

Meets- A Step by Step Introduction

Step One- Entering Meets

Opt In/Out Form- This form allows you to communicate to your coach ahead of time which meets your swimmer will be able to attend. These forms are made available on the website and from your coach, and generally need to be turned in by a certain deadline. If you do not turn in the form to your coach, they will assume you do not want to attend meets. The first Opt In/Out Form will be available by the beginning of the season.

Meet Entries- Meet entries list all the swimmers entered in a specific meet and the events they are scheduled to swim. Our coaches check the Opt In/Out Forms and enter all the swimmers who indicate that they can attend a specific meet. About 3 weeks before a meet the preliminary meet entries will be posted on the FCST website. It is important to check these whether you indicated that your swimmer would enter the meet or not. If there are any errors, please contact your coach as soon as possible.

Meet Entries are finalized two weeks before a meet. If you are entered in the meet at this time, you will be charged for each event you are entered for whether you swim that event or not. Charges are billed on your monthly bill. This is why it is very important to check meet entries before they are finalized. Our coaches may be close to perfect, but even they make mistakes occasionally.

How Events Are Picked- Believe it or not, there is a significant amount of thought process that goes into selecting a swimmer's events. When a coach selects events for a swimmer, they're going through the entry process with an individual plan in mind for each swimmer.

Each swimmer has their own past, present and future with swimming; therefore, each swimmer's event choices are unique to them based on several variables. Variable aspects for each swimmer include: age, birthday, recent achievement, past & future meet entries, past meet experiences, relative practice attendance & performance, and future goals. Additionally, many meet goals will revolve around the current focus and training of their respective practice group.

Below are stages of thought that go into choosing events. Depending on the variables above, each of the stages of thought will be more or less significant to each swimmer. While it may not be possible to choose the "perfect" events at every meet, there may be better events to choose than others.

The Basics – Eligibility and parameters for each meet.

1. How many events can one enter per day? How many events can one enter for the entire meet?
2. What events are offered? 25's? 50's? 100's? 200's? Distance events?
3. Are there any qualifying times or cut-off times? Age restrictions? Special rules?

Planning Stage – Make the meet competitively beneficial!

1. What are the swimmer's goals? What are the swimmer's needs?
2. How can this meet best serve this swimmer?
3. What events did the swimmer compete in at the last meet?
4. Is the swimmer locked into certain events at an upcoming meet?
5. If the swimmer skips a particular event at this meet, when will they have this opportunity again?

Opportunity Stage – Achieve higher levels of the sport!

1. What are the swimmer's physical and technical strengths? What are their physical limits?
2. In what events can the swimmer see time improvement?
3. In what events can the swimmer earn a new time standard, IMX score, or qualify for a higher level meet?
4. Are there any new events/strokes/distances that can be swum?
5. Is team score being kept? Does the team need points? Are points relevant to this swimmer's events?
6. How can the swimmer be more competitive for the next oldest age-group?

Psychological Stage – Race with confidence!

1. What does the swimmer want to swim? What are they comfortable with? What's fun?
2. What challenges will the swimmer accept and welcome?
3. How do I balance challenging the swimmer without overwhelming them with a heavy workload?
4. How often have they swum a particular event? Will this event become trite or stale?
5. What expectations need set up, and what conversations need to happen, for the swimmer to have confidence before the meet starts?

Logistical Stage – Make the meet cost and time effective!

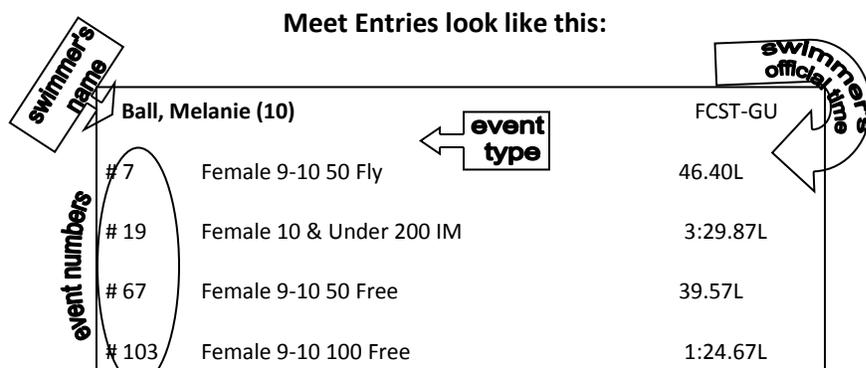
1. Where is the meet? What costs will be spent on attending (gas, food, hotel, entries, etc.)?
2. What are the entry fees and facility surcharges?
3. How long will the meet last? How much time will be spent at the pool and on travel?
4. Where is recovery built into the equation?

Some common principals of developmental and age-group swimming:

1. Best events will change over time, usually for reasons beyond anyone's control.
2. A fast swim at a young age may not translate into a competitive stroke 2-3 years later.
3. Success in swimming is measured by progress over time – it may take a few months/meets to determine what works and how the swimmer is making progress.
4. Compare times season-to-season and year-to-year, not meet-to-meet; it's much easier to see improvement and success, and for the swimmer to get excited about their swimming.
5. The swimmer, parent, and coach almost always share the same desired outcomes for the swimmer, but may have a different idea/plan for how to get there. Communicate concerns ahead of time to ensure both parties are on the same path to the end goal.

