

# SWIM MEET 101 / FAQs FOR NEW SWIM PARENTS



\*\* Big thanks to the Shamrock Seals for this Template! \*\*

## PART I: SWIM MEET LOGISTICS

### How do I help my child understand what events they will swim at a meet?

The GCAT coaches can help parents/swimmers decide on events. Parents and older swimmers will go onto the website, sign in, commit to the meet and select events at least 10 days before the start of the meet.

At the meet, the meet program (heat sheet) will look like the following:

#8 Boys 13-14 100 Free                      1:15.70    2/3

In the above example, “#8” means your swimmer is competing in event 8, which is the Boys 13-14 100 Freestyle. “1:15.70” off to the side is his personal best time in the event, and the time he’ll be seeded at. “2/3” means that he’ll be competing in Heat 2, Lane 3 of the event. Heat is always on the left.

If you are not given the heats and lanes ahead of time, you will need a highlighter and to purchase a heat sheet at the meet. Scan the heat sheet and highlight your child’s name wherever it appears.

Using this as a guide, many parents use a waterproof marker (non-toxic Sharpie or otherwise) to make a grid on their child’s forearm or thigh. List the child’s event number, heat number, lane number, and event name. They may look at the grid to double check their schedule of events. **See: photo at the top of the document for an example.**

### How do I know what time to be at a meet?

ALWAYS ALWAYS ALWAYS check the GCAT website and find the “Meet Information.” For example, go to the GCAT website, click on: team events, select the meet, then look for the attached document that

usually says “Meet Information”. Warmup information is always listed on the meet info, as well as other things like the list of events. Coaches will try to email you as well.

### **Where do I sit at a meet?**

At home meets at the CCAC, GCAT parents can always sit together in the stands overlooking the pool. At away meets, this setup always varies, but it’s good for GCAT parents to sit together as much as possible!

### **Where do the swimmers sit at a meet, and can they sit with parents?**

Swimmers should always sit in the location designated by coaches at or prior to the meet. At home meets, swimmers should plan to sit ON THE POOL DECK with their swim bags unless otherwise instructed. It is very important to our team culture that swimmers sit together at meets. NO SWIMMER IS ALLOWED TO SIT ALONE! We are a team, and we will act as one! This also makes it MUCH easier for coaches to locate athletes and make sure they don’t miss their events. Coaches will provide direction on where athletes can sit. There is no bullpen at USA swimming meets, so swimmers have to pay attention!

YES, swimmers can go up to the stands and sit with parents for short periods of time, but they should spend the majority of their time on the deck with teammates. They don’t sit with you in the stands during basketball games or baseball games! Likewise, they shouldn’t at swim meets except for shorter visits.

### **How do coaches decide upon relay placement, and what if my swimmer isn’t on a relay?**

Relays are 100% a judgement call decision made by the coaches. Sometimes when coaches decide who to put on a relay, we don’t necessarily follow the standard of “who has the fastest time.” Sometimes changes are even made on the fly at the meet! Sometimes a swimmer may be removed from/added to a relay at a meet. Sometimes an entire relay may be scratched if certain athletes are unable to attend at the last minute. These things happen. THE BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS ARE THIS:

- a. Relays will always be fluid
- b. Coaches always make the final call
- c. Part of being a member of a team is support coaches/teammates no matter what the relay setup might be. Sometimes a swimmer may not be on a relay, or on the “A Relay,” or swimming the stroke they want to swim. That’s not what our sport or our team is about! We are a team and a family, and will support one another!

### **Will there be relays at every meet?**

No, there will not. In fact, you’ll find relays at only about 1/3 of meets. They often don’t make sense in the effort of maintaining reasonable meet timelines.

### **How does my swimmer prepare for/conclude a swim.**

Every swimmer in every age group should follow this procedure, 100% of the time!

- a. **Speak with a coach** from their practice group prior to their race.

b. **Swim the event**

c. **“Warm Down” (aka Cool down) after the race.** This means going over to the designated non-competition pool and swimming a few easy laps to bring down heart rate and wash out lactic acid built up in the muscles during the race.

d. **Speak with the coach again** after warm down for feedback and advice.

**How will I sign my child up for a meet?**

Coaches will send an email request to the team 2-4 weeks prior to the meet. Go to the website, select team events, select the meet and click on edit commitment (in the pink box). You can then commit to or decline the meet.

**Who chooses the events my child will swim at the meets?**

Swimmers should talk with their coach to help decide on what to swim in the meet. This conversation should take place before or after practice. Parents are responsible for going to the website and entering the events.

**How will I know what is going on at a swim meet?**

Check out the big scoreboard showing what event/heat we're on, as well as results! Also, listen to the announcer giving event updates throughout the meet!

**What do we wear to a meet?**

Swimmers and parents should wear GCAT shirts if they have them! If not, they can always wear purple and/or teal colors. Parents and swimmers can order their own GCAT t-shirt a couple of times per year when orders go out.

**What if my child gets sick, or suddenly cannot make it on meet day?**

Text Coach Bill for Savannah groups, Coach Anthony for Hinesville groups, Coach Ben for Richmond Hill groups.

## **PART II: COACHING STAFF REQUESTS FOR PARENTS**

### **What if my child doesn't drop time or adds time in an event?**

How do I handle that? The best way to handle it is to be positive about what your child did do at the meet, and to trust the coaching staff! Encourage your athlete to share any concerns they have with their coach before/after the meet.

Please hear this: SWIMMERS WILL NOT DROP TIME ON EVERY RACE! THEY MAY EVEN GO LONG PERIODS OF TIME WITHOUT A TIME DROP, AND THAT IS OK!

Keep in mind the following: Sometimes coaches are teaching swimmers new technique/skills and it slows them down initially. For instance, what if I'm trying to teach a swimmer to become more efficient on freestyle. I tell them to "stretch out their stroke" before the races. Then, they stretch out perfectly and I'm thrilled with them, even though they added 2 seconds onto their best time. What happens then if you tell your child after the meet: "I wish you could have dropped time on that 50 freestyle." NOW THE SWIMMER IS NO LONGER FOCUSING ON WHAT THEY DID WELL! That opportunity for growth has just been squashed.

### **Should I "Coach" or give feedback to my swimmer at a meet?**

We ask that you please do not coach your athletes. Allow us to do the coaching. If you have specific concerns, we are always open to hear. I know many of you are very knowledgeable about the sport. Your knowledge is not our concern. More so, our concern is swimmer "burnout". If a swimmer didn't have a great meet, the last thing they need is to be coached the whole way home from the meet when they don't want to talk about it anymore! You don't want to be the cause of your athlete burning out, do you?

If you've never done so, check out this awesome website about parenting young athletes. "I love to watch you play/swim" are the best six words you can say to your athlete, and the absolute best way to support them. <https://ilovetowatchyouplay.com/>.

### **Should I offer incentives (aka bribe) my swimmer to go best times at meets?**

Absolutely not. It seems like a tantalizingly easy thing to do to motivate your athlete, but if you have to bribe them to swim fast, both you and they have already missed the point of competition in the first place! Extrinsic motivations like this are one of the leading causes of swimmer burnout!!! From the coaching staff, we sincerely ask that you avoid this!

### **Should I encourage my swimmer to beat a specific teammate, or try to beat someone out for a spot on a relay?**

NO, NO, NO, PLEASE NO!!! (Channeling my inner Michael Scott). If you don't want to create drama and divisiveness on the team (I hope you don't), then DON'T DO THIS!