



**NEW PARENTS GUIDE TO
SWIMMING 101 AND
BEYOND.....**

Majority of articles taken from USA Swimming's website

Introduction To This Guide

While this is by no means the all inclusive guide to swimming, it will most definitely help you to understand some of the basics that your fellow seasoned parents sitting next to you in the stands may already know. We have tried to compile as much information as possible within the guide to help answer any of your questions that may come up randomly during the day. However, you will undoubtedly have a question that can't be answered with this. Usually it will happen at a time when the person you need to ask isn't around, at least that's the way it always happens for me.

Please do not wait to ask a question. Even the smallest topic may be very important to your better understanding of what swimming is about. While many seasoned parents can be a good source of information about swimming, most of the technical questions should be posed to a coach to answer. Either way, please feel free to ask when a questions pops up that you are not sure of. Hopefully, whomever you ask will have an accurate answer for you.

If in your first few seasons as a new parent, there is information you feel isn't in here that should be, please let us know and we'll be sure to add it for future families to improve their understanding of our little "world".

Swimcerely,

Coach John

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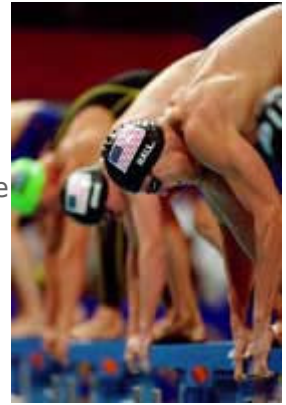
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What is USA Swimming?

USA Swimming Headquarters

USA Swimming Headquarters provides a variety of services and programs for its membership. Among the many services are publications, educational programs, fund-raising activities, sports medicine programs, resources and general information about swimming related activities. USA Swimming staff are available to assist you in answering questions or providing additional information about USA Swimming.

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www.usaswimming.org

Background

USA Swimming is the National Governing Body for competitive swimming in the United States. USA Swimming was conceived in 1978 with the passage of the Amateur Sports Act which specified that all Olympic sports would be administered independently. Prior to this act, USA Swimming was the Competitive Swimming Committee of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) located in Indianapolis, Indiana. USA Swimming Headquarters office was established in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 1981 and is located at the Olympic Training Center.

As the National Governing Body for the sport, USA Swimming is responsible for the conduct and administration of swimming in the United States. In this capacity, USA Swimming formulates the rules, implements the policies and procedures, conducts the national championships, disseminates safety and sports medicine information and selects athletes to represent the United States in international competition.

USA Swimming Mission Statement

USA Swimming is the National Governing Body for the sport of swimming. We administer competitive swimming in accordance with the Amateur Sports Act. We provide programs and services for our members, supporters, affiliates and the interested public. We value these members of the swimming community, and the staff and volunteers who serve them. We are committed to excellence and the improvement of our sport.

USA Swimming Vision Statement

To inspire and enable our members to achieve excellence in the sport of swimming and in life.

USA Swimming Core Objectives

Build the base
Promote the sport
Achieve competitive success

How Is USA Swimming Organized?

International - The international federation for the aquatic sports is the Federation Internationale de Natation Amateur (FINA). USA Swimming is affiliated with FINA through United States Aquatic

Sports (USAS), made up of the four aquatic sports – swimming, synchronized swimming, diving and water polo.

National - USA Swimming is a Group A member of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and has voting representation in the USOC House of Delegates.

Zone - We are divided into four separate zones – central, eastern, southern and western. Each zone elects two representatives to the national Board of Directors. [Map of the zones](#)

Local - Within the United States, there are fifty-nine (59) Local Swimming Committees (LSCs). Each LSC is responsible for administering USA Swimming activities in a defined geographical area and has its own set of bylaws under which it operates. A House of Delegates with representation of athletes, coaches, members of the Board of Directors and clubs is responsible for managing the business affairs of the LSC.

How USA Swimming Operates

USA Swimming is a non-profit organization made up of very dedicated volunteers and support staff. Interested volunteers donate their time, energy and expertise at every level from the national Board of Directors to the local swimming clubs. There are over 30 standing committees. Staff liaisons, along with these committees, create, implement and evaluate USA Swimming programs. The House of Delegates meets annually to determine the rules and regulations for the following year. Between yearly meetings of the House of Delegates, an elected USA Swimming Board of Directors is charged with the responsibility of making decisions for USA Swimming. A support staff at Headquarters in Colorado Springs implements the policies and provides service to members.

Glossary of Swimming Terms

A Glossary of those strange and wacky words we use in the sport of swimming. You may or may not find these words in the English Dictionary, and if you do, their definitions will probably be radically different than the ones listed in this Glossary. Relax and take your time reading. Soon you'll be understanding and maybe even speaking some "SWIMSLANG".



"A"	Time classification for a swimmer. National Age Group Time Standard "A". "A" time is .01 seconds faster than the "BB" time standard and .01 slower than the "AA" time standard. See the NAGT published chart.
"AA"	Time classification for a swimmer. .01 faster than "A" time standard.
"AAA"	Time classification for a swimmer. .01 faster than the "AA" time standard.
"AAAA"	Time classification for a swimmer. .01 faster than the "AAA" time standard. This is the fastest time standard listed on the NAGT chart. Times faster than this are approaching National cuts or Top Times consideration.
A-Meet	Swim meet which requires swimmers to have previously achieved an "A" time standard in the events they wish to enter.
A-B Meet	Swim meet that offers separate competition for both "A" swimmers and "B" swimmers, usually with medals for the "A" swimmers and ribbons for the "B" swimmers. Swimmers compete in separate brackets against other swimmers of their own ability. Usually only "A" swimmers can score individual event team points.
A-B-C	Swim meet similar to the A-B meet except that there are 3 divisions. This type of meet includes every ability level of swimmer from Novice to very experienced. All swimmers "A" time or faster compete in the "A" division, and all swimmers "C" and down compete in the "C" division. The "B" division is the most limited with both top (.01 slower than "A") and bottom (.01 faster than "C") limitations.
Achiever Card	A recognition card or certificate proving the swimmer has made a specific time in an event. The card list the distance, stroke, swimmers time, date and place of meet, swimmers name, and meet referees signature.
Add Up	Aggregate Time - times achieved by 4 swimmers in individual events which are added together to arrive at a provable relay entry time.
Admission	Certain swim meets charge for spectators to view the meets. These are usually the larger more prestigious meets. Sometimes the meet program (heat sheet) is included in the price of admission.
Age Group	Division of swimmers according to age. The National Age Group divisions are: 10-under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16,17-18. Some LSCs

have divided the swimmers into more convenient divisions specific to their situations: (i.e.) 8-under, 13-Over, 15-Over, Junior, Senior.

Alternate

In a Prelims/Finals meet, after the finalist are decided, the next two fastest swimmers other than the finalist are designated as alternates. The faster of the 2 being first alternate and the next being second alternate. If a finalist cannot participate, the alternates are called to take their place, often on a moments notice.

Anchor

Approved Meet

The final swimmer in a relay.

A meet conducted with sufficient USA Swimming officials to certify conformance to USA Swimming rules. The meet may include competitors who are not USA Swimming members. The meet may be a competition sanctioned at the LSC level with the added approval of USA Swimming because both member and non-member athletes will be competing.



ASCA

The American Swim Coaches Association. The professional organization for swim coaches throughout the nation. Certifying coaches and offering many services for coaches education and career advancement.

"B"

Time classification for a swimmer. National Age Group Time Standard "B". "B" time is .01 seconds faster than the "C" time standard and .01 slower than the "BB" time standard. See the NAGT published chart.

"BB"

Time classification for a swimmer. National Age Group Time Standard "BB". "BB" time is .01 seconds faster than the "B" time standard and .01 slower than the "A" time standard. See the NAGT published chart.

B-Meet

Swim meet which requires swimmers to have previously achieved a "B" time standard in the events they wish to enter. Some meets have no bottom cut time allowing "C" swimmers also to compete. B-C Meet Swim meet that offers separate competition for both "B" swimmers and "C" swimmers, usually with ribbons for the "B" swimmers and smaller ribbons for the "C" swimmers. Swimmers compete in separate brackets against other swimmers of their own ability. Swimmers are not allowed to enter an event that they have an "A" time in.



Backstroke One of the 4 competitive racing strokes, basically any style of swimming on your back. Backstroke is swam as the first stroke in the Medley Relay and second stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yards/meter,

100 yards/meter, and 200 yards/meter. (LSCs with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd back)

Banner	A team sign that is displayed at swim meets. Banners are usually made from nylon material and carry the Team Logo and possibly the name of a popular team sponsor. Some size restrictions are enforced at certain meets.
Beep	The starting sound from an electronic, computerized timing system.
Big Finals	The top 6 or 8 swimmers (depending on the # of pool lanes) in a Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals. Big Finals is the fastest heat of finals when multiple heats are held.
Blocks	The starting platforms located behind each lane. Some pools have blocks at the deeper end of the pool, and some pools have blocks at both ends. Blocks have a variety of designs and can be permanent or removable.
BOD	Board of Directors of the Local Swim Committee (LSC) or USA Swimming (USA-S).
Bonus Heat	The heat held during the finals session of a Prelims/Finals meet, that is slower than the swimmers participating in Big Finals. The Bonus Heat may refer to Consolation Finals or an extra heat in addition to Consolation finals.
Bottom	The floor of the pool. Bottom depths are usually marked on the walls or sides of the pool.
Breaststroke	One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Breaststroke is swam as the second stroke in the Medley Relay and the third stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yards/meter, 100 yards/meter, and 200 yards/meter. (LSCs with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd back)
Bull Pen	The staging area where swimmers wait to receive their lane and heat assignments for a swimming event. Area is usually away from the pool and has rows of chairs for the swimmers to sit. The Clerk of the Course is in charge of the Bull Pen.
Bulletin	One of the most important communication devices for a swim club. Bulletin boards are usually in the entrance Board ways of pools and have timely information posted for swimmers and



parents to read.

Butterfly

One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed FLY) is swam as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and first stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yards/meter, 100 yards/meter, and 200 yards/meter. (LSCs with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yard back)



Button

The manual Timing System stopping device that records a back-up time in case the touch pad malfunctioned. The button is at the end of a wire, plugged into a deck terminal box. There are usually 3 buttons per lane. It is the timers responsibility to push the button as the swimmer finishes the race.

Camp

A swimming function offered by USA-S, your LSC, or a USA-S coach. There are many types of camps for just about every level of swimmer. When selecting a camp, ask for your coaches advice as to what will be the best for the swimmer, or call USA-S swimming for details on the many camps they offer.

Cap

The latex or lycra covering worn on the head of swimmers. The colors and team logo's adorning these caps are limitless. National Caps, State Team Caps, award caps, plain practice caps, etc.

Car pool

The major transportation service provided by parents of a swim club, to shuttle swimmers to and from practices.

Cards

A card that may either be handed to the swimmer in the bull pen or given to the timer behind the lane. Cards usually list the swimmers name, USA-S number, seed time, event number, event description, and the lane and heat number the swimmer will swim in. Backup times are written on these cards. Each event may have a separate card.

Carbohydrates

The main source of food energy used by athletes. Refer to a Nutritional Manual for more information.

Championship Meet

The meet held at the end of a season. Qualification times are usually necessary to enter meet.



Championship Finals

The top 6 or 8 swimmers (depending on the # of pool lanes) in a Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals. The fastest heat of finals when multiple heats are held. Big Finals.


