area at the meet. Before the swimmers event, the heat sheet will be posted. The heat sheet shows the heat and lane number for all swimmers participating in that event. The number of heats in an event varies depending on the number of swimmers entered. If it is your first meet or you do not have a time in a particular event it is likely that you will be in the first 2 or 3 heats. You should also write down your heat and lane number

- **Report to the Coach:** After finding your heat and lane assignment, report this info to your coach. If your coach does not know when you are swimming, they may miss your race. The coach will discuss any last minute instructions and race strategy.

- **Listen for your event:** As mentioned before, it is often difficult to hear your event being called, even if over a loudspeaker. Sometimes there is an event # posted on the pool deck. It is best to report early to your event – check with the timer in your lane to make sure you are in the correct lane and heat. Be sure to be on time – missing your event will disqualify you from your next race.

- **NOTE:** Occasionally, at lower level meets, there will be a staging area for the younger swimmers when swimming the 25 yard events. This means an official will line up all of the swimmers and take them to their starting positions in the correct order.

- **Starting Position:** When your heat is ready to swim the starter calls the swimmers to the blocks. The starter will blow a short whistle to let swimmers know to approach the blocks, then 1 long whistle to get on the blocks. The starter will say, “take your mark,” and when he is sure all the swimmers are set they will sound the starting tone or beep to start the race.

- **SWIM!!** Your best!

- **After each swim:** Most times the official wants you to stay in the water (on the wall) until the next race has started – this is called a “flyover” start. Do not distract the swimmer on the block ready to race. Ask the timers your time or check the score board if there is one.

•**Report this to your coach:** The coach will discuss your swim with you and give suggestions for improvement and positive comments regarding your swim. Then warm down and prepare for your next race!!

- **Note:** At meets coaches are trying to reinforce the same plans and strategies developed during practices. This requires consistent one-on-one communication. To keep the interaction more meaningful to the swimmer it is best if the parents do not accompany their children to the pre- and post talks with the coaches. It is beneficial for the child to learn to interpret and express the coach's advice back to their parents, rather than for the parents to interpret it to their swimmer.

### PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Tell your swimmer what a GREAT JOB they did!!!!**
- **TEAM Support for Golden West:** Cheer your swimmers fellow teammates on!! This builds camaraderie between the families and swimmers.
- **Keep track of the progression of the meet:** So your swimmer doesn't miss an event or forget to talk to their coach!!
- **Timing at the Meet:** It is the responsibility of all Golden West parents to participate as timers. Timing is not difficult, but without volunteers, it is not possible to conduct a successful meet. Plus you get a great seat to watch the meet. Generally one person will take on the responsibility to put together a "timing assignment sheet," where you can sign up for a timing shift. Each shift will last from 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on how many parents or families attend the meet. Please be on time for your shift!
- **Timing Procedure/Equipment:** Each lane has 3 timers assigned to it. Timing procedures vary by Meet. It is very important to get up and watch the swimmer touch the wall when timing. **DO NOT SIT IN THE CHAIR AND WATCH!!!** Accurate times are important for swimmers that are trying to improve their times and can be crucial to qualifying for upper level meets.

### WHEN ALL YOUR EVENTS ARE FINISHED

- When all of your events are completed, and your timing responsibilities are over, you may go home. However, check with your coach to be sure you are not included on a relay.
- Clean up the area around where you were sitting.
- Also, check the final postings for your official times and record them prior to leaving. These are normally posted shortly after the event is over. If you do not get them at the meet, you can check the [Results Section at Southern California Swimming's Website](#).

### Other Advice

- Let the coaches coach! Your support is essential and it is really enough to see that your swimmer gets to workouts, meets, eats correctly, and gets enough sleep. Let all of this be THEIR dream realized, not YOURS.
- At the meet, look for other GWSC parents. Try to sit in the same area. This will help build the friendships for both you and your swimmer. Also, as you're "learning the ropes", seek out more experienced parents. They can help answer any questions you might have.
- For at least the first few meets, get there early. Getting familiar with the setup at the pool will help relieve stress of a crowded meet. Please let your coach know prior to the meet if your swimmer will be arriving late or leaving early. This is essential for proper planning of relay events.
- Dress for comfort, both winter and summer. Layers work well and if you're not sure about seating, always bring a few compact beach/pool chairs.