



## Planet Swim Aquatics Parent Handbook

Dear Parents,

The Parents' Handbook includes important information on how to be a supportive swimming parent, as well as general information about the sport.

Included in this handbook will be an overview of USA Swimming and Planet Swim Aquatics' mission, vision and objectives.

This publication has been created to help educate you on how to support your child throughout his/her swimming career. USA Swimming has conducted research about why kids choose to participate in swimming and what makes it fun. Supportive parents play a very significant role in why kids swim, as well as why kids quit. We suggest you take the time to talk to your child about your role as a needed support system for him/her. This is the best way to communicate your interest in making your child's swimming experience the best one possible.

You will also find step by step instructions and frequently asked questions to access common swimming and parent applications that are used within Planet Swim and USA Swimming such as TeamUnify, USA Swimming Parent OnDeck, and MeetMobile.

*Please note, this handbook derives from the USA Swimming Parent's Handbook as well as TeamUnify, Meet Mobile, and Parents OnDeck mobile applications. Planet Swim LLC. does not take credit for the information and details listed within this handbook.*

## **What is USA Swimming?**

USA Swimming is the national governing body for competitive swimming in the United States. USA Swimming was conceived in 1978 as the United States Swimming (USS) when Congress passed the Amateur Sports Act, which specified that all Olympic sports would be administered independently. Prior to this act, USA Swimming was the Competitive Swimming Committee of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) and was located in Indianapolis, Indiana. The USA Swimming Headquarters was established in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 1981 and is located at the United States Olympic Training Center. In 1998 our name changed to USA Swimming.

As the National Governing Body (NGB), USA Swimming is responsible for the conduct and administration of swimming in the United States. In this capacity, USA Swimming formulates the rules, implements policies and procedures, conducts national championships, disseminates safety and sports medicine information and selects the athletes to represent the United States in international competition.

### **USA Swimming Mission Statement**

*USA Swimming is the National Governing Body for the sport of swimming. We administer competitive swimming in accordance with the Amateur Sports Act. We provide programs and services for our members, supporters, affiliates and the interested public. We value these members of the swimming community, and the staff and volunteers who serve them. We are committed to excellence and the improvement of our sport.*

### **USA Swimming Vision Statement**

*To inspire and enable our members to achieve excellence in the sport of swimming and in life.*

### **USA Swimming Core Objectives**

*Build - Promote - Achieve*



## **Local Swimming Committees**

The USA Swimming House of Delegates is made up of elected positions from 59 Local Swimming Committees (LSC). Each LSC may send the following voting positions to the annual convention: General Chair, Age Group Chair, Senior Chair, Coaches Representative, Administrative Chair, and an Athlete Representative. For information on how to get involved with your LSC, contact your Coach or Board President.

### **Planet Swim Aquatics Mission Statement**

*We believe in the life skills swimming can teach. Our goal is to teach our swimmers valuable life skills such as goal-setting, discipline and perseverance while focusing on the technical development of all four swimming strokes and building swimming specific physical fitness. We are committed to share our knowledge, experience and passion with our swimmers EVERYDAY!*

### **Planet Swim Aquatics Vision Statement**

*To empower children and adults to achieve excellence in life through a positive competitive swimming experience while fostering a safe and supportive environment to our members.*

### **Planet Swim Aquatics Core Objectives**

*Develop - Persevere - Empower*



## **USA Swimming Headquarters**

The USA Swimming headquarters provides a variety of services and programs for its membership. Among the many services are publications, educational programs, fundraising activities, sports medicine programs, video resources and general information about swimming related activities. USA Swimming staff are available to provide you with additional information through the following methods:

Telephone (719) 578-4578

Fax (719) 578-4669

SwimFax: (719) 575-9606

Website: [www.usa-swimming.org](http://www.usa-swimming.org)

## THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF SWIM PARENTING BY USA SWIMMING<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Thou shalt not impose your ambitions on thy child.**

Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes and don't push them based on what you think they should be doing. The nice thing about swimming is that every person can strive to do their personal best and benefit from the process of competitive swimming.

### **2. Thou shalt be supportive no matter what.**

There is only one question to ask your child after a practice or a competition - "Did you have fun?" If meets and practices are not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.

### **3. Thou shalt not coach their child.**

You are involved in one of the few youth sports programs that offer professional coaching. Do not undermine the professional coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to provide love and support and a safe place to return to at the end of the day. Love and hug your child no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job.

You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy or any other area that is not yours. And above all, never pay your child for a performance. This will only serve to confuse your child concerning the reasons to strive for excellence and weaken the swimmer/coach bond.

**4. Thou shalt only have positive things to say at a swimming meet.** If you are going to show up at a swimming meet, you should be encouraging and never criticize your child or the coach. Both of them know when mistakes have been made. Please remember that "yelling at" is not the same as "cheering for."

### **5. Thou shalt acknowledge thine child's fears.**

Your child's first swimming meet, 500 free or 200 I.M. can be a stressful situation. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event if your child was not ready to compete in it. Remember your job is to love and support your child through their entire swimming experience.

<sup>1</sup>From USA Swimming. (n.d.). *USA Swimming Parent's Handbook*. Colorado Springs, CO: USA Swimming.

### **6. Thou shalt not criticize the officials.**

If you do not care to devote the time or do not have the desire to volunteer as an official, please don't criticize those who are doing the best they can.

### **7. Honor your child's coach.**

The bond between coach and swimmer is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child, as it will only serve to hurt your child's swimming.

### **8. Thou shalt be loyal and supportive of thy team.**

It is not wise for parents to take their swimmers and jump from team to team. The water isn't necessarily bluer in another team's pool. Every team has its own internal problems - even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team are often ostracized for a long time by the teammates they leave behind and are slowly received by new teammates. Often swimmers find that switching teams does not improve their performance.