Check-In	The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded meet. Sometimes referred to as positive check in, the swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host.
Check-Out	The parents job at the motel. This is listed here to remind parents to request "Late Check Out" times if offered at no charge by the motel. This makes the last day of the meet a little less hectic.
Chlorine	The chemical used by most pools to kill the bacteria in water and keep it clear and safe to swim in.
Circle Seeding	A method of seeding swimmers when they are participating in a prelims/finals event. The fastest 18 to 24 swimmers are seeded in the last three heats, with the fastest swimmers being in the inside lanes. (Ie) Lane 4 in the final 3 heats. See rule book for exact method for seeding depending on the lanes in the pool.
Clinic	A scheduled meeting for the purpose of instruction. (Ie) Officials clinic, Coaches clinic.
Closed Competition	Swim meet which is open to the members of an organization or group. Summer club swim meets are considered to be "Closed Competition".
Club	A registered swim team that is a dues paying member of USA-S and the local LSC.
Code	A set of rules that have been officially published.
Code of Ethics	A Code of Conduct that both swimmers and coaches are required to sign at certain USA-S/LSC sponsored events. The Code is not strict and involves common sense and proper behavior.
Colorado	A brand of automatic timing system.
Consolation Finals	After the fastest 6 or 8 swimmers, the next 6 or 8 swimmers (depending on the # of pool lanes) in a Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals. Consolations are the second fastest heat of finals when multiple heats are held and are conducted before the Championship heat.
Convention	United States Aquatic Sports annual, week long, meeting where all rules changes are decided and working committees are established. Representatives are sent by each LSC to make up the voting body.

Course	Designated distance (length of pool) for swimming competition. (Ie) Long Course = 50 meters / Short Course = 25 yards or 25 meters.
Deadline	The date meet entries must be "postmarked" by, to be accepted by the meet host. Making the meet deadline does not guarantee acceptance into a meet since many meets are "full" weeks before the entry deadline.
Deck	The area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches. No one but an "authorized" USA Swimming member may be on the deck during a swim competition.
Deck Entries	Accepting entries into swimming events on the first day or later day of a meet.
Deck Seeding	Swimmers report to a bull pen or staging area and receive their lane and heat assignments for the events.
Dehydration	The abnormal depletion of body fluids (water). The most common cause of swimmers cramps and sick feelings.
Developmental	A classification of meet or competition that is usually held early in the season. The purpose of a developmental meet is to allow all levels of swimmers to compete in a low pressure environment.
Distance	How far a swimmer swims. Distances for short course are: 25 yards (1 length), 50 yards (2 lengths), 100 yards (4 lengths), 200 yards (8 lengths), 400 yards (16 lengths), 500 yards (20 lengths), 1000 yards (40 lengths), 1650 yards (66 lengths). Distances for long course are: 50 meters (1 length), 100 meters (2 lengths), 200 meters (4 lengths), 400 meters (8 lengths), 800 meters (16 lengths), 1500 meters (30 lengths).
Disqualified	A swimmers performance is not counted because of a rules infraction. A disqualification is shown by an official raising one arm with open hand above their head.
Dive	Entering the water head first. Diving is not allowed during warmups except at the designated time, in specific lanes that are monitored by the swimmers coach.
Diving Well	A separate pool or a pool set off to the side of the competition pool. This pool has deeper water and diving boards/platforms. During a meet, this area may be designated as a warm-down

pool with proper supervision.

Division I-II-III	NCAA member colleges and universities are assigned divisions to compete in, depending on the schools total enrollment. Division I being the large universities and Division III being the smaller colleges.
Double Dual	Type of swim meet where three teams compete in dual meets against each other, at the same time. Separate Meet scores would be kept for Team A vs. Team B, Team A vs. Team C, and Team B vs. Team C.
Dual Meet	Type of meet where two (2) teams/clubs compete against each other.
Draw	Random selection by chance.
Dropped Time	When a swimmer goes faster than the previous performance they have "dropped their time".
Dryland	The exercises and various strength programs swimmers do out of the water.
Dry Side	That part of the Code book (rule book) that deals with the "Administrative" Regulations of Competition.
Entry	An Individual, Relay team, or Club roster's event list into a swim competition.
Entry Chairperson	The host clubs designated person who is responsible for receiving, and making sure the entries have met the deadline, or returning the entries if the meet is full. This person usually will find discrepancies in the meet entries and notify the entering club to correct any errors.
Entry Fees	The amount per event a swimmer or relay is charged. This varies depending on the LSC and type of meet.
Entry Limit	Each meet will usually have a limit of total swimmers they can accept, or a time limit they can not exceed. Once an entry limit has been reached, a meet will be closed and all other entries returned.
Electronic Timing	Timing system operated on DC current (battery). The timing system usually has touchpads in the water, junction boxes on the deck with hook up cables, buttons for backup timing, and a computer type console that prints out the results of each race. Some systems are hooked up to a scoreboard that displays swimmers.

Eligible to compete	The status of a member swimmer that means they are registered and have met all the requirements.
Equipment	The items necessary to operate a swim practice or conduct a swim competition.
Event	A race or stroke over a given distance. An event equals 1 preliminary with its final, or 1 timed final.
False Start	When a swimmer leaves the starting block before the horn or gun. One false start will disqualify a swimmer or a relay team, although the starter or referee may disallow the false start due to unusual circumstances.
False Start Rope	A recall rope across the width of the racing pool for the purpose of stopping swimmers who were not aware of a false start. The rope is about 1/2 way on yard pools and about 50 feet from the starting end on meter pools.
Fastest to Slowest	A seeding method used on the longer events held at the end of a session. The fastest seeded swimmers participate in the first heats followed by the next fastest and so on. Many times these events will alternate one girls heat and one boys heat until all swimmers have competed.
Fees	Money paid by swimmers for services. (Ie) Practice fees, registration fee, USA-S membership fee, etc.
FINA	The international, rules making organization, for the sport of swimming.
Finals	The final race of each event. See "Big Finals", "Consolation Finals", "Timed Finals", etc.
Final Results	The printed copy of the results of each race of a swim meet.
Fine	The monetary penalty assessed a swimmer or club when a swimmer does not achieve the necessary time required to swim in an event, and cannot prove they have done the time previously.
Fins	Large rubber fin type devices that fit on a swimmers feet. Used in swim practice, not competition.
Flags	Pennants that are suspended over the width of each end of the pool approximately 15 feet from the wall.

Format	The order of events and type of swim meet being conducted.
Fund Raiser	A money making endeavor by a swim team/club usually involving both parents and swimmers.
Freestyle	<p>One of the 4 competitive racing strokes. Freestyle (nicknamed Free) is swam as the fourth stroke in the Medley Relay and fourth stroke in the I.M. Racing distances are 50 yards/meter, 100 yards/meter, 200 yards/meter, 400 mtr/500 yd 800 mtr/1000 yds, 1500 mtr/1650 yds. (LSCs with 8-under divisions offer the 25 yd free)</p> 
Gallery	The viewing area for spectators during the swimming competition.
Goals	The short and long range targets for swimmers to aim for.
Goggles	Glasses type devices worn by swimmers to keep their eyes from being irritated by the chlorine in the water.
Gun	The blank firing pistol that may be used by the starter to start the races.
Gun Lap	The part of a freestyle distance race (400 meters or longer) when the swimmer has 2 lengths plus 5 yards to go. The starter fires a gun shot over the lane of the lead swimmer when swimmer is at the backstroke flags.
Handbook	A reference manual published by teams/clubs and LSCs or other swimming organizations.
Hats	See "caps".
Headquarters	The motel designated by the meet host. Usually, hospitality rooms and meetings relating to the meet will be held at this location. Many times this motel is one of the sponsors of the meet.
Heats	A division of an event when there are too many swimmers to compete at the same time. The results are compiled by swimmers time swam, after all heats of the event are completed.
Heat Award	A ribbon or coupon given to the winner of a single heat at an age group swim meet.
Heat Sheet	The pre-meet printed listings of swimmers seed times in the

various events at a swim meet. These sheets vary in accuracy, since the coaches submit swimmers times many weeks before the meet. Heat sheets are sold at the admissions table and are used mainly to make sure the swimmer has been properly entered in all the events they signed up for. Parents enjoy looking at the seedings prior to the race plus swimmers can tell the order the events will be conducted and get a rough idea how long the meet sessions will last.

High Point	An award given to the swimmer scoring the most points in a given age group at a swim meet. All meets do not offer high point awards; check the pre meet information.
HOD	House of Delegates. The ruling body of an LSC composed of the designated representative of each club plus the board of directors (BOD) of the LSC. One vote per club and board member.
Horn	A sounding device used in place of a gun. Used mainly with a fully automatic timing system.
Illegal	Doing something against the rules that is cause for disqualification.
IM	Individual Medley. A swimming event using all 4 of the competitive strokes on consecutive lengths of the race. The order must be: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle. Equal distances must be swam of each stroke. Distances offered: 100 yards, 200 yards/meters, 400 yards/meter.
Insurance	USA Swimming offers "accident insurance coverage" which is automatic when swimmer, coach, official, pays their USA-S membership fee. Many restrictions apply, so check with your club for detailed information.
Interval	A specific elapsed time for swimming or rest used during swim practice.
Invitational	Type of meet that requires a club to request an invitation to attend the meet.
J.O.	Junior Olympics. An age group championship meet conducted by the LSC.
Jump	An illegal start done by the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th member of a relay team. The swimmer on the block breaks contact with the block before the swimmer in the water touches the wall.

Juniors A USA-S Championship meet for swimmers 18 years old or less. Qualification times are necessary. This meet is scheduled to resume in August of 2005.

Kick The leg movements of a swimmer. A popular word to "yell" to encourage swimmers during a race.

Kick Board A flotation device used by swimmers during practice. A lightweight object used with great accuracy by coaches.



Lane The specific area in which a swimmer is assigned to swim. (ie) Lane 1 or Lane 2. Pools with starting blocks at only one end: As the swimmers stand behind the blocks, lanes are numbered from Right (lane 1) to Left (Lane 6).

Lane Lines Continuous floating markers attached to a cable stretched from the starting end to the turning end for the purpose of separating each lane and quieting the waves caused by racing swimmers.

Lap One length of the course. Sometimes may also mean down and back (2 lengths) of the course.

Lap Counter The large numbered cards (or the person turning the cards) used during the freestyle events 500 yards or longer. Counting is done from the end opposite the starting end. The numbers on the cards are "odd numbers" only with the final lap being designated by a bright orange card.



Late Entries Meet entries from a club or individual that are received by the meet host after the entry deadline. These entries are usually not accepted and are returned to sender.

Leg The part of a relay event swam by a single team member. A single stroke in the IM.

Length The extent of the competitive course from end to end. See lap.

Little Finals After the fastest 6 or 8 swimmers, the next 6 or 8 swimmers (depending on the # of pool lanes) in a Prelims/Finals meet who, after the Prelims swim, qualify to return to the Finals. Little Finals are the second fastest heat of finals when multiple heats are held and are conducted before the Championship heat.

Long Course	A 50 meter pool.
LSC	Local Swim Committee. The local level administrative division of the corporation (USA-S) with supervisory responsibilities within certain geographic boundaries designated by the Corporation.
Lycra	A stretch material used to make competitive swim suits and swim hats.
Malfunction	A mechanical or electronic failure - not a human failure by the swimmer.
Mark	The command to take your starting position.
Marshall	The adult(s) (official) who control the crowd and swimmer flow at a swim meet.
Medals	Awards given to the swimmers at meets. They vary in size and design and method of presentation.
Meet	A series of events held in one program.
Meet Director	The official in charge of the administration of the meet. The person directing the "dry side" of the meet.
Meters	The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the metric system. Long course meters is 50 meters, short course meters is 25 meters.
Mile	The slang referring to the 1500 meter or the 1650 yard freestyle, both of which are slightly short of a mile.
NAIA	National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics
NAGTS	National Age Group Time Standards - the list of "C" through "AAAA" times published each year.
Nationals	USA Swimming National Championship meet conducted in March/April and August.
Natatorium	A building constructed for the purpose of housing a swimming pool and related equipment.
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
Newsletter	A written communication published by a club or association.
NGB	National Governing Body

NCSA	National Club Swimming Association, Inc. is a private nonprofit organization for professionally coached swimming clubs and their coaches. The clubs are independently owned and operated and not under the direct control of any other institution.
Non-Conforming Time	A short course time submitted to qualify for a long course meet, or vice versa.
Novelty Meet	A meet that does not fall into a specific category because of limited events, sessions, or age brackets.
Novice	A beginner or someone who does not have experience.
NRT	National Reportable Time. A time list published once a year, which if a swimmer equals or betters the time on the list, they may submit their time in that event for consideration for national recognition.
NSSA	National Swim School Association
NT	No Time. The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer has not swam that event before.
NTV	National Times Verification. A certificate verifying a national qualifying time achieved by a swimmer and issued only by a verification official of the location where the meet was held.
Nutrition	The sum of the processes by which a swimmer takes in and utilizes food substances.
Nylon	A material used to make swim suits.
Observed Meet	A meet that is not conducted according to USA Swimming rules (high school, YMCA) where a request for observation has been processed and approved in advance. Sufficient USA Swimming officials are present to certify that the athletes' swims are in compliance with USA Swimming technical rules.
Observed Swim	A swim observed by assigned USA Swimming officials for conformance with USA Swimming technical rules in a meet conducted under other than USA Swimming rules.
Officials	The certified, adult volunteers, who operate the many facets of a swim competition.
Olympic Trials	The USA-S sanctioned long course swim meet held the year of the Olympic Games to decide what swimmers will represent the

USA on our Olympic Team. Qualification times are faster than Senior Nationals.

