

Courtesy: Elizabeth Wickham

Some parents love meets, while others not so much. For some, meets are like a reunion of sorts, seeing old friends who are coaches, officials and other swim families. Meets can also be nerve-wracking, especially when you're newer to the sport and don't know what heat your children are in or when they'll swim.

Here's are six ways to get more enjoyment out of swim meets:

ONE

Volunteer. If you're the busy type and can't stand waiting for hours on end for your child's 30-second swim, find a way to pass the time by helping out. Many parents who don't enjoy being idle, eventually go through the process to become officials. Others volunteer and help organize their home meets and always take a timing chair when they're at an away meet.

TWO

Sew. Knit. Crochet. I know countless swim moms who use the time on deck to create gorgeous scarves, hats and quilts for their swimmers. They're organized, skilled and super fast at completing a project during the time they sit on deck.

THREE

Walk. I burned up my nervousness by walking laps on nearby tracks or around park trails. Miles and miles I walked at meets. I walked with my husband and other swim parents. We solved many world problems during our walking and talking sessions. Somehow we managed to make it back at the right moment to watch our kids swim.

FOUR

Read or Work. It can be possible to find a small quiet place alone to read that book you've been wanting to return to. Or, bring your laptop and make some progress on that work project. We recently discovered portable batteries for our laptop and phones! How I wish I'd been aware of them years ago when they first came out!

FIVE

Stay clear of gossip. There's nothing that sours a meet more quickly than listening to an unhappy parent. Whether they don't like the new suit rules or are aggravated at the coach, one upset parent can turn the entire meet experience into something ugly. Listen empathetically if someone has a problem, but have your radar out for that constant complainer or gossip.

SIX

Cheer and celebrate. Have fun with fellow swim parents and make a cheer squad. I've been fortunate to be with some of the loudest, most fun parents at meets. We've arrived with pompoms, noisemakers and even a vuvuzela, which strangely got broken quickly. The fun times with other parents builds the camaraderie of the team, embarrasses our kids, and is just plain fun.

What's your favorite way to pass time at a swim meet?