YOUR FIRST SWIM MEET

After months of practicing diligently, your young swimmer is finally ready for their first swim meet. What will certainly be an exciting event for swimmers may also be confusing for parents. Which events will my child swim? What should I bring to the meet? Splash Aquatics is here to provide some important information for your child’s first swim meet.

**BEFORE THE MEET**

**About 1 week before the meet**: Prior to a swim meet, you will receive an email letting you know that the coaches have selected your child to compete in the meet. It will also provide a list of the events the coaches would like your child to swim. A variety of strokes and distances are swum during a typical swim meet. The coaches will pick the strokes and distances they think your child is capable of doing. If you feel your child is not ready or if for any reason your child is not able to participate in the meet, this is the time to inform the team by replying to the email. If you don’t let the team know that your child will not be swimming, you will still be responsible for paying the race fees. These fees are usually $2 per event and will be included in your next billing statement. The Meet Announcement will also be sent with this email. It contains everything you need to know about the meet including the list of events. Swim meets are usually divided into a morning and afternoon session with different age groups swimming in each session. Your child will swim in only one of the sessions. You can tell if your child is swimming in the morning or afternoon by comparing the list of events your child is swimming with the list of events in the Meet Announcement.

**2 or 3 days before the meet**: As the day of meet draws near, the team will send out another email with the final list of participants, the events they are swimming, the Meet Announcement, and a tentative timeline. The tentative timeline shows the approximate times the different races are expected to start. These are only estimated times and it is not a good idea to attempt arriving at the meet just before your child’s first event. The tentative timeline is provided to give you an idea of when during the session your child will swim and the approximate amount of time your child will have to rest between events.

**1 day before the meet:** Several things to keep in mind while preparing for the swim meet.

1. Compared to other sports, like baseball or football, there isn’t much equipment needed for a swim meet. The uniform for a swim meet is a pair of jammers for boys and a one-piece racing suit for girls. Splash Aquatics has an agreement to compete in Arena brand swimsuits. It is okay if you child doesn’t have an Arena swimsuit for the first meet, but you will eventually have to get one. In addition to the swimsuit and a pair of goggles, a Splash Aquatics swim cap and a towel are all that your swimmer needs. Make sure you bring these items with you to the meet. In fact, it is a good idea to bring two of everything to the meet. Goggles break, caps get misplaced, racing suits tear. Having a back up can save the day. For yourself, an umbrella, hat, sunscreen, and a chair are recommended.

2. There is a lot of waiting between events. It is a good idea to bring something to pass the time, like a good book or a deck of cards. The coaches prefer leaving electronic devices at home.

3. Bring a camera! When your child makes it on the U.S. Olympic swim team these videos will help you remember how it all began. There are, however, certain areas around the pool where picture taking is not allowed. Photography is not allowed behind the starting blocks for modesty reasons. For safety reasons, the deck surrounding the pool is reserved for coaches, swimmers, and officials only during the meet. Parents are free to video and cheer from anywhere else.

4. Eating and drinking are allowed at the pool, so bring snacks. If your child’s events are spread out over a session you could be there for up to four hours. It is a good idea to bring something light to fuel and hydrate your young athlete - and bring something for yourself as well. Sitting in the sun and cheering can burn a lot of calories.

5. Be prepared to get wet. Swimmers coming back to the team tents will be dripping wet. You might get splashed on during the meet. Also, there is always the possibility of rain. Don’t wear anything that can’t withstand a little chlorinated water.

**ON MEET DAY**

1. Warm-up begins one hour before each session. Your child is expected to be there to warm up with the team. If your child is swimming in the afternoon session, you should probably arrive about 15-20 minutes prior to the projected end of the morning session, which can be found on the tentative timeline you received in the email with the final list of participants. If no timeline is available, please confer with your coach.

2. Look for the Splash tents: When you arrive at the pool on the day of the meet there will be a lot of tents with swim team banners set up around the pool. Look for the white tents with the “Splash Aquatics” banner. These tents are for the swimmers first. Parents can sit under the tents if there is room.