Omega	A brand of automatic timing system.
OT	Official Time. The swimmers event time recorded to one hundredth of a second (.01).
OTC	Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado.
Open Competition	Competition which any qualified club, organization, or individual may enter.
Parka	Large 3/4 length fur lined coats worn by swimmers. Usually are in team colors with logo or team name.
Pace Clock	The electronic clocks or large clocks with highly visible numbers and second hands, positioned at the ends or sides of a swimming pool so the swimmers can read their times during warmups or swim practice.
Paddle	Colored plastic devices worn on the swimmers hands during swim practice.
Plaque	A type of award (wall plaque) given to swimmers at a meet.
Pool	The facility in which swimming competition is conducted.
Positive Check In	The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded or pre seeded meet. The swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host.
Practice	The scheduled workouts a swimmers attends with their swim team/club.
Prelims	Session of a Prelims/Finals meet in which the qualification heats are conducted.
Prelims-Finals	Type of meet with two sessions. The preliminary heats are usually held in the morning session. The fastest 6 or 8 (Championship Heat) swimmers, and the next fastest 6 or 8 swimmers (Consolation Heat) return in the evening to compete in the Finals. A swimmer who has qualified in the Consolation Finals may not place in the Championship Finals even if their finals time would place them so. The converse also applies.
Pre-seeded	A meet conducted without a bull pen in which a swimmer knows



what lane and heat they are in by looking at the Meet heat sheet or posted meet program.

Proof of Time	An official meet result, OVC, or other accepted form. Swimmers/Coaches must supply proof of time with some meet entries, and other meets it is not required unless a swimmer misses a cut of time at the meet.
Psyche Sheet	An entry sheet showing all swimmers entered into each individual event. Sometimes referred to as a "Heat Sheet" or meet program. However, a "heat sheet" would show not only every swimmer in an event, but also what heat and lane they are swimming in.
Pull Buoy	A flotation device used for pulling by swimmers in practice.
Qualifying Times	Published times necessary to enter certain meets, or the times necessary to achieve a specific category of swimmer. See "A" "AA" (etc.) times.
Race	Any single swimming competition. (Ie) preliminary, final, timed final.
Ready Room	A room pool side for the swimmers to relax before they compete in finals.
Recall Rope	A rope across the width of the racing pool for the purpose of stopping swimmers who were not aware of a false start. The rope is about 1/2 way on yard pools and about 50 feet from the starting end on meter pools.
Referee	The head official at a swim meet in charge of all of the "Wet Side" administration and decisions.
Registered	Enrolled and paid as a member of USA-S and the LSC.
Relays	A swimming event in which 4 swimmers participate as a relay team each swimmer swimming an equal distance of the race. There are two types of relays: 1.) Medley relay - One swimmer swims Backstroke, one swimmer swims Breaststroke, one swimmer swims Butterfly, one swimmer swims Freestyle, in that order. Medley relays are conducted over 200 yd/mtr and 400 yd/mtr distances. 2.) Freestyle relay - Each swimmer swims freestyle. Free relays are conducted over 200 yd/mtr, 400 yd/mtr, and 800 yd/mtr distances.
Rest Area	A designated area (such as a gymnasium) that is set aside for swimmers to rest during a meet.


Ribbons	Awards in a variety of sizes, styles, and colors, given at swim meets.
Safety	The responsible and careful actions of those participating in a swim meet. USA-S and each LSC now have a "Safety Coordinator" and each meet must have "Marshalls" in charge of safety.
Sanction	A permit issued by an LSC to a USA-S group member to conduct an event or meet.
Sanction Fee	The amount paid by a USA-S group member to an LSC for issuing a sanction.
Sanctioned Meet	A meet that is approved by the LSC in which is held. Meet must be conducted according to USA Swimming rules. All participants, including coaches, athletes and officials, must be USA Swimming members.
Schedule	USA-S or LSC list of meets with dates, meet host, meet location, type of meet, and contacts address and phone.
Scratch	To withdraw from an event after having declared an intention to participate. Some meets have scratch deadlines and specific scratch rules, and if not followed, swimmer can be disqualified from remaining events.
Sectionals	Nickname for Speedo Championship Series (see below).
Seed	Assign the swimmers heats and lanes according to their submitted or preliminary times.
Seeding	Deck Seeding - swimmers are called to report to the Clerk of the Course. After scratches are determined, the event is seeded. Pre Seeding - swimmers are arranged in heats according to submitted times, usually a day prior to the meet.
Senior Meet	A meet that is for senior level swimmers and is not divided into age groups. Qualification times are usually necessary and will vary depending on the level of the meet.
Senior	A USA-S National Championship meet for swimmers of any age as long as the qualification times are met.
Session	Portion of meet distinctly separated from other portions by locale, time, type of competition, or age group.

Shave	The process of removing all arm, leg, and exposed torso hair, to decrease the "drag" or resistance of the body moving through the water. Used only by Seniors at very important (Championship) meets.
Short Course	A 25 yard or 25 meter pool.
Simultaneously	A term used in the rules of butterfly and breaststroke, meaning at the same time.



Speedo Championship Series
 Open "senior level" meets held in the spring and summer. Each Zone may hold up to four meets. Meets are commonly called "Sectionals." Qualifying times, sites, dates and meet rules are determined locally.

Splash	TheUSA Swimming magazine that is mailed bi-monthly. A benefit of being a member of USA Swimming.
Split	A portion of an event, shorter than the total distance, that is timed. (ie) A swimmers first 50 time is taken as the swimmer swims the 100 race. It is common to take multiple splits for the longer distances.
STARS	Swimming Tracking and Recognition System. National Times Database of meet results provided by tabulators appointed by each LSC.
Stations	Separate portions of a dryland or weight circuit.
Start	The beginning of a race. The dive used to begin a race.
Starter	The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.
Still Water	Water that has no current caused by a filter system or no waves caused by swimmers.
State	A meet held twice a year (Short Course and Long Course) sponsored by the LSC. In larger LSCs it is common to hold a Championship Senior meet and Age Group meet separately. Qualification times are usually necessary.
State Qualifier	A swimmer who has made the necessary cut off times to enter the State meet.

Stand-up	The command given by the Starter or Referee to release the swimmers from their starting position.
Step-Down	The command given by the Starter or Referee to have the swimmers move off the blocks. Usually this command is a good indication everything is not right for the race to start.
Stroke	There are 4 competitive strokes: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, Freestyle.
Stroke Judge	The official positioned at the side of the pool, walking the length of the course as the swimmers race. If the Stroke Judge sees something illegal, they report to the referee and the swimmer may be disqualified.
Submitted Time	Times used to enter swimmers in meets. These times must have been achieved by the swimmer at previous meets.
Suit	The racing uniform worn by the swimmer, in the water, during competition. The four most popular styles/types of suits worn are: Nylon, Lycra, Paper, and Fastskin.
Swim-A-Thon	The "Fund Raiser" trademarked by USA Swimming for local clubs to use to make money. 
Swim America	The professional swim lesson program administrated by the American Swim Coaches Association licensed to coaches.
Swim-off	In a Prelims/Finals type competition, a race after the scheduled event to break a tie. The only circumstance that warrants a swim-off is to determine which swimmer makes finals or an alternate, otherwise ties stand.
Swimming World	The most popular of the paid subscription swimming magazines. All swimmers and parents who are interested in swimming should consider a subscription.
SWIMS	USA Swimming system that keeps track of every time swum by all swimmers. Available through the USA-S website.
Taper	The resting phase of a senior swimmer at the end of the season before the championship meet.
Team	USA-S Registered club that has the right to compete for points.

Team Records	The statistics a team keeps, listing the fastest swimmer in the clubs history for each age group/each event.
Timed Finals	Competition in which only heats are swum and final placings are determined by the those times.
Time Standard	A time set by a meet or LSC or USA-S (etc) that a swimmer must achieve for qualification or recognition.
Timer	The volunteers sitting behind the starting blocks/finish end of pool, who are responsible for getting watch times on events and activating the backup buttons for the timing system.
Time Trial	An event or series of events where a swimmer may achieve or better a required time standard.
Top 16	A list of times compiled by the LSC or USA-S that recognizes the top 16 swimmers in each age group (boys & girls) by each event and distance. The number 16 was arbitrarily chosen because it would normally fill the finals and consoles heats at a swim meet.
Touch Out	To reach the touchpad and finish first in a close race.
Touch Pad	The removable plate (on the end of pools) that is connected to an automatic timing system. A swimmer must properly touch the touchpad to register an official time in a race.
Transfer	The act of leaving one club or LSC and going to another. Usually 120 days of unattached competition is required before swimmer can represent another USA-S club.
Travel Fund	A sum of money set aside for a swimmer to use for travel expenses and entry fees to specified meets.
Tri-meet	A meet with 3 team competing for points to see who places 1st-2nd-3rd.
Trophy	Type of award given to teams and swimmers at meets.
Unattached	An athlete member who competes, but does not represent a club or team. (abbr. UN)
Uniform	The various parts of clothing a swimmer wears at a meet. May include: Parka, Warmup jacket, Team duffel bag, sweat pants, suits, hat, goggles, T-shirt, etc.
Unofficial Time	The time displayed on a read out board or read over the intercom by the announcer immediately after the race. After the time has been checked, it will become the official time.

USA-S	The governing body of swimming--USA Swimming.
USA Swimming	The national governing body of the sport headquartered in Colorado Springs.
USA-S ID Number	A 16 part number assigned to a swimmer after they have filled out the proper forms and paid their annual dues. The first 6 parts are numbers of swimmers birthdate: Day/Month/Year using zeros as place holders. The next three spaces are the first three letters of the athletes legal first name. The next letter is the middle initial, followed by the first four letters of the swimmers last name. For example: USA-S ID# for swimmer Suzanne Eileen Nelson and born Aug.27, 1976 = 082776SUZENELS.
USOTC	United States Olympic Training Center located in Colorado Springs, Colorado.
Vertical	At right angle to the normal water level.
Vitamins	The building blocks of the body. Vitamins do not supply energy, but are necessary for proper health.
Warm-down	The recovery swimming a swimmer does after a race when pool space is available.
Warm-up	The practice and "loosing" up session a swimmer does before the meet or their event is swum.
Watch	The hand held device used by timers and coaches for timing a swimmers races and taking splits.
Water	For the purpose of filling swimming pools and swimmers drinking to properly hydrate themselves.
Weights	The various barbells / benches / machines used by swimmers during their dryland program.
Whistle	The sound a starter/referee makes to signal for quiet before they give the command to start the race.
Work Out	The practice sessions a swimmer attends.
Yards	The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the American system. A short course yard pool is 25 yards (75 feet) in length.

Yardage	The distance a swimmer races or swims in practice. Total yardage can be calculated for each practice session.
Zones	The country is divided up into 4 major zones: Eastern - Southern - Central - Western. At the end of the long course season (in August) the Zone Administration sponsors a championship age group meet.