Understanding Meet Entries & Meet Invitations- Meet Entries can tell you what event(s) your swimmer will be swimming. Meet Invitations can help you figure out what day the event(s) will be. Meet Invitations also list meet location, warm-up and meet start times, and much more information.

What Event– Each swimmer will have an event number and the type of event (ex: 50 Free) following their name. Entries are listed in alphabetical order with girls first, boys following.



What Day– To find out the day an event will be swum, you must check the Meet Invitation and the Meet Entries. Meet invitations are put out on both the FCST and the Gulf LSC websites about one month prior to the meet. Meet Invitations include a list of the events that will occur on each day of the meet. Check the Meet Entries for the event numbers of the events for your swimmer. Then check the Meet Invitation to see what days those events occur.

Warm-ups- The Meet Timeline and Warm-up times are published a few days before a meet, and can be found on both the FCST and Gulf LSC websites. Both the Timeline and the Warm-ups are set after each team files their final entries, and are based on the number of entries from each team for each event.

There are usually two or three sessions of warm-ups. Each team is assigned to a specific warm-up session. Check the warm-up times, and plan to be at the meet 15-20 minutes prior to the start of the warm-up times assigned to FCST.

Timeline – The Timeline for the meet is an approximate projection of when each event will be swum. Don't rely on it to be exact! Many things can affect a timeline, such as equipment problems, longer breaks between events, and other unforeseen problems. However, it does give you a rough idea of what to expect and approximately how much time your swimmer will have between events.

Step Two- Getting There

Location of the meet is included on the Meet Invitation. Meet Invitations sometimes also include a map, usually on the last page or two of the meet invitation.

Arrive 15-20 minutes before the start of the warm-up session for FCST. This gives you time to set up stretch, and circle-in (see explanation below) before racing off to warm-ups.

When are warm-ups? Warm-up times for each team participating in the meet will be set about 3 days before the meet starts. These times can be found on the Gulf LSC website: www.gulfswimming.org. Go to the link for Meets, and then to the link for meet information, and you will see a table with every meet invitation, and columns for warm-ups and other information. We also try to email out warm-up and other information on the upcoming meet as we receive it.

Step Three- What to Bring

Suit, cap, goggles- FCST suits and caps are required for all meets. FCST is a NIKE sponsored team. In return for the many benefits the team reaps from that contract, FCST swimmers must wear NIKE suits to compete. Please do not send your swimmer to a meet in any other brand of suit. Goggles are your choice. It is recommended that your swimmer bring two pair of goggles and an extra cap to the meets, as a broken cap or goggles at the last minute can be a problem. You will receive a latex FCST cap at the beginning of the short course (fall) season. Replacement caps and silicone caps are available for purchase at the team office and at most meets from an FCST coach.

NOTE: Another benefit to wearing team suits, caps and shirts (when they aren't swimming) to all meets is that it is easier to locate our swimmers.

At least 2 towels - they can get pretty wet.

Appropriate clothing- Usually short course meets (October-March) are held indoors and long course meets (April-July) are held outdoors. The indoor meets can be quite warm, but occasionally you may be surprised by a cold area, so it is best to bring some layers of clothing. Outdoor meets require lots of sunscreen, hats if you like, and whatever clothing you would like. T-shirts must be FCST shirts, and our coaches request that you wear certain color shirts on certain days. The normal progression is Red on Friday, White on Saturday and Blue on Sunday. If you are new to the team, you should receive our Team T-shirt for the year, and if that is the only FCST shirt you have, just wear that each day.

Parents: You may purchase a team t-shirt for yourself. We offer these for sale throughout the season. Wearing a t-shirt to meets helps other parents know you are on the team, so you can sit together, offer each other support, cheer together, and you will know who to find if you have questions.

Optional: Chairs, tents, blankets, other items- It is usually best to pack a few folding chairs in the car, as you may need these at some meets and not at others. If you arrive fairly early in the morning, there is usually some seating near the pool at all the meets, but it often is not enough to hold all the people who come to a meet. Tents (pop-up shade covers) are good for summer meets. Blankets can be spread out for tired swimmers to lie on, play cards, etc. There may not be room for all of these items at some meets. Swimmers may want to include the following in their bags: books, homework, games, change of clothes, and talcum powder (to sprinkle in their cap to help it dry).

Food- Concessions are always available at area USA Swimming meets. The quality and variety varies from meet to meet. Most meets are close to fast food places and sometimes grocery stores. You are encouraged to bring or buy nutritious food for your swimmer – coaches don't want to see their swimmers loading up on candy and fried foods. Remember that they will have time between events to eat, but it is best to limit the food to small "snacks" until they have finished all of their events.

Most meets have sufficient room for a small cooler if you choose to bring one, although some pools restrict cooler use (see the meet invitation for the meet for restrictions).

