

# WEST COOK YMCA COMPETITIVE SWIMMING (TOPS) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND TIPS

This document provides answers to commonly asked questions and helpful tips. It is organized into the following categories:

- Swim Team Basics
- Practices
- Prior to a Swim Meet
- Day of the Swim Meet
- Helpful Tips from Other Swim Parents
- Types of Swim Competitions
- Meet Fees
- Volunteer Expectations

If you are unable to find an answer to your question, feel free to reach out to a coach, PAC Member, or Group Parent. Contact information can be found on the TOPS Team Unify Website. *This packet will be updated on an ongoing basis to remain consistent with the most up to date information, we ask that you please check back to the website for updates. If you'd like to see something in this packet that you think would help families, please let us know!*

## THE BASICS

### What is difference between Short Course and Long Course?

- ✓ Short Course season takes place fall through the spring (September-March). Pool length is 25 yards.
- ✓ Long Course season takes place during the summer (May-July). Pool length is 50 meters.
- ✓ A separate registration is required for each season

### What is the difference between a Meet and an Event?

- ✓ A **swim meet** is the overall competition that is made up of a series of events. The swim meet can be scheduled on one or **multiple** days. Parents are responsible to register for the specific swim meet by the set deadline. Often times, deadlines cannot be adjusted for late entry.
  - Example: Joey is attending the Claire Statton *swim meet*
- ✓ **Events** are typically broken out by age group, gender, and type of Stroke. A swimmer may participate in one or more event during a swim meet. The coach will determine and assign the swimmers to the events.
  - Example: Joey is scheduled to swim in the following *events*:
    - ❖ Event 102 – 50 Freestyle
    - ❖ Event 108 – 50 Butterfly

### Is my child required to swim in all of the meets?

- ✓ **Developmental Teams - Tiny Tops, Red, Yellow:** No. At a minimum, it is recommended that each swimmer participate in the West Cook YMCA hosted meets: For instance: Tops/Barry Dual Meet (Short Course Season), Claire Statton (Short Course Season), and Father's Day meets (Long Course Season).
- ✓ **Age Group Teams - Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Seniors:** Refer to the registration package for specific requirements.
- ✓ To qualify for District, State, and other championship competitions, swimmers are required to participate in a minimum number of swim meets. Refer to TYPES of SWIM COMPETITION section below for more details.

### Where can I find TOPS Team information? How do I get access?

- ✓ TOPS families can find information about TOPS on the TOPS Website, hosted by Team Unify: <https://www.teamunify.com/Home.jsp?team=iltyst>.
- ✓ *How do I get a User ID?*
  - *Information Coming!*

### What is difference between Team Unify, On-Deck, and Meet Mobile?

- ✓ Team Unify is the TOPS Team Website to get official Team information such as:
  - Practice Calendar
  - Swim Meet Sign Up and Details
  - News
  - Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) and Group Parent Information
  - Etc.
- ✓ On-Deck is a supplementary App that can be used to track your swimmer times and qualification times for championship meets, account information, and provides a few tools like stop watch that can be used to time your swimmer from the stands during practice or at a meet.
- ✓ Meet Mobile is an on-line App that may be used by the swim meet host in lieu of, or in addition to purchasing heat sheets. Meet mobile will provide the following for the team and individual swimmers:
  - Event, Heat, and Lane assignments
  - Entry (Seed) Times, Final Times, and seconds dropped/gained
  - Place and Points Earned

### How do I order Tops apparel?

- ✓ Required TOPS Swimsuits and Swim caps, along with other apparel and gear may be purchased during the TOPS Apparel sale. Refer to the TOPS Team Unify website for dates, times, and locations.
- ✓ TOPS apparel can also be purchased on-line at the Swim Store:  
<http://www.theswimteamstore.com/lgsteams/productcart/pc/viewCategories.asp?idCategory=3591&idAffiliate=1107>

## Practices

### Where and when are practices held?

- ✓ Developmental Teams - Tiny Tops, Red, Yellow: Practices are typically held at the YMCA Pool.
- ✓ Age Group Teams - Bronze, Silver, Gold, Seniors:
  - During short course season, practice is typically held at Oak Park River Forest High School East and West pools.
  - During long course season, practice is typically held at Ridgeland Common, 415 Lake Street, Oak Park, Illinois.
- ✓ Dates, Times, and locations can be found on the TOPS Team Unify Site Calendar

### What do swimmers need to bring to practice?

- ✓ Swim Suit
- ✓ Goggles
- ✓ Swim Cap – Recommended
- ✓ Towel
- ✓ Fins (Age Group Swimmers)
- ✓ Kickboard (Age Group Swimmers)
- ✓ Water Bottle - Recommended

### Where can Parents watch practices?

Viewing areas are available at each pool. The temperature in the viewing areas of the YMCA and OPRF pools tends to be very warm. Dress appropriately and bring water.