A Rules Primer



The technical rules of swimming are designed to provide fair and equitable conditions of competition and to promote uniformity in the sport. Each swimming stroke has specific rules designed to ensure that no swimmer gets an unfair competitive advantage over another swimmer.

Trained officials observe the swimmers during each event to ensure compliance with these technical rules. If a swimmer commits an infraction of the rules that is observed by an official, a disqualification (DQ) will result. This means that the swimmer will not receive an official time and will not be eligible for an award in that event. A disqualification may result from actions such as not getting to the starting blocks on time, false starting, performing strokes in an illegal manner, or unsportsmanlike conduct.

DQs are also a result of technical rules violations. They include but are not limited to:

Freestyle: Walking on the bottom, pulling on the lane rope, not touching the wall on a turn, or not completing the distance.

Backstroke: Pulling or kicking into the wall once a swimmer has turned passed the vertical onto the breast. Turning onto the breast before touching the wall with the hand at the finish of the race.



Breaststroke: An illegal kick such as flutter (freestyle), dolphin (butterfly - except for one during the pullout), or scissors (side stroke); not on the breast; alternating movements of the arms; taking two arm strokes or two leg kicks while the head is under water; touching with only one hand at the turns or finish.



Butterfly: Alternating movements of the arms or legs; pushing the arms forward under instead of over the water surface (underwater recovery); a breaststroke style of kick; touching with only one hand at the turns or finish.

For specific language on any technical rules consult the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations book. Violations of the rules are reported to the Referee. The rules require that every reasonable effort be made to notify the swimmer or his coach of the reason for the disqualification. If your child is disqualified in an event, be supportive rather than critical. For beginning swimmers, a disqualification should be treated as a learning experience, not as a punishment. A disqualification alerts the swimmer and coach to what portions of the swimmer's stroke need to be corrected. They should be considered in the same light as an incorrect answer in schoolwork—they point out areas that need further practice. Disqualifications are necessary to keep the competition fair and equitable for all competitors. A supportive attitude on the part of the official, coach, and parent can make a positive situation out of the disqualification.

Parent & Athlete



Competitive swimming programs provide many benefits to young athletes including self-discipline, good sportsmanship, and time management skills. Competition allows the swimmer to experience success and to learn how to treat success and failure as two sides of the same coin, while becoming healthy and physically fit. As a parent, your major responsibility is to provide a stable, loving and supportive environment. This positive environment will encourage your child to continue. Show your interest by ensuring your child's attendance at practices, by coming to swimming meets and volunteering for your club at swim meets, or by participating in

fundraising, etc.

Parents contribute to the success experienced by the child and the team. Parents serve as role models and their children emulate their attitudes. Be aware of this and strive to be positive role models. Most importantly, show good sportsmanship at all times toward coaches, officials, opponents and teammates. Remember that you are teaching your child at all times.

Be Enthusiastic and Supportive!

Remember that your child is the swimmer. Children need to establish their own goals, and make their own progress towards them. Be careful not to impose your own standards and goals. Do not over burden your child with winning or achieving best times. Let them know that first they are the child you love, and second, a swimmer. Tell them you will love them whether they swim well or not, and ask only that they give their best effort. Learning about oneself while enjoying the sport is the most important part of the swimming experience. The swimming environment encourages learning and fun, which will help your child develop a positive self-image.

Positive Parenting Tips

1. Your child needs your emotional, physical, and financial support. Be liberal in providing this support.
2. Support but do not push your child.
3. Understand development – long-term development as an athlete, and growth and development as it impacts performance.
4. Be realistic in terms of expectations; factor in age and skill level; be aware of your child's perception of your expectations.
5. Emphasize performance and effort, not just outcome. The athlete only has control over his/her performance. Define and measure success as giving maximal effort and as personal improvement.
6. Keep winning in perspective.
7. Do not bribe.
8. Give plenty of encouraging and rewarding statements. Criticize sparingly.
9. View swimming as an arena in which to teach your child about commitment, hard work, and coping with adversity.
10. Work to form an effective Coach-Athlete-Parent Triangle.

You and Your Club

Parental involvement is crucial to every club. Regardless of the organizational model of the club, parents play key support roles. In parent owned clubs, parents are needed in leadership roles as board members and committee leaders. Regardless of structure, clubs are looking for volunteers to help with swim meets, coordinate social events and organize fundraising. Volunteering to help your club is a great way to get involved, meet other parents and be a positive role model for your child. Contact the coach or an involved parent to find out more about what you can do and how you can be a positive force in your club.

Roles and Responsibilities on Your Club <>

Getting involved with your child's club is a great way to meet people, have fun and teach your child about commitment. Many swim parents develop long-term friendships and enjoy the family-like atmosphere that develops when people work together. Working at a meet can be a lot more fun than sitting in the stands! Additionally, when your child sees you devoting time and energy to help the team, he or she understands that team loyalty is important and worthwhile.

1. How can we help support the team?

That's a great question. Check with the coach to find out if there is a parent's committee or booster organization that supports the team. Many clubs have programs in place to maximize parent involvement and resources. For example, your club may have a fundraising committee, or even a social committee. Find out from your board or coach how the team can best utilize your skills.



2. It looks like it takes an awful lot of people to run a meet. What can I do to help?

If you have already attended a meet, you have probably been approached to be a timer. This is a great way to begin to help run meets. In fact, this is how many officials get started. Officials are a necessary part of every type of competition. Here is a list of the officiating positions:

- Stroke and turn judges
- Clerk of course
- Computer operator
- Starter
- Referee
- Safety Marshal

If any of the jobs interest you, check with your coach or LSC officials chair.

If your club hosts meets, you may be able to help in the following areas:

Soliciting sponsorship

Meet Director

Hospitality and snack bar

Meet Entries

Meet results/awards

Set up and clean up

And much more. Check to see if your team has a meet committee and find out how to get involved.

3. What does it take to be an official?

You need to become certified by the Local Swim Committee (LSC) Officials Chair to become an official. Each LSC establishes its own criteria for training and certifying its officials. The national standards are ensured through taking a series of tests. Officials are trained to be consistent in their knowledge of the rules and protocol involved in each position. This consistency is fostered through

USA Swimming and LSC officials workshops. If you are really interested in becoming an official, speak with one of the officials during a break at your next meet. Or, feel free to contact you LSC officials chair for more information.

4. Our coach misses practice to go to an “LSC” meeting. What is that? What is involved?

You would be surprised at how many people don't know what an LSC is much less what it does. Let's begin by telling a little about how USA Swimming is organized. USA Swimming is the national governing body for the sport of swimming. In this capacity, USA Swimming formulates rules, implements policies and procedures, conducts national championships and offers a variety of services and program to enhance the swimming experience of all members. USA Swimming is made up of 59 LSCs. LSC stands for Local Swimming Committee and each LSC has it's own House of Delegates where local decisions are made. Your LSC also has 6 representative that are elected to represent you at the national House of Delegates as well.

The reason your coach and hopefully another representative of your team attend these important meetings is to keep informed as well as participate in all the activities of the LSC. The LSC makes decisions such as funding swimmers to national meets, hosting meets and registering all swimmers with USA Swimming through a local registration person and much more.

5. Our coach was just named to a National Committee. What is that? What is involved?

That is very exciting. In addition to the national House of Delegates, USA Swimming has nearly 50 standing committees that meet and conduct business in conjunction with the USA Swimming staff to develop, create and evaluate all the programs offered. Your coach has just been appointed to serve in this very prestigious role. This may mean that he must attend meetings and be away from your club, but the honor and responsibility of this role is a very important one. Your team should understand this role and be proud that your coach was chosen as a member of a national committee.

6. Our coach is gone to ASCA and USAS every September for two weeks. What's that all about?

First of all, congratulations to your team for understanding the importance of these two meetings by making sure your coach is in attendance as well as financing his travel. The ASCA meeting is actually a coaches education program run by the American Swimming Coaches Association. The USAS, or United States Aquatic Sports, convention serves as the annual business meeting for USA Swimming. The USAS meeting is where all standing committees meet each year as well as the USA Swimming House of Delegates. The House of Delegates is responsible for electing our national officers, voting on our annual budget and any other rules and legislation for the next year. By attending these events, your coach will be bringing back invaluable first hand information and knowledge that will benefit your team.

7. I have just been asked to submit myself as a candidate for the board. What kind of commitment will this mean?

Becoming a member of the club's board of directors is an important decision, a decision that requires a great amount of consideration. Find out from current board members what their experience has been, like what kind of time commitment and responsibility are involved. Most clubs should have already defined roles and responsibilities outlined in it's by-laws or team policies. Ask your coach or team president for a copy of these documents.

Let the Coach Coach!



The best way to help your child achieve goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake. If your child does make one, remember that this is a learning experience. You and your child should learn to treat success and failure as learning experiences and not life changing situations. Encourage your child's efforts and point out the positive things. The coach is the one you have assigned to judge a swimmer's performance and technique. Your role is to provide love and support regardless of outcome.

Parent and Coach...The Other Stuff

Coaching is about more than athletes, practices, and competition. As Mike Krzyzewski, Duke's hugely successful basketball coach said, it's also about "the other stuff." For coaches of club teams, that means parents.

By Tom Slear, *Splash Magazine* special correspondent

"All that craziness," is how Monica Teuscher describes the rituals of other parents who nervously follow their children's swimming development. Teuscher, mother of Cristina, a 1996 and 2000 Olympian, never owned a stopwatch and rarely bought a meet program. She didn't track her daughter's times, yell during her races, or seek out her coach after practices for private chats. During swim meets, she went off by herself to read or knit, only to be amused when other parents gave her a rundown on Cristina's swims, complete with split times.

"I thought it was important that I was there, but for support, not for coaching or to add pressure," Teuscher explains. "My job was to take my daughters (older daughter Carolina also swam) out for a good meal after they raced. The last thing we talked about was swimming."

Most coaches would agree that the best team to coach is one filled with parents such as Teuscher, who recognize the line between parenting and coaching and avoid it as if it were radioactive. They somehow manage to counterbalance their staunch support with a refreshing cluelessness. Years ago Debbie Phelps, mother of Michael, the world record-holder in the 200-meter butterfly, relocated the family so that her children would be closer to North Baltimore Aquatic Club's practice facility. Yet when asked about Michael's world record time, she can do no better than to say, "I'm not sure – 1:50 something?" (Actually, 1:54.58)

"The swimmers I've had who have had the most success were unencumbered by parents calling the shots behind the scenes," says John Collins, who has coached Olympians Rick Carey and Lea Loveless as well as Cristina Teuscher at the Badger Swim Club in Larchmont, N.Y. "These parents are very good about backing up their kids, but they are hands off when it comes to swimming business."

The Growing Intrusion of Parents

Most coaches will tell you that Teuscher and Phelps are hardly exceptions. The overwhelming majority of parents instinctively, or with gentle guidance, find their place in the background. A few, however, can't resist meddling, such as the mother who wrote Collins a five- or six-page letter every week for a year and a half. Rare is the swim coach who doesn't have a similar story to tell.

"So many," says Chuck Warner, the head coach at Rutgers University who coached club teams for years before entering the college ranks. "All filed away in a painful spot."

The effect of such parents is all out of proportion to their numbers. A survey by Dan Doyle, which will be published in his forthcoming book, *The Encyclopedia of Sports Parenting*, found that high school coaches across different sports are convinced that the biggest change in their profession over the last 15 years has been the growing intrusion of parents.

"No other factor they mentioned even came close," says Doyle, the executive director of the Institute for International Sport.

The top issues raised when the development coordinators for USA Swimming solicit opinions from club coaches are "parent education" and "club governance," euphemisms for the difficulty of dealing with parents, whether individually or as members of the club's board of directors. (The coach-board relationship will be covered in a future issue of *Splash*.)

An Oasis

But a bit of perspective is in order here. While all coaches labor to properly shape the parent-athlete-coach triangle, some suffer more than others. Rick Wolff, chairman of the Center for Sports Parenting (www.internationalsport.com/csp), calls swimming "an oasis." Coaches of team sports have only subjective means to evaluate talent. Even at its best, the process is imprecise and open to question. How does a coach fix with any certainty which offensive lineman blocks better, or which outfielder offers the best combination of hitting and fielding?

