

Goggles, Rashguards, T-shirts and Sunscreen: A New Parent's Guide

by Coach Russ Payne

Goggles

As a swimmer, I cannot understate the importance of tinted goggles when swimming outdoors in the daytime. Wearing clear or lightly-colored goggles will actually hurt my eyes. ("It feels like the sun is inside my face!") Next time you are buying goggles for your child, consider getting them at least one pair of darkly tinted or metallic goggles for sunny weather swimming. Some of these provide additional UV protection as well as being easier on the eyes.

If a swimmer does not have to constantly squint or close their eyes, they will be more comfortable. When they are more comfortable, they will be able to focus more on their technique and even be able to devote more effort to the practice. An important skill for swimming backstroke outdoors is to be able to spot the lane line next to you and stay swimming straight. This is nearly impossible when your eyes are hurting from the bright sun.

Rash Guards/ T Shirts

There are many different reasons to wear rashguards or other upper body coverings during practice, and they are perfectly valid; ranging from modesty concerns to UV protection. However, be aware that they make it more difficult for your swimmer in three ways. First, they create a large amount of drag: no matter how tight they are, they still pull on the water much more strongly than skin or swimsuits that are designed to cut drag. Second, they reduce mobility, especially in the shoulders. Finally, if they are full-arm coverings they add extra weight to the arms, making it even more difficult to lift their arms out of the water for butterfly and freestyle. Swimmers in these garments will tire more easily and may find it difficult to execute various strokes and skills.

One last thing that is important to note: since the ruling in late 2010 by FINA and USA swimming regarding competition swimwear, boys can only wear suits that cover from belly button to their knees, and girls must wear a normal swimsuit that extends no further than their knees. In competition, a swimmer may only wear a garment such as a rash guard if their are modesty concerns, *and they have prior, written consent from Pacific Swimming*. Again, it is OK to wear these garments in practice, the coaching staff simply wants you, the parents, to be aware of the concerns.

Sunscreen

We as a staff have heard many swimmers complaining of sunscreen in their eyes. We've all had it happen to us as well, and it hurts! Once the swimmer is in the water, all we can tell them is to tough through it and not to rub their eyes. There are a few things you can do to alleviate this.

When applying sunscreen, do not put it on right before they get in the water as it needs time to "soak into" the skin. Applying sunscreen to the forehead will cause excess to wash off the skin and run into the eyes. Also, when a swimmer puts their goggles on their forehead at the wall, they will get lotion on the, which will be carried directly into their eyes the next time they put the goggles on.

For ideal protection from the sun, I would recommend using Zinc Oxide. (The white stuff you might see on lifeguards' noses or the faces of the girls doing synchro in the well.) It may look funny, as it doesn't rub into the skin, but it provides almost total UV protection, and will not transfer to the eyes.