

# **SWIM MEETS 101 or EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SWIM MEETS, BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK...(or didn't know you had to...)**

Swim meets are a great experience for swimmer and family alike! They're a place where the swimmers can spend time with teammates and friends, and families can spend time with other team families. Listed below are some very in-depth guidelines geared toward helping 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 we possibly could. If you have any questions, please contact one of the coaches or your age group parent.

## **Before the Meet Starts**

1. **Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins.** This time will be listed on the website: [gulfswimming.org](http://gulfswimming.org) under the meet information section. It may also be emailed to all swimmers entered in the meet during that week. When in doubt, ask your swimmer's coach.
2. **Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's blankets, swim bags and/or sleeping bags and chairs.** The team usually sits in one place together, so look for familiar faces. Some meets will have designated team areas. At some venues, the swimmer seating area is on deck with the coaches.
3. **Find the check-in/circle-in place and go with your swimmer to check them in.**
  - This is usually near the area marked "Clerk of Course"
  - Check for special posted instructions in the area. Usually one will need to circle the swimmer's name or "#" before each swimmer name, in each event they are swimming that day. Do NOT highlight or underline swimmer names as that can be misinterpreted as a "scratch" or withdrawal from the race. If circle-in is not done at least 45 minutes prior to the start of the meet, the swimmer will NOT be allowed to swim in those events.
  - Circle-in is done so that the people running the meet can seed it properly with only those swimmers attending.
  - If "on decking" or entering your swimmer in events the day of the meet, you must do so at the Clerk of Course table usually by 7:30 or 7:45am (each meet may have their own on-deck schedule, so please check ahead of time). These meet entries are usually double the cost of meet entries paid to TWST. Please have the event number, swimmer's best time in that event, and their USA number ready with your check. The USA number consists of the swimmer birth date (mm/dd/yy) followed by the first three letters of their first name, middle initial, and then first four letters of their last name. Example: if I was born this year, my USA number would be 031211JENWSHAM. If you're your swimmer doesn't have a middle initial or if their first or last name is shorter than the required number of letters an "\*" is put in it's place. Example: if I didn't have a middle name, my USA number would be 031211JEN\*SHAM.
4. **Once "circled-in", you may write each event number on your swimmer's hand in ink.** This helps the younger swimmers remember what events they are swimming and what event numbers to look/listen for.
5. **Your swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the assigned lane ON TIME for warm-up instructions.** Team lane postings for warm-up are available online at [gulfswimming.org](http://gulfswimming.org) and posted at the host pool and also in the heat

sheets. 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 can race. Missing warm-up can result in not being included on team relays for that day. Not warming up does not make the coaches very happy!

6. **After warm-up, your swimmer should go back to the team area and prepare for his/her first event.** This is a good time to make sure that they go to the bathroom if necessary, change into their racing suit if applicable, drink fluids and eat something small if time allows.

7. **The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after the last warm-ups are over.**

8. **According to USA Swimming rules (due to insurance restrictions), parents are not allowed on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity or as a volunteer timer.** Similarly, all questions concerning meet results, an officiating call, or the conduct of the meet, should be referred through the coaching staff. They, in turn, will pursue the matter through proper channels.

9. **Heat Sheets:** A heat sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. Heat sheets generally sell for around 5 dollars, but may be more or less depending on the length of the meet. It contains all swimmers in each event in order of "seed time". When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time in the event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered with an "NT" or "no time". A "no time" swimmer will likely compete in one of the last heats of the event.

## **The Meet Starts**

If the meet is "pre-seeded", then the heat sheet will contain the assigned heat and lane numbers for each swimmer in each event.

1. **It is important for any swimmer to know what event numbers he/she is swimming.** He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.

2. **Swimmers should always be aware of how much time they have before an event.** They need to make sure they allow enough time to check in with their coaches before the race to get final instructions and reminders about their upcoming event. If a swimmer misses his/her race after they have circled-in, there is a missed event fee charged to that swimmer as a Gulf fine (usually around \$5 per missed event).

3. **A swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, or shown on an event flip chart near the clerk of course area.** Generally, girls are in odd-numbered events and boy's events are even-numbered.

4. **Events with heat and lane assignments will be posted near the starting blocks at each end of the pool.** At some meets, girls will start at one end and boys at the other. Others may run with odd heats at one end and even heats at another. The specific events will be posted at the correct starting end for each event. Heat and lane assignments will also be posted in or near the team areas. The coaches do not always have access to this information.

5. **Once a swimmer finds their heat and lane and has spoken with their coach, they should report behind the blocks with cap and goggles ready to swim.**

Once in place, they should stretch and begin to focus on the race at hand.