### **9. Thy child shalt have goals besides winning.**

Most successful swimmers are those who have learned to focus on the process and not the outcome. Giving an honest effort regardless of the outcome is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, "My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. Does this make me a failure? No, in fact I am very proud of that swim." What a tremendous outlook to carry on through life!

### **10. Thou shalt not expect their child to become an Olympian.**

There are 250,000 athletes in USA Swimming and we keep a record of the Top 100 all-time swimming performances by age group. Only 2 of the swimmers listed in the 10 & Under age group made it to the Top 100 in the 17-18 age group. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are about .0002 %.

Swimming is much more than just the Olympics. Ask your coaches why they coach. Chances are they were not Olympians, but still got so much out of swimming that they wanted to pass the love for the sport onto others. Swimming teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship; it builds self-esteem and fitness; it provides lifelong friendships and much more. Most Olympians will tell you that these intangibles far outweigh any medal they may have won. Swimming builds good people, like you want your child to be, and you should be happy your child wants to participate.

## **YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT**

Competitive swimming programs provide many benefits to young athletes including self-discipline, good sportsmanship, and time management skills. Competition allows the swimmer to experience success and to learn how to treat success and failure as two sides of the same coin, while becoming healthy and physically fit. As a parent, your major responsibility is to provide a stable, loving and supportive environment. This positive environment will encourage your child to continue. Show your interest by ensuring your child's attendance at practices, coming to swimming meets, volunteering for your club at swim meets, participating in fundraising, etc.

Parents contribute to the success experienced by the child and the team. Parents serve as role models and their children emulate their attitudes. Be aware of this and strive to be positive role models. Most importantly, show good sportsmanship at all times toward coaches, officials, opponents and teammates. Remember that you are teaching your child at all times.

### **Be Enthusiastic and Supportive!**

Remember that your child is the swimmer. Children need to establish their own goals and make their own progress towards them. Be careful not to impose your own standards and goals. Do not overburden your child with winning or achieving best times. Let them know that first they are the child you love, and second, a swimmer. Tell them you will love them whether they swim well or not and ask only that they give their best effort. Learning about oneself while enjoying the sport is the most important part of the swimming experience. The swimming environment encourages learning and fun, which will help your child develop a positive self-image.

### **Let the Coach Coach!**

The best way to help your child achieve goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake. If your child does make one, remember that this is a learning experience. You and your child should learn to treat success and failure as learning experiences and not life changing situations. Encourage your child's efforts and point out the positive things. The coach is the one you have assigned to judge a swimmer's performance and technique. Your role is to provide love and support regardless of the outcome.

### **Keeping the Fun in Swimming**

A few years ago, USA Swimming conducted a survey to try to understand why kids participate in swimming and why kids drop out of swimming. (Results from this survey were printed in the December 1996 issue of USA Swimming's Splash). Probably the most important finding from this survey was that fun played a huge role in participation. Kids do not stay in the sport because it is no longer fun.

### **Provide support**

One resounding thing coming from the kids was that parents increased the fun in swimming by providing unconditional encouragement and support. For the most part, it seems that a physical presence at meets and interests in what their child is doing goes a long way towards enhancing swimming enjoyment. The kids seem to enjoy swimming when they feel their parents support them regardless of their performance

### **Don't Push Too Much**

A theme that was identified by the kids as detracting from the fun of swimming related to parents' pushing too much. Some of the kids felt that excessive pushing by their parents to practice, compete and perform well made swimming less fun.

### **Learn Optimal Push**

Interestingly, there was a positive side to this idea of ‘parental pushing’. Kids talked about the role of parents in enhancing fun in swimming by providing a push. However, caution is warranted as there is a fine line between pushing in a positive way and pushing to the detriment of kids’ enjoyment. As evidence below, it seems a slight push from parents can enhance enjoyment and, as kids point out, is often needed.

### **Resist Assuming the Role of Coach**

A last theme evident from the kids’ response is tied to the idea that when parents take on the roles and responsibility of the coach it takes away from the fun in swimming. Critiquing races, offering suggestions on what went wrong or how to improve, and placing expectations on performance are examples of things parents do that tend to decrease the kids enjoyment. An exception to this seems to be when parents have credibility as swimmers; advice is sometimes welcome as it is viewed as coming from an expert as opposed to a parent. To be sure, however, parents may want to ask their kids if they want advice or suggestions regardless of the parents swimming background.

## **POSITIVE PARENTING TIPS**

**1) Your child needs your emotional, physical, and financial support.** Be liberal in providing this support.

**2) Provide optimal 'push.'**

**3) Understand development.**

Long-term development as an athlete, and growth and development impacts performance.

**4) Be realistic in terms of expectations.**

Factor in age and skill level; be aware of your child's perception of your expectations.

**5) Emphasize performance and effort, not just outcome.**

The athlete only has control over his/her performance. Define and measure success as giving maximal effort and as personal improvement.

**6) Keep winning in perspective.**

**7) Focus on the power of rewards.**

- Give plenty of encouraging and rewarding statements.
- Give rewards sincerely and when warranted.
- Catch your kids doing something right.

**8) View swimming as an arena in which to teach your child about commitment, hard work, coping with adversity, etc.**

**9) Work to form an effective Coach-Athlete-Parent Triangle.**



## Parent Mobile Application FAQs and Guide

1. [OnDeck Parent: Expert in 5 Minutes](#)
2. [OnDeck Parent Sign-In and FAQ's](#)
3. [Meet Mobile App \(Swim\) | ACTIVE.com Help](#)
4. [Parent Team Unify](#)
5. [USA Swimming Deck Pass FAQ's](#)