

The following document is courtesy of [USA Swimming](#).

Swim meets are a great family experience. They're a place where the whole family can spend time together. 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 possible.

## Before the Meet Starts

- Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information listed under the Meets section of the RICE [webpage](#) or on [www.gulfswimming.org](http://www.gulfswimming.org).
- Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's blanket, swim bags and/or towels. The team usually sits together so look for some familiar faces or RICE gear.
- Find the *Circle-in* place and either you or your swimmer will need to circle themselves in for each event.
  - This is usually around the area marked "Clerk of Course". When in doubt ask another parent or coach, or look for a large group of swimmers with pencils.
  - Check for special posted instructions in the area. Each swimmer will need to circle in their whole name for each event they are swimming that day. If this is not done, the swimmer will not be able to swim that event.
  - This is done so that people running the meet know who is actually attending the meet. All heat and lane assignments will be posted according to who circles in the events.
- Once *Circled-In* make sure to write each event number down. Sometimes doing this on the swimmer's hand is also helpful. This helps you and your swimmer remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen for.
- Your swimmer now gets cap and goggles and reports to the pool/coach for warm ups. It is very important for all swimmers to warm up with the team. Swimmer's bodies are just like cars on a cold day. They need to get the engine going and warmed up before they are able to get all out!
- The meet will begin 15-20 minutes after the last warm up session.
- According to USA Swimming rules (because of insurance purposes) parents are not allowed on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity. Similarly, all questions concerning meet results, officiating calls, or other conduct of the meet, should be referred to the coaching staff. They, in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.
- Psych Sheets. A psych sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby area of the pool. It will list all of the swimmers seeded in an event in order of "seed time". When the meet entries are sent in the swimmers previous best time will be used for the seed time. These times must come from a USA Swimming meet. If a swimmer does not have a time in an event they will be listed with an NT or no time.



## Once the Meet Starts

- It is important that every swimmer know what events he/she will be swimming in the meet.
- The event and heat number being swam will be called during the meet. It is important that you and your swimmer follow the events as they are being swam. Girls events are typically odd numbers while boy events are evens. The events will be swam in their entirety before moving on to the next event number, unless otherwise noted. Distance events over a 400 are usually alternated between girls and boys.
- Swimmers should report to their coach with enough time to hop in for a quick warm up, talk about the race, and make it down behind the lane with enough time to get their caps and goggles on. This varies depending on the event type, number of heats, and age of the swimmers. A good rule of thumb is to send them at least 2 events before their event.
- Swimmers will get their heat and lane assignments from a designated location. Coaches do not have these during the meet. These will be posted well before the event is swam.
- Swimmers will need to line up behind their assigned lane and be prepared for their race.
- Your swimmer swims their race.
- After each swim:
  - Your swimmer should go immediately to their coach. The coach will discuss the swim with each swimmer.
  - Generally the coach follows the guidelines when discussing swims:
    - Positive comments or praise
    - Suggestions for improvement
    - Positive comments
- Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:
  - Tell your swimmer how great they did! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with them.
  - Let them sit down and relax.
  - Make sure they are staying hydrated and are eating to keep their energy up.
  - You and your swimmer wait for their next event and start the process over again.
- When a swimmer has completed all of his/her events they get to go home. Make sure, however you, as a parent, check with the coach before leaving to make sure your swimmer is not on a relay. It is not fair to other swimmers who may have stayed to swim a relay if you swimmer leaves early.

## What happens if your Swimmer has a Disappointing Swim

If your child has a poor race and comes out of it feeling bad, talk about the good things. Take them and talk about all the good things the child did in the race. Never talk



about the negative things.

If your child comes up to you and says, “That was a bad race; don’t tell me it wasn’t” there is nothing wrong with a swimmer negatively evaluating a race. The important thing is for the child not to dwell on it. You should move the swimmer on to something good. Immediately start talking about the positive things.

## What to take to the Meet

- Most important: RICE suit, RICE cap, and goggles.
- Towels: Realize your swimmer will be there awhile, so pack at least two.
- Something to sit on. Find out from the coaching staff what the deck space is like. Chairs are not always allowed. Blankets for bleachers can help with a long meet.
- Clothes: An extra set is good once the first set gets wet.
- Jacket or Hoodie: Even when it is hot outside the pool can be a cold place once the swimmer gets out of the water. Something to wear while wet is always a great thing to have at the meet.
- Games: These help keep the swimmers busy between events.
- Food: Each swimmer is usually allowed to bring a small cooler. It is better to bring snacks: Granola bars, fruit snacks, cereal, and pasta. Drinks: Fruit Juice, Gatorade, water, and Hi-C type drinks.

Once you have attended one or two meets this will all become very routine. If you have any questions try to ask an experienced meet going parent.

## 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 (intentional or not) they will be disqualified. There are no recalls for false starts. Meaning they will swim the race in the entirety and then the swimmer will be notified of their disqualification.

### Turns and Finishes

- Freestyle: Feet must touch the wall.
- Backstroke: Swimmers must be on their back when they touch the wall if not doing a flip-turn. A non-continuous turn in a flip-turn is usually the result of the swimmer rolling over too early and kicking into the wall before flipping. The turn must be a continuous motion. Finish: A swimmer must finish on their back.
- Breaststroke and Butterfly :
  - Swimmers have to touch the wall with both hands at the same time.



- A swimmer may not freestyle kick off the wall in either breaststroke or butterfly.
- When swimming butterfly, both arms must move at the same time.

Swimmers are special people and deserve to have a positive experience as rewards for their dedication and commitment. Let's make sure as parents, swimmers, and coaches we are laying the foundation for the best possible experience at meets. Even at the highest level of swimming this is still a sport and is meant to be fun.