



North Palm Beach Swim Club

PARENT'S GUIDELINES

You have done a great deal to raise your child. You create the environment in which they are growing up. Your child is a product of your values, the structures you have provided, and the model you have been. Human nature, however, is such that a person loses some of his ability to remain detached and objective in matters concerning his children. The following guidelines will help you keep your child's development in the proper perspective.

1. Every individual learns at a different rate and responds differently to the various methods of presenting skills. The slower learner obviously takes more time, and this requires more patience on the part of the parents and coaches, who must remember that his/her ultimate swimming potential may be as great or greater than that of the faster learner.

2. When an athlete first comes out for the team and starts practicing, it is possible for him/her to worsen rather than improve. In the case of team members in the White and Red groups this is likely due to the emphasis placed on stroke technique in these groups. It takes a great deal of the swimmer's attention to master these skills. These new sets of habits are the basis for later improvement. As training progresses to the upper level groups, additional stress is placed upon the muscles. The muscles will at first break down under the demand of additional work and this can explain an initial lack of improvement. As the need for improvement is realized, the muscles will gradually strengthen and the athlete's performance will improve.

3. Plateaus can occur at one time or another in every swimmer's career. Plateaus can be both in competition and training. A plateau signifies the swimmer has mastered lower-order skills, but they are not yet sufficiently automatic to leave the attention free to attack newer, higher-order skills. It is important to explain to the athlete that plateaus occur in all fields of physical learning. The more successful athletes are those who work through this momentary delay in improvement and go on to achieve greater performance to approach their personal potential.

4. Swimmers ten years and younger are the most inconsistent swimmers. This can be frustrating for parents, coaches, and swimmers alike! We must be patient and permit these youngsters to learn to love the sport.

5. Parents must realize that slow development of the competitive drive at an early age is normal and perhaps more desirable than precocious or forced early development. It is important that everyone learn to compete and develop some competitive spirit. It is also important for children to learn to adapt to reasonable levels of emotional stress. The small disappointments we must learn to handle as youngsters prepare us for the larger ones we are certain to experience as adults.

6. It is the coaches' job to offer constructive criticism of a swimmer's performance. It is the parents' job to supply love, recognition, and encouragement necessary to help the young athlete feel good about him or herself.



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7. Parents' attitudes and models often dictate those of their children. A child might not be consciously aware of what is taking place while subconsciously absorbing powerful messages about his/her parents' desires. For example, be enthusiastic about taking your child to practice and meets, fund-raising projects, meetings, etc. – don't look at these functions as chores.

8. If you have any questions about your child's training or team policies, contact the coach. Criticizing the coach in front of the child undermines the coach's authority and breaks the swimmer-coach support that is necessary for maximum success.

9. No parent should behave in such a way as to bring discredit to the child, the team, or competitive swimming. Any disagreement with a meet official should be brought to the attention of the coach and handled by the coach.

10. Be sure that your child swims because he/she wants to. Children tend to resist anything they "have to do." Self-motivation is the stimulus of all successful swimmers.

11. The etymology of the word "competition" goes back to two Latin words: "com" and "petere," which means together to strive. Avoid "playing" your child against his nearest competitor, thereby creating friction within the team and swimming community. Close competition provides two great services for the athlete: it brings out the best in him/her and shows where improvement is needed.

12. The communication between coach and swimmer is very important. A two-way relationship must exist daily at practice. It is imperative that the coach has the swimmer's full attention at these times. It is for this reason, we ask parents to watch practice from the designated benches in the pool area and not participate in the coaching in any manner. Parents who attempt to coach their child during a practice may be asked to leave the pool deck.

In general, it is best for parents to refrain from making stroke corrections or trying to coach their swimmer. When parents interject opinions as to how the swimmer should swim, it causes considerable and, oftentimes, insurmountable confusion as to whom the swimmer should listen and respect. If you differ with something, please confer with the coach. Our coaches would enjoy the opportunity to further explain the NPB Swim program to you.

Remember, particularly in the case of younger swimmers, that attitude and behavior of the parents in regard to their outlook on the sport has an important effect on the child. In swimming, as in life, nobody can "win" or succeed all the time – there will always be some disappointments.

Every child can gain from his experience, whether or not he/she ever wins a single race. The important thing is to keep on striving to do better next time. **THE SECRET IS NOT ONLY TO PRODUCE GREAT SWIMMERS, BUT RATHER PRODUCE GREAT YOUNG PEOPLE WHO SWIM.**