6. **Swimmers need to step behind the block in a timely manner when their heat is up.** The starter will signal for them to approach the block, step up, and get into starting position. They must be very still for the start – any movement once they have taken their position will result in a disqualification for a “false start”.

7. **The race is swum.**

8. **After each swim:**

- He/she should check with the timers for his/her time.
- He/she should go immediately to their coach. The coach will discuss the swim and the time achieved with each swimmer offering immediate feedback on the race.
- The swimmer should then go straight to the warm-down pool and swim the appropriate amount of laps to “cool down” their body. If no pool space is available, they should do some long stretches after a race.

9. **Things you, as a parent can do after each swim:**

- Tell your swimmer that it looked like a good swim. The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with them. They need to hear from parents that they did a good job and that you are proud of them.
- Allow them to swim the determined amount of warm-down before bringing them back to the team area.
- This is a good time to check out the bathrooms, get another drink and possibly a light snack.
- At this point, find out what event is currently swimming and figure out how long before your swimmer’s next event.

10. **When a swimmer has completed all of his/her events and it’s time to go home, make sure that he/she checks with the coach before leaving to confirm that they aren’t needed for a relay.** It isn’t fair to other swimmers who may have stayed to swim on a relay only to discover that your swimmer was also on the relay and isn’t there.

## **What Happens If Your Child has a Disappointing Swim?**

If your child has a poor race and finishes feeling bad, please leave the race analysis to the coaches. The first thing you can say is “How did you feel about that race?” You can focus on the good things you saw. You should never talk about the negatives of the race.

If your child comes up to you and says, “That was a bad race and I know it”, there is nothing wrong with a swimmer negatively evaluating their performance. The important thing is for the child not to dwell on it. You should move the swimmer on to something good. “All right, you have had a bad race. How do you think you can do better next time?” Immediately start talking about the positive things.

## **Very Special Parent Note**

**PARENTS SHOULD NEVER OFFER MONETARY INCENTIVES OR “BRIBES” TO REWARD SWIMMER PERFORMANCE.** This can’t be stressed enough! If a swimmer gets rewarded with money or gifts or the promise of trips for dropping “x” amount of time or achieving a “X” time standard, then they aren’t swimming in order to become the best athlete they can be. They are swimming to get the prize offered to them. This can cause unnecessary performance stress for

your athlete. A bad race becomes more of a failure because they aren't getting what was promised, rather than being an opportunity to learn from mistakes and become a stronger swimmer. Swimmers are special people and deserve to have positive experiences as rewards for their dedication and commitment.

### **What to Take To The Meet**

1. Most important: swim suit, caps x 2 and goggles x 2 just in case a cap or pair of goggles breaks at the meet.
2. Towels (more than one, so that there is one available after both warm-up and racing)
3. Something to sit on: sleeping bag, old blanket, folding chair, etc. Swimmers spend a lot of time in the team area and should be as comfortable as possible.
4. Sun screen (if outdoors) and baby powder if needed for caps.
5. Sweat suits or warm clothing. If the meet is indoors, the team area may be cooler for the wet swimmers than attending parents. Swim parkas are also good for this purpose.
6. T-shirts: at least two – they can easily get wet and soggy.
7. Games: travel games, books, anything to pass the time. Please make sure all items are clearly marked and stowed safely when not in the team area. Any valuable electronics or cell phones should be kept in bags and out of sight when not in use.
8. Food and drink: There is usually a concession stand available at meets with a variety of items for purchase. It is recommended that each swimmer bring water or sports drink so that they stay properly hydrated during the competition. NO Redbull or other high-caffeine drinks allowed! Healthy snacks are also encouraged. Suggested items to bring include:  
Water, fruit juice, Gatorade type beverages, granola bars, high-protein bars, fruit snacks, yogurt, cereal, pasta, jerky, peanut butter.

Once you have attended one or two meets, this information will all become very routine. Please do not hesitate to ask any other TWST parents for help or answers to your questions!

Meets are vital to the overall swim experience in terms of race strategies, performance under pressure and coping with expectations. They should also be fun for the swimmers. They allow the swimmer the chance to visit with his/her friends, play games and meet swimmers from other teams. Please make sure that your swimmer sits with his/her teammates and friends rather than sitting with parents. This helps foster a sense of self-sufficiency that will serve them well as they get older and begin attending travel meets. Swimming in meets gives them a chance to race and see how much they have improved as a result of the hard work they put in at practice.

The indoor pool area can be usually very warm and humid. Therefore, you need to make sure to dress accordingly. Nothing is worse than being hot at a swim meet. It makes the time drag so slowly! At some of the meets, parents are allowed to sit in the team area near the swimmers. Please remember to bring chairs for your comfort as well!