Yet these judgements determine playing time, which is at the root of nearly all parental complaints. Coaches are forced to defend themselves armed with nothing stronger than an arbitrary standard. Who's to say a guard with a deft shooting touch should play more than a tenacious defender?

With swimming the only standard is time, so performance is entirely quantifiable, measured precisely by a stopwatch. And playing time is rarely an issue. The only barrier to entry at most age-group meets is the entry fee. Everyone who wants to swim can compete.

"When you compare what coaches of team sports have to put up with when they make decisions about who makes the team and who plays, coaches of individual sports like swimming and track are not even in deep water as far as their problems with parents," says Doyle. "They are barely in three feet of water."

Swimming's preciseness, however, comes with a price. In sports such as soccer and basketball, parents can judge their children's potential only against the players they compete against, which typically stretches no farther than adjacent counties. Not until the last two or three years of high school do they step onto a stage that provides statewide or national exposure.

Swimming, on the other hand, allows comparison between a 10-year-old breaststroker in Pennsylvania to one in California right down to the hundredth of a second. The temptation for parents to extrapolate is irresistible. If a son or daughter is among the Top 16 when they are 10, shouldn't they be in the running for a national championship when they turn 18?

In fact, quite the opposite is the case. Improvement is not a steady, positive slope, especially for prodigies. A study by USA Swimming using the All-Time Top100 swims in each age group through 1996 found that only 10 percent of the Top 100 10-and-Unders maintained their status through age 18.

Only half of the swimmers among the Top 100 in the 17-18 age group had made any top-100 list when they were younger.

"Those winning races at 10 probably won't be winning races when they are 20," says John Leonard, the executive director of the American Swimming Coaches Association. "This is one of those things that is obvious to coaches but is a mystery to parents. Coaches understand the long-term nature of the sport, parents often don't."

This misunderstanding creates swimming's equivalent of playing-time disputes. As swimmers begin to slip in national, regional, and even local rankings, their parents scramble for solutions. Sue Anderson, a former world record-holder and one of USA Swimming's development coordinators, saw the pattern repeat itself many times when she was head coach of the Scarlet Aquatic Club in New Jersey during the 1990s. These "pressure parents," as she calls them, begin to micromanage their children's swimming by arranging for extra practices and seeking out meets not on the team's schedule. When expectations still aren't met, they invariably blame the coach, who is mostly defenseless because no one can say for sure why young, talented swimmers stop improving. Maybe it is the coach's fault, though the problem just as likely could stem from the swimmer's early physical maturation or a mindset that has become mis-wired because of parental pressure, or a host of other reasons.

Regardless, the conflict heats up until the swimmer jumps to another club, which is often the first of several such moves.

"What the parents think is helping their kids is only putting them under a lot of pressure," says Anderson. "Many of these kids do very well when they are 10-and-under and 11-12, but eventually a lot of them they stop living up to expectations, and they fall apart."

The Other Stuff

Of course, not all disputes fall under the category of domineering parents and underachieving swimmers (though they tend to be the most intractable). A coach's personal style can cause problems, particularly if he focuses almost exclusively on the senior swimmers. There is also the matter of different outlooks. Parents see only their sons and daughters and the next few weeks and months. Coaches see the entire team and the upcoming years. Then there's the issue of how coaches are viewed. Many parents don't see a professional, but a former jock slumming between real jobs.

"It was amazing how differently parents acted when I started coaching at the college level," says Warner. "I knew nothing more than when I was coaching a club team, but the parents assumed that I did."

Mike Krzyzewski, who, over the last 20 years at Duke has established himself as one of the most successful college basketball coaches ever, once said, "The coaching I love. The kids I love. It's the other stuff you have to watch out for."

What often matters to parents is the other stuff, whether coaches are returning their phone calls promptly or thanking them for their volunteer work on behalf of the club. These small courtesies seem insignificant by themselves, but when taken together they acknowledge that the coach is meeting the parents halfway. They also keep disputes to a minimum. A meticulous plan handed out in March for the summer season will inhibit parents from overlapping family vacations with major competitions. Regular parent meetings run by the coaches and board members that both inform and educate will minimize rumors and alleviate concerns over the cyclic nature of competitive swimming. Set office hours for the coach will discourage interruptions from parents during practice.

The biggest courtesy of all, Leonard believes, is listening. A handful of parents are unreasonable. Others simply have healthy concerns about what's best for their children. Separating the two requires more than a five-minute conversation.

To make his point, Leonard refers back to his first coaching job, which was in Illinois during the 1970s. The father of a talented girl initially gave off all the signs of trouble.

"The classic horror story of a parent," Leonard recalls. "He was a trial attorney. Very pushy. His style of conversation was confrontational."

Yet Leonard endured and gradually came to realize that despite the father's bluster, he had a lot to offer. After two years, they were running together. Leonard would talk about his new ideas and the father would poke holes in all of the right spots.

"He'd question me on everything I was doing, which gave me a lot to think about," Leonard says. "Our relationship lasted for eight years and the daughter represented the United States on national teams. The mother and the father were the most active parents in helping to run the club. They were the best swimming parents I have ever known. It took me a while, but I discovered they were only interested in the best possible experiences for their daughter – both in life and in swimming – and they wanted to learn all they could about the sport.

"It just took a little bit of willingness to understand what they were after, and a little bit of patience to give them the opportunity to do the right thing."

Good advice, both for coaches and parents.

Physical Growth & Maturation



During childhood kids grow on average 2.5 inches in a year and gain five pounds per year. Athletes of the same chronological age can vary by as much as five years in biological maturation! So, with two 13 year old swimmers, biologically one may be 10 years and the other 16 years - - what a huge difference. This is illustrated by the picture on the right that shows three boys all of whom really are 13 years old.

Girls generally reach peak growth around 11-13 years old, and boys generally reach peak growth around 13-15 years old. Hormonal changes in males and females cause different and often drastic changes in body composition.

Once a child reaches puberty, scientists and coaches feel more serious training can begin. This can be a particularly frustrating time for swimmers. During this transition from age group to senior swimming and from childhood to young adulthood, an athlete may experience a plateau in performance. Best times can be few and far between, while training commitments increase, requiring more time and dedication. Hopefully the coaches have prepared swimmers for this change, but many parents may begin to question whether a child's swimming career is over at this point. These factors, coupled with the other normal difficulties of puberty, can sometimes lead a swimmer to leave the sport prematurely. It is critical that parents and coaches be cooperative and very supportive during this period of adjustment, realizing that it will pass and the rewards will be even better.

Below are common discussion topics dealing with growth and development. You should schedule an appointment with your child's coach if you have other questions or concerns.

Q: 01. When is my child ready for competition?

A: That is a difficult question, as research on athlete development provides no clear-cut answer. In an article by Passer (1988) addressing this question, he reviewed several areas of development in attempting to provide guidelines on determining readiness for competition:

- Motivational readiness: Because competition is a social comparison process, the young athlete is motivated to compete when he or she possesses a social comparison orientation. Research suggests that around the age of 5-7 kids have the desire for and ability to use social comparison information.
- Cognitive readiness: Competition requires numerous cognitive and reasoning skills (i.e., perspective taking, differentiating between effort and ability) that take some time to develop in youngsters. Researchers suggest that kids do not develop the cognitive abilities to have an understanding of the competitive process until approximately age 12.
- Physical growth, physiological capacity, and development: These factors must also be considered when trying to decide readiness for competition.

Q: 02. What should I tell my child when he or she says it's not fair that I have to swim against Suzy, she is so much bigger than I am?

A: Look at a classroom full of school children. The diversity in size and shape is remarkable. Even though these children are similar in chronological age (calendar age) they may be very different in biological age (physical/sexual maturity). Puberty is a critical point in the developmental process. It is well known that girls mature more rapidly than boys do. In fact, the average girl matures 2-2.5 years earlier than the average boy (see sidebar on next page). However, these values are merely averages and the range can be several years within each gender.

It is important to remember that "early bloomers"-children who move through biological maturation more rapidly than average- tend to be more physically developed. This can sometimes be an advantage for them in the swimming pool. "Late bloomers" tend to catch-up over time and will often become even more proficient at the sport. Regardless of the maturational pace of your child, she needs to focus on her personal improvements over time.

Q: 03. Should boys and girls be trained differently?

A: During the early years of competitive swimming, children of both genders are predominantly pre-pubescent. This stage allows for some flexibility in grouping the young athletes. At this point, young boys and girls can train together with relative ease.

Girls tend to move through biological development more rapidly than boys of similar chronological age (approximately 2-2.5 years earlier). This may cause initial differences within the training groups. Further, elements such as aerobic capacity (ability to use oxygen to make energy) and muscle mass are different between genders throughout the later developmental period. Aerobic capacity reaches its peak between the ages of 12-15 in girls and 16-20 in boys. Ideally, training programs should be specifically tailored for the individual.

Q: 04. Are there some exercises that prevent injuries to growing muscles and bones?

A: Physical activities like swimming are considered repetitive movements. Training for swimming will enhance the ability of the muscle to work over and over in the same movement pattern. These types of activities do not typically place large strains on the bones and joints. However, to prevent injury, it is important to develop and maintain strength and flexibility in the joints, as well as to use proper stroke technique.

The use of certain training aids, or swimming with poor technique, may place excessive force on the shoulder during training that may be harmful. Be sure to have your child check with his coach

for more information. It is important to develop muscular strength, endurance and flexibility to reduce the risks of both shoulder and knee problems. Your child should check with the coach before participating in any exercises designed to increase strength.

Q: 05. Why does it seem so many kids have inhalers? Should my child be on one?

A: Exercise-induced asthma (EIA) and exercise-induced bronchoconstriction (EIB) are common diseases in children. Various agents (such as humidity and temperature of the air) cause an irritation of the bronchioles in the lungs resulting in bronchoconstriction. Due to these facts, the warm moist (humid) environment of the swimming pool is helpful in reducing the onset of asthmatic attacks. Therefore, many children with asthma are advised to swim if they are interested in sport participation.

Typical treatments for EIB or EIA are inhaled medications that aid in reducing the bronchoconstriction and opening the airways (McArdle, Katch, Katch 1991). The inhalers are prescribed by a licensed doctor for the youngster following medical testing to determine both the presence of and severity of either EIA or EIB. As with any prescribed drug, sharing inhalers is not a safe practice.

Although many swimmers may be seen using inhalers, the sport of swimming does not cause asthma in children. The warm moist environment of the swimming pool is often one of the only places that children suffering from EIB or EIA can be physically active without severe problems. Advances in the diagnosis and treatment of asthma have allowed more children and adults to participate in organized sport throughout their lifetime.

*If an inhaler is prescribed for your child, you might want to double-check the USADA (United States Anti-Doping Agency) drug hotline for which drugs are acceptable and which are banned. (800) 233-0393

Q: 06. My daughter can beat several girls in the senior training group, but her coach won't move her up. Why not?

A: While your child may have the physical skills or times to move to the next group, move criteria may also be based on emotional, social and cognitive skills. Additionally, having performance times does not necessarily equate to being able to train in that group. Progression from group to group is set by the coaching staff to ensure long-term development. This allows proper training to be introduced at the appropriate level for each individual child. Obviously your coach believes it is in the best interest of your daughter to remain in that group. Express your concerns to the coach in private, and value the opinion and decision made by your coach.

Q: 07. My son comes home every night and says, "Tommy doesn't help cover the pool or pick-up boards." What do I say to him?

A: First of all, be sure to commend your son for helping out and explain why that's important. Praise him for helping without being asked. In this case you might encourage him to talk to Tommy and ask him to help the coach and the group by pitching in. This will begin to teach your son to deal directly with a problem and the person he has the problem with. Obviously, your son has a respect for others and a good team concept or he wouldn't be asking this question.

Q: 08. My daughter is influenced by the senior athletes. How do I encourage her to have the appropriate role models?