What to eat and drink- During swim meets swimmers need to stay hydrated and energized. Easily digested good carbohydrates are your best bet for energy foods—fruit, whole grain breads with jam, pasta. Water and sport drinks are good for hydration.

Check out the Nutrition section of the USA Swimming website for lots of great info on nutrition for swimmers. Go to www.usaswimming.org, click on the link to Parents, and then the link to Nutrition.

Money- You will want to purchase a heat sheet – usually \$5 for the whole meet. You may also need money for on-deck entries (below), and concessions.

Step Four- When You Get There

Send your swimmer off to warm-ups- They need to take their cap and goggles and go meet with the coach and other swimmers on the pool deck just before their scheduled warm-up time. The coaches will have them swim, do some drills, and work on starts and turns.

Check Your Timing Assignment- At each meet, the team is required to provide parents who will be

back-up timers. These timers use stop watches, and provide times that will be used if the automatic timing devices fail. Timing can be fun – you are on the deck (where parents usually aren't allowed), and you get to meet other interesting swim parent.

You may view our timing policy online under [FCST Policies & Documents](#). This policy is also stated on page 29 of this handbook.

Optional: On deck entries- If you are entered in less than the maximum number of events for that meet (usually three), you may enter a swimmer in an event “on deck”. You must check with your coach if you would like to “on-deck” your swimmer. Find the table for the Clerk of Course, fill out the form, pay the entry fee (usually double what you pay for early entries), and you are set. On deck entries are usually taken until about half an hour before the meet starts, so you must get there even earlier if you want to “on-deck” your swimmer. They will announce when on-deck entries close. If the meet requires qualifying times, you may need to have a record of your child’s times with you.

Buy a heat sheet (sometimes called “psych sheets” or “meet programs”) - Heat sheets tell you the timeline, list all events and swimmers for each event, and may also include some information on time standards. Looking this over will give you a sense of the flow of the meet.

Find out where heat/lane assignments will be posted- The event heat and lane assignments will be posted in one or more places near the pool. These will tell you what heat and lane your swimmer is swimming in their event. Sometimes the heat and lane assignments are ONLY posted in the area that is restricted to swimmers (the pool deck). The heat and lane assignments are posted as quickly as possible after the “Circle-In” sheets are collected and the event is “seeded”. Your swimmer should begin checking for their heat and lane assignment about 20-25 minutes prior to the time listed for that event on the Timeline (this will be in the heat sheet you have purchased, or you can download from the internet).

Find out how you will know what event is swimming- At some meets, the event being swum will be listed on the scoreboard. Also, the official starting each event will usually announce the event and heat at the start. Sometimes the announcer will also announce, but not consistently. This is important to know, as it will help you keep track of when your child should be getting ready to swim.

After warm-ups- Your swimmer will always have a team meeting after warm-ups, but not always immediately after. Check with your swimmer to see if they went to the team meeting, or when it is. During the team meeting the coach will tell the swimmers who will be on a relay. Ask your child if they are on a relay – if they aren't sure, check with the coach. Missing a relay hurts the other swimmers in the relay, so you want to be really sure that you are not on one before you leave the meet.

If there is enough time between warm-ups and the swimmer’s first event this is a good time to have a light breakfast.

Step Five- Before, During, and After Each Event

Swimmer checks in with coach- About 15 minutes before your swimmer’s event they need to gather their cap and goggles and check in with the coach. Your swimmer’s specific coach may not always be at any given meet, but there will be an FCST coach there that is assigned to talk to your swimmer. Usually the coach will give them some word of encouragement, and tell them how they would like them to swim

the event. This coach will also watch your swimmer when they swim. If the heat and lane assignments for this event have been posted before they go to speak with the coach, the coach will ask them what their heat and lane are. Younger swimmers sometimes like to have their heat and lane written on their arm to help them remember.

Swimmer waits by the blocks- After speaking with the coach, the swimmer should go and wait by the blocks for their event to be called. USA Swimming insurance specifies that parents are not to be on deck during a meet. If you are worried about your child finding the right place and paying attention to when their heat will be called, pair them up with a more experienced swimmer, who can be on deck with them.

Swim- Parent's role: Find a good spot to watch, wave to your swimmer, and watch the whole thing. Yelling encouragement is optional.

Swimmer checks in with coach- Your swimmer should check in with the coach after their swim. Depending on when their next event is, the coach may tell them to swim a few warm-down laps.

Go get a hug from a parent, and get ready for the next event.

Repeat the above for each event they are swimming.

For relays – start getting ready a little sooner, to give enough time to gather all members of the relay. Relay teams should be all together and in the area of the starting blocks at least 5-10 minutes before their event.

Step Six- Your Swimmer is Finished

Check-out with coach, especially if relays are not over- Most of the time, check-out happens right after the last event. The swimmer will be told to swim some warm-down laps, and then go home. However, if the relays have not yet occurred, you should probably double check with the coach to make sure your child is not expected to swim in a relay.

Go home – tired and happy.