3. Get a heat sheet: Make sure you get a heat sheet when you first arrive at the meet. The host team will be selling them for $3 at either the hospitality tent or at the concession stand. A heat sheet lists all the races for that session by event, heat, and lane. You can figure out when your child is swimming by referring to the heat sheet. It is common practice to write the event number, heat number, and lane number on the arm of the swimmer using a Sharpie or other felt pen for easy reference. The ink can be washed off with soap and water after the meet.

4. Report to your coach: After you have settled down with the team, your swimmer should report to their coach. The coaches will lead the swimmers to the pool for warm-ups. Don’t be concerned if you see the coaches trying to fit the entire team into a couple of lanes. Warm-ups are chaotic and crazy and really prepare the swimmers both mentally and physically for their events. If you arrive late to the pool and warm-ups have already begun, your child’s coach may be at the start end of one of the lanes watching the team. During the meet, the coaches will alert the younger swimmers when their events are coming up. Older swimmers are expected to keep track of their events on their own. Coaches will give the swimmers last-minute instructions and send them to the starting area. After each race is completed, the swimmer should ask for their time from the timers in their lane and report back to their coach so they can discuss their performance. After that you can congratulate your young athlete on their excellent effort and give them snacks and water.

5. Consider volunteering at a meet: As you and your child become more comfortable at meets there will eventually come a time when you won’t have to constantly watch over your child anymore. When you reach that point you may ask yourself if there is anything you can do to help with the meet. The answer is “Yes!” Swim meets depend heavily on volunteers, especially timers. These are the people who help record the times of each swimmer and are so vital that a meet cannot start until all timers are in place. There is no prior training necessary to be a timer. It is a fairly easy job, timers are in the middle of all the action, and timers get snacks from the host team throughout the meet! Each team is responsible for providing a certain number of timers depending on the number of athletes each team enters in the meet. By volunteering you are also helping the team! Volunteers sign up to be timers on the day of the meet.

Another way to help at a meet is to become a meet official. At every meet, you will see people with white shirts and khaki shorts on the pool deck watching the swimmers. These are the stroke and turn judges and they are volunteers just like the timers. The meet starter and deck referee (the one blowing the whistle) are volunteers as well. More volunteers can be found behind the starter and deck referee. There is a console operator, timing judge, interface person, clerk of course, and announcer. Some training is involved for these positions including “shadowing” more experienced volunteers and a background check is required. If you are a deck official, you will have the best vantage point at the meet and like the timers each team is required to provide a certain number of officials at each meet. Again, you will be helping the team by training to be an official and volunteering. If you have any questions about volunteering, please contact any Splash Aquatics board member.

**FAQs**

1. Q: I’m having a difficult time finding Arena suits. Where can get them?

A: If you can’t find them locally, Arena suits are available online at the official Arena website at [arenawaterinstinct.com/en\_us/](http://www.arenawaterinstinct.com/en_us/) and on the Swim Outlet website at swimoutlet.com and other sites where swimsuits are sold like amazon.com. In fact, the Splash Aquatics website has a link to Amazon Smile in the “Support” section. A portion of all purchases made using this Amazon Smile account will be donated to the team. So not only will you be getting the right suit at a good price, you will also be supporting this team fundraiser.

1. Q: Where can I get a Splash logo cap?

A: After your swimmer is registered with Splash, they will receive one Splash logo cap. Additional caps are available for purchase ($5 for latex caps and $10 for silicone caps) via any Board member. Cost will be included in your next billing. Caps are often given as incentive awards as well.

3) Q: When and what should I feed my young swimming star before and during the meet?

A: Your swimmer should have a pre-meet meal at least 1 to 1-1/2 hours before warm-up and should hydrate before, during and after the meet with water. Please try to avoid heavy breakfasts with fried foods and meats like bacon or sausage on the day of the meet. Bring light easily digestible snacks like bagels, raisins, bananas, apples and other fruits, etc. for consumption between events.