A: That's a tough one. We suggest you begin by complimenting or simply pointing out the behavior of athletes you want her to emulate. Focus on such things as a good work ethic, sportsmanship, a good attitude, and other values held by your family. There have been many heroes and role models throughout the history of swimming, e.g. Tracy Caulkins, Mary T. Meagher, Pablo Morales, Jeff Rouse, etc. Encourage your daughter to do some homework on these heroes. The "Swimmers" section of the USA Swimming web site has profiles of many great role models.

Q: 09. I worry that my child is overwhelmed by all of his commitments. What can I do?

A: Talk to your son. Is this your perception or is it really happening? If your son is overwhelmed, it's time to work together in establishing priorities. Be sure to make any observations of "wasted" time in his day. After helping him establish his priorities, help your son determine whether it is

necessary to drop some activities. Then, some decisions have to be made by you and your child to relieve this pressure and allow your child to be better balanced and enjoy his activities. This experience will teach your son how to better manage his time and balance his schoolwork, family, training, and activities.

Psychological Development for Age Group Parents



The mental side of athletic competition is just as challenging as the physical side. Parents want to help their children set appropriate goals and handle nervousness before competition. Coaches work with athletes on the "mental side" as part of their training, but there are things parents can do also. Below are some frequently asked questions and discussion topics that can guide you to help guide your swimmer.

Psychological Development Discussion Topics <>

Q: 01. What are "Process" goals?

A: There are two types of goals that swimmers can set:

- **Outcome Goals:** focus on the end result of performance. "Win, make finals."
- **Process Goals:** relate to process of performance. "Breathe every 3rd stroke, streamline."

Swimmers have much more control over Process Goals. Outcome Goals are uncontrollable since they also involve the performance of other competitors. Swimmers and coaches, especially at the Age Group level, should concentrate on Process Goals.

Q: 02. Should my child begin setting goals?

A: Of course! Everyone should set goals. In fact, most kids have already set goals. As adults, however, we must remember that kids are not simply little versions of us and are not going to set the same types of goals as adults. One developmental difference is that children lack the cognitive ability to distinguish time and are also very concrete thinkers. Therefore, setting long-term goals often doesn't provide the motivation for kids that it does for adults. Kids want results today. With younger swimmers, it is appropriate to talk about short-term goals - - what they need to work on today. Most coaches will emphasize goals that reinforce skill development and the process of swim performance. Additionally, based on cognitive development research, we know that around the age of 6 or 7, kids enter the stage of social comparison. In this stage, they begin to evaluate their own performance by comparing it to others. So as the parent, reinforce what the coach has emphasized and help her focus on individual improvement.

Q: 03. My son has set some great goals but I am not sure if the coach is aware of them.

A: Ask your son if he developed the goals with his coach. You might find that the coach actually helped your son set these goals. This is the beginning of your son learning to take risks and responsibility for his swimming. Encourage his goal to be "SMART".

- **Specific:** tells the athlete what to do
- **Measurable:** able to measure and record progress
- **Attainable:** athlete can experience success
- **Realistic:** challenging but "do-able"
- **Trackable:** short-term goals build into long-term goals

Q: 04. All my swimmer talks about is being an Olympic swimmer. Should I discourage this since it may not be realistic?

A: Most kids will have long-term or “dream” goals of making the Olympic team or winning Nationals. Dream goals can be beneficial by helping motivate your athlete to go to practice and to train hard (and there is no way of knowing if it is realistic or not). While it is okay to have dream goals, there are several problems with athletes **only** having dream goals. These problems include not knowing if they are making progress towards their goal, not experiencing little “successes” along the way, and losing motivation when the goal seems so distant. To combat this, it is important to also talk to your child about setting short-term or even daily goals. Ask him what he is working on in practice this week (just as you ask him what is going on in school), get him to identify skills he needs to improve on, and follow up with him to help him recognize successes along the way. Be sure to ask your son to speak to his coach if he needs help seeking some practice or short-term goals.

Q: 05. I know the mental aspect of swimming is important. Should my child be using mental skills, or is she too young?

A: If we equate mental skills with physical skills, as we should, this question becomes easier to answer. Just as there are certain physical skills that a young swimmer is not physically, developmentally, or cognitively ready for, there are also mental skills he is not ready to learn. But, on the flip side, there are basic mental skills young athletes can be taught at this level. It is great to begin laying a foundation of mental skills (just as it is great to introduce basic physical skills at a young age). Some basic skills that can be introduced include setting goals, imagery, concentration, and relaxation. We often tell athletes to “concentrate” or “relax,” but fail to teach athletes what it means or what they need to do to concentrate or relax. These are skills that coaches can work on with young athletes.

Q: 06. My child gets so nervous before a competition. Is this natural? What can I do to help her to reduce this competitive pressure/stress?

A: To a degree, nervousness is part of the competitive experience and can be used as an opportunity to teach the young athlete specific strategies or skills to help her manage this arousal or nervousness. A simple skill that young athletes can learn to help manage the “butterflies in their stomachs” is belly breathing. The athlete is taught to take slow, deep breaths into her belly, hold it briefly, and then exhale slowly. Words can be included to help the athlete focus her thoughts on something besides worry. This is a quick strategy that helps calm the body and mind and only takes a few seconds to do. Another skill to help the athlete deal with muscular tightness brought on by nervousness is progressive muscle relaxation. In this procedure, the athlete goes through the major muscles in her body and first tenses and then relaxes each muscle. This teaches athletes to learn the difference between a tense and relaxed muscle, to learn where different muscles are located, and to eventually be able to relax specific muscles as necessary. Remember that these skills must be taught and practiced before the athlete will be able to use them effectively.

We also know that excessive anxiety can be damaging to both performance and to the athlete's desire to enter such situations in the future. Two factors which have been found to play a role in the level of anxiety experienced are the importance of the event and the uncertainty of the outcome. Greater importance and greater uncertainty lead to increased anxiety. Parents, this suggests that you can play an active role in reducing competition anxiety by de-valuing the outcome of the event and by focusing on the individual performance over which the swimmers have control.

Symptoms of anxiety:

- increased heart rate
- rapid breathing
- sweating
- negativity
- jittery
- frequent ‘pit stops’
- excessive worry
- doubts

- talk of failure
- low confidence

Strategies to Manage

- Deep belly breathing
- positive self-talk
- relaxation exercises
- think of successes
- stretching
- visualize race
- listen to music
- focus on goals
- light massage
- distract by talking with friends, family

10 Commandments for Swimming Parents



by Rose Snyder, Managing Director Coaching Division, USOC
Former Director of Club Services, USA Swimming
(adapted from Ed Clendaniel's 10 Commandments for Little League Parents)

I. Thou shalt not impose thy ambitions on thy child.

Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes and don't push him based on what you think he should be doing. The nice thing about swimming is every person can strive to do his personal best and benefit from the process of competitive swimming.

II. Thou shalt be supportive no matter what.

There is only one question to ask your child after a practice or a competition - "Did you have fun?" If meets and practices are not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.

III. Thou shalt not coach thy child.

You are involved in one of the few youth sports programs that offers professional coaching. Do not undermine the professional coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to provide love and support. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy. Never pay your child for a performance. This will only serve to confuse your child concerning the reasons to strive for excellence and weaken the swimmer/coach bond.

IV. Thou shalt only have positive things to say at a swimming meet.

You should be encouraging and never criticize your child or the coach. Both of them know when mistakes have been made. Remember "yelling at" is not the same as "cheering for".

V. Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears.

New experiences can be stressful situations. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event or meet if your child was not ready. Remember your job is to love and support your child through all of the swimming experience.

VI. Thou shalt not criticize the officials.

Please don't criticize those who are doing the best they can in purely voluntary positions.



VII. Honor thy child's coach.

The bond between coach and swimmer is special. It contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child.

VIII. Thou shalt be loyal and supportive of thy team

It is not wise for parents to take swimmers and to jump from team to team. The water isn't necessarily bluer in another team's pool. Every team has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team find that it can be a difficult emotional experience.

Often swimmers who do switch teams don't do better than they did before they sought the bluer water.

IX. Thy child shalt have goals besides winning.

Most successful swimmers have learned to focus on the process and not the outcome. Giving an honest effort regardless of what the outcome is, is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, "My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. Does this make me a failure? No, in fact I am very proud of that swim." What a tremendous outlook to carry on through life.

X. Thou shalt not expect thy child to become an Olympian.

There are 250,000 athletes in USA Swimming. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child's odds of becoming an Olympian are about .0002%.



Are You A Pressure Parent?

The following survey has been taken from the *Amateur Swimming Association of Great Britain*. If you answer yes to one or more of these questions, you may be in danger of pressuring your child. It is important to remember that the parents' role is critical and should be supportive at all times to ensure a positive experience for your child.

- Is winning more important to you than it is to your child?
- When your child has a poor swim, is your disappointment, such as through body language or vocal tones, obvious?
- Do you feel that you are the one to have to "psyche" your child up before competition?
- Do you feel that winning is the only way your child can enjoy the sport?
- Do you conduct "post mortems" immediately after competition or practice?
- Do you feel that you have to force your child to go to practice?
- Do you find yourself wanting to interfere with coaching and instructions during practice or competition thinking that you could do better?
- Do you find yourself disliking your child's opponents?
- Are your child's goals more important to you than they are to your child?
- Do you provide material rewards for performance?

Training for Age Group Swimmers

Many parents have lots of questions about swim practice, especially when their children are new to the sport. It is sometimes difficult to know what to expect of your child. Your child may talk about swim practice, but you may not even understand the new "swimming vocabulary" your child is using!



Many children improve rapidly during the developmental stages due to growth and improved technique. It is difficult to resist the tendency to push young athletes at this stage! However, the emphasis should be placed on technique and not intense training. The training schedule for developmental swimmers should be flexible enough to provide them with enough time to participate in other activities. Since swimmers' careers can extend well into adulthood, swimming at the youngest levels needs to be fun, pressure free, and filled with learning experiences. This will ensure that swimming remains fun throughout their lives.

You should certainly ask questions at swim team parents' meetings or schedule an appointment with your child's coach to clarify things. However there are many common questions that might be answered below. Read through the FAQs and see if you have found yourself asking these same questions!

FAQs

Q: Q1. Some days he likes to just play with his friends. Should I force him to go to practice?

A: You should not force your child; you want his participation to be his decision. Reinforce the choices and decisions he has made to start swimming. For example, your son chose to go to practice on Tuesday and Thursdays, on other days he has the freedom to do other activities. As a parent, explain your expectation that he fulfill the commitment he made by joining the team. You don't want to force your child into a sport that he does not enjoy, yet you want your child to be involved in a 'lifetime sport', to learn about making and keeping a commitment and to interact with peers So, what are you to do?

Instead of allowing your child to make a daily decision about going to practice, allow him to decide whether or not he wants to swim for the season. Once the decision is made to swim, he is making a commitment to the team and needs to follow through on it by attending practice on a regular basis. A haphazard schedule is detrimental to the swimmer's overall development.

Interestingly, when asked to reflect on the role of their parents in their swimming, athletes from the World Championship team talked about being pushed to swim by their parents on a weekly basis but knowing they could quit if they stopped having fun with swimming.

Q: Q2. What will happen to my child's meet results if he only makes half of the offered workouts because he is participating in other sports?

A: Children involved in other activities can benefit in the areas of coordination and balance, as well as improved social and intellectual development. Specialized training in one activity does not necessarily need to take place at this stage of development. Will your son's teammate who makes all practices have better results? Probably, because his teammate is working solely on developing swimming skills. It is up to you to explain to your child that making the choice to participate in other activities can have its consequences. Tell your son that he should not compare his results to that of his teammate, but to focus on the fact that he is benefiting from and enjoying both sports.

Q: Q3. It looks like my child has too much fun, shouldn't she be working harder?

A: Be happy that your child is having fun! According to a recent study conducted by USA Swimming children who experience fun while participating stay in sports longer (Tuffey, Gould, & Medbery, 1998). At this stage of the game, the most important aspect of development is the mastery of skills, which means learning to swim the strokes with proper technique. Fundamentals must be established prior to true "training" taking place. And, if she is having fun in the process of learning, she is more likely to continue to swim.

