

# TOPS Swim Meet Survival Guide

If you are new to the sport of swimming, swim meets can seem like an overwhelming experience, so we made this survival guide to make sure everything goes as smoothly as possible for your first meets! This will cover all the basic aspects of a swim meet and what to expect.

## Meet Packet

The meet packet is an extremely useful document to look over. It covers all the technical details of a swim meet. Inside the meet packet you will find: contact information for the people running the meet, the location and info about the pool, miscellaneous facts about the meet (policies, parking, safety info, etc.), when entries are due and the dues for entry, and information about each session of a meet, including event numbers and during which session events are being swum. With all that info it's a good idea to look over the meet packets for every meet that provides them.

## Positive Check In

One thing to look for in the meet packet is if there is positive check in. Positive check in is basically a long list of every swimmer that will be in the meet, and the events they are swimming that day. The swimmers need to highlight their names on the list to show that they are there, and going to swim. If the name is not highlighted it will be assumed that the swimmer is not participating and **WILL NOT** be entered into the meet. It typically closes during the warm up sessions, so the earlier you sign in the better! This is a silly way to miss out on the chance to swim at this meet so be sure to check in!

## Warm Ups

Warm ups are a very important part of the swim meet. It helps get your body ready to swim without excess strain. They are a little more chaotic than a typical practice, and are often broken up into two different sessions so everyone can have a chance to swim a bit before the meet. There can be more than twenty people in a lane during a warm up, and they might not all be from the same team, so it's important swimmers leave the wall quickly after the person before them, and slide out of the way once they finish a length to ensure every swimmer gets to finish at the wall. Since time is a factor in warm up it is very important to get to a swim meet **at least 15 minutes before warm ups begin.**

## What to Bring

Swim meets take a long time. It's important to remember these basics every swim meet:

- Towels! All too often a swimmer only brings a single towel, and after their first event the towel is soaking wet and unable to dry or keep the swimmer warm. Bring an extra!
- Sweats! Like the towel, sweatpants and a sweatshirt are great ways to stay warm and should be worn the whole time the swimmer is out of the water. If you have a swim parka or tracksuit that also works, just so long as it keeps a body warm!
- Snacks! After a few hours at a meet, you tend to get hungry. It's important to bring healthy snacks like: nuts, fruit, applesauce, pasta, or foods along those lines. Avoid foods very high in sugar, fats or dairy, all those can make a swimmer feel sick during a race. Also, don't forget to eat breakfast! Your body needs all the energy it can get!
- Drinks! Almost every practice we have a swimmer ask us, "can I get a drink of water?" and we always reply with, "did you bring a water bottle today?" and more often than not the answer is no. It is extremely important to stay hydrated throughout the day. Make sure to bring enough water to last the day, or a refillable water bottle to be reused. Sports drinks and 100% juices are okay as well, just avoid high sugar drinks and sodas!
- Things to do! Let's be honest, swim meets can be boring if no one from your team is swimming in the next 4 heats of the 500 Free. Make sure you have a book, cards, or something to do on the pool deck with the other swimmers. Remember, as the TOPS Handbook states, cellphones and electronics are not allowed on deck.
- Extra everything! Make sure each swimmer has an extra suit, goggles, and cap! It's a rough moment when you're getting ready to go swim an event and your goggles break in half. Don't get caught unprepared! Have extras ready to go every swim meet.
- Remember, this is just a basic list, each swimmer has something they like to bring to a meet. Maybe you have pump up music, or a shammy you like to use. It never hurts to make a list of everything you need and check that before you leave the house!

## Not Sure What You're Swimming?

Before a swim meet we will typically send out a list of swimmers entered in the meet which will have the events each swimmer is signed up for. Using this info you can look back through the meet packet and see when the events are taking place.

Coaches reserve the right to modify events being swum by athletes based upon various factors. These decisions are always in the best interest of the team, and the decisions are final.

## During the Meet

During the meet, parents are typically not allowed on deck (unless there is a designated spectator area). This leave plenty of room for the officials, swimmers, and coaches to do what they need to do without running into extra bodies. Here's a breakdown of what each of those people need to do.

The officials: They will be watching over the meet to make sure that every swimmer legally performs the stroke. If you see a hand raised by an official, that means they saw something that resulted in a disqualification. If your swimmer gets a DQ, don't worry about it! It happens to everyone. Mistakes in races teach a swimmer what they need to work on, so just take a DQ as a learning experience.

The swimmers: The swimmers are there to swim! Every meet the coaches get a heat sheet that has exactly what event, heat, and lane the swimmer will be in. Sometimes coaches have a marker that the swimmer can use to write events on their hands or arms, but that's not always a sure thing, so if your swimmer is more forgetful it may be useful to pack a marker so they can keep track of what/when they need to swim. Ultimately it is up to the swimmer to get behind the blocks for their race. The coaches will do all they can, but they can only do so much at a time. After a race the swimmer should go to their coach to get some feedback on the race and learn what they need to improve and what they did well.

The coaches: The coaches are there to coach. They are responsible for watching the races, giving feedback, and ensuring the race goes as smoothly as possible. If you ever have any questions about a meet, they are the people to talk to, but make sure that you follow all meet rules when getting to them, including staying off the deck. Your swimmer can get in trouble for your behavior, so make sure you follow the rules!

The parents: You are at the swim meet to be supportive. This doesn't extend to just supporting your own swimmer, it includes all swimmers on our team, and the swimmers on other teams. You are not there to be a coach, or tell them what to work on (because it could differ from what we are teaching, and that'll just confuse them!). You are there to cheer them on and say, "Great job!" Remember, in the handbook, there is a section on bullying that pertains to parents. If we see any sort of negative behavior towards any person at the meet, you might not be allowed back to more meets. Be sure to do everything you can to make the meets a good experience for everyone!

## **After the Meet**

Meets can be a long and draining process. After the meet you may be tired and in a hurry to go home, but make sure you clean up after yourself and have all of your belongings. There have been meets where swimmers leave behind technical suits worth hundreds of dollars, so be sure everything is packed up and ready to go. It's important to clean up any trash you may have collected throughout the meet. Respect is an important part of any sport, and showing respect for the host team's facilities is just as important as being respectful and polite to the other team's members.

Hopefully this answered any questions you had about swim meets. There is more to know, but the rest is pretty easy to pick up as you go. If there are any other questions don't hesitate to email or call any one of the coaches. We're here to help you and your swimmers through your first season and first meets, no matter what questions you may have!