## PRIOR TO A SWIM MEET

### How to do I sign up for a Swim Meet

- ✓ Go to the TOPS Team Unify site (<https://www.teamunify.com/Home.jsp?team=iltyst>)
- ✓ Scroll down to the Events section
- ✓ Click the swim meet/event you wish to register for
- ✓ Click on “Edit Commitment”
- ✓ Select ‘Will Attend’ or ‘Will Not Attend’
- ✓ Use the notes to indicate if your swimmer will be swimming only on specific day(s) or other information you want the coach to know.

### If a meet occurs over multiple days, are swimmers required to attend all the days, or can we indicate if only attending one or two days?

- ✓ Use the notes section in the commitment screen, of the registration, to indicate if child will not be swimming on specific day(s).

## **How do I find details about the meet: Location, admission, times, if bleacher seating or if bring your own blanket/chair, etc.?**

- ✓ Prior to the Swim Meet, the host team provides a 'Meet Packet' which is posted to the Meet details on TOPS Team Unify website. The Meet Packet isn't always immediately available and is often available within the week of the meet. West Cook YMCA staff will send emails with specific meet information as early as possible, even before the Meet Packet is posted.
- ✓ Prior to the meet, you should review it for key information such as:
  - Location
  - Times
  - Parking
  - Seating
  - Positive Check In times
  - Warm Up times
  - Entry fees (to understand what will be charged to your escrow)
  - Spectator Admission Fee – Typically cash only
- ✓ Go to the Events section on the TOPS Team Unify website and click on the name of the swim meet to download the Meet Packet and other essential meet information.

## **What is a Psych Sheet?**

- ✓ Psych sheets are a preliminary listing of each swimmer signed up for the Swim Meet. It is sorted by the Swimmers last name and indicates the event they are swimming, along with their entry (seed) time for each.
- ✓ Psych sheets are available after the registration deadline and prior to the day of the swim meet on the TOPS Team Unify Site.
- ✓ Go to the Events section on the TOPS Team Unify website and click on the name of the swim meet to download the Psych Sheet and other essential meet information.

## **What reports are available in the Meets/Events section of the site?**

- ✓ *Information coming soon!*

## **DAY OF A SWIM MEET**

### **What do swimmers wear to a swim meet?**

- ✓ Swimmers are required to wear the official TOPS Team Uniform: TOPS swim suit, TOPS swim cap, and goggles.
- ✓ It is recommended to bring 2 swim caps in case one rips and 2 pairs of goggles in case one pair breaks.
- ✓ TOPS apparel, such as t-shirts, flannel pants, sweatshirts or swim jackets may be worn between events, and is optional.

### **What is Positive Check-In?**

- ✓ This is the standard method used to confirm swimmers are checked in and available to swim in the event(s) they are assigned. Additionally, they are used to finalize the Heat Sheets.
- ✓ Always refer to the Meet Packet for Positive Check-In times.
- ✓ Swimmers arrive at the competition, and highlight their names and across each event they are scheduled for that specific day.
- ✓ If the swimmers name is not highlighted on any of the events they are scheduled, it is assumed the swimmer will not swim in that event.
- ✓ If swimmers miss Positive Check-In, they will not be able to participate on that day.
- ✓ If the name is not highlighted it will be assumed that the swimmer is not participating and WILL NOT be entered into the meet.
- ✓ **Positive Check-In usually closes during the warm up sessions, so the earlier you sign in the better! Refer to the Meet Packet for the Positive Check-In Times. These times are strictly enforced. Be sure to check in on time!**
- ✓ Note: There may be some swim meets that do not use Positive Check-in, in this case swimmers will check in directly with TOPS coaches the day of the meet.