Q: 04. Shouldn't my child be swimming more laps instead of doing all those drills?

A: Your child needs to develop a solid foundation in stroke mechanics. Drills and drill sets serve the specific purpose of teaching skills and fundamentals. Drills develop motor coordination, motor skills, and balance. In fact, your child's coach may prescribe a particular drill, just for your child, in order to improve a part of her stroke. In addition, she may actually be experiencing a "training" benefit from drills. Drills require concentration and aerobic energy to do them correctly.

Q: 05. My daughter's coach makes her sit on the side of the pool. What's that teaching her?

A: The coach has set up expectations of proper behavior both in and out of the water. Hopefully, your child is aware of the consequences of testing these boundaries. Obviously the coach is reinforcing what is expected of the children at practice. We encourage you to reinforce the coach's practice expectations by discussing your child's behavior and the consequences of that behavior. Hopefully, this "time out" begins to reinforce self-discipline, accountability and respect for others.

Q: 06. My son came home and said he had his best result on a test set of 100s on 1:45, what does that mean?

A: Some coaches use test sets to measure improvement. This particular challenge set consists of swimming a certain number of 100s on every 1 minute and 45 seconds, which is the send off. Praise your child for this accomplishment. In addition to achieving the physical goal, your child is also learning to swim on an interval, read the pace clock, and accomplish practice goals. Congratulate him on his efforts and let him know you are proud of him.

Q: 07. My son complains that some of the kids in the lane skip laps. He doesn't think that's fair. What should I tell him?

A: Praise him first for completing the workout the coach offers. Remind him that he is there to improve his own swimming and he can't control what his teammates do. Tell him however, that his best course of action is to continue to do things right and others may actually be influenced by his good example. By committing to do his best at all times, over the long haul he will reap the benefits of his hard work.

Q: 08. My child seems to be bouncing off the wall during "taper." What is that?

A: Tapering is a gradual reduction in training workloads in preparation for major competition. Some Age Groupers do not need to taper at all: a little rest and they are ready to go. As training increases, swimmers need more rest and the process of tapering is introduced. Swimmers taper only a couple of times a year, for their major competitions. Taper is not something that occurs for every meet! "Taper time" is an exciting time for a young swimmer and there are two reason for this:

- Physiologically your child is expending less energy because the workload has been reduced.
- Psychologically there is less mental fatigue as he is doing less physical work. Additionally, the anticipation and nervousness associated with the upcoming competition contributes to your child's bouncing off the wall. Do not worry, it will soon be over.

Everything You Wanted to Know About Swim Meets But Were Afraid To Ask



(Excerpt from USA Swimming's Sample Club Handbook) Please be sure to check with your swimmer's coach for specifics that may be different from the examples below.

Swim meets are a great family experience! They're a place where the whole family can spend time together. Listed below are some very in-depth guidelines geared to help you through your first couple of swim meets. It may seem a little overwhelming, but we tried to be as specific and as detailed as we possibly could. If you have any questions, please ask your coach.

Before the Meet Starts

1. Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. This time will be listed in the meet information handed out to all swimmers and also in the team newsletter.
2. Upon arrival, find a place to put your swimmer's blankets, swim bags and/or sleeping bags. The team usually sits in one place together, so look for some familiar faces.
3. Find the check-in place. Usually, parents are not allowed on deck so this may be a responsibility of your swimmer or your swimmer's coach. Make sure your swimmer checks in with his or her coach!
 - a. Check for special posted instructions in the check-in area. Usually one will need to circle the swimmer's name or "#" before each swimmer's name, in each event he or she is swimming, that day. If this is not done, the swimmer will not be allowed to swim that event. Check-in is required so that the people running the meet know who is actually at the meet. After check-in, the meet administrators "seed" the swimmers into heats. Heat and lane assignments will be posted, so be sure your swimmer knows where to look!
 - b. Sometimes the meet is "pre-seeded" and no check-in is required. You and your swimmer can find heat and lane assignments by purchasing a program.
4. Once "checked in", write or have the swimmers write each event-number on his or her hand in ink. This helps him/her remember what events he/she is swimming and what event number to listen or watch for.
5. Your swimmer now gets his/her cap and goggles and reports to the pool and/or coach for warm-up instructions. It is very important for all swimmers to warm-up with the team. A swimmer's body is just like a car on a cold day-he/she needs to get the engine going and warmed-up before he/she can go all out.
6. After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where his/her team is sitting and wait there until his first event is called. This is a good time to make sure he/she goes to the bathroom if necessary, gets a drink, or just gets settled in.
7. The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after warm-ups are over.
8. According to USA Swimming rules (because of insurance purposes), parents are not allowed on deck unless they are serving in an official capacity. Similarly, all questions concerning meet results, an officiating call, or the conduct of a meet, should be referred to a coach. He or she in turn, will pursue the matter through the proper channels.
9. Psyche Sheet or Heat Sheets. A psyche sheet is usually available for sale in the lobby or concession area of the pool. It lists all swimmers in each event in order of "seed time". When the team entry is sent in, each swimmer and his/her previous best time (up to the date that the entry was submitted) in that event is listed. If the swimmer is swimming an event for the first time, he/she will be entered as a "no-time" or "NT". A "no-time" swimmer will most likely swim in one of the first heats of the event. A Heat sheet may be available close to the start of the meet that lists the actual heat and lane a swimmer will be competing in.



Meet Starts

1. It is important for any swimmer to know what event numbers he/she is swimming (again, why they should have the numbers on their hand). He/she may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.
2. Generally, girls events are odd-numbered and boys events are even-numbered. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 50 freestyle"
3. Most meets are computerized. There are generally two ways a swimmer gets to his/her lane:
 - a. A swimmer usually reports directly to his/her lane for competition a number of heats before he/she actually swims. Check with your swimmer's coach for specific instructions.
 - b. In some novice meets, a swimmer's event number will be called, usually over the loudspeaker, and he/she will be asked to report to the "clerk of course" or "bullpen". Swimmers should report with his/her cap and goggle. Generally, girls events are odd-numbered and boys events are even-numbered. Example: "Event #26, 10-Under Boys, 50 freestyle, report to Clerk of Course." The "Clerk of Course" or "bullpen" area is usually where all swimmers checked in before the warm-up.
 - i. The clerk will usually line up all the swimmers and take them down to the pool in correct order.
 - ii. You can expect at least 4-8 heats of each event.
4. The swimmer swims his or her race.
5. After each swim:
 - . He/she is to ask the timers (people behind the blocks at each lane) his/her time.
 - a. Depending on the coaches instructions, the swimmer may be asked to do some recovery swimming if a "warm down" pool or lanes are available.
 - b. The swimmer should then go immediately to his or her coach. The coach will discuss the swim with each swimmer. Some coaches may wish to talk with the swimmer before her recovery swim.
6. Generally, the coach follows these guidelines when discussing swims:
 - . Positive comments or praise
 - a. Suggestions for improvement
 - b. Positive comments
7. Things you, as a parent, can do after each swim:
 - . Tell him how great he did! The coaching staff will be sure to discuss stroke technique with him. You need to tell him how proud you are and what a great job he did.
 - a. Take him back to the team area and relax.
 - b. This is another good time to check out the bathrooms, get a drink or something light to eat.
 - c. The swimmer now waits until his next event is called and starts the procedure again.
8. When a swimmer has completed all of her events she and her parents get to go home. Make sure, however, you, as a parent, check with the coach before leaving to make sure your swimmer is not included on a relay. It is not fair to other swimmers who may have stayed to swim on a relay where your swimmer is expected to be a member and she is not there.
9. Results are usually posted somewhere in the facility. Awards are often gathered for a team and given to the coach at the end of the meet. The coach will give the awards to the swimmers at a later time.

What Happens If Your Child has a Disappointing Swim?

If your child has a poor race and comes out of it feeling badly, talk about the good things. The first thing you say is, "Hey, that is not like you. I know you are disappointed, but it's not the end of the world!" Then you can go on and talk about the good things the child did. Don't talk about the negative things and don't keep talking about the race. Drop it and get your child to focus on the next race or something enjoyable coming up after the meet! Limit the "post mortems!"

If your child comes up to you and says, "That was a bad race, don't tell me it wasn't," there is nothing wrong with a swimmer negatively evaluating a race. The important thing is for the child not to dwell on it. You should move the swimmer on to something good. "All right, you have had a bad race. How do you think you can do better next time?" Immediately start talking about the positive things.

What To Take To The Meet

1. Most important: Swim Suit, Team Cap--and goggles (if your swimmer uses them).
 2. Baby or talcum powder--To "dust" the inside of swim cap. This helps preserve the cap and makes it easier to put on.
 3. Towels--Realize your swimmer will be there awhile, so pack at least two.
 4. Something to sit on. Oftentimes the swimmer area may be located in a gym or cafeteria. Example: sleeping bag, old blanket, or anything that will be comfortable to sit on. The swimmers will be spending a lot of time on it.
 5. Sweat suits: bring one. Each swimmer may want to bring two because they can get wet and soggy.
 6. Team T-shirts: Two or three. Same reason as above.
 7. Games: travel games, coloring books, books, anything to pass the time.
 8. Food: Each swimmer is usually allowed to bring a small cooler. It is better to bring snacks. They usually have snack bars at the meet, but the lines are long and most of the time they only sell junk food.
- Suggestions for items to bring:
- a. Drinks: Hi-C, Fruit juice, Gatorade
 - b. Snacks: Granola bars, Fun fruits, yogurt, cereal, jello cubes, sandwiches



Once you have attended one or two meets this will all become very routine. Please do not hesitate to ask any other parent for help or information!

These meets are a lot of fun for the swimmers! He/she gets to visit with his/her friends, play games, and meet kids from other teams. He/she also gets to "race" and see how much he/she has improved from all the hard work he/she has put in at practice.

Special Parent's Note

The pool area is usually very warm. Therefore, you need to make sure you dress appropriately. Nothing is worse than being hot at a swim meet. It makes the time pass very slowly! At some of the meets, the parents are allowed to sit with the swimmers at the blanket area. If you don't think that a gym floor is comfortable, feel free to bring folding chairs to sit on. Better yet, become an official and get involved! You get to be close to the action and take the focus off of your own child!

How do I sign up for a swim meet? *By CPSC Head Coach*

This can be a confusing thing for new parents and it will be a consideration for the next topic as well but know that all parents have gone through learning all the same things you are now, when they started.

The coaching staff picks the events for your swimmer since they are the ones to best judge your swimmers capability to swim those events. You just need to make sure you have certain things filled out correctly on the online system.

Online at our website, www.crownpointswimclub.org, you'll need to sign in to your account first. After that follow this process.....

- Click on the Events Tab and each meet will pop up.
- Find the meet you wish to sign up for and click on the "Edit Commitment" button
- Some of the meet details will pop up above the name of your swimmer, locate your swimmers name and click on it.
- Where it says "Signup Record", click on the arrow to the right to pull down the selections for the meet and pick "Yes, please sign (my swimmer) up for this event"
- If the meet events and sessions have been imported, you will be given the available sessions for your swimmer to participate in. Select which sessions they will be available for by checking the boxes.
- Click on "Save Changes"
- Your swimmer is now signed up for that meet in those sessions

"Registration Deadlines" will be posted to Add or Delete from a meet on the website under the title of each meet. If is not removed from a sign up prior to the deadline listed, then the swimmer will be entered into the meet and all applicable fees will be charged to their account. NO EXCEPTIONS! Conversely, any swimmer NOT signed up prior to the "Registration Deadlines" cannot be added to ANY meet, whether home or away. Please know that this is done to maintain a properly run meet not to penalize swimmers or parents. All swimmers qualifying for a "Championship Meet" will be expected to attend unless otherwise discussed with the Head Coach.

Emails are sent out when the meet information is posted (a/k/a, when meet events & sessions are loaded into the online system) to the website. An email reminder will also be sent out 7 days before the deadline, just in case you forgot to do it yet.

