



Lake Erie Silver Dolphins

Swim Meet 101

Introduction

The goal of this document is to introduce LESD parents to the basics of USA Swimming swim meets. LESD's coaches will have the swimmers well prepared for their meets. Our hope is that this will provide parents a very basic understanding of what to expect at a swim meet so they can be prepared for meets too.

Swimmers Should Bring:

- **Goggles** - Two pairs in case a backup pair is needed.
- **Swimsuits** - It never hurts to have an extra suit in case one rips or straps break, etc.
- **Swim caps** - Caps are not required, though most swimmers (boys and girls) use them. LESD swimmers should wear their team issued LESD cap. Because it can rip trying to put it on, it helps to have a second one in your bag.
- **Towel** – a second towel may be helpful.
- **Water Bottle** - Filled with water, Gatorade, etc. It's very important to stay well hydrated.
- **Flip Flops** or something similar for locker rooms or if your child wants to walk through concession area with you.
- **Entertainment** - Swimmers usually have time between races, it helps to have something quiet to do – books, cards, small toys, handheld gadgets and travel games are all great. These items will be left with the swimmer's things so be sure not to include any items that if lost would be an issue.
- **Sharpie** - Parents can help the coaches out by writing your child's event numbers on their hand. With the heat sheet you can add heat and lane information, too.
- **Snacks or Cash** - Most venues have a snack bar or food table, but you may want to bring granola bars, fruit, yogurt, bagels, or similar food to snack on between races. Avoid salty or sugary foods like candy bars, donuts, chips etc. No glass containers.
- **Sweats/T-shirts** - Try to bring an extra sweatshirt, t-shirt, shorts to keep your child warm between races. LESD apparel is great for this purpose.
- **Good sportsmanship and a fun attitude!**

Before the Meet Starts, a Swimmer Should:

1. **Arrive Early** – Arrive at the pool at least 15 minutes before the scheduled warm-up time begins. You will be notified of the meet start time by email. (Depending on the size of the meet, plan extra time to find a parking space and navigate your way to the pool within the building).
2. **Sit with the Team** - When you get to the pool, look for familiar faces and set up with the rest of the team. Typically swimmers sit with the team and parents sit in the stands. The swimmers will always sit as a team. This helps the kids to get to know each other better, and helps the coaches to communicate with the swimmers. Parents typically sit in the stands together to cheer LESD on and also get to know one another. Sometimes, a meet will have an area for the swimmers that is not on the pool deck like a gym. In this case, parents may often sit in the gym with the team to help make sure swimmers are well behaved and safe. Parents will go to the stands when their child swims an event.

3. **Sign in/Circle in** if required - Your swimmer may have to circle in for the meet. This means that he/she finds sheets and circles his/her name. Sometimes they circle in for every event, sometimes just once. They should ask their coach if they need to sign in and new swimmers can ask the experienced swimmers to help them.
4. **Get your events written on your hand** - For younger swimmers, parents should write the events on the swimmer's hand before arriving at the meet. Experienced swimmers should take the initiative to do this for themselves. You can use a sharpie for this.
5. **Get cap/goggles and report for warm up** - Your swimmer should get his/her cap and goggles and report to the 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 go back and sit in the team area and wait for the meet to begin** - After warm-up, your swimmer will go back to the area where the team is sitting and wait there until their first event is called. This is a good time to make sure younger swimmers go to the bathroom if necessary, get a drink, or just get settled in. The meet will usually start about 10-15 minutes after warm-ups are over.

During the Meet, a Swimmer Should:

1. **Know your events and listen for them to be called** - It is important for any swimmer to know what event numbers they are swimming (again, why they should have the numbers on their hand). They may swim right away after warm-up or they may have to wait awhile.
2. **Go to Clerk of Course or line up behind the blocks** - At many swim meets there is a Clerk of Course to assist the younger swimmers in lining up and getting to their events. Swimmers should listen for their event to be called and report to the Clerk of Course. Experienced swimmers should keep track of the meet and report in a timely manner. The area behind the start end of the pool deck should be reserved for swimmers in the next several heats.
3. **Swim!** - The swimmer will hear the event announced and then a series of whistles. These whistles instruct the swimmer what to do. The first series of 4 or more short tweets means to get ready (cap and goggles should already be on). The next long whistle signals the swimmer to get up on the block, or for the backstroke to get in the water. They will then hear the starter say, "Take your mark." The swimmer should promptly assume their starting position. Once they are in this position, they should not move (do not adjust goggles, or replant their feet). They will then hear an electronic beep signaling the start of the race. If there is movement prior to the start they may be asked to "stand" and then take their mark again.