#### **Do Swimmers have the opportunity to warm up prior to swimming their event?**

- ✓ Yes, swimmers should arrive in time for warm ups which are a very important part of the swim meet. It helps swimmers prepare their body to swim.
- ✓ Warm ups are often broken up into two different sessions so everyone can have a chance to swim before the meet.
- ✓ Refer to the Meet Packet for the Warm Up times. It is important for swimmers to be on deck and ready to warm up at least 10 minutes early.

#### **What is a Heat Sheet?**

- ✓ The Heat Sheet provides details for each event for that day. It is sorted by event number first, then by Heat, and then by swimmers based on their entry (seed) time.
- ✓ Swimmers are assigned in Heats and Lanes based on their seed time.
- ✓ NT indicates that no entry (seed) time is available.
- ✓ Heat Sheets are sometimes available for purchase in Hard Copy or on Meet Mobile.
- ✓ Heat Sheets are posted throughout the venue for Parents and Swimmers to view.

#### **Why/what do the swimmers write on their arms during the meets?**

- ✓ The swimmers write the schedule of their events for the day on their arms to ensure they are lined up behind the blocks and are ready to swim.

○ Example:

Event No.	Swim Stroke	Heat	Lane
206	50 FR	3	7
208	200 IM	1	5

#### **Do swimmers sit with the team in a separate section from parents?**

- ✓ When there is room on the deck, the TOPS swimmers will sit together as a team. Between events, swimmers can take a break and join their parents to grab a snack or shop for merchandise.

### **Bullpen**

- ✓ Younger swimmers, usually age 8 and under, lined up in the bullpen prior to their events and are then directed to their lanes by a host volunteer.

## **HELPFUL TIPS FROM OTHER SWIM PARENTS**

### **Get off to a great start!**

- ✓ Pack your bag the night before so you don't forget important items. (See Section Below)
- ✓ Don't forget to eat breakfast before leaving the house.
- ✓ Arrive early to check in and warm up on time, and for parents, to get a good seat.

### **What to Bring:**

- ✓ Extra Goggles. Be prepared if goggles are lost or break in half.
- ✓ Extra Swim Cap. Be prepared if the swim cap rips. It happened to Michael Phelps during the Olympics, it can happen to your swimmer too!
- ✓ Extra towels! Towels are often soaking wet after the warm ups and first event. Bring extra.
- ✓ Sweatpants and a sweatshirt are perfect to keep your swimmer warm between events. If you have a swim parka or tracksuit that also works, just so long as it keeps a body warm!
- ✓ Healthy Snacks: This will help swimmer with recovery immediately after swimming an event. Swimmers burn lots of calories and energy in a short amount of time. They will be hungry. Avoid foods very high in sugar, fats, or dairy. All of those can make a swimmer feel sick during a race.
- ✓ Water bottle
- ✓ Set of dry clothes to change into after the meet.
- ✓ A good book, magazine, cards, or other items to keep you and your swimmers busy between heats. It can be a long day.
- ✓ Reminder: cellphones and electronics are not allowed on deck.

### **GO TOPS!**

- ✓ Support the TOPS swimmers and show your spirit by wearing TOPS Gear!

## TYPES OF SWIM COMPETITIONS

### What is the difference between, YMCA swim meets and USA/Illinois meets?

- ✓ Swimmers must to participate in two (2) YMCA sanctioned meets to be able to swim in YMCA championship meets.
- ✓ USA/Illinois swim meets are multiple session/day meets sanctioned by Illinois Swimming. They require all swimmers to be members of USA/Illinois swimming and require entry fees. Times from these meets can qualify a swimmer for YMCA or USA Championship Meets. ONLY times swum at sanctioned Illinois swim meets can be used to qualify for Regional Championships, Senior/Age Group Championships, and Junior/Senior Nationals.

### How do I qualify for YMCA Districts (Short Course Season Only)?

- ✓ All swimmers that have participated in two or more YMCA swim meets during the Fall/Winter season and are current YMCA members, are eligible to swim at the YMCA District Championships. TOPS coaches will keep an updated list, organized by swimmer and YMCA meet participation on the website for viewing.

### How do I qualify for Regional Championships and Senior/Age Group States?

- ✓ Each swimmer must be an active Illinois/USA swimming member and must meet the designated qualifying time at an Illinois Swimming sanctioned meet. Time standards are posted on the [Illinois Swimming web site](#).