All meet information will be posted under each meet under "Form/Documents". The invitational information will be in the form of a PDF of the meet packet. You can read through this to find out what time the meet starts, what events are offered on what days, when your swimmer swims by which sessions their events are listed in, as well as, meet location, any applicable entry fees, and meet rules. Dual meet will just have an order of events posted.

If you ever have any questions, please come ask the Head Coach.

What meets/events are recommended for a new swimmer? *By CPSC Head Coach*

Most of the time any meet is good for a new swimmer to get their "feet wet" per say.

If you are unsure whether a new swimmer would be able to handle the mental aspect of participating in a 4 hour session on a weekend or you for that matter, let alone two of them over two days, then dual meets are the way to go. We try to schedule at least two to three dual meets a season so that there are the three opportunities to qualify to swim at the Conference championships at the end of each season.

In either meet, the swimmers will always be prepared to at least swim the basic strokes of both Freestyle and Backstroke in the shortest distance allotted for their age group. For some swimmers that are a little older and/or stronger feel free to enter them in the next distance up for those strokes as well. As we progress through the season, they should be able to enter into at least the shortest distance available for both the Breaststroke and Butterfly.

Since the coaching staff selects the events for the swimmers, we will try to enter them in the events we feel that they are ready to swim. Occasionally we will put them in events they may not yet feel ready for in order to show them the confidence we have in their ability to swim the event. Even though you think they might get disqualified, it's still a good thing to try something they have not done yet. That's how we all learn how to become better swimmers. Every swimmer has gotten disqualified at one time or another for different reasons. Even if you know they will get disqualified, sometimes that can be a motivating tool to plug away at practice to make the necessary corrections to avoid it the next time.

"Look at the stone cutter hammering away at his rock, perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred-and-first blow it will split in two, and I know it was not the last blow that did it, but all that had gone before." - Jacob Riis

We all learn through trial and error and those that are more persistent at getting things done correctly are the ones that will have a greater deal of success in the future. However, if you are unsure, please ask a coach that your swimmer works with on a daily basis to see if they feel that they are ready to swim a certain meet.

Preventing Swimmer's Ear

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You don't have to be a swimmer to get swimmer's ear. Athletes who frequently get water or perspiration in their ears are susceptible to the condition. Staying in a pool too long can reduce the acid level of the ear wax, which is there to help resist infections.

Swimmer's ear (otitis externa) is actually one of several names that refer to an infection of the outer ear. It can be caused by a fungus, but is more commonly associated with bacteria that is brought into the ear with water. If the water then runs out, the ear and the bacteria dry up. But when some of the water remains trapped in the ear canal and the skin gets soggy, the bacteria are in a perfect environment to grow into a problem.

SYMPTOMS

The first symptoms are a feeling that the ear is blocked, muffled hearing, and an itch. Later, the canal can become swollen and painful, and a watery discharge accumulates in the area. If the ear gets to the point of being tender to the touch, it's time to get to a doctor.

PREVENTION

There are several ways to prevent swimmer's ear from ever occurring. Here is a summary of preventive methods:

- Don't swim in dirty water.
- Wear earplugs while swimming.
- After a swim, tilt and shake your head to allow the water to drain.
- Dry your ears with a clean cloth after showering and with a hair dryer set at low speed, held about 12" from your ear.
- Use one dropper of commercial eardrops, isopropyl alcohol, or white vinegar in your ear after swimming or showering. Wiggle your ear to let the solution get to the bottom, then let the fluid drain out. Drops should not be used by people with tubes in their ears or perforations in their eardrums.
- Some experts suggest that you use a dropper of mineral oil, baby oil, or lanolin to create a protective coating before you exercise. Get advice from a physician or trainer before using this method.

If you wear a hearing aid, remove it frequently to allow your ear to dry.

Avoid excessive cleaning that removes all of the protective wax naturally present in the ear canal.

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As I have on many occasions, I've gotten the opportunity to talk to parents about their experiences. The past, present, and future are always brought up at one time or another. The past, in any situation, is a learning experience. The present always shows the promise to improve the future.

One of the things that I have noticed in all my years of coaching is that there are certain things that can either keep a team from ever bonding or completely divide the organization. I would like to take to give you my view point on why these things can be directly linked to your athlete's successes or failures which in turn leads directly to the success or failure of the organization.

Setting a good example

We all should have learned as we grew up that the best thing that you can do for your child is to set a good example. Whether it is how they interact with other or what kinds of food they eat or what kinds of words they use to express themselves, we want them to grow up as respectable young adults that everyone would be proud to call their own. We as parents need to also show them what it means to play fair, be a good sport, show compassion, and follow the "Golden Rule". The way our kids act when they are not in our presence has a direct link to the examples we set for them in the situations they find themselves in or, at least, our indifference towards bad behavior. Setting an example of how you feel a person would act in "Pleasantville", things they would say to others, and nonverbal expressions one would show, should be the primary goal of all of us.

Support for each and every athlete

While you obviously put your child in his or her sporting activities to provide them with a good dose of healthy activities, you also probably know that they learn life lessons as well. I believe that much of today's problems with major sports figures stems directly from the fans sheer disrespect of other human beings. I believe that this is something we all can have a hand in changing for the better. When I would go to watch the Chicago Bears or Bulls when I was growing up, I never remember being encouraged to boo the other teams or to shout obscene things at the visiting team's players. Why that seems to be alright and the normal interaction from some fans is beyond my comprehension. I think that shows a complete lack of sportsmanship. I would expect that parents show their children that it is OK to cheer for good plays even when it wasn't your team making the good play. Letting other athletes know that we support them and their efforts, whether they have a good day or a bad day should always be the norm. Congratulating a fellow athlete on their performance will only let them know that, whether it was good or not so good, they tried and that's all we can ask of them.

Practice competition

There are two types of competition, healthy and unhealthy. There can also be a fine line between the two. The greatest practice environments are ones where teammates are positively encouraging each other by pushing each other both verbally and physically to go faster on a daily basis. A situation like this is one that will foster an average team to championship level status. However, when swimmers argue and fight with each other because of negative things said or exchanges it can break down the team bond and cause resentment that will inevitably cause a team to falter. Situations where swimmers compare themselves to their teammates or say how much harder they work then their teammates will also breed resentment from those around them.

Comparing athletes

Every person in the world is different. Nothing about any two athletes is the same, especially their bodies and how they move. Some people have faster metabolisms, some are stronger, some are shorter, and some are not as strong mentally. None of these things mean anything about how an

athlete can perform. What an athlete may lack may be made up in other areas. Attempting to compare one athlete and their performances to another is not only unfair to the athlete be critiqued but it's also a very inaccurate way to gauge success or lack of. The best way to ascertain whether an athlete is progressing in their swimming or not, is to compare their own swims to each other, more than a few months apart. The best person to do that is the coach who sees them on a daily basis and can determine exactly how much work each athlete is putting into improving.

Pitting teammates or even opposing swimmers against one another

While unhealthy practice competition and comparing athletes to each other will cause a team big problem, the most detrimental action any parent could take would be to pit teammates or even opposing athletes against one another. It will teach the athlete to have either an aloof attitude towards other athletes or a superior air about them which will inevitably alienate them. The last thing we want is our children or athletes being shunned by others because their attitude is one of arrogance or attention driven. The best approach to avoid this is to teach your athletes to focus on only what they are doing. Since they cannot control any outside forces in what they do, the only way to ensure the best possible performance that day is for the athlete to control the things they can. Focus and stay within themselves or their lanes and race the clock.

Rumors

Talking about anyone or anything without direct knowledge of the facts should be outlawed. The spreading of unfounded rumors is probably the worst of all. If you have ever feel victim to this you know how devastated or angry it can make you. Once again the Golden Rule comes into play; always think first before talking of things you do not know for sure. Both children and parents can be found guilty of this crime against appropriate human behavior. Always talk directly to the person(s) with whom the topics involve before spreading rumors that may or may not be true. If that person would rather the topic not be discussed, then please, honor that request. The communication that makes organizations thrive can be greatly damaged by those who live to talk negatively about others outside of their presence. If you are in a conversation where talk like this comes up, please let the offender know that you are not interested in talking about others in such a manner.

Negative talk in the pool and the stands

There are two instances where this topic applies. The first is in regard to how an athlete performs. While I will never tell another parent how to raise their child, I will give my advice on what things should or should not be said to my athlete's in the realm of their athletic competition. I cannot begin to tell you all of the most unbelievable things that I have heard parents say to their own children, thinking that what they are saying is appropriate or will even help their child. However, for the benefit of you children's athletic success, keep all comments about their efforts positive. Positively supportive comments should be the only things said to children if parents ever hope for there to be an enjoyable future for their children. For example:

"Hey, that was great!"

"That's OK, honey, I still love you."

"I'm proud of what you did and you should be too."

"You tried you best and that's all anyone could ask of you."

"It's OK to be upset but know that we're not. We're proud of you!"

Those are just a few of the responses that someone could give an athlete who clearly looks upset about their performance. Comments should always be positive and short and then the topic should be routed in another positive direction. My parents were great at this. I can remember my father congratulating me on a race which I added three seconds and was mortified with my own performance and the first and only thing he said was "Hey, great race!" Since he didn't know my

times I knew he was sincere, even though I was disgusted with it he let me know that it was OK to not always do well and it really didn't matter.

The other area is a disgruntled parent complaining about what is going on or how things are going on without ever discussing the issues with the coaches. I can't begin to tell you how much this will segregate and split an organization apart. Everyone is entitled to their opinion however for the benefit of not only your child's organization but your child, the negative talk in the stands or even at home, about anyone should never be done in the presence of the athlete's. Children who hear such talk can alienate those children of a parent who tries to discredit the organization or coach they like because they hear negative talk from someone else's parents. Any issue that comes up should always be discussed with the coach away from anyone else who isn't invited to participate in the discussion. If you cannot have your issue resolved to your satisfaction, you are always free to reassess whether or not you want your child to continue in the program or not. However, make sure the decision you make is what your child wants and not just because you disagree with how things are going on.

Vision of the club's direction

Please understand that the way our program is organized is in such a way that your child will progress at the rate they are ready to. Some kids advance faster than others. The more the kids can advance at a rate that is acceptable to them, and not pressure filled to move up or advance, then the more fun they have and the longer they stay in the sport. Remember everything about what your child does is for their benefit. As a parent you should never be asking, "what am I getting out of this." "Nothing," should be the answer to that question, except less time for yourself or less money in your pocket. All of what an extracurricular activity provides is ONLY for your child's benefit or gain. If you are asking what are you getting out of this then maybe you need to look into an activity for you to gain something for your time, perhaps our master's program. We always encourage more participants in our sport!

The goal of the club is to develop not only our athlete's swimming, social interactions, and mental preparation skills but most of all a love for the sport. Development takes a long time for all swimmers and the coach must plan out a "career" path that looks far off into the future for the swimmers. What may not seem like its set up to help the child's development right now may be more geared towards developing their future interest for the sport. As the Head Coach, it's my responsibility to do what I feel is best for the club and each member as a whole, not what a parent may feel should happen right now. It may not be the right time for something or fall into the timeline of future plans. Know that what is going on right now in your swimmers practices are things that we feel will help them develop into great high school, collegiate, and hopefully international swimmers.

The recipe for making a great team has generous helpings of love, support, sacrifice, patience, and hard work all mixed together and nurtured over time. Most of the ingredients have to be supplied by both the parents and the coaches with the parents allowing the coach to be the only chef in the kitchen. Sometimes the mixture may not taste so good so we have to add a few extra helpings of one or two of the ingredients to hopefully improve the final meal. Know that in the end we all are here to help the kids grow as human beings to make brighter future for all. As kids are asked who they look up to, who there hero's are, more and more they respond, "my parents" or "my mom" or "my dad," as they should. We, as their hero's, need to set positive examples of great sportsmanship and love for everyone so they see how teamwork helps build everyone up to greatness. Please help me work together to make this the greatest team it could ever be.