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Etiquette. It's a word you've probably heard only when your grandmother reminds you not to dig into your hearty serving of Thanksgiving turkey until everyone has been served. However, etiquette is a word that every swimmer should know. After all, just as there are etiquette rules at your grandmother's dinner table, there are etiquette rules for swimming, both in practice and at meets. Following these simple guidelines will help you (and your teammates) get the most out of the upcoming championship season.

Meet Etiquette

- **Arrive on time.** Get to a meet early enough to settle down into a 'spot' with your team and be ready with your cap and goggles on when the warm-up session starts. Meet warm-ups are often short and crowded, so it's important to be on time.
- **Be prepared.** It is best to know what events you are swimming BEFORE warm-up. This way, you can practice the appropriate starts, turns and sprints in the warm-up. Also, make sure that you have everything you need – towels, swimsuit, water bottle, cap and goggles
- **Sit with your teammates and cheer.** Swim meets are the best time to get to know your teammates and build team spirit. It is also easier for your coach and teammates (relay members) to find you if they need you.
- **Stay positive.** If you have a bad swim, or you don't want to swim the events you're entered in, get over it and just do your best. In her Road to Athens Journal, recently published on USA Swimming's web site, Mary DeScenza writes, "Sometimes your coach puts you in an event you do not like. You just have to do your best and not complain."
- **Bring plenty of drinks and snacks.** Know how much water you will need (about 8 ounces per event) and be prepared. Bring light snacks to munch on, such as fruit, goldfish or string cheese. You don't want to be buying Skittles from the concession stand.
- **Realize that relays are just as important as your individual events (if not more so).** Give it your all and help pump up your teammates (no matter which relay you're on). Swim in the relay order your coach gave you, and HAVE FUN! Also, stay and cheer on your team until your last teammate is out of the water.
- **Talk to your coach and cool down after every event.** Make sure that you see your coach after each event to get input on your race. And if you have time, cool down between events until your heart rate is below 100. Cooling down will make a huge difference in your body's ability to recover for future races.
- **Respect the meet officials.** Remember that these are volunteers who want to see you get the most out of swimming. Go so far as to thank the person who DQ'd you for helping you to improve.
- **Clean up ALL of your mess.** It is important to leave your area just as you found it. Throw away your empty bottles and Power Bar wrappers. If your teammates left a mess, go ahead and pick it up. That's what teammates are for!

See, etiquette is not just some stuffy word your grandmother uses. Following these basic rules of etiquette will ensure that you and your teammates enjoy each and every meet. So next time you see grandmother, tell her you practice etiquette at swimming all the time – She'll be impressed.