### What are the rules used at swim meets?

- ✓ All of the meets we swim in use the USA Swimming rules. These are available on the USA Swimming [USA Swimming Rules and Regulations](#). If you are just getting your first look at the rules, you probably want to start with the Mini-Rulebook.

## MEET FEES

### What is "meet escrow"?

- ✓ Meet Escrow is a fee the swim team includes in registration at the beginning of each season and uses during the specific season to pay for meet entry fees.
- ✓ Meet fees vary from meet to meet. The fees can be found in each meet packet. Fees usually include a \$2 athlete surcharge that goes to ISI (Illinois Swimming Inc), and then a \$3-5 per event fee, relays fees are divided between the swimmers participating in the relay.
- ✓ YMCA dual meets have no fees.

- ✓ If your swimmer is confirmed for attending a meet, but are suddenly unable to attend, you will still be charged for the meet fees, UNLESS you inform the coaching staff before the entry deadline. The entry deadline can be found in each meet packet, usually one month prior. Once the deadline passes, the club is required to pay the fees of the swimmers entered regardless of attendance.

#### **How do I pay for my entry fee?**

- ✓ As part of each season's registration, required minimum meet escrow fees are included in the registration process. Escrow fees are used swimmer entry fees into meets with amounts varying by meet. Entry fees will be charged to each escrow account after every meet. Outstanding balances will be billed at the conclusion of the season to bring all accounts to \$0.00.

#### **How can I find out how much will be charged to my escrow account for each swim meet my child is registered?**

- ✓ Refer to the Meet Packet provided by the Host Team.

#### **What if my swimmer uses more of their Escrow in the season?**

- ✓ Parents of swimmers that have exceeded their escrow balance by mid-season will be contacted by a TOPS coach with the amount due. Swimmers will not be able to sign up for additional meets during the season until the Escrow balance is settled.
- ✓ West Cook YMCA coaches will put a balance on your YMCA account at the conclusion of each season with a charge to return your balance to \$0. You will also be provided, email or post, with an invoice of the charges for the season. You can settle your YMCA account via the online registration process and the My Balances link or via a check made payable to the West Cook YMCA and sent to the office or given to a coach. Please settle all escrow account before registering for the next season.

#### **Will I be charged if I cancel prior to the registration deadline?**

- ✓ No. You must cancel on-line prior to the registration deadline to avoid being charged.

#### **If I signed up for a meet, but do not attend, will my account be charged?**

- ✓ Yes. TOPS must pay the host team for the all entries, several weeks before the actual competition. There is no reimbursement from the host team for missed races and/or swimmers who do not show.

#### **Do I get charged for YMCA Dual meets?**

- ✓ No, these are the only meets TOPS participates in that do not require entry fees.

#### **Do I need to pay the \$66 USA/Illinois registration fee?**

- ✓ Yes. TOPS is both a YMCA swimming and USA swimming team due to participation in both types of meets. In order to participate on the competitive swim team, all swimmers must have a valid YMCA membership. As a team that aligns with USA/Illinois Swimming, all swimmers must be registered with USA/Illinois Swimming as well. This is an annual, one-time fee that is renewed when registering for the short course season each September.

## Volunteer Expectations

### Are all parents required to volunteer?

- ✓ While we encourage all parents to volunteer, there are no volunteer requirements for first season Tiny Tops Swimmers.
- ✓ Volunteer participation is required even if your swimmer is not competing in the meet.

### What are the volunteer requirements?

- ✓ Each family is required to volunteer for at least four (4) sessions:
  - At least two (2) sessions during the Claire Statton Swim Meet
  - At least one (1) session during the YMCA Districts
  - One (1) more session during the season, which may include volunteering at a non-hosted meet or at the YMCA
  - All four (4) sessions may be met by volunteering at Claire Statton and YMCA District meets

### Can someone other than a parent volunteer on behalf of the swimmer's family?

- Yes, a volunteer other than the parent (16 years or older) may satisfy the volunteer obligations, so long as the substitute can competently perform the volunteer tasks

### Is there a penalty if a family is unable to meet the volunteer obligations?

- ✓ Yes, families will be charged a \$50 fee for each volunteer session not met, up to \$150.