4. **Shake hands** - Remind your swimmer that they should shake hands at the end of the race with the swimmer on either side. All meet officials, coaches, teammates and members of the other team should be treated with courtesy. LESD emphasizes sportsmanship. Please model this behavior for your swimmer and provide positive feedback when you see them demonstrating this virtue.
5. **Go see your coach** - After swimming, the swimmer should go immediately to an LESD coach. The coach will discuss the swim with each swimmer. Swimmers should get their time just in case the coach was attending to something else.
6. **Go back to step one and listen for your next event.** The swimmer now waits until his next event and starts the procedure again. These are the times to cheer for teammates and contribute to team spirit.
7. **Once all your events are over, double check with the coach to see if you are on a relay** - When your swimmers have completed all of their events you may be ready to go home. Make sure, however, the swimmer, checks with the coach before leaving find out if he/she is in a relay. One swimmer can scratch a relay for the other three swimmers. In addition to disappointing other swimmers, relays are weighted more heavily than individual events in the team scoring. If you can, stay until the end to cheer for all LESD swimmers.
8. **Clean up** - Before you leave, clean up the area where you and your swimmers were sitting. Throw away any empty water bottles, wrappers, etc. and leave the area the way it was when you got there. We ask that each swimmer pick up at least 5 pieces of trash before leaving any meet.

Parents Need to Know:

- **Length of a meet** - Swim meets typically last 4 hours + warm up time. Come prepared.
- **Dress for heat** - Swim meets are hot for spectators; wear cool clothing and layers.
- **Seat cushion** - Parents may wish to bring a seat cushion to alleviate the pain that comes with sitting for long hours.
- **Pen/Highlighter** - Parents may wish to bring a highlighter or pen to use on the heat sheet/program.
- **Meet Mobile** - Many swim meets use an app called "Meet Mobile." It is free and currently available only on the iPhone. If it is kept up to date it will provide all the information you need for a meet, including heat and lane assignments and results. Not every meet uses it or keeps it up to date.
- **Vendors** - Depending on the meet there are concession stands, as well as vendors selling swimsuits, goggles, caps, and T-Shirts and sweatshirts with the name of the meet printed on it. Some kids get them; some don't, but bring a check book if you think you may want to purchase one.
- **No parents on deck** - In general, parents are not allowed on the pool deck. The kids do a great job taking care of one another. The coaches are there too. This is a good time to allow them safe independence.
- **Photographs** – You are welcome to take photos at meets. No flashes at the starts. No one is allowed to take photos from behind the starting area.
- **Swimmers should have a buddy** – Tell your swimmer they should go to the restroom or to concessions stands with a buddy only. We are often at meets where the venue is open to the public. This is a simple safety precaution.

- **Problems?** If you have a problem getting to the meet, call another parent that is there so he/she can inform the coaches.
- **Results and Awards** - Results are usually posted somewhere in the facility. Ribbons can either be picked up by swimmers after a meet or are gathered for the team and given to the coach at the end of the meet. In this case, ribbons will be available at practice. On the back of each ribbon are the event and your swimmers time. This is an easy way for your swimmer to track their improvement. Remember, hard work is much more important than blue ribbons!
- **Heat Sheets/Psyche Sheets** - Most swim meets sell programs, also called heat sheets or psyche sheets. Psyche Sheets are rankings of swimmers by event and time. Heat Sheets are more specific and will inform you what heat and lane the swimmer will be participating in. No matter what, all teams will post heat and lane assignments in a public place for swimmers to check.
- **National Age Group Time Standards (NAG)** - USA Swimming standards for age group swimmers. Time cuts such as B, BB, A, AA, AAA, AAAA are used. These time standards are utilized as cuts for many meets. Once kids get involved in swimming you will hear a lot of talk about these time cuts and goal setting. A link to the current NAG times is posted on our website under Resources.

Parents have an Important Role during the Meet

Becoming a Second Goal Parent

- Remember the BIG PICTURE
- Ensure your child will take away the lessons that will help them be successful in life

Fill Your Child's Emotional Tank With:

- Truthful, Specific Praise
- Express Appreciation
- Listening
- Nonverbal Actions

What do you do when your child has a "bad" swim? (What's a "bad" swim anyway?!?)

- Let the coaches coach
- Listen to your child
- Fill your child's emotional tank by celebrating getting to the race on time and on the block, finishing the race, sticking a turn, holding a streamline, keeping a breathing pattern, giving a hug.

At the end of the day it's about...

- Being Present